

## ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC PAPER

# Beliefs about the Influence on Attitudes of Turkish University Students toward Advertising through Sport

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## Abstract

This research study had two main goals; the first was to compare consumers' attitudes towards advertising in general and attitudes towards advertising through sport, while the second was to verify the association of beliefs about and attitudes towards advertising through sport. The data was collected from 173 randomly selected students (male: 75; female: 98) who attended Middle East Technical University in Ankara. The questionnaire contained eight socio-demographic items and 39 items that were related to attitudes and beliefs about advertising through sport. A factor analysis was carried out to select the most influential item of each construct, and a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used to compare attitudes toward advertising in general and advertising through sport, while the Optimal Scaling Method was used to discover whether beliefs about the influence of consumer's attitudes toward advertising through sport that have been more positive than their attitudes toward advertising in general. This analysis confirmed that consumers' attitudes towards advertising through sport were significantly more positive than advertising in general, while some beliefs (social role and image, hedonism/pleasure and annoyance/irritation) significantly influenced Turkish consumers' attitudes towards advertising through sport.

**Key words:** sport, advertising, beliefs, attitudes, Turkey

## Introduction

Based on extant literature, it is clear that it is not easy for advertising to thrive in heavily regulated industries such as finance, retail, education, pharmaceuticals etc. (Bjelica, Gardasevic, Vasiljevic & Popovic, 2016; Ling, Piew & Chai, 2010). From this reason, one of the crucial goals is to assess the determinants of consumers' attitudes towards advertising as this can help marketers to discover how various indicators affect consumers' preferences to achieve the goals of the enterprises concerned, such as promoting the enterprise and creating global brand awareness, as well as increasing the sales of certain products and services (Popovic, Jaksic, Matic, Bjelica & Maksimovic, 2015a). Therefore, it is beneficial to investigate its nature, mostly because advertising is an attractive promotional tool for marketers who can use it to strengthen commu-

nication with potential consumers who are persuaded to buy certain products or services. For this reason, the advertising has become one of the most important segments of contemporary life around the world (Ling et al., 2010); the first authors to research this area were Bauer and Greyser (1968) who quickly became aware of the fact that consumers' attitudes towards advertising reflect the behaviour of the target mass audience, which is associated with (un)favourable reactions regarding the content of the advertising messages. Lutz (1985) also concluded that the general attitudes towards advertising are a significant concept as it is one of the determinants of attitudes towards specific advertisements and it can influence the way consumers respond to any particular advertising (cited in Molnar, Lilic, Popovic, Akpinar & Jaksic, 2011). Consequently, it was evident that the consumers' attitudes towards ad-



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vertising are one of the significant factors that can strengthen its effectiveness, especially because consumers' cognitive abilities are contained in their feelings and thoughts (Mehta, 2000).

Analysing the relevant literature, it is clear that many articles on the topic of consumers' attitudes toward advertising exist; however, most of these studies dealt with the problem of general advertising (cited in Popovic et al., 2015a), which pointed to a negative trend in consumer attitudes during the 1960s and 1970s (Andrews, 1989; Muehling, 1987; Zanot, 1984). Nevertheless, some researchers received the opposite results, and they claimed that the trend was positive and criticized their colleagues who argued differently (Shavitt, Lowrey, & Haefner, 1998). They quickly concluded that both findings were correct and that the reason they received the opposite results lies in the fact that they used elements that differed considerably regarding consumers' attitudes towards advertising. Hence, some researchers believe that the elements of sport, such as athletes, teams, images of sporting events and sporting venues (Pyun, 2006) specifically affected consumers' attitudes and caused significant fluctuations in their attitudes in parallel to other elements, and they recognized sport as an independent advertising platform (Pyun, Kwon, Chon, & Wook, 2012). Accordingly, the authors believed that their companies could overcome the negative attitudes of consumers towards advertising through the use of sport motives, such as radio advertisements, television advertisements, online banners or magazine ads, largely because sport ensures a healthy image and a wide demographic profile from which any specific consumer segment could be targeted (Pitts, & Stotlar, 2007).

All data mentioned above raised the question of whether consumers' attitudes towards advertising through sport are more positive than their attitudes towards advertising through other mediums. Based on a theoretical framework created by Pyun and James (2011) and the fact that advertising through sport in Turkey is an unexplored area, this research study had two main goals: the first was to compare consumers' attitudes towards advertising in general and attitudes towards advertising through sport, because the authors have assumed that Turkish consumers have recognized sport to be an independent advertising platform; however, this had to be proven. Because the author believed that this hypothesis would be confirmed, the second goal was to verify the association among beliefs about and attitudes towards advertising through sport, as this issue has been totally neglected in Turkey; the author expected that enterprises would profit from the use of sport as an advertising medium and that the identification of specified beliefs influencing the positive attitudes would enhance advertising strategies.

