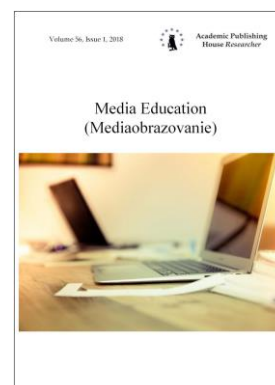




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Empirical Evidence of Factors Affecting Attitude towards the Advertising of Socially Sensitive Products in Digital Media

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Abstract

With the rapid growth of unvarying advertising campaigns, the promotional content of socially sensitive products is available across all the digital platforms, which sometimes hurt consumer sentiments. Due to which the identification of the factors determining attitude towards the advertisement of socially sensitive products has now become important for both advertising professionals and academic scholars. Considering its significance, this study intends to measure the impact of Good for Economy, Social Role and Image, Value Corruption, and Product Information on Attitude towards Advertising of Socially Sensitive Products in digital media. The population for this study is comprised of digital media users, having 18 years of age or above. The sample size for this study is 400 respondents. The data was collected through an online survey. The overall explanatory power of the model is 56 %, where $F = (4,212) = 37.29$, $p < 0.05$, therefore it can be concluded the factors included in the model has the potential to shape attitude towards the advertising of socially sensitive products by 56 %.

Keywords: digital advertising, good for economy, value corruption, social role, image, product information.

1. Introduction

Digital media is an emerging advertising medium in the global economy. It provides greater opportunity and challenge to understand the differences in consumers' beliefs and attitudes towards digital advertising (Frith, Mueller, 2010). The challenge increases when it comes to advertising what academic research scholars have described as: "unmentionables", "socially sensitive products", "decent products", or "controversial products" (Waller et al., 2005).

Moreover, for advertisers and advertising agencies, the situation becomes more complex particularly when the advertised product itself may be considered as controversial, eg. condoms and feminine hygiene products (Waller, 2004). In that case, it causes results in several negative public reactions like adverse publicity, product boycotts, registering complaints to advertising regulatory bodies, declining sales, therefore, it has become important for the academic scholars to identify the determinants of advertising attitude towards socially sensitive products in digital media.

The objective of this research is to study the impact of good for economy, social role and image, value corruption, and product information on attitude towards the advertising of socially sensitive products in digital media.

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2. Material and methods

Conceptual Framework

The study use factors from a theoretical framework based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Pollay, Mittal, 1993) as depicted in Figure 1.

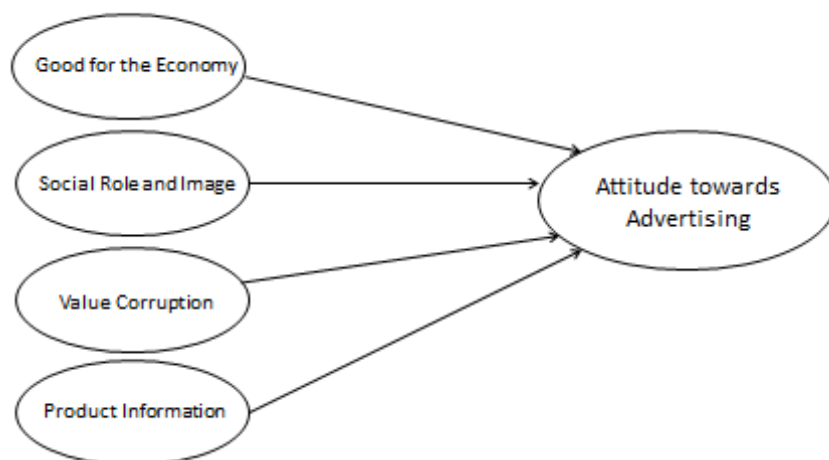


Fig. 1. Theoretical framework

Hypothesis. The overall model based on the predictors (Good for Economy, Social Role and Image, Value Corruption and Product Information) have a combined effect on Attitude towards advertising of Socially Sensitive Products

Conceptualization of Framework

Good For Economy and Attitude towards Advertising. Consumers' response to an advertisement is highly dependent on the way the advertising message has been comprehended and evaluated by them (Morimoto, Chang, 2006). The economic benefit of advertising is the ability of the advertisers to provide accurate and reliable information about their products to the audience therefore, it plays an important role in setting consumers' attitude towards advertising (Petrovici, Marinov, 2007).

