

Antecedents of Attitude towards Advertising of Controversial Products in Digital Media

Safeena Yaseen¹

Bahria University, Karachi, Pakistan

Syed Amir Saeed

Institute of Business Management, Karachi, Pakistan

Muhammad Ibtesam Mazahir

Bahria University, Karachi, Pakistan

Sara Chinnasamy

University Technology Mara, Malaysia

Abstract

The promotion of controversial products on digital media has become a challenge for marketers as consumers of different ethnicities and cultures access web media. Therefore, the study has examined the impact of advertising's antecedents on consumers' attitude and their effect on purchase intentions. The study has also considered the mediating roles of attitude towards purchase intentions. The population for this study comprises of adult female digital media users. We collected data from 377 female respondents via the online survey method. The results suggest that hedonic value, falsity, and materialism directly impact attitude towards the advertising of controversial products. Further, hedonic value and materialism also affect purchase intentions. We also found that advertising attitude mediates the relationship between hedonic value, falsity, materialism, and purchase intentions. The study's empirical results will help design appropriate marketing strategies, especially in the context of controversial products. Future research may extend the model by incorporating other factors and testing their efficacy in different regions and cultures.

Keywords: *Attitude towards advertising, hedonic value, falsity, materialism, purchase intentions, digital advertising, controversial products.*

¹Corresponding Author: Safeena Yaseen; Email: safeena.yaseen@hotmail.com

Introduction

Digital advertising refers to the distribution of advertising content by identified sponsors in interactive digital platforms (Kulkarni et al., 2019). Some of the factors that have contributed to digital media's popularity are technology, globalization, and consumers' increased use of social media. Thus, social media has become a strategic advertising medium for firms all over the world. However, this advertising medium has brought both opportunities and challenges for marketers. On the one hand, advertising on social media has a huge reach, and its cost is far less than the conventional medium. On the other hand, it has become extremely difficult for marketers to measure consumers' attitudes towards advertisements, especially considering the global diversity of social media users (Frith & Mueller, 2010). Like conventional advertising, social media advertisements have a few inherent issues. For example, the promotion of controversial products in digital media is more challenging because of its global reach (Huang, 2019; Waller et al., 2005)

Controversial advertising messages usually offend consumers and are contrary to their core values. Provocative messages and obscene visual images come in this category (Waller, 2004). Promoting controversial products is also morally challenging (Moraes & Michaelidou, 2017). Waller (2004) believes that advertising gender related products, including feminine hygiene, family planning-related products, also come in the category of controversial advertising. Such advertisements stimulate negative attitudes.

Attitude is an individuals' mindset towards a product or a person. It is enduring and does not change frequently (Aaker et al., 2001). The concept of attitude has often been discussed in the marketing literature (De Pauw et al., 2018; Oumlil & Balloun, 2019; Wiese & Akareem, 2020). Research on attitude suggests that it is a critical precursor to individual behavior. Thus, consumers' positive attitude towards a product leads toward its purchase intentions (Jalees, 2014; Zaman et al., 2018).

In collective societies such as Pakistan, the promotion of feminine hygiene products is considered controversial, and they stimulate negative behavior towards such advertisements (Taimoor & Hameed, 2019). Multinational companies usually promote controversial products through digital marketing, which might not be an issue in western countries, but remain controversial in Southeast Asia. Therefore, it has become essential for academicians and advertising professionals to identify the determinants of controversial advertising products in digital marketing based on empirical evidence. The empirical results of the study may help marketers to develop suitable digital marketing strategies for such products.

Literature Review & Hypothesis Development

Hedonic Messages and Attitude towards Advertising

Hedonic messages are a critical precursor to both positive and negative attitudes. It refers to an individuals' reaction to a product or message, which also depends on consumers' cultural values. Thus, some consumers might negatively respond to a message, while others may find it amusing and entertaining. Individuals' reactions to advertising messages also depend on their content, including aesthetic visuals, auditory recall, or printed essentials (Ting et al., 2015). Because of their design and aesthetic appeal, hedonic advertisements stimulate positive consumer emotions (Bauer et al., 1968).

Thus, an attractive advertisement not only entertains consumers but also captures their attention (Petrovici & Marinov, 2007). Unlike conventional advertising mediums, media advertising is more interactive. Therefore, researchers believe, it should be more aesthetic, sentimental, and entertaining (Wolin et al., 2002). Similarly, many researchers have also endorsed that media advertisements with an aesthetic appeal attract consumers and promote a favorable attitude (Eze & Lee, 2012).

Past studies have also endorsed that an advertisement is a source of entertainment and pleasure for many consumers. Advertisements help promote a positive attitude towards a product or service (Alwitt and Prabhaker, 1992; Pollay & Mittal, 1993; Eze & Lee, 2012). On the contrary, irritation is a factor in which consumers develop a negative attitude towards media advertising. However, researchers believe that if the advertisement is attractive and unique, it might reduce consumers' irrational factors and stimulate a positive attitude (Saadeghvaziri et al., 2013).

Furthermore, if advertisers do not change their websites frequently, they may not be attractive to consumers. Consumers want novelty. Thus, firms should often change the website design to maintain a sustainable association with consumers (Chew & Abdul-Adis, 2018). A novelty in advertising content makes it more pleasant and captures consumers' attention. The newness in an advertisement is essential, especially for hedonic consumers. Thus, when marketers incorporate uniqueness in an advertisement, it promotes positive beliefs and attitudes (Chew & Abdul Adis, 2018).