**Methods**

The subjects that were asked to participate in the survey were

randomly selected students who attended Middle East Technical University in Ankara. Out of 174 questionnaires distributed, 173 usable questionnaires were returned (male: 75; female: 98) for a response rate of 99%, which represents an acceptable level.

The questionnaire was composed of three sections: 1) attitude toward advertising in general (three items) and attitude toward advertising through sport (three items), 2) belief factors about advertising through sport: product information (five items), social role/image (eight items), hedonic/pleasure (four items), annoyance/irritation (four items), good for the economy (four items), materialism (four items), and falsity/no sense (four items), and 3) and eight items capturing socio-demographic information. Therefore, the system of variables consists of 39 items, measured on a seven-point Likert scale anchored with 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree) as well as 1 (strongly dislike) and 7 (strongly like) regarding attitudes and beliefs about advertising through sport, and eight socio-demographic items that were modified from Pyun's (2006) original item to fit each relevant area. It is also necessary to highlight that all subjects were encouraged to interact with the interviewers and discuss each item if they felt they needed to. The subjects were informed that they are allowed to withdraw from participating in the survey at any time, and about the confidentiality of their responses. Because Middle East Technical University is a monolingual institution that requires a high level of English language proficiency, the author did not need to use the translation of original English versions of the scales, and the questionnaires were distributed in the English language.

The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 20.0). The factor analysis was carried out to select the most influential item of each construct, while the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used to compare consumers' attitudes towards advertising through sport with their attitudes towards advertising in general. Then, the Optimal Scaling Method was used and Categorical Regression Analysis employed to reveal the relationships between beliefs about product information, social role and image, hedonism/pleasure, annoyance/irritation, good for the economy, materialism and falsity/no sense, as well as attitudes towards advertising through sport.

**Results**

This section reports the results of the statistical analyses that have been examined in this study. First of all, the results of the factor analysis are presented, followed by the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test that was used because there were some statistically significant differences between the Gaussian curves and those of this study in the variables of two attitude constructs (Table 1). Finally, the results of the Optimal Scaling Method are reported.

**Table 1.** Kolmogorov-smirnov test among attitudes towards advertising through sport and advertising in general

	KS	p
Advertising through sport	.21	.00
Advertising in general	.17	.00

The factor analysis was used to take the best item of each construct. The data revealed in Table 2 reported the following beliefs about advertising through sport, such as product information (P3), social role and image (S2), hedonism/pleasure

(H3), annoyance/irritation (A2), good for the economy (G2), materialism (M1), falsity/no sense (F4), as well as attitude towards advertising through sport (AS2) and attitude towards advertising in general (AG2), to be the best item of each construct.

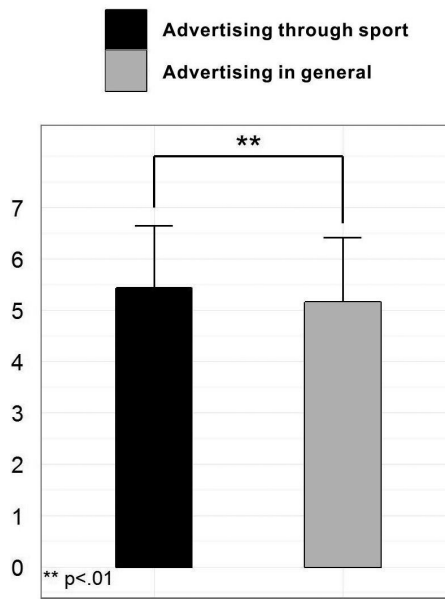
**Table 2.** The factor analysis among attitudes and beliefs about advertising through sport