Social Role and Image and Attitude towards Advertising. Social role and image is a belief that considers advertising as a tool to influence individuals' lifestyles and exemplifies their prevalent trends and current social status (Wang et al., 2009). Advertising keeps consumers informed and trendy, therefore it forms a positive attitude (Yaakop et al., 2011). Therefore, it is considered as an important factor to be incorporated in the conceptual framework.

Value Corruption and Attitude towards Advertising. Like every other media facet, advertising is also considered responsible for transmitting cultural and social values, but in reality, we can see advertising compromise on the social values to sell products or services (Wang, Sun, 2010).

Product Information and Attitude towards Advertising. Advertising is a source of disseminating product information in a market place. It is classified as a personal use factor that contributes to the marketing communication process (Eze, Lee, 2012).

Research Methodology

The current research has employed quantitative data analysis through regression. The population for this study was set to digital media users, age 18 years or above. Non-probability, convenience sampling techniques have been adopted to determine the sample. The sample size calculated through www.raosoft.com/sample_size.html based on 95 % confidence level and 5 % error suggests a minimum sample of 400 respondents (Malhotra, Birks, 2007). A digital video advertisement of a contraceptive advertisement was attached to the questionnaire as a stimulus. The respondents have watched a digital advertisement before responding to the questionnaire.

Adopted Instruments

The constructs of each variable have been adopted for this research (Pollay, Mittal, 1993). The constructs adopted for this study have established reliabilities. The online survey has two sections. In the first section, the demographic questions were asked as per the nominal scale and

the second section was comprised of the variables under investigation. The answers were measured on a seven-point Likert Scale. The constructs adopted for this study are presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Constructs Adopted

| Construct | No of Items | Author |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Good for Economy | 3 | (Pollay, Mittal, 1993) |
| Social Role and Image | 3 | (Pollay, Mittal, 1993) |
| Value Corruption | 2 | (Pollay, Mittal, 1993) |
| Product Information | 3 | (Pollay, Mittal, 1993) |
| Attitude towards Advertising | 3 | (Pollay, Mittal, 1993) |

Data Analysis

SPSS software was used for the data coding, and further analysis was done as presented below in this article.

Normality of Data

To ascertain the normality of the data collected, the standardized scores for each item were calculated. The standardized scores for all items were ranged ± 2.5 , this has confirmed that the data is normally distributed. After that univariate normality was ascertained by performing Skewness and Kurtosis analyses, the results were laid between ± 2.5 , hence confirmed the univariate normality of the data (Kline, 2011).

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha test was performed to measure the reliability of the adopted constructs. It has been suggested applying this test to check the internal consistency of the adopted instruments (Sekaran, Bougie, 2016). If the Cronbach's alpha coefficient value falls between 0.6 to 0.7 then it is acceptable, moreover, above 0.8 standardized coefficient value is considered good (Patten, Newhart, 2017).

Validity

Validity is termed as the accuracy of the adopted measures. It also establishes the link between a conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. Convergent and discriminant validity are the two sub-types of construct validity used in the study (Bryman, Bell, 2015). The relatedness of the items of the constructs is measured through convergent validity. However, distinctness, uniqueness of the constructs are measured through discriminant validity (Rowley, 2014).

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Through EFA test, the larger data set fragmented into small summary variables. This technique helps in identifying the relationships present between variables and respondents. Principal component factor analysis is one of the commonly used methods adopted to generate a reduced number of factors, explaining the variance of original values (Walliman, 2015).

Descriptive Analysis

In the descriptive analysis, a summary of the descriptive tests conducted is presented (Miller, Salkind, 2002). This study reports skewness, kurtosis, mean and standard deviation as descriptive statistics (Zikmund et al., 2013).

Correlation

Correlation analysis has been done to determine the extent of the relationship found between two variables (Malhotra, Birks, 2007). Karl Pearson r is the correlation coefficient if its value ranges between ± 1 . Here +1 elucidates positive relationship and -1 represents the negative relationship (Gujarati, 2011).

Regression Analysis

Regression is a technique is adopted to determine the estimated impact of one variable on another. Regression is different from correlation because, the distinction of dependent and independent variables is present in it, unlike correlation (Malhotra, Birks, 2007).

3. Discussion

The media face frequent criticism over the projection of questionable content, and the recent significant increase in condemnation has been witnessed (Gurrieri et al., 2016). Advertising is a common facet of the media that is no stranger to such criticism. The discomfort advertising message of controversial campaign causes leads to a boycott of the product (Wang et al., 2018).

