

Chinese Generation Xers' Attitude toward Advertising: Evidence from Hong Kong and Shanghai Consumers

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Abstract - The purpose of this study is to examine Chinese Generation Xers' attitude toward advertising and whether the ranking for ad likeability and dislikeability attributes are the same across Hong Kong and Shanghai. A telephone interview of 200 respondents in each city was conducted using a strategy of matched samples. The results show that the respondents from both cities find advertising 'interesting and entertaining', but 'devious'. In terms of likeable attributes, they like 'entertaining', while 'style' is the most disliked attribute. The main difference between the two groups was found in attribute rating. The study concludes by offering several explanations for these variations.

Keywords - Likeability, Dislikeability, Entertaining, Generation Xers, China

I. INTRODUCTION

The Generation X cohort (Generation Xers)' is comprised of those born between the years of 1961 and 1981. To date there has been significant conjecture about them in the literature [1][2][3]. In Asia, Generation X comprises the largest group of 'shoppers' [3] and so therefore makes up a key consuming group. Generation X as a group has been described as enjoying more educational and personal development opportunities than those before, and has a strong interest in self-indulgence and personal entertainment, also tending to hold materialistic values [4]. They have been well exposed to Western popular culture through their experience with foreign music, movies and television shows. The literature also postulates that Gen X audiences are sophisticated and cynical, yet inconsistent in their use of mass media. This generation is consistently being touted as the most media-savvy, relentlessly cynical, and terminally apathetic.

This study focuses on Generation Xers residing in Hong Kong and Shanghai. These two consumer markets are comprised of adults in their active years of wealth accrual and consumption and therefore are very attractive to advertisers and their entreaties. Furthermore, as these consumers are more educated, share similar interests and prefer visual imagery over written word, advertising design and affect are important considerations. These two cultures are also now politically more uniform than at any other previous time. Over time it is very feasible they will grow to share increasingly similar economic and business structures and therefore be exposed to the same goods and services.

As advertising is a key communications vehicle through which these consumers might be reached, the more that is known about how advertising effectiveness can be increased, the greater the likelihood of brands succeeding in this generational group will be. Therefore it is well worthwhile determining how messages are conceived within the two groups. It will also be valuable knowing the extent to which advertising can be generalized between young Chinese and Hong Kong consumers or needs to be culturally or context specific may be known. Therefore, the current study examines firstly whether consumer beliefs about advertising, hold and secondly, whether the ranking for ad likeability and dislikeability attributes remain the same between the two cities.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Different cultures groups may respond to advertising in different ways based on their cultural dimensions [5][6].