Variable	#	Spearman's correlation matrix								Hotteling		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	H1	h <sup>2</sup>	%
Product information	P1	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00				.64	.42	57
	P2	.45	1.00	.00	.00	.00				.80	.64	
	P3	.49	.67	1.00	.00	.00				.87	.75	
	P4	.21	.34	.46	1.00	.00				.66	.43	
	P5	.34	.50	.58	.52	1.00				.79	.62	
Social role and image	S1	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.72	.52	57
	S2	.47	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.80	.64	
	S3	.54	.50	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.73	.54	
	S4	.44	.64	.48	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.78	.62	
	S5	.51	.52	.63	.51	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.77	.60	
	S6	.56	.49	.45	.52	.43	1.00	.00	.00	.72	.51	
	S7	.40	.60	.48	.56	.58	.41	1.00	.00	.76	.58	
	S8	.47	.56	.38	.55	.50	.49	.55	1.00	.75	.56	
Hedonism/pleasure	H1	1.00	.00	.00	.00					.71	.51	60
	H2	.48	1.00	.00	.00					.78	.61	
	H3	.43	.54	1.00	.00					.84	.71	
	H4	.36	.41	.61	1.00					.76	.58	
Annoyance/irritation	A1	1.00	.00	.00	.00					.74	.55	51
	A2	.46	1.00	.00	.00					.78	.61	
	A3	.34	.30	1.00	.00					.65	.42	
	A4	.27	.39	.26	1.00					.66	.43	
Good for the economy	G1	1.00	.00	.00	.03					.79	.63	55
	G2	.61	1.00	.00	.00					.88	.77	
	G3	.45	.60	1.00	.01					.80	.64	
	G4	-.17	-.23	-.20	1.00					-.41	.17	
Materialism	M1	1.00	.00	.00	.00					.77	.59	49
	M2	.39	1.00	.30	.00					.65	.42	
	M3	.30	.08	1.00	.00					.58	.34	
	M4	.39	.35	.34	1.00					.77	.59	
Falsity/no sense	F1	1.00	.17	.00	.00					.56	.31	53
	F2	.11	1.00	.00	.00					.65	.42	
	F3	.28	.38	1.00	.00					.81	.66	
	F4	.38	.42	.58	1.00					.85	.73	
Attitudes toward advertising in general	AG1	1.00	.00	.00						.88	.77	78
	AG2	.67	1.00	.00						.89	.79	
	AG3	.66	.69	1.00						.89	.78	
Attitudes toward advertising through sport	AS1	1.00	.00	.00						.88	.77	73
	AS2	.70	1.00	.00						.89	.79	
	AS3	.54	.56	1.00						.80	.65	

The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used to compare two attitude constructs, because the authors wanted to test the hypothesis of whether the Turkish university students showed significantly more positive attitudes toward advertising through sport than those toward advertising in general. The results of the descriptive statistics in Figure 1 revealed that the Turkish university students' overall attitudes towards advertising through sport (Mean=5.26±1.07)

were favourable, as well as their overall attitudes towards advertising in general (Mean=5.06±1.17).

However, the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, which is also included in Figure 1, supported the author's hypothesis and revealed that the consumers' attitudes toward advertising through sport in Turkey are significantly more positive than advertising in general ( $p < 0.01$ ).



**Figure 1.** Wilcoxon signed ranks test among attitudes towards advertising through sport and advertising in general

Using an Optimal Scaling Method, the seven hypotheses were tested. The statistical analysis indicated in Table 3 that three of the maximum seven belief constructs (social role and image ( $\beta=.09$ ), hedonism/pleasure ( $\beta=.09$ ) and annoyance/irritation ( $\beta=-.60$ ) significantly influenced attitudes towards

advertising through sport, while product information ( $\beta=-.12$ ), good for the economy ( $\beta=-.01$ ), materialism ( $\beta=-.07$ ) and falsity/no sense ( $\beta=-.24$ ) did not. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2=.70$ ) indicated that 70% of the total variance of the attitude construct was explained by the seven belief constructs.

**Table 3.** Optimal scaling method among attitudes towards advertising through sport and beliefs about it

Variable	$\beta$	p
Product information	.12	.41
Social role and image	.09	.00
Hedonism/pleasure	.09	.00
Annoyance/irritation	-.60	.05
Good for the economy	.01	.72
Materialism	.07	.59
Falsity/no sense	-.24	.57
R		.83
P		.00
%		.70

**Discussion**

When discussing advertising through sport, it is very difficult to create frameworks that would be limited to a single research study, because there are a large number of research questions and factors that could have a significant impact on the conclusions that researchers make in this field, which is incorporated in every segment of contemporary life. For this reason, the author of this study clearly defined the research questions, in the most concrete sense, in order to be able to test his assumptions more successfully (i.e., to give more precise answers to the research questions). Thus, in this study, the author was initially researching whether there is a significant difference in the attitudes of consumers toward advertising through sport and advertising in general. Since the author was quite convinced that he would find differences in consumers' attitudes that are in favour of advertising through sport, he asked another research question. The author wanted to determine the relationship of a particular consumers' belief constructions, which are based on the theoretical framework of

Pyun and James (2011) and attitudes towards advertising through sport or to determine which beliefs might significantly influence the attitude of Turkish consumers towards advertising through sport.