Government regulations and policies are also important in this regard. An unhappy viewer of the advertisement reports it to the complaint cell and raises concerns over its content which advertisers want to avoid (Bátorfy, Urbán, 2020). The advertising message is also considered as unwelcome and advertisers are considered intruders, therefore it has become important for communication professionals and media scholars to study this phenomenon in detail (Miltgen et al., 2019).

In addition to advertising, digital media itself considered controversial, particularly social media, where every mass communication message circulating is not considered as legitimate (Carlson, 2018). Attitude is one of the frequently studied concepts in advertising research and generally explained as a mental state of individuals through which they perceive and respond to their environment (Aaker et al., 2001). It is also described as a learned predisposition to respond consistently (Fishbein, 1967). The consumers' brand/choice behavior is likely to be influenced by attitudes towards the advertising stimulus and it serves as a potential mediator to study advertising effect (Mitchell, Olson, 1981). Individuals' attitude towards advertising is affected by the individual experiences and belief constructs of individual about product information, hedonic/entertainment, falsity/no sense, good for the economy, and corrupt values/materialism (Pollay, Mittal, 1993).

Research activity has progressed from a broad study of attitude towards advertising in general to a focus on attitude towards advertising in specific mediums (Pyun, James, 2011). However, one advertising platform that has grown dramatically is digital media, however, research addressing attitude towards advertising of socially sensitive products displayed in digital media and its controversial nature of the advertising message has rarely been discussed. In these evolving media spaces, media literates should give an edge to discuss these topics with empirical evidence (Moraes, Michaelidou, 2017).

The notion of "Good for the economy" suggests that advertising assists consumers in embracing technological advancements and product innovations, which further leads to generate more employment, and promotes healthy competition by reducing the production cost (Oumulil, Balloun, 2019). Moreover, it delivers product-related information to the consumers, which helps them in improving their lifestyle. In conclusion, advertising has become the essence of any business venture (Blech, Blech, 2003), and plays a significant role in upgrading their living standards (Bauer et al., 1968).

In an attempt to build brand personality and image, advertising is always believed to create content in a way that can resonate with certain components of individuals' lifestyles (Massara et al., 2019). Therefore, consumers start associating themselves in terms of status, reputation, and ownership of the given products. If consumers find these ideas appealing and reflecting their desired social image and lifestyles then they build a favorable attitude (Tan, Chia, 2007). Moreover, consumers express themselves as living an ideal life, therefore, they even do not mind paying a higher price for a product they find unique, just to flaunt their status (Pollay, Mittal, 1993).

The concept of homogeneity is prevalent these days and the concept of globalization has inspired many research scholars, however, due to the disparity exists between technologically equipped and technology deprived countries, this may not be justified to set global standards for all the countries. Due to disparity exists among different countries due to their social and cultural background, religious beliefs, viewers' response towards the advertisements can not be generalized (Wiese, Akareem, 2020). It is generally believed that advertising has the power to distort audiences' perceptions and societal values (Korgaonkar et al., 2001). The advertisement exploits youngsters and disrupts the values instilled by their parents (Pollay, Mittal, 1993). In this regard, web advertising has no exception. It has similar power to disrupt, mold, and corrupt the values of its users. It disrupts the values instilled by parents in their children (Cho, Leng, 2020). There are ad blockers and software available that prevent ads from appearing while consuming digital media, this shows value corruption is a serious user concern (Wolin et al., 2002). In a nutshell, that value corruption will also cause an advertising attitude to be unfavorable.

Advertising plays different roles, however, its role as an information provider has long been debated. People still believe in advertising, and consider it an important mode of transmitting information (Wang, Sun, 2010). In digital media, the advertisements placed on websites and social media distribute information that brings more efficiencies and effectiveness to the virtual market place, where consumers' can easily evaluate and choose the advertising offering better matched with their needs and wants. In today's networked, interactive, multiscreen world, consumers accumulate a vast amount of information from the marketers through advertising commercials

placed in different media platforms (Bharadwaj et al., 2020). Keeping in view the predictors discussed here, in this research study, the factors determining attitude towards the advertising of socially sensitive products were empirically tested through regression analysis. The future study may expand this model with additional predictors.