H1: Hedonic messages have an impact on the attitude towards the advertising of controversial products.

Falsity and Attitude towards Advertising

Falsity in advertising negatively affects consumers' attitudes towards advertised products. It creates a contradiction between fiction and reality (Russo et al., 1981). Advertisements that are deceptive, untrue, and irrational belong in this category (Pollay & Mittal, 1993). Most ads contain information about products and services, which helps consumers in their buying process. But all advertisements are not rational. A bulk of them are confusing and have social consequences (Pollay & Mittal, 1993). Alwitt and Prabbaker (1992) believe that a misleading and manipulative advertisement stimulates a negative attitude and has other unfavorable outcomes (Alwitt & Prabhaker, 1992). Wolin et al. (2002) believe that web advertisements that claim magical results challenge consumers' intelligence and negatively influence their buying behavior (Wolin et al., 2002).

Muratović et al. (2014) argue that falsity in sports-related ads is more common than other advertised products. Thus, they recommend that sports enterprises address this issue to enhance their advertisements' effectiveness. Consumers are now able to identify the falsity in advertisements. Therefore, they condemn such advertisements and develop a negative attitude towards them, which in the long run adversely affects the reputation of the brand (Ting et al., 2015; Alwitt & Prabhaker, 1992). In multi-ethnic cultures, advertisers face a dilemma. Often, advertisements might be compatible with one ethnic group's cultural values but may be unsuitable for another ethnic group. Many past studies have found that advertisers face this dilemma in countries like Malaysia, where Chinese and Malaysian values are significantly different (Ting et al., 2015).

H2: Falsity in advertisements negatively impact consumers' attitude towards advertising of controversial products.

Materialism and Attitude towards Advertising

Pollay and Mittal (1993) refer to materialism as an attitude where consumers believe that worldly goods are a major source of comfort and satisfaction in life. Consumers, due to technological advancement, get more exposure to products and services available globally. Thus, they spend more time on the web searching for goods and services. Many researchers have criticized advertisements as they promote excessive buying and materialistic values, which is considered harmful to society (Sabah, 2017). Many studies have documented a positive association between materialism and attitude towards advertising (Singh & Sahni 2019). For example, Yoon (1995) found that materialistic values promote a positive attitude towards advertisements. He also believes that materialism has a causal impact on advertising, while advertising helps materialistic values. Many researchers believe that materialistic tendencies in an individual are enduring. Therefore,

they get inspired by advertising (Othman, Ali & Ismael, 2020; Osmonbekov, Gregory, Brown, & Xie, 2009). Bhatia (2018) believes that materialistic individuals spend more time viewing advertisements as they focus on finding new products for purchase.

Mandliya et al. (2020) have studied materialism and attitude towards the advertising of sustainable products. The study concluded that consumers' selection of durable products is dependent on the degree of materialism and other factors, i.e., attitude towards materialism, sustainability, and environmental advertising. Further, Wolin et al. (2002) have observed that materialistic products promoted through websites attract consumers' attention and stimulate greed.

H3: Materialism has an impact on attitude towards the advertising of controversial products

Hedonic Values and Purchase Intentions

Hedonic consumers enjoy spending their time in conventional and online shopping. They derive pleasure by just watching goods and services available on websites (Sabah, 2017; Hüttl-Maack, 2018). Generally, their intentions are not to purchase products available on social media. But many researchers believe that the proximity of goods and the experience of websites inspire them to buy (Russell et al., 2017). Similarly, Gan & Wang (2017) believe that hedonic consumers spend time on websites searching for bargains, which stimulates positive emotional feelings in them. Consequently, these factors inspire hedonic consumers to develop a positive attitude towards purchase intentions (Hüttl-Maack et al., 2018). Moreover, experiential shopping, a critical facet of hedonic value, also promotes favorable purchase intentions (Anderson et al., 2014; Chew & Adis, 2018). Hedonic value (i.e., enjoyment and pleasure) in the context of social media is non-functional. Nevertheless, hedonic value causes emotional benefits. These irrational values are a significant precursor of purchase intentions (Gan & Wang, 2017).

H4: Hedonic values stimulate favorable purchase intentions.

Materialism and Purchase Intentions

Materialism is a critical facet of consumer buying behavior. Materialistic consumers derive happiness by possessing and displaying material goods (Ting, Goh, & Isa, 2016). They believe that worldly goods are a source of joy due to which materialistic individuals have a favorable attitude towards buying (Davidson, Nepomuceno & Laroche, 2019). Materialistic individuals have higher purchase intentions towards prestigious brands as they would help them associate with the elite class (Singh & Sahni, 2019; Xi & Cheng, 2017). Consumers learn materialistic values from family, friends, and social media. Many studies have documented that young adolescents who spend more time on social media develop materialistic values, leads to high purchase intentions (Kalyoncuoglu &

Sahin, 2017).

H5: Materialism has an impact on purchase intentions.

Attitude towards Advertising and Purchase Intentions

Attitude is one of the frequently studied concepts in advertising research. It refers to an individual's mental state towards a person or an object (Aaker et al., 2001). It also reflects an individual's pre-learned disposition that is sustainable and enduring (Fishbein, 1967). Purchase intention, on the other hand, is an individual's intention to purchase a good or service in the future. Consumers who have a positive attitude towards a product generally want to buy it (Blackwell et al., 2006; Ting, Chuah, Cheah, Ali & Yacob, 2015).

