

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INVOLVEMENT AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS TV ADVERTISEMENTS WITH ISLAMIC SYMBOLS AND PURCHASE INTENT.

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Abstract

The exploratory study was conducted to examine the impact of involvement and attitude towards Television (TV) advertisements (ads) with Islamic symbols to that of purchase intent. Specifically the study examines i) the level of involvement towards TV ads, ii) the attitude towards TV ads, iii) the relationship between involvement towards TV ads and purchase intent, iv) the relationship between attitude towards TV ads with and purchase intent. The framework of the study was constructed based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) that suggested that the level of consumers' involvement differ due to their processing of information. The theory also explained that sometimes the use of different cues were able to generate consumers' high involvement in their information processing. This has thus, contributed significantly to their purchase intent. The study utilized the one group post-test only experimental methods by engaging 76 female subjects from Kuala Lumpur to participate. They were shown four advertisements that have Islamic symbols and asked to answer a set of self-administered questionnaires. The study found that the subjects showed high involvement on ads that used the Islamic symbols of "hijab" and thus have effectively generated positive attitude towards the advertisements. The results also revealed that there was a positive impact between the Islamic symbols on purchase intent.

Keywords: Islamic symbol, hijab, involvement towards ads, attitude towards ads, purchase intent.

SATU KAJIAN EKSPLORATORI HUBUNGAN ANTARA PEMBABITAN DAN SIKAP TERHADAP IKLAN TV BERSIMBOL ISLAMIK DAN KEINGINAN MEMBELI

Abstrak

Kajian penerokaan ini dijalankan untuk mengenalpasti kesan pembabitan dan sikap terhadap simbol Islam dalam iklan televisyen (TV) dengan keinginan membeli. Secara khususnya kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti i) pembabitan terhadap iklan TV, ii) sikap terhadap iklan TV, iii) perkaitan di antara pembabitan terhadap iklan dengan keinginan membeli, iv) perkaitan di antara sikap terhadap iklan dengan keinginan

membeli. Kerangka kajian dibentuk berdasarkan Model Huraian Kebarangkalian (Elaboration Likelihood Model) (ELM) yang menekankan bahawa tahap pembabitan konsumer dikatakan sebagai berbeza disebabkan maklumat yang diproses. Teori tersebut juga menerangkan penggunaan isyarat yang berbeza kadangkala menyebabkan konsumer dapat membentuk pembabitan yang tinggi ketika melaksanakan pemprosesan maklumat. Keadaan ini menyumbang kepada keinginan membeli. Kajian ini mengaplikasi kaedah “*one group post-test only*” eksperimen terhadap 76 wanita dari Kuala Lumpur. Mereka dipertontonkan dengan empat iklan yang mempunyai simbol Islam. Pengutipan data adalah menerusi penggunaan soalselidik yang disediakan. Kajian mendapati mereka menunjukkan pembabitan yang tinggi terhadap penggunaan hijab sebagai simbol Islam dalam iklan. Pembabitan tersebut juga menunjukkan sikap yang positif terhadap iklan. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan terdapat perkaitan yang positif di antara penggunaan simbol Islam dalam iklan.

Kata kunci: Simbol Islam, hijab, penglibatan terhadap iklan, sikap terhadap iklan, keinginan membeli.

INTRODUCTION

Asia is seeing the emergence of a new modern Muslim consumer. These consumers represented a vast number of market especially in the developing world and thus they are also currently the enormous as well as the growing purchasing power in countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Morocco and also Malaysia. A conservative estimates shows that Asia is home to an almost 700 million Muslims, some 60 per cent of the global total (O'Neill, 2010). Research has also shown that in countries such as Egypt, Iran, India, Malaysia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and South Africa, Muslim consumers hold a great purchasing power (Haque, Ahmed & Jahan, 2010). The Islamic population has grown in size and affluence and as mentioned by Temporal (2011) there are 1.57 billion Muslims worldwide with more multinationals seeking to tap into the market.

In fact of the “Ten Big Emerging Markets,” targeted by the United States (US) Department of Commerce for American export promotion efforts, two were Muslim nations namely Turkey and Indonesia and two substantially growing number of Muslim consumers in the developed nations, such as in the US, the United Kingdom (UK) and Germany. In the US for example, Islam has been reported as the fastest growing religion and the estimated Muslim population range from six to eight million (Abdul Rahman and Tug, 1998). The number is increasing and it is estimated the purchasing

power amongst Muslim population around the world is USD2.7 trillion (Halal Journal, 2008).

To target Muslim consumers, companies need to understand and appreciate the unique needs of Islam before entering the markets, especially market where the majority are Muslim such as Malaysia. Companies that fail to do so, often offend their consumers by not understanding the sensitivity of the religion. Extra attention needed for the marketers to understand the role of the religion in the market, mostly in marketing activities since religion is essential to a culture (Cornwell et al., 2005). Religion as stressed by Fam et al., (2004) plays an important role to consumer where it influences how consumer utilizes certain products and also services. Although the Muslim population is growing yet they were still considered as representing the poor nation (Temporal, 2011). Couple with the fact that there is also still trend of strong religious conservatism and commitment (Rice & Al-Mossawi, 2002) it makes them less attractive to marketers.

ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL (ELM)

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) predicts that effect of persuasive messages depends on people's involvement. If they were less involve in processing the message, they would be strongly affected to simple cues from the advertisement such as that of the presenter's attractiveness or expertise. ELM also explained that consumers go through a process of involvement in decision making to purchase. When purchasing of expensive product, consumers would go through the high involvement process before their decision making process to purchase. Thus, advertisers have been using cues or symbols extensively to solve the high involvement process in decision making. However, the use of Western antecedents such as celebrity spokesperson has so far been seen in many advertisements to solve the high involvement process. Therefore, the paper finds that is a need to address the issue of using the Islamic symbols or antecedent to help with the high involvement processing. The paper seeks to examine the relationship between the involvement towards advertisement with Islamic symbols and purchase intent as well as the attitude towards advertisement with Islamic symbols and purchase intent.