4. Results

Interpretations

Table 2 summarizes the univariate validity measured through Kurtosis and Skewness analyses.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

| Construct | Mean | Std. Dev. | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|------------------------------|------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Good for Economy | 3.67 | 1.39 | 0.20 | -0.40 |
| Social Role and Image | 4.96 | 1.40 | -0.18 | -0.85 |
| Value Corruption | 4.63 | 1.30 | 0.02 | -0.49 |
| Product Information | 4.61 | 1.05 | 0.55 | 0.17 |
| Attitude towards Advertising | 4.32 | 1.34 | -0.06 | -0.30 |

Table 2 depicts the highest Kurtosis (KT = -0.85) is for social role and image with a (Mean = 4.96, SD = 1.40) and the lowest Kurtosis is (KT = 0.17) product information (Mean = 4.61, SD = 1.05). Moreover, product information with a (Mean = 4.61, SD = 1.05) has the highest Skewness (SK = 0.55) and value corruption with a (Mean = 4.63, SD = 1.30) have the lowest Skewness (SK = 0.02). The descriptive statistics of the constructs range between ± 1.5 , therefore univariate normality is achieved (Flick, 2009).

Table 3 summarizes the findings of Cronbach's Alpha test performed to check the internal consistencies of the adopted constructs:

Table 3. Reliability Analysis

| Construct | Cronbach's Alpha | Standardized Cronbach's Alpha | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|------|--------------------|
| Good for Economy | 0.90 | 0.90 | 3.67 | 1.39 |
| Social Role and Image | 0.91 | 0.91 | 4.96 | 1.40 |
| Value Corruption | 0.79 | 0.79 | 4.63 | 1.30 |
| Product Information | 0.88 | 0.88 | 4.61 | 1.05 |
| Attitude towards Advertising | 0.81 | 0.81 | 4.32 | 1.34 |

Varies between the range of ($\alpha = 0.79$ to $\alpha = 0.91$), Table 3 elucidates the reliability analysis statistics. The lowest reliability ($\alpha = 0.79$) was scored by value corruption. Contrary to that, the highest reliability ($\alpha = 0.91$) was scored by social role and image. Cronbach's Alpha values are greater than 0.7, hence reliabilities are acceptable and consistent (Leech et al., 2005).

Table 4 summarizes the results of Correlation analysis for checking multicollinearity:

Table 4. Correlation

| Constructs | GFE | SRI | VC | PI | ATA |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Good for Economy | 1.00 | | | | |
| Social Role and Image | 0.84 | 1.00 | | | |
| Value Corruption | 0.88 | 0.88 | 1.00 | | |
| Product Information | 0.68 | 0.78 | 0.80 | 1.00 | |
| Attitude towards Advertising | 0.64 | 0.68 | 0.72 | 0.65 | 1.00 |

The pairs of good for economy and value corruption, and social role and image and value corruption scored the highest correlation ($r = 0.88$). Additionally, good for economy and attitude towards advertising scored the lowest correlation ($r = 0.64$). The problem of multicollinearity was not found, because the correlation values are ranging between 0.30 and 0.90.

Table 4 reported the Varimax Rotation result, conducted to check the relationship present between latent variables and the constructs.

Table 5. EFA for the Constructs

| Constructs | Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Test | Bartlett's Sphericity Test ($P < 0.05$) | Cumulative Factor loading Test | Items |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|---|--------------------------------|-------|
| Good for Economy | 0.90 | 408.68 | 68.13 % | 3 |
| Social Role and Image | 0.88 | 579.02 | 82.57 % | 3 |
| Value Corruption | 0.84 | 427.43 | 76.68 % | 2 |
| Product Information | 0.76 | 410.20 | 62.35 % | 3 |
| Attitude towards Advertising | 0.83 | 431.35 | 74.86 % | 3 |

The KMO value of each construct should exceed the value of 0.6, which is acceptable (Hair, 2015).

Table 6 presents the variance explained that should be scored above 0.40 for convergent validity and 0.70 for reliability.

Table 6. Convergent Validity

| Construct | Cronbach's Alpha | Variance Explained | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------|--------------------|
| Good for Economy | 0.90 | 0.68 | 3.67 | 1.39 |
| Social Role and Image | 0.91 | 0.82 | 4.96 | 1.40 |
| Value Corruption | 0.79 | 0.76 | 4.63 | 1.30 |
| Product Information | 0.88 | 0.62 | 4.61 | 1.05 |
| Attitude towards Advertising | 0.81 | 0.74 | 4.32 | 1.34 |

Table 6 depicted social role and image with maximum variance explained ($V = 0.82$), and product information with the minimum variance explained ($V = 0.62$) is for. The lowest reliability for value corruption ($\alpha = 0.79$) was found, moreover, the highest reliability for good for economy was found for ($\alpha = 0.90$). The variance explained for all the constructs was scored more than 0.40 and the reliability score exceeds the value of 0.73, hence the constructs were measured as intended (Kline, 2015).