In line with the previous paragraph, the author began with the assumption that consumers' attitudes towards advertising through sport are significantly more positive than their attitudes towards advertising in general, which was confirmed by empirical analysis; the findings of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test have confirmed the assumption that consumers attitudes toward advertising through sport were statistically significantly more positive than attitudes toward advertising in general. As mentioned, the author was quite convinced that he would receive such results, which are in accordance with previous research carried out in other countries (Muratovic, Bjelica & Popovic, 2014; Mittal, 1994; Schlosser, Shavitt, & Kanfer, 1999; Popovic et al., 2015a; Pyun et al., 2012). However, this research question had to be verified, since the available literature also includes studies that had unexpected conclusions, that is,

results that were not consistent with the assumptions, which were based on many citations in the available literature (Popovic et al., 2015a). Therefore, in Turkey, the results obtained are congruent with the general idea that advertising through sport is a much more attractive promotional tool for acquiring potential consumers who should decide on a particular product or service and that in the best way it strengthens quality communication between business organizations and potential consumers (Popovic & Milasinovic, 2016).

Nevertheless, there are facts that are very noticeable in the work of various authors who deal with this issue: the examination of attitudes towards advertising in general, the existence of negative trends, and that potential consumers do not feel comfortable with traditional advertising messages (Andrews, 1989; Muehling, 1987; Zanot, 1984). However, regarding advertising in general in Turkey, it is interesting to point out that potential Turkish university students did not show negative attitudes; instead, it was positive, but not as much as it was positive towards advertising through sports, which was significantly more positive in the test sample. Therefore, various elements in the field of sport, such as athletes (Cristiano Ronaldo, Tiger Woods, Novak Djokovic, etc.) teams (Real Madrid, Bayern, Maccabi, Fenerbahçe, etc.), photos and videos from various sports events (FIFA World Cup, Olympic Games, Super Bowl, Wimbledon, Tour De France, etc.) and famous sports facilities (Beijing National Stadium, Allianz Arena, Kaohsiung National Stadium, etc.) have significantly affected the reduction of negative consumer reactions when they come into contact with traditional advertising messages, and it strengthened their attitudes towards advertising through sports. As such, the results of this research have a special value, especially because they will give specific guidelines to business entities regarding how to use elements of sports in their advertising campaigns, thus stimulating the development of their business ventures through sport as an independent platform for advertising their products or services. As has been unequivocally established from the above-mentioned (that the views of Turkish university students towards advertising through sport are significantly more positive than their attitudes towards advertising in general), this research continued with the testing of assumptions related to the second research question, i.e., the determination of the relationship between certain consumers' belief constructions, based on Pyun and James's (2011) theoretical framework, and attitudes towards advertising through sport. Attempts were made to identify specific beliefs about that have a significant impact on attitudes towards advertising through sport, mostly because their identification would lead to concrete knowledge that would enable business entities to prepare their advertising strategies in the best way, including reducing costs.

In the study itself, as has been mentioned several times, Pyun and James's (2011) theoretical framework was used, based on already constructed consumer beliefs that were reflected in product information, social roles and image, hedonism/pleasure, annoyance/irritation, good for the economy, materialism and falsity/no sense, as well as attitudes towards advertising through sport. However, this study is only a case study and might not represent a complete population, since the sample was compiled exclusively from university students who represent only one of the socio-demographic categories that should be explored. If the results obtained in this research are compared with the results obtained in Montenegro (Advertising through Sport=5.44±1.39; Advertising in General=5.26±1.51) and Ser-

bia (Advertising through Sport=5.39±1.84; Advertising in General=4.89±1.68), it is interesting to note that the results are almost in agreement when attitudes towards advertising through sport are concerned, that is, the most prominent attitudes of the Montenegrins, while they are less positive for the Serbians, while the Turks have the least positive attitudes (Muratovic et al., 2014; Popovic et al., 2015a) within this comparison.

In contrast, when attitudes toward advertising in general were in question, the situation is only slightly different. Although all three surveyed populations have positive attitudes toward advertising in general, Montenegrins are again distinctly positive, while this time Serbians showed less positive attitudes than the Turks. It is noteworthy that matching results can be found in research outside Europe, among university students in Singapore and the United States (Pyun & James, 2009, 2011; Pyun et al., 2012).