Kaushal and Kumar (2016) investigated the relationship between attitude towards advertising and purchase intentions of smartphones. The study found that consumers who had a positive attitude towards smartphones also showed a high inclination to buy it. Thus, the study concluded that advertising is a critical aspect that motivates consumers to buy a product. Consumers' favorable purchase intentions depend on their attitude and subjective norms. Subjective norms directly associate and intervene (through attitudes) with purchase intentions (Paul & Bhakar, 2018). Given this association, marketers promote a product to target a selected group of consumers. Christofi et al. (2018) believe that cause-related marketing is a critical strategy for changing consumers' behavior towards a brand. Thus, marketers can use this strategy for making their advertisements more appealing and promoting purchase intentions.

H6: Attitude towards the advertising of controversial products stimulates purchase intentions.

Indirect Hypotheses

In addition to the direct hypotheses discussed in the earlier section, we also have proposed three indirect hypotheses, whose literature support is presented in the following sections. Web advertisements are creative not only attract consumers, but they also make their experience pleasant and enjoyable (Saadeghvaziri et al., 2013). On the other hand, hedonic consumers also enjoy searching for deals available on the web (Aziz & Ariffin, 2010). Thus, the alignment between the needs of hedonic consumers and creative web design has a favorable impact on attitude towards advertising (Aziz & Ariffin, 2010).

Many studies have documented that consumers' positive attitude towards

advertisements stimulates favorable purchase intentions (Wirtz, Sparks & Zimbres, 2018). Additionally, Patel, Gadhavi and Shukla (2017) believe that peers and family members indirectly affect purchase intention. Jalees and Ernest (2013) based on extensive literature review, have concluded that the relationship between attitude towards purchase intention is universal, which means that this relationship does not change from one culture and product category to another.

Falsity is a contradiction between advertisements and reality. Additionally, deceptive advertisements also fall into this category. Many studies have found a negative association between falsity and attitude towards advertisements. Most consumers are well equipped to identify such advertisements due to which they develop a negative attitude towards brands endorsed by them.

Materialism is a tendency that assumes that possession of materialistic goods is a major source of comfort and wellbeing. Davidson, Nepomuceno and Laroche (2019), Singh & Sahni (2019), and many others have concluded that materialism promotes a favorable attitude towards advertisements. A few studies also found the young adults who spend more time on the internet and television are more vulnerable to materialistic values and have favorable purchase intentions (Osmonbekov, Gregory, Brown & Xie, 2009). Based on the above-cited literature, we argue that:

H7: Attitude towards the advertising of controversial products mediates the relationship between hedonic value and purchase intentions.

H8: Attitude towards the advertising of controversial products mediates the relationship between falsity and purchase intentions.

H9: Attitude towards the advertising of controversial products mediates the relationship between materialism and purchase intentions.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical discussion, we have developed a model in Figure 1, which has six direct relationships and three indirect relationships.

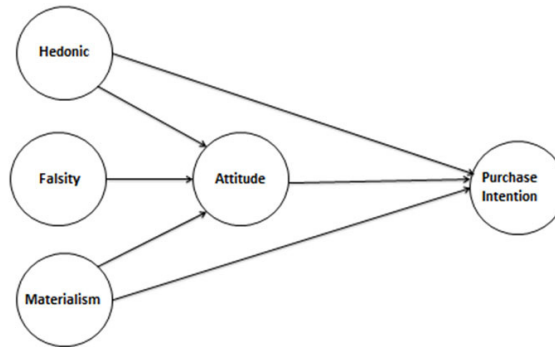


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Population and Sample Size

The target population for this study was female digital media users. We have used a sample size of 377, which we calculated at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. The authors have used a non-random sampling technique for collecting the data. The questionnaire used for collecting the data also had a print advertisement of feminine hygiene products as an annexure. The respondents' profiles are as follows. Of all the respondents, 35% were single, and 65% were married. 30% of respondents were in the age strata of 18 to 28; 25% of respondents' age ranged from 25 to 35 years, 30% of respondents were in the age group of 35 to 45 years. The remaining 35% of respondents were 45 years of age or older. Most of the respondents (55%) were from the middle-income group, 35% were from the lower-income group, and the remaining 10% were from the higher income group. About 50% of respondents had an intermediate level education, 35% had a bachelor's degree, and the remaining 15% had a Master's degree.

Survey Instrument

The questionnaire used in the study has five latent variables and 18 indicator variables. Table 1 shows the sources and other details about the constructs used in the study. All the adapted constructs had Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.65 in earlier studies, which is considered acceptable in marketing research (Ursachi et al., 2015). We measured the responses on a five-point Likert Scale where one represents Strongly Agree, and five represents Strongly Disagree. The constructs of the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Constructs

Construct	No of Items	Author
Hedonic Value	3	(Pollay & Mittal, 1993)
Falsity	3	(Pollay & Mittal, 1993)
Materialism	3	(Pollay & Mittal, 1993)
Attitude	4	(Le & Nguyen, 2014)
Purchase Intentions	5	(Dodds et al., 1991)

Results

Descriptive Statistics

We have presented the results related to the descriptive statistics in Table 1. The descriptive statistics examine the internal consistency and univariate normality of the constructs.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
Hedonic value	0.693	3.356	0.982	-0.391	-0.172
Falsity	0.669	3.446	1.027	-0.261	-0.496
Materialism	0.678	3.038	0.909	0.101	-0.338
Attitude	0.687	3.020	0.904	0.035	-0.352
Purchase Intentions	0.758	3.134	0.810	-0.216	-0.065

The results show that the Kurtosis (KR) values range from -0.065 to -0.496. It is the highest for the construct falsity (KR=-0.496, Mean= 3.446, SD= 1.027), and the lowest for the construct purchase intentions (KR=-0.065, Mean=3.134, SD=0.810). Similarly the highest skewness (SK) value is for the construct hedonic (SK= -0.391, Mean= 3.356, SD=0.982), and the lowest is for the construct attitude (-SK= 0.219, Mean =3.134, SD=0.810). The results suggest that the construct used in the study have univariate normality.

Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.669 to 0.758. It is the highest for purchase intentions (α =0.758, Mean= 3.134, SD=0.810) and the lowest for falsity (α =0.669, Mean= 3.446, SD=1.027). The results suggest that the variables used in the study have internal consistency.

Reliability Analysis

The summary of the results exhibited in Table 3 shows the reliability of constructs.

Table 3: Reliability Analysis

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Standardized Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Standard Deviation
Hedonic Value	0.693	0.699	3.356	0.982
Falsity	0.669	0.663	3.446	1.027
Materialism	0.678	0.688	3.038	0.909
Attitude	0.687	0.686	3.020	0.904
Purchase Intentions	0.758	0.757	3.134	0.810

The results show that Cronbach's alpha values range between ($\alpha = 0.66$ to $\alpha = 0.75$). Falsity has the lowest reliability ($\alpha = 0.66$, Mean=3.44, SD=1.02), while purchase intentions ($\alpha = 0.75$, Mean=3.13, SD=0.81) has the highest reliability. Since all the Cronbach's Alpha values are greater than 0.65, therefore, we believe that the adopted constructs have adequate reliability (Ursachi et al., 2015).

Convergent Validity

We have ascertained the convergent validity to examine the theoretical association between latent variables and their indicator variables. Table 4 summarizes the results related to the convergence of the data set.

Table 4: Convergent Validity

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Explained
Hedonic Value	3.356	0.982	0.83	0.63
Falsity	3.446	1.027	0.81	0.58
Materialism	3.038	0.909	0.79	0.56
Attitude	3.020	0.904	0.81	0.51
Purchase Intention	3.134	0.810	0.84	0.50

The results shows that the highest AVE is for hedonic value (AVE=0.63, Mean=3.356, SD=0.982) and the lowest is for attitude (AVE=0.51, Mean= 3.020, SD=0.904). Similarly, the highest composite reliability is for purchase intentions (AVE= 0.84, Mean= 3.134, SD= 0.810).

The results also indicate that the highest composite reliability is for purchase intentions (CR=0.84, Mean= 3.134, SD=0.810), and the lowest is for materialism (CR=0.79, Mean=3.038, SD=0.909). The variance explained is at least 0.40, and composite reliability is at least 0.70; therefore, we have inferred that the theoretical relationships between latent and their indicator variables exist (Kline, 2015).

Discriminant Validity

We have examined the “distinctiveness and uniqueness of the constructs” based on Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion. Table 5 exhibits the summarized results.

Table 5: Discriminant Validity

Constructs	Hedonic Value	Falsity	Materialism	Attitude	Purchase Intentions
Hedonic Value	0.760				
Falsity	-0.183	0.793			
Materialism	-0.366	0.493	0.748		
Attitude	-0.469	0.466	0.611	0.714	
Purchase Intentions	-0.317	0.607	0.632	0.471	0.712

The results show that the square root of variance explained for the construct falsity is 0.793, and lowest for the construct purchase intentions (i.e., 0.714). As the “Pearson Correlation values are less than the square root of AVE,” we conclude that all the latent variables are “distinctive and unique.”

Results

The study has proposed nine hypotheses, including three indirect hypotheses. These hypotheses were empirically tested using Smart PLS. Table 6 shows the summary of results, while Figures 2 and 3 show measurement and structural models.

Table 6: Statistical Results from SEM

		B	T Stat.	P Values	Results
H1	Hedonic value -> Attitude	0.22	4.25	0	Accepted
H2	Falsity -> Attitude	-0.29	4.92	0	Accepted
H3	Materialism -> Attitude	0.42	7.14	0	Accepted
H4	Hedonic value -> Purchase Intentions	0.39	6.89	0	Accepted
H5	Materialism -> Purchase Intentions	0.41	7.46	0	Accepted
H6	Attitude -> Purchase Intentions	0.01	0.1	0.92	Rejected
H7	Hedonic value -> Attitude -> Purchase Intentions	0.11	3.57	0	Accepted
H8	Falsity -> Attitude -> Purchase Intentions	-0.15	5.26	0	Accepted
H9	Materialism -> Attitude -> Purchase Intentions	0.21	4.86	0	Accepted

Our results support all the direct hypotheses except hypothesis six, which is “the association between attitude and purchase intentions.” In the context of indirect hypotheses, we found support for all the three mediating relationships.

