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Social media political advertising: A gender-based attitudinal analysis

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Abstract

Informativeness, entertainment and irritation are key factors in determining people's attitudes toward social media political advertising (SMPA). The more informative, entertaining, and less irritating an advertisement is, the more likely it is to positively influence people's attitudes toward it. Even though there are studies which have been conducted in the past on the role of gender in advertising evaluation, but the picture is still not clear in the context of political advertising. In order to address this issue, the present research is conducted to investigate the impact of these belief factors on attitude towards SMPA among different genders. According to the results of this study, females can lead to a more favourable attitude towards SMPA in the context of informativeness than for males, and entertainment can help form a more favourable attitude towards SMPA for males than for females. However, females are more likely to be irritated by SMPA than males. Findings, Conclusion, and limitations are discussed followed by suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Informativeness, entertainment, irritation, attitude, social media political advertising (SMPA)

1. Introduction

Political campaigns are increasingly relying on social media advertising which is valuable because it is informative and entertaining while also irritating. Advertisements are considered informative when they provide viewers with information about the political message they are trying to convey. The degree to which viewers find an advertisement enjoyable determines its entertainment value whereas irritation is the degree to which it provokes negative emotions. According to previous research, attitude towards social media advertising is strongly influenced by these three factors. Gaber & Wright (2014) ^[11] also pointed that, improvement in attitude towards social media advertising, can be done with the advertisement which is informative, entertaining, and not irritating. However, advertising is generally processed differently by men and women (Darley & Smith, 1995) ^[8]. The concept of gender is not simply a biological construct, but a psychological one as well (Bem, 1981) ^[3]. It has been suggested in previous studies (e.g., Venkatesh & Morris, 2000; Shao *et al.* 2019) ^[30, 26] that men and women show different decision-making because they have different types of socially constructed cognitive structures. In addition, males and females have different motivations for using the Internet, resulting in different attitude and behaviour (Wolin & Korgaonkar, 2003) ^[33]. Ducoffe, 1996 ^[9] model, explains that an individual's attitude towards advertisement is determined by how informative, entertaining, and irritating he or she finds it. Studies have repeatedly shown the direct impact of these factors on attitude, but potential moderators like gender affecting their relationship with SMPA have not been examined yet. Therefore, in order to fill this research gap, gender is considered in this study. The study aims to find out that who among the males and females have more impact of these factors on attitude towards SMPA and whether there is any difference in attitudes toward SMPA among different genders.

2. Literature Review

Political leaders around the world recognize the power of social media and include it into their communication strategies during election campaigns, making it an essential part of modern election campaigns. In addition to reaching voters easily and quickly, social media allows you to transmit the correct information immediately, stop rumours, and provide one-to-one communication (Mengü *et al.* 2015) ^[22].

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Different people have different attitudes toward these advertisements. Various studies have revealed that both the genders have different levels of general advertising effectiveness and this ability to recognize gender differences in advertising effectiveness offers advertisers the opportunity to spend advertising money more effectively (Wolin & Kargaonkar, 2003) [33].

2.1 Informativeness

Informativeness is the advertisement's ability to communicate effectively and pass information to its target audience (Ducoffe, 1996) [9]. According to advertising attitude research, informativeness plays a crucial role in advertising evaluation. Brown & Stayman (1992) [5] found that an important determinant of brand attitude is informativeness. One of the main reasons people use social media is to search for information (Muntinga *et al.* 2011) [24]. Men and women process information differently, which explains their cognitive differences. According to Bamoriya & Singh, (2011) [1] men tend to seek out more information than women do. There is a contradiction that who has more impact of informativeness on attitude among different genders. A study by (Logan *et al.* (2012) [17] concluded that females find social media advertising more informative and entertaining than males. On the contrary, Wolin & Kargaonkar, 2003 [33] proved that relative to females, males have more impact of informativeness on attitude. Based on the results of these studies, following hypothesis is suggested:

H1: Informativeness has a greater influence on SMPA attitudes for males than for females.