In contrast, when testing assumptions related to the relationship of intentionally constructed beliefs about and attitudes towards advertising through sport, it is interesting that the results are not approximately in agreement, as is the case with the first research question. This was also expected by the author of this research, and it is interesting that it was determined that beliefs about advertising through sport among Serbian consumers (Popovic et al., 2015a) can significantly influence attitudes towards advertising through sport in only one of the defined categories (Product Information) while in the case of Montenegrin consumers (Muratovic et al., 2014) is completely different: it was determined that most of the defined categories of beliefs about can significantly influence the consumers' attitude towards advertising through sport (product information, social role and image, hedonism/pleasure, annoyance/irritation, good for the economy and falsity/no sense); only the category defined as "materialism" was indicated as a significant factor that influences attitudes.

Outside of Europe, studies conducted in Singapore (Pyun et al., 2012) and the United States (Pyun, 2006) have found that beliefs about can significantly influence attitudes towards advertising through sport in two categories of beliefs (Product information and Hedonism/pleasure). Hence, the results of this research are not consistent with the results obtained in Serbia or in Montenegro, but three beliefs about advertising through sport (Social role and image, Hedonism/pleasure, Annoyance/irritation) have been identified, which can significantly influence consumers' attitude towards advertising through sport. Therefore, it is not difficult to conclude that it is necessary to define specific strategies in each of the countries, since the relation of beliefs about and attitudes towards advertising through sport varies from country to country, and the results from one country cannot be taken as guidelines for interventions in others. It is, therefore, necessary to initiate research in other countries, as an unequivocal need in business policy when advertising through sport.

When the differences in results reflecting the impact of beliefs about attitudes towards advertising through sport are concerned, several potential responses could resolve established variations among different countries. Primarily, we should start from the fact that sport can attract potential consumers based on their specific motives that are associated with the success of their favourite athletes, sports clubs, and national federations (Copeland, Frisby, & McCarville, 1996), and the motives that appear in such situations can be created through exciting experiences permeated by strong emotional feelings



associated (Micoogullari, 2017) with the success of their favourite individuals or teams. All the three mentioned European countries (Serbia, Montenegro, and Turkey) have had outstanding sport results in the past decade, both on the individual and the team levels, so it is very logical that the reason for very positive attitudes towards advertising through sport could lie in the fact that potential consumers are strongly identified with their sports heroes, and all advertising activities that involve any connection with them leads to a more positive attitude towards advertised products or services.

According to all of the above, this study represents an excellent basis for creating new advertising campaigns and strategies related to the acquisition of potential consumers in all spheres of modern industries in Turkey, as well as a cornerstone for further research in the field of advertising, and the relationship between beliefs about and attitudes towards advertising through sport. It is important to point out that marketers will make a profit for their companies if they decide that advertising campaigns should contain elements such as social roles and image, hedonism/pleasure and annoyance/irritation.

However, even though this research is an original contribution, reflected in the knowledge that the marketers will use, it still has significant limitations; first of all, the sample of respondents in this study reflects the views of university students in the area of central Turkey, and other socio-demographic categories should be included in further research. It would be advisable to carry out a national survey that would give clear results on the level of the whole country, as was the case in a study conducted by Popovic et al. (2015a) in Montenegro. Given the fact that significantly various results are obtained with Pyun and James's (2011) theoretical framework guidelines, it would be very meaningful to consider defining a new theoretical framework, or to include other beliefs about advertising through sport, such as informative, credibility, claim believability, drama, value corruption, aesthetics, entertainment, commercialism, and sex appeal in the existing theoretical framework (Ashill & Yavas, 2005; Barrio & Luque, 2003; D'Souza & Taghian, 2005; Korgaonkar, Silverblan, & O'Leary, 2001; Pyun et al., 2012; Tsang, Ho, & Liang, 2004; Wang, Sun, Lei, & Toncar, 2009; Wang, Zhang, Choi, & D'Eredita, 2002), since these authors proved to be potentially significant predictors in their studies. However, we should bear in mind that the current study explained 70% of the variance; only 30% of attitude construct is unexplained, which was not the case in the research in Montenegro ( $r^2=48.7$ ), Serbia ( $r^2=77$ ), Singapore ( $r^2=43$ ) and the United States ( $r^2=56.9$ ), where the coefficient of determination was considerably lower in Montenegro, and higher in Serbia. This fact indicates the necessity of creating separate theoretical frameworks for each nation, in order to obtain clearly defined beliefs constructs which would explain the higher percentage of the target variance. In addition, based on some previous research (Masanovic, 2018; Milosevic, Bjelica, & Masanovic, 2019; Popovic, Matic, Milasinovic, Jaksic, & Bjelica, 2015b), the author also suggests further researching attitudes toward advertising through sport within various socio-demographic categories, primarily because this might be the main reason for the national differences obtained.

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#### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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