Faculty of Economics and Business

A STUDY OF GENERATIONAL COHORT EFFECT
ON ATTITUDE TOWARDS ADVERTISING:
A TWO-DIRECTIONAL STUDY OF ADVERTISING IN GENERAL
AND CONTROVERSIAL ADVERTISING

Ting Huong Yiew

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Ting Huong Yiew

A thesis submitted
in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Economics and Business
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DEDICATION

Dedicated to Rebecca, my beloved wife

My kids: Carlyne, Henna and Chrisman, precious gifts from God

And my dearest parents and family
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

If someone were to tell me three years ago that I would write Acknowledgement one day, I would have cringed away. Little did I know I actually wrote this section earlier than expected. It is not because I submit my thesis within three years. Instead I feel obliged to express my truest gratitude to the following people in words when I can still remember vividly what they have done to make this journey possible. Hence, I do not want this section to be something customary for my thesis proper. I want it to be a true memorial of their guidance, assistance and care in various manners and at different times. Although unexpected things happened which have substantially delayed the completion of study and submission of thesis, I will always regard this particular journey and all its experiences meaningful and rewarding.

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journey. I beg to differ. While being independent is important, being able to work with others and get help from them is indispensable. Like my supervisor, my graduate fellows make this transitory journey more rewarding.

I would have struggled financially if it were not for Zamalah Postgraduate Scholarship and the projects that I was given opportunities to participate in. For that I am thankful to relevant personnel at FEB, Centre for Graduate Studies (CGS) and Research and Innovation Management Centre (RIMC). Besides, I am also thankful to those who have facilitated registration, form submission, postgraduate colloquium and other relevant matters.

Last but not least, my thanks go to my family for their continual support. I owe my sincerest gratitude to my wife, Rebecca, for her understanding and unreserved care. She gave birth to Carlyne when I wrote my proposal, and Henna when I began to collect data for the second phase of study; and now she is pregnant with our third child. I thought it was a great challenge for me to juggle church activities, family matters, study and work at the same time. In retrospect, it has actually been a greater challenge for her to take care of the family. I am glad to have learnt from her to always take my family as priority.

I thank God for preserving me and leading me from the beginning until now. Over the years I have realized that human achievement counts for nothing if it is not for continual learning unto the fulfilment of His purpose in me. I pray for His leading and supply of grace to make me a purposeful person and a channel of blessing to the society, no matter what I do and where I go.

_Hiram Ting (written in 2013, revised in 2015)_
ABSTRAK


Kajian ini terbahagi kepada dua fasa dengan menerapkan reka bentuk tinjauan berurutan (exploratory sequential design) untuk menyelidiki iklan daripada kohot generasi di Sarawak. Fasa pertama terdiri daripada dua bahagian yang bersifat kualitatif. Bahagian pertama
bertujuan untuk mencungkil kepercayaan terhadap pengiklanan parti-parti politik dan pengiklanan pencegahan penyakit seks sementara bahagian kedua bertujuan untuk menerokai kohot generasi dengan meninjau pengaruh peristiwa bersejarah dan pengaruh peristiwa masyarakat yang utama ke atas individu semasa tempoh pembentukan mereka. Oleh yang demikian, empat puluh tiga wawancara dijalankan di seluruh negeri untuk bahagian pertama, dan empat puluh lapan wawancara dijalankan untuk bahagian kedua. Semua wawancara dicatat dan disalin untuk penganalisisan. Kemudian, penemuan-penemuan digabungkan ke dalam fasa kedua untuk memastikan kesahihan dan perkembangan model.

Pendekatan kuantitatif melalui borang soal selidik yang berasaskan tinjauan/pemerhatian dijalankan di seluruh negeri. Sebanyak 1,410 salinan yang boleh digunakan dengan respons berkadar 70% telah dikutip untuk analisis inferens. Teknik analisis Model Persamaan Struktur (Structural Equation Modelling, SEM) melalui kaedah Partial Least Squares (PLS) diterapkan untuk memaparkan analisis pembolehubah dan analisis pelbagai kumpulan (MGA). Pendekatan ini bertujuan untuk menentukan hubungan di antara konstruk perilaku di antara pengiklanan secara umum dan pengiklanan berkontroversi khusus dalam satu model. Model Tujuh Faktor yang Boleh Dipercayai untuk mengukur iklan yang umum dan pengiklanan khusus yang boleh dipercayai yang diperlihatkan dalam fasa pertama digunakan untuk menelaah Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). Tambahan pula, kohot generasi disepadukan ke dalam model untuk menaksir kesan yang sederhana/wajar/munasabah dalam setiap perhubungan.

Penemuan dalam fasa pertama menunjukkan bahawa terdapat sebelas faktor dan enam faktor yang boleh dipercayai untuk menghuraikan pengiklanan khusus bagi parti-parti politik dan
ABSTRACT

The thesis aims to investigate attitude towards advertising (Aad) by delving into the modeling effect of three behavioural constructs (belief, attitude and behavioural intention) between two forms of advertising, namely advertising in general and specific controversial advertising. As such, the antecedent-to-consequence and general-to-specific relationships are determined simultaneously. All relationships are then further examined across generational cohorts in the model. Despite the abundance of literature on advertising in general and its association with specific advertising in the West, the validity of these findings in the East, especially the emerging markets, is continually being questioned. Evidence on the relevance of Aad in general to Aad of specific products, particularly controversial products, is found greatly wanting. There is an obvious theoretical gap in literature pertaining to the antecedent of Aad of controversial products. As a result, the effect of Aad in general on Aad of controversial products remains largely unanswered. There is also a lack of empirical research to explicate the actual generational cohorts in different contexts. Marketing literature on segmentation approach using generational cohorts is predominantly based on western sources. Generalizing western findings in void of theoretical implication remains a matter of serious concern. Consequently, little is known about use of generational cohort in understanding Aad in emerging markets.