2.2 Entertainment

A major factor affecting advertisement value and attitude is the level of entertainment offered by an advertisement. Entertainment is a key component of an advertisement that help people to satisfy some basic needs for enjoyment, diversion, escapism, or emotional release (McQuail, 1987) [20]. In order to increase the effectiveness of the advertisements, advertisers strive to provide entertaining advertising. In particular, it is believed by advertisers that entertaining advertisements generate more favourable attitude towards advertising (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989) [19]. According to (Weiser, 2000) [32] Internet usage is more common among males for entertainment, leisure, and functional purposes, while it is more common among females for communication and socializing. This suggests, in the context of attitude towards advertising on social media, that men's attitudes are more affected by the entertainment value of advertising than women's (Taylor *et*

al. 2011) [29]. As a result of the preceding discussion, the following hypothesis has been proposed:

H2: Entertainment has a greater influence on SMPA attitudes for males than for females.

2.3 Irritation

An individual's irritation from advertisements increases when they feel uncomfortable watching those advertisements. The reasons can be personal or social, for example, people are distracted while trying to focus on an online task because of these advertisements (Saxena & Khanna, 2013) [25]. In some cases, people may perceive the advertisements as confusing or distracting, resulting in a decrease in productivity. Furthermore, some messages may be misleading or even offensive to them (Ducoffe, 1986) [9]. So, there is a feeling of irritability among people due to the high number of advertising messages they receive online every day. There is also a difference in irritation level of males and females due to these advertisements. The study of Wolin & Korgaonkar (2003) [33] proved that most females find internet advertising irritating and annoying as compared to males and female's perceptions of intrusiveness play a crucial role in deciding their attitude towards social media advertising. Following is the hypothesis derived from the preceding discussion:

H3: Irritation has a greater influence on SMPA attitudes for males than for females.

2.4 Attitude

It appears that males and females have different levels of privacy concerns, attitudes, and behaviours when it comes to online privacy (Sheehan, 1999) [2]. In spite of earlier studies showing that men dominate internet usage, recent studies have shown that the gender gap is rapidly shrinking (Youn *et al.* 2003; Weiser 2000) [34, 32]. Finding of Lewis & Nichols (2010) [15] indicate that gender does influence attitude towards social media advertising, but they are relatively weak.

Due to the differences in responses between males and females to advertising, gender issues are important for advertisers. There are many evidences by previous studies (Kempf *et al.* 1997; Shavitt *et al.*, 1998; Wolin & Korgaonkar, 2003; Liaw & Huang (2011) [14, 27, 33, 16] that males exhibit a more positive attitude towards advertising than females do. Therefore, based on these results, following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: Males have stronger influence on attitude towards SMPA than females have.

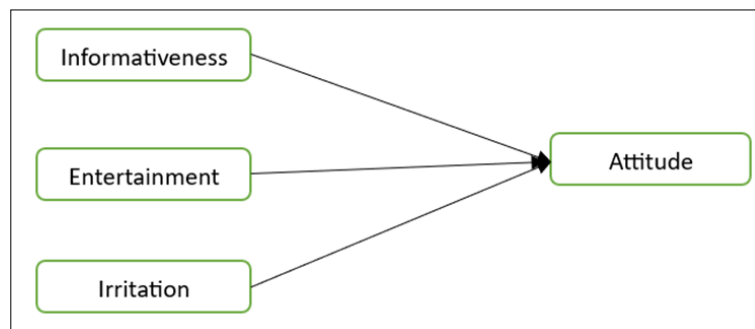


Fig 1: Proposed Conceptual Model

3. Research Methodology

The measurement scales used in this study are adapted from previous research Yuanxin & Noichangkid (2011) [35]; Cheng *et al.* (2009) [6]; Mir (2012) [23]; Barriopedro *et al.* (2020) [7]; Nevarez, & Torres (2015) [18]. 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree was used. In order to collect the data, non-probability sampling was used through Google forms, and received a sample of 107 respondents. Out of these, 71% of the respondents are males and 29% are females. 42% are from the age group of 18-24 years, whereas, 53% are from 25-44 years and the rest are 45 years and above. 63% (more than half) respondents are employed followed by 32% students.

4. Findings and Results

The study is quantitative, therefore descriptive statistics are provided. Reliability for the constructs is tested using Cronbach's alpha. The model is also tested using structural equation modelling. Moreover, to ensure the quality of the data, convergent and discriminant validity tests are conducted before testing hypotheses. 0.70 is the minimum recommended value for Cronbach's alpha and the acceptable

reliability coefficient should be between 0.70 and 0.95 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011) [28]. In Table 1, Cronbach's alpha for all factors is exceeding 0.8, indicating high reliability.