Hypothesis Testing

The Hypothesis depicts that the predictors (good for economy, social role and image, value corruption, and product information) significantly influence attitude towards advertising of socially sensitive products was measured through regression analysis method. Table 7 reports the findings.

Table 7. Summarized Results (Regression)

| Construct | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. | Collinearity Statistics | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|------|------|-------------------------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | Tolerance | VIF |
| Attitude towards Advertising | 0.67 | 0.31 | | 2.57 | 0.00 | | |
| Good For Economy | 0.12 | 0.14 | 0.08 | 3.78 | 0.01 | 0.22 | 4.44 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Social Role and Image | 0.08 | 0.15 | 0.09 | 2.58 | 0.04 | 0.21 | 4.76 |
| Value Corruption | 0.55 | 0.16 | 0.40 | 2.87 | 0.00 | 0.17 | 5.87 |
| Product Information | 0.27 | 0.18 | 0.23 | 2.30 | 0.02 | 0.41 | 2.39 |

Dependent Variable: Attitude towards advertising, $R^2=0.58$, Adjusted $R^2=0.56$, $F = (4,212) = 37.29$, $p < 0.05$

The findings revealed that the predictors (good for economy, social role and image, value corruption and product information) mutually determine the variance of 56 %, where $F = (4,212) = 37.29$, $p < 0.05$. The results exhibits that good for economy ($\beta = 0.08, p < 0.05$), social role and image ($\beta = 0.09, p < 0.05$), value corruption ($\beta = 0.40, p < 0.05$) and product information ($\beta = 0.23, p < 0.05$) have a significant impact on attitude towards advertising. The developed model explains the influence of good for economy, social role and image, value corruption and product information on attitude towards advertising, which is also proven from the following regression equation: Attitude towards advertising = $0.67 + 0.12 * \text{Good For Economy} + 0.08 * \text{Social Role and Image} + 0.55 * \text{Value Corruption} + 0.27 * \text{Product Information} + 0.31$.

5. Conclusion

This research aimed to study the good for economy, social role and image, value corruption, and product information to predict attitude towards advertising of socially sensitive products in digital media. These determinants were first tested and, later replicated in many studies (Pollay, Mittal, 1993). In combination with other determinants, these factors have been studied to determine the consumers' attitude towards sports advertising (Pyun, James, 2011). Further, these factors were discussed in the context of Asian markets (Salam et al., 2018), later in the context of luxury brands (Chu et al., 2013), however, the factors good for economy, social role and image, value corruption and product information have rarely been empirically tested to be established as significant contributors in shaping attitude towards the advertisements of socially sensitive products in digital media.

The results of the Hypothesis Testing (see Table 7), suggested that the good for economy, social role and image, value corruption and product information positively influence attitude towards advertising of socially sensitive products in digital media. The available literature, discussing the advertising of socially sensitive products in digital media suggests that such advertising is considered to set the negative attitude towards the advertisement and advertised product (Huang, 2019) therefore it is important to identify the influencing factors along with their empirical evidence.

With the highest beta value, value corruption has emerged as the strongest predictor in determining attitude towards the advertisements of socially sensitive products, moreover, good for economy with lowest beta value emerged as the weakest determinants of attitude towards advertising of socially sensitive products in digital media. The overall explanatory power of the model is 56 %, where $F = (4,212) = 37.29$, $p < 0.05$, therefore it can be concluded the factors included in the model has the potential to shape attitude towards advertising of socially sensitive products by 56 %.

Implication

The overall study significantly contributes to the existing body of knowledge investigating attitude towards the advertisement of socially sensitive products in digital media. The insights derived from this study will help advertising professionals and communication experts to device impactful advertising and communication strategies to market socially sensitive products in digital media. The advertising professionals may give special attention to the factors i.e., good for economy, social role and image, value corruption, and product information while designing digital advertising campaigns of socially sensitive products.

Additionally, the academic scholars can further expand this area of inquiry by incorporating other factors in the model empirically tested in this study

Limitations and Future Research

Future research should incorporate other factors in the study. From the Asian advertising perspective, other factors like culture, social norms, and religious beliefs should be incorporated in

the conceptual model. Only a single contraceptive brand advertisement has been taken as a stimulus, future research should study the phenomenon with multiple categories and advertisements. Before empirical testing, future research is also suggested to incorporate qualitative study for getting better insights.

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