Two phases of study, utilizing exploratory sequential design, were adopted to investigate Aad by generational cohort in Sarawak. The first phase was composed of two parts, and was qualitative in nature. The first part was to elicit beliefs about the advertising of political parties and sexual diseases prevention while the second part was to explore the formation of
generational cohort by looking into the impact of major historical and societal events on individuals during their formative years. Accordingly, forty-three interviews were administered throughout the state for the former, and forty-eight interviews for the latter. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for content analysis. The findings were then incorporated into the second phase for validation and model development.

A quantitative approach via survey-based questionnaire was administered throughout the state. 1,410 usable copies with more than seventy percent response rate were collected for inferential analysis. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using Partial Least Squares (PLS) was utilized to perform latent variable analysis and multi-group analysis (MGA). The objective was to determine the relationships between behavioural constructs of advertising in general and specific controversial advertising in a single model. The Seven-factor Belief Model for measuring Aad in general and the beliefs about specific advertising elicited from the first phase were adopted to decompose the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). Additionally, generational cohort was integrated in the model so as to assess its moderating effect on every relationship.

The findings in the first phase show that there are eleven and six belief factors to describe the specific advertising of political parties and sexual diseases prevention respectively. They are found to be dissimilar from that of advertising in general. Moreover, five generational cohorts, namely Neoteric-inheritors, Prospective-pursuers, Social-strivers, Idealistic-strugglers and Battling-lifers, are observed based on their personal attachment to major events during the formative years. They are also found to be different from the cohort labels in the western sources. The quantitative findings in the second phase, in turn, validate four belief
factors about advertising in general, eight belief factors about the advertising of political
parties and four belief factors about the advertising of sexual diseases prevention. All belief
factors are found to have positive effect on Aad. In like manner, all relationships between
behavioural constructs are found to be significant and positive in the model. Nevertheless, the
effect in general-to-specific relationships is less than that of antecedent-to-consequence
relationships. The quantitative findings also confirm the segregation of five generational
cohorts in the first phase. Moreover, the effect in general-to-specific relationships and
antecedent-to-consequence relationships is found to be different by cohorts. Hence, the study
not only extends the decomposed TRA with a two-directional Aad model, it also provides a
whole new dimension for marketers and managers alike to gain insights into Aad in general
and of specific products, and the two-directional relationship by generational cohort.
Limitations and direction of future studies are outlined at the end of the thesis.
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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Conference Proceedings


Journal Articles


8. Ting, H. and de Run, E. C. (2014). Attitude towards Advertising among Young Adults: A Comparative Study by Ethnicity. Full paper submitted to International Journal of Business and Society (IJS) and accepted for double-blind review. (Scopus-indexed)


LIST OF AWARDS

1. **Full Zamalah Postgraduate Scholarship** at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Scholarship Grant Scheme), from Aug 2010 until Aug 2013. (Status: Completed)

2. Co-investigator of a **Dana Principal Investigator/DPI research** (project leader: Prof Dr Ernest Cyril de Run) (Grant no. 03/DPI07/823/2011 (07)), from July 2011 until July 2013. (Amount approved: RM29,100; Status: Completed)

3. Member of a **Faculty Funded Research** (project leader: Prof Dr Ernest Cyril de Run) (Grant no. FPI (F01)/125/2012 (85)), from December 2012 until November 2014; Status: Completed).

4. Won **Best Paper Award** with Prof Dr Kim-shyan Fam and Prof Dr Ernest Cyril de Run on a paper entitled “Chinese Generation Xers’ Attitude toward Advertising: Evidence from Hong Kong and Shanghai Consumers” at the 5th International Borneo Business Conference, Tawau, Malaysia, December 19-21, 2012.

5. Won **Silver Award** for poster entitled “Defining and Creating a Generational Cohort Scale” with Prof Dr Ernest Cyril de Run at UNIMAS R&D Expo 2013, March 20-21, 2013.

6. Won **Bronze Award** for poster entitled “Attitude towards Advertising and Controversial Advertising” with Prof Dr Ernest Cyril de Run at UNIMAS R&D Expo 2013, March 20-21, 2013.

7. **Invited speaker** on “Sharing Experience among Us” at Business Seminar Series at the Faculty of Economics and Business of UNIMAS on 13 June 2013.

8. Member of a **Fundamental Research Grant Scheme/FRGS research** (project leader: Prof Dr Ernest Cyril de Run), from December 2013 until November 2016. (Amount approved: RM56,100; Status: Ongoing).

9. Won **Best Marketing Paper Award** with Prof Dr Ernest Cyril de Run on a paper entitled “How Young Adults Perceive Advertising: A Comparative Study of Three Ethnic Groups” at the 5th Asia Pacific Marketing and Management Conference, Kuching, Malaysia, November 20-22, 2013.


11. Won **Best Paper Award** with Prof Dr Ernest Cyril de Run and Siew Ling Liew on a paper entitled “How Adolescents View Advertising: The Effects of Beliefs and Personal Values” at the 6th International Borneo Business Conference, Kuching, Malaysia, August 20-21, 2014.