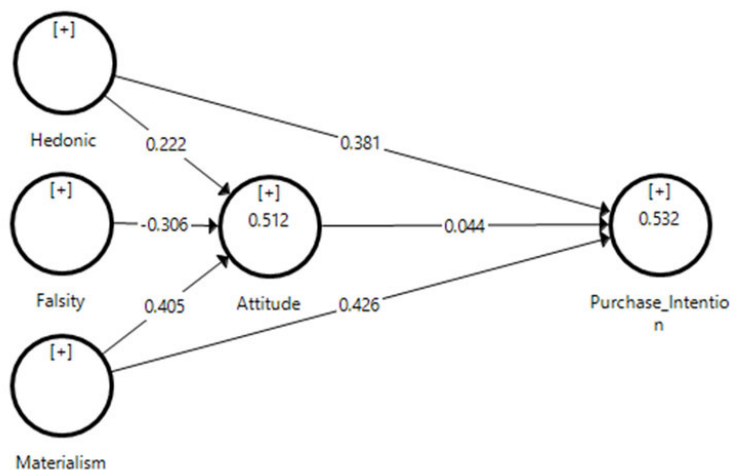


Figure 2: Measurement Model

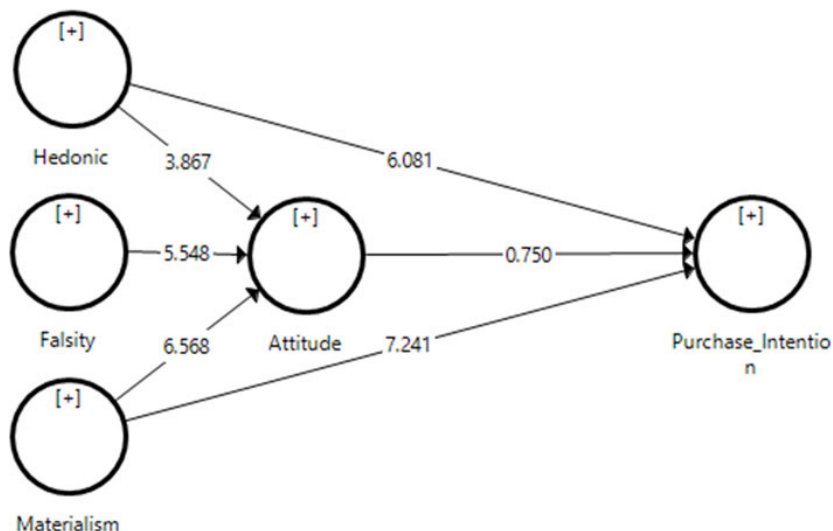


Figure 3: Structural Model

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

This study has developed and empirically tested nine hypotheses, including three indirect hypotheses. Of the six direct hypotheses, our results did not support one direct hypothesis. However, we found support for all the three mediating relationships. The following sections discuss the effects of the premises and their relevance with earlier empirical studies.

Hypothesis 1 was based on the “positive effect of hedonic values on attitude towards advertising. We found support for this hypothesis. This finding is consistent with Wiese & Akareem (2020) conclusions, who also found that hedonic values promote a favorable attitude towards advertising. Wang et al. (2009) believe that advertisers should balance the content and make the advertisement memorable and enjoyable. Wiese & Akraeem (2020) suggest that consumers’ attitude depends on their beliefs and perceptions. Therefore, they suggest that marketers should not use hedonic attributes in mass marketing advertisements. Instead, they should use it in customized marketing messages (Wiese & Akareem, 2020).

Hypothesis 2 states that “falsity and attitude towards advertising have an association.” We found support for this hypothesis. Azeem & Haq (2012) believe that falsity is the negative attribute of advertisement. Therefore, it promotes a negative attitude towards the advertisement. When watching an irrational or misleading ad, consumers develop a negative attitude towards the advertised product (Pollay & Mittal, 1993). On the contrary, Tan and Chia (2007) found a positive association between falsity and consumers’ attitude towards the advertisement. However, a few researchers believe that marketers should make advertisements in a manner they appear rational and credible to consumers.

Hypothesis 3 states that “materialism and attitude are associated.” This hypothesis was accepted. Literature supports the positive relationship “between materialism and attitude towards advertising.” Richins & Dawson (1992) and Segev et al. (2015) believe that advertising promotes materialistic values, which adversely affects individuals and society. Similarly, Yoon (1995) also found empirical evidence suggesting that worldly individuals have more favorable attitudes towards advertisements than non-materialistic individuals. Contrarily, Boateng and Okoe (2015) found a “negative relationship between materialism and attitude towards social media advertising.”

Hypothesis 4 postulates that “materialism and attitude towards advertising and purchase intentions are associated” and supported by our results. This finding is

consistent with many studies that found a “positive relationship between hedonic values and purchase intentions” (Xu et al., 2015; Hsu & Lin, 2016; Gan & Wang, 2017). Xu et al. (2015) suggest that consumers who enjoy shopping and consider it a pleasant experience tend to have positive purchase intentions (Xu et al., 2015).

Hypothesis 5 states that materialism and attitude towards advertising are positively associated”. We found support for the hypothesis. This finding is consistent with other studies that also found a “positive relationship between materialistic values and consumers purchase intentions” (Eze & Lee, 2012; Segev et al., 2015; Nguyen et al., 2019). Materialistic consumers believe that goods are a source of happiness and wellbeing. Therefore, they have a favorable attitude towards them.

Hypothesis 6 states that “attitude towards advertising positively affects purchase intentions.” The study’s results do not support this hypothesis. The result is inconsistent with previous empirical research (Young et al., 2009; Zhu, 2012; Mandliya et al., 2020). However, it is surprising, as well. The possible reason could be the nature of the product category used in the study (i.e., feminine hygiene products) may have contributed to this result. Dolan et al. (2020) believe that feminine hygiene products are need-based products, and factors such as affordability are important aspects. Despite knowing the value of feminine sanitary products, many females in developing countries like Pakistan still use old clothes and towels as substitutes.