Table 1: Reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha

Scales	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Informativeness	6	0.918
Entertainment	5	0.931
Irritation	5	0.867
Attitude	4	0.952

Source: The authors (using SPSS 26.0)

All the constructs have AVE values greater than 0.5, and CR values more than 0.70, confirming their convergent validity. Additionally, the regression weights of all the items are greater than 0.50 (Hair *et al.* 2010) [13] and to establish discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE should exceed the correlation values among all the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) [10]. So, in this study, all these conditions have been fulfilled (refer Table 2).

Table 2: Convergent and Discriminant Validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	INF	ATT	ENT	IRR
INF	0.919	0.654	0.484	0.922	0.808			
ATT	0.953	0.835	0.526	0.956	0.684***	0.914		
ENT	0.933	0.738	0.526	0.946	0.696***	0.725***	0.859	
IRR	0.865	0.567	0.466	0.888	-0.575***	-0.683***	-0.601***	0.753

Source: The authors (using AMOS 23.0)

Notes: The bold numbers on the diagonal are the square roots of the AVE.

***Correlation is significant at $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed).

The CFI and IFI of the model are greater than 0.90, indicating a good fit (Husin *et al.* 2016) [21]. As shown in Table 3, CFI = 0.949, IFI = 0.950, RMR = 0.068 (<0.08), SRMR = 0.073 (<0.08) and RMSEA = 0.079 (<0.08), which represent good fit of the model (Hair *et al.* 2006) [12].

Table 3: Fit Indices

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
CMIN/DF	1.56	Between 1 and 3	Excellent
CFI	0.949	>0.90	Excellent
IFI	0.950	>0.90	Excellent
RMR	0.068	<0.08	Acceptable
SRMR	0.073	<0.08	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.073	<0.08	Acceptable

Source: The authors (using AMOS 23.0)

According to the findings (refer Table 4) females have stronger impact of informativeness on attitude towards SMPA ($\beta = 0.428, p < 0.01$) than for males ($\beta = 0.262, p < 0.05$), hence H1 is not supported. However, males have stronger impact on attitude towards SMPA ($\beta = 0.418, p < 0.001$) than for females ($\beta = 0.328, p < 0.05$) supporting H2. Irritation has negative impact on attitude towards SMPA and this negative attitude from irritation is stronger in females ($\beta = 0.569, p < 0.01$), than for males ($\beta = 0.324, p < 0.01$), supporting H3. This study shows that both the genders have positive impact on attitude towards SMPA, and that overall difference between the attitudes of males and females is very little. Even if that impact is little, difference between the attitudes is still there, which is females ($\beta = 0.929, p < 0.01$) have stronger impact on attitude towards SMPA, than for males ($\beta = 0.890, p < 0.01$)

and these results do not support H4.

Table 4: Hypothesis testing results

	Std. RW	C.R.	p-value
(Informativeness)			
Males	0.262	3.113	0.002
Females	0.428	3.707	***
(Entertainment)			
Males	0.418	4.983	***
Females	0.328	2.843	0.004
(Irritation)			
Males	-0.324	-4.309	***
Females	-0.569	-4.935	***
(Attitude)			
Males	0.890	17.023	***
Females	0.929	13.539	***

Source: The authors (using AMOS 23.0)

Note: ***Significant at $p < 0.001$.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aims to develop a model for investigating how gender differences can moderate the relationship among the belief factors (informativeness, entertainment, irritation) and attitude towards SMPA. Overall, males and females think and behave differently due to their biological differences. The results of current study indicate that women have stronger impact on attitude towards SMPA than for men which proves the results of Wang & Sun (2010) [31] who also found that online advertising is more likely to be favoured by those who perceive it informative. Tschla *et al.*, 2014 [36] stressed towards the need to understand the differences in attitudes between genders. The results of present study also indicate that males and females form

attitudes toward SMPA differently. Furthermore, the current study also suggests that it is important for advertisers to take gender differences into account when producing political advertisements for men and women.

6. Limitations and Future Research

The data for this study have been collected using the non-probability sampling technique, therefore the results can vary if the sample is collected by using random sampling technique. Second, the sample collected is very small (N=107), hence the results cannot be generalised. Future research might expand this study by taking large number of samples to find out the clearer image of attitude difference between males and females. Lastly, the factors used here in this study are informativeness, entertainment, and irritation to find out the impact on attitude and these factors cannot explain the attitude towards SMPA entirely. There are other factors also (e.g., trustworthiness or credibility). Future research can expand this study by including other factors thereby getting a more comprehensive result.

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