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ATTITUDE TOWARDS ADVERTISING: A COMPARISON BETWEEN MARKETING AND NON-MARKETING STUDENTS AT A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine general attitude towards advertising from the perspective of marketing and non-marketing students. Beliefs towards advertising are investigated so as to determine what contributes to attitude and subsequently behavioral intention towards advertising. A quantitative approach by means of questionnaire based survey was administered at a private university. 217 usable copies, whereby 101 are marketing students and 116 are non-marketing students, were collected. Descriptive and inferential analyses were subsequently used. Findings show that there is no significant difference in beliefs, attitude and intention towards advertising among marketing and non-marketing students despite dissimilar educational background. This study therefore articulates the present view of university students about advertising, and its implication to academia and business.

Keywords: Advertising, attitude, belief, intention, university student

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INTRODUCTION

Advertising is an important communication tool in marketing and modern life. It is regarded as an economic and social phenomenon that stimulates societal activities, and affects even personal value and behavior (Pollay & Mittal, 1993). As technology continues to grow rapidly, seen especially in the burgeoning use of internet, young consumers are becoming increasingly aware of various advertisements, thus making the whole matter more intricate than ever before (Purosothuman, 2008; Tai, 2007). This intensifies the interest of researchers and marketing practitioners to further delve into the study of advertising progressively in contemporary setting.

While much research has been conducted to investigate public's attitude towards advertising, studies that seek to understand students' attitude towards advertising are also on the rise (Dubinsky & Hensel, 1984; Larkin, 1977; Munusamy & Wong, 2007). University students represent a meaningful and substantial segment of the general public, and hence it requires continual attention (Beard, 2003). Therefore this study aims to investigate the present view of university students towards advertising. In particular attitude of marketing and non-marketing students from private university towards advertising is focused on. It is believed that this study will extend knowledge about their attitude towards advertising, and thus provide relevant implication.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Attitude towards Advertising

Large-scale studies of public view about advertising started in the late 1950s (Zanot, 1984) before the first comprehensive academic work on attitude towards advertising by Bauer and Greyser (1968). Since then more studies were conducted to gain insights into the subject matter (Eze & Lee, 2012; Kwek, *et al.*, 2010; Larkin, 1977; Mittal, 1994; O'Donohoe, 1995; Pollay & Mittal, 1993; Ramaprasad & Thurwanger, 1998; Shavitt, *et al.*, 1998; Yaakop, *et al.*, 2011). Interest in assessing attitude towards advertising is generated and perpetuated by empirical results that underline its effect on advertising effectiveness (Greyser & Reece, 1971; Kotler, 1988; Mehta, 2000; Mehta & Purvis, 1995), attitude towards specific advertisement (Lutz, 1985), purchasing behavior (Bush, *et al.*, 1999; Ha, *et al.*, 2011), and social policies (Pollay & Mittal, 1993; Rotzoll, *et al.*, 1986; Wills & Ryans, 1982)

Attitude towards advertising is generally defined as a learned predisposition to respond to advertising in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner (Lutz, 1985; MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). Such attitude is predicted by beliefs about advertising, which is described as specific statements about the attributes of objects (Brackett & Carr, 2001; Ducoffe, 1996; Pollay & Mittal, 1993; Wang, *et al.*, 2009). While a number of past studies have looked into beliefs about advertising, the seven-factor belief model by Pollay and Mittal (1993) is regarded as one of the most comprehensive works (Korgaonkar, *et al.*, 2001; Munusamy & Wong, 2007; Ramaprasad & Thurwanger, 1998). The model includes two dimensions, namely personal utility factors and socioeconomic factors, and these measures have been validated empirically (Korgaonkar, *et al.*, 2000; Korgaonkar, *et al.*, 2001). Personal utility factors are made up of product information, social image information and hedonic amusement whereas socioeconomic factors are composed of good for economy, materialism, falsity and value corruption. Out of the seven factors, materialism, falsity and value corruption have inverse relationship with attitude.

Early studies of university students' attitude towards advertising have suggested they were largely unfavourable in general (Haller, 1974; Larkin, 1977; Taylor, 1982). In Malaysia, only a handful of studies have been conducted to examine students' views about advertising and they do not show similar results (De Run & Ting, 2013; Kwek, *et al.*, 2010; Munusamy & Wong, 2007; Ramaprasad, 1994; Rashid & Sidin, 1987). Since university students make up a substantial percentage in Malaysian population, and they have a sizeable degree of purchasing power and influence now and again, it is of utmost importance to keep close track of their view in present times (Beard, 2003; Morton, 2002; Munusamy & Wong, 2007; Wolburg & Pokrywcznski, 2002). Moreover, as advertising is an important component in marketing, it becomes more