Hypothesis 7 states that “attitude towards the advertising of controversial products mediates the relationship between hedonic and purchase intentions.” The results support this hypothesis. Hedonist online shoppers enhance their pleasant shopping experience by interacting with other users of websites. The shopping for such persons promotes a pleasant experience and sensory emotions (Delafruez et al. 2011). Thus, advertisements’ attitude has a mediating impact on purchase intentions (Saadeghvaziri et al., 2013). The study’s finding is consistent with many past empirical studies, which also found that attitude mediates hedonic values and purchase intentions (Ting et al., 2015; Moon et al., 2017). Similarly, Delafruez et al., (2011) also found that both hedonic and utilitarian attributes, directly and indirectly, affect consumer purchase intentions.

Hypothesis 8 states that “attitude towards advertising mediates falsity and purchase intentions.” The results support this hypothesis. This result is consistent with the empirical findings of Wolin et al. (2002) and Aziz and Ariffin (2010) and Chu et al. (2013), who also found “that attitudes towards advertising mediate falsity and purchase intentions.”

Hypothesis 9 states that “attitude towards advertisement mediates materialism and

purchase intentions.” Our results support this hypothesis. This finding is also consistent with the empirical study of Kamal et al. (2013) and Tan and Chia (2007), who also documented that “attitude towards advertising mediates materialism and purchase intentions” Past literature also suggests that materialism has a direct impact on both attitude and purchase intentions (Yoon, 1995).

Conclusion

Websites are accessed globally by consumers of conflicting cultural values. Therefore, using these websites for controversial products may adversely affect consumer attitudes. Thus, it is important to identify consumer attitude’s antecedents and their direct or indirect relationship with purchase intentions. This research-based on empirical findings has concluded that hedonic value, falsity, and materialism significantly affect attitude towards advertising. The study also found that attitude mediates the association between (1) “hedonic values and purchase intention,” (2) “falsity and purchase intention,” and (3) “materialism and purchase intentions.” Our results are consistent with existing empirical research.

Implications

The study’s findings contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge. The study’s findings will also help advertising professionals and communication experts to develop effective advertising and communication strategies to promote controversial products via digital media. However, marketers should understand that websites are accessible globally. Consumers’ world over have different values. Therefore, while promoting such a product, marketers must ensure that the messages do not adversely affect cultural values. While this is challenging, our study has provided a direction for future researchers.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was restricted to the females of Karachi. Other studies may be extended to other cities and may also examine the impact of demographic factors. Factors like culture, social norms, and religious beliefs are essential in controversial advertising, which other studies can incorporate in their conceptual framework. We have used one stimulus in this study. Combining more than one stimuli may bring more insight into the phenomenon. This study was cross-sectional. However, a longitudinal research design can also be used by future researchers.

Annexure 1

Constructs and Items in the Questionnaire

Hedonic Value

This digital advertising of a feminine hygiene product is amusing and entertaining

Sometimes advertising of a feminine hygiene product in digital media is even more enjoyable than other media contents

This advertising contains funny characters and is enjoyable

Falsity

This digital advertising of a feminine hygiene product is misleading

This digital advertising of a feminine hygiene product insults the intelligence of an average consumer

This digital advertising of a feminine hygiene product does not present a true picture of the product advertised

Materialism

This digital advertising of a feminine hygiene product is making us a materialistic society, overly interested in buying and owning things

This digital advertising of a feminine hygiene product makes people buy unaffordable products just to show off

This digital advertising of a feminine hygiene product makes people live in a world of fantasy

Attitude towards Advertising

I favor advertisement of this feminine hygiene product in digital media

This digital advertisement of a feminine hygiene product is good

I like this advertisement of a feminine hygiene product visible on digital media platforms (social media, websites)

This digital advertisement of a feminine hygiene product is positive

Purchase Intentions

I would like to purchase this feminine hygiene product in the future

If I were going to buy this feminine hygiene product, I would consider buying this at the price shown

I will probably buy this feminine hygiene product in the future

I am willing to purchase this feminine hygiene product in the future

I am in favor of purchasing this feminine hygiene product in the future

References

- Aaker, D. A., Kumar, V., & Day, G. S. (2001). *Marketing Research*. New York: John Wiley & Sons. Inc.
- Alwitt, L. F., & Prabhaker, P. R. (1992). Functional and belief dimensions of attitudes to television advertising: Implications for copytesting. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 32(5), 30–42.
- Anderson, K. C., Knight, D. K., Pookulangara, S., & Josiam, B. (2014). Influence of hedonic and utilitarian motivations on retailer loyalty and purchase intention: A facebook perspective. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21(5), 773–779.
- Azeem, A., & Haq, Z. (2012). Perception towards internet advertising: A study with reference to three different demographic groups. *Global Business and Management Research*, 4(1), 28–45.
- Aziz, N. A., & Ariffin, A. A. M. (2010). Exploring Consumers Attitude towards Web Advertising and its Influence on Web Ad Usage in Malaysia. *Jurnal Pengurusan*, 31, 55–63.
- Blackwell, R. D., Miniard, P. W., & Engel, J. F. (2006). *Consumer Behavior* (10th Ed/). Thomson South-Western.
- Boateng, H., & Okoe, A. F. (2015). Determinants of consumers' attitude towards social media advertising. *Journal of Creative Communications*, 10(3), 248–258.
- Chew, B. E., & Abdul Adis, A.A. (2018). A study on Malaysian consumers' attitude and behavioral intention towards print advertising. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 10(2), 132–150.
- Christofi, M., Vrontis, D., Leonidou, E., & Thrassou, A. (2018). Customer engagement through choice in cause-related marketing: A potential for global competitiveness. *International Marketing Review*, 37(4), 621–650.
- Chu, S.-C., Kamal, S., & Kim, Y. (2013). Understanding consumers' responses toward social media advertising and purchase intention toward luxury products. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 4(3), 158–174.
- Davidson, A., Nepomuceno, M. V., & Laroche, M. (2019). Shame on you: when materialism leads to purchase intentions toward counterfeit products. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 155(2), 479–494.
- De Pauw, P., De Wolf, R., Hudders, L., & Cauberghe, V. (2018). From persuasive messages to tactics: Exploring children's knowledge and judgement of new advertising formats. *New Media & Society*, 20(7), 2604–2628.

