Generations X and Y Attitude towards Controversial Advertising

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**Abstract**

Segmentation has been useful in advertising decisions and subsequently the generation approach has emerged as a superior segmentation approach. The purpose of this article is to examine the attitudes of generation X and generation Y towards controversial advertising. Structured questionnaires were distributed throughout Malaysia, and a total of 768 usable questionnaires were obtained. Findings show that the two generational cohorts are significantly different in attitude towards controversial advertising. Generation X found the advertising of female contraceptives, feminine hygiene products, and funeral services to be more controversial, whereas generation Y found the advertising of alcoholic products, condoms, and gambling to be more of a controversy. In terms of the reasons of controversy, generation X found only health and safety issues to be more controversial whereas generation Y, hard sell, nudity, racist images, sexist images, and subject too personal. Future studies are therefore needed to validate the segregation of generations in Malaysia to secure effective marketing strategy.

**Keywords**: Generation X, Generation Y, Controversial advertising, Malaysia

**Introduction**

Marketing practitioners are continually confronted with the intricate task of advertising products/services to increasing diversified consumers in the marketplace. Hence it is paramount that the advertising communicates with the targeted ones effectively in order to yield favorable responses continually (Wells *et al.*, 2003). This is why market segmentation has been used extensively in advertising decisions (Kamakura and Wedel, 1995; Kaynak and Kara, 1996). The underlying principle is to target groups of consumers with homogeneous bonds since they are more likely to be identical in their response to advertising (Schewe and Meredith, 2004).