- Delafrrooz, N., Paim, L. H., & Khatibi, A. (2011). Understanding consumer's internet purchase intention in Malaysia. *African Journal of Business Management*, 5(7), 2837–2846.
- Dodds, W. B., Monroe, K. B., & Grewal, D. (1991). Effects of Price, Brand, and Store Information on Buyers' Product Evaluations. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 28(3), 307-319.
- Dolan, C., Gordon, C., Steinfeld, L., & Hennegan, J. (2020). Logics of affordability and worth: Gendered consumption in rural Uganda. *Economic Anthropology*, 7(1), 93–107.
- Eze, U. C., & Lee, C. H. (2012). Consumers' Attitude towards Advertising. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 7(13), 94-108.
- Fishbein, M. (1967). *Readings in Attitude Theory and Measurement*. New Jersey: Wiley.
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Structural Equation Models with Unobservable Variables and Measurement Error: Algebra and Statistics. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(3), 382–388.
- Frith, K. T., & Mueller, B. (2010). *Advertising and Societies: Global Issues*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Gan, C., & Wang, W. (2017). The influence of perceived value on purchase intention in social commerce context. *Internet Research*, 27(4), 772–785.
- Greyser, S. A., American Association of Advertising Agencies, Bauer, R. A., & Harvard University. (1968). *Advertising in America: The Consumer View*. Division of Research Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University Press, Boston.
- Hsu, C.-L., & Lin, J. C.-C. (2016). Effect of perceived value and social influences on mobile app stickiness and in-app purchase intention. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 108, 42–53.
- Huang, G. (2019). Variation matters: How to curb ad intrusiveness for native advertising on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. *Internet Research*, 29(6), 1469–1484.
- Hüttl-Maack, V. (2018). Visual art in advertising: new insights on the role of consumers' art interest and its interplay with the hedonic value of the advertised product. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 27(3), 262-276.
- Jalees, T. (2014). Influence of idealized fashion models on purchasing behavior. *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research*, 29(2), 299-314.
- Kalyoncuoglu, S., & Sahin, B. (2017). Moderating Role of Materialism in the Effect of Perceived Value on Purchase Intention of Counterfeits of Luxury Brands. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 9(4), 76-88.

- Kamal, S., Chu, S.-C., & Pedram, M. (2013). Materialism, attitudes, and social media usage and their impact on purchase intention of luxury fashion goods among American and Arab Young generations. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 13(1), 27–40.
- Kaushal, S. K., & Kumar, R. (2016). Influence of attitude towards advertisement on purchase intention: exploring the mediating role of attitude towards brand using SEM approach. *IUP Journal of Marketing Management*, 15(4), 44–59.
- Kline, R. B. (2015). *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling, Fourth Edition*. New York: Guilford Publications.
- Kulkarni, K. K., Kalro, A. D., & Sharma, D. (2019). Sharing of branded viral advertisements by young consumers: The interplay between personality traits and ad appeal. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 36(6), 846–857.
- Le, T. D., & Nguyen, B.-T. H. (2014). Attitudes toward mobile advertising: A study of mobile web display and mobile app display advertising. *Asian Academy of Management Journal*, 19(2), 87–103.
- Mandliya, A., Varyani, V., Hassan, Y., Akhouri, A., & Pandey, J. (2020). What influences intention to purchase sustainable products? Impact of advertising and materialism. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, ahead-of-print (ahead-of-print). [Available] <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPPM-12-2019-0591>
- Moon, M. A., Khalid, M. J., Awan, H. M., Attiq, S., Rasool, H., & Kiran, M. (2017). Consumer's perceptions of website's utilitarian and hedonic attributes and online purchase intentions: A cognitive–affective attitude approach. *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, 21(2), 73–88.
- Moraes, C., & Michaelidou, N. (2017). Introduction to the Special Thematic Symposium on the Ethics of Controversial Online Advertising. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 141(2), 231–233.
- Muratović, A., Bjelica, D., & Popović, S. (2014). Examining beliefs and attitudes toward advertising through sport among montenegrin consumers. *Facta Universitatis*, 12(2), 95–104.
- Nguyen, M. T. T., Nguyen, L., & Nguyen, H. V. (2019). Materialistic values and green apparel purchase intention among young Vietnamese consumers. *Young Consumers*, 20(4), 246–263.
- Osmonbekov, T., Gregory, B. T., Brown, W., & Xie, F. T. (2009). How consumer expertise moderates the relationship between materialism and attitude toward advertising. *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, 17(4), 321–327.

- Oumlil, A. B., & Balloun, J. L. (2019). Millennials' attitude toward advertising: An international exploratory study. *Young Consumers*, 21(1), 17–34.
- Patel, J. D., Gadhavi, D. D., & Shukla, Y. S. (2017). Consumers' responses to cause related marketing: moderating influence of cause involvement and skepticism on attitude and purchase intention. *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, 14(1), 1–18.
- Paul, J., & Bhakar, S. (2018). Does celebrity image congruence influences brand attitude and purchase intention?. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 24(2), 153–177.
- Petrovici, D., & Marinov, M. (2007). Determinants and antecedents of general attitudes towards advertising: A study of two EU accession countries. *European Journal of Marketing*, 41(3/4), 307–326.
- Pollay, R. W., & Mittal, B. (1993). Here's the Beef: Factors, Determinants, and Segments in Consumer Criticism of Advertising. *Journal of Marketing*, 57, 99–114.
- Richins, M. L., & Dawson, S. (1992). A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement: Scale Development and Validation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19(3), 303–316.
- Russell, C. A., Russell, D., Morales, A., & Lehu, J. M. (2017). Hedonic contamination of entertainment: How exposure to advertising in movies and television taints subsequent entertainment experiences. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 57(1), 38–52.
- Russo, J. E., Metcalf, B. L., & Stephens, D. (1981). Identifying Misleading Advertising. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 8(2), 119–131.
- Saadeghvaziri, F., Dehdashti, Z., & Reza Kheyrikhah Askarabad, M. (2013). Web advertising: Assessing beliefs, attitudes, purchase intention and behavioral responses. *Journal of Economic and Administrative Sciences*, 29(2), 99–112.
- Sabah, S. (2017). The impact of self-construal and self-concept clarity on socially motivated consumption: The moderating role of materialism. *Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science*, 27(1), 31–45.
- Segev, S., Shoham, A., & Gavish, Y. (2015). A closer look into the materialism construct: The antecedents and consequences of materialism and its three facets. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 32(2), 85–98.
- Singh, L. R., & Sahni, S. K. (2019). Materialism as Predictor of Purchase Intention Towards Counterfeit Products: A Conceptual Framework. *IUP Journal of Management Research*, 18(1), 53–63.

- Tan, S. J., Chia, L. (2007). Are we measuring the same attitude? Understanding media effects on attitude towards advertising. *Marketing Theory*, 7(4), 353–377.
- Taimoor, S., & Hameed, M. (2019). It's everybody's business, Period. *Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies*, 9(2), 1–24.
- Ting, H., Chuah, F., Cheah, J., Ali, M., & Yacob, Y. (2015). *Revisiting Attitude towards Advertising, its Antecedent and Outcome: A Two-Stage Approach using PLS-SEM*, 9(2), 382–402.
- Ting, H., Run, E. C., & Thurasamy, R. (2015). Young adults' attitude towards advertising: A multi-group analysis by ethnicity. *Review of Business Management*, 17(5), 769–787.
- Ting, M. S., Goh, Y. N., & Isa, S. M. (2016). Determining consumer purchase intentions toward counterfeit luxury goods in Malaysia. *Asia Pacific Management Review*, 21(4), 219–230.
- Ursachi, G., Horodnic, I. A., & Zait, A. (2015). How Reliable are Measurement Scales? External Factors with Indirect Influence on Reliability Estimators. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 20, 679–686.
- Waller, D. S. (2004). *What factors make controversial advertising offensive?: A preliminary study*. ANZCA04 Conference, Sydney.
- Waller, D. S., Fam, K., & Zafer Erdogan, B. (2005). Advertising of controversial products: A cross-cultural study. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 22(1), 6–13.
- Wang, Y., Sun, S., Lei, W., & Toncar, M. (2009). Examining beliefs and attitudes toward on-line advertising among Chinese consumers. *Direct Marketing: An International Journal*, 3(1), 52–66.
- Wiese, M., & Akareem, H. S. (2020). Determining perceptions, attitudes and behaviour towards social network site advertising in a three-country context. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36(5–6), 420–455.
- Wirtz, J. G., Sparks, J. V., & Zimbres, T. M. (2018). The effect of exposure to sexual appeals in advertisements on memory, attitude, and purchase intention: A meta-analytic review. *International Journal of Advertising*, 37(2), 168–198.
- Wolin, L. D., Korgaonkar, P., & Lund, D. (2002). Beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards Web advertising. *International Journal of Advertising*, 21(1), 87–113.
- Xi, E. A. C., & Cheng, K. T. G. (2017). The determinants of purchase intention on counterfeit sportswear. *Journal of Applied Structural Equation Modeling*, 1(1), 13–26.

- Xu, C., Peak, D., & Prybutok, V. (2015). A customer value, satisfaction, and loyalty perspective of mobile application recommendations. *Decision Support Systems*, 79, 171–183.
- Yoon, K. (1995). Comparison of beliefs about advertising, attitude toward advertising, and materialism held by African Americans and Caucasians. *Psychological Reports*, 77(2), 455–466.
- Young, W., Hwang, K., McDonald, S., & Oates, C. J. (2009). Sustainable consumption: Green consumer behaviour when purchasing products. *Sustainable Development*, 18(1), 20–31.
- Zaman, S., Jalees, T., Jiang, Y., & Kazmi, S. (2018). Testing and incorporating additional determinants of ethics in counterfeiting luxury research according to the theory of planned behavior. *Psihologija*, 51(2), 163–196.
- Zhu, B. (2012). The impact of green advertising on consumer purchase intention of green products. *In Proceedings of World Business and Economics Research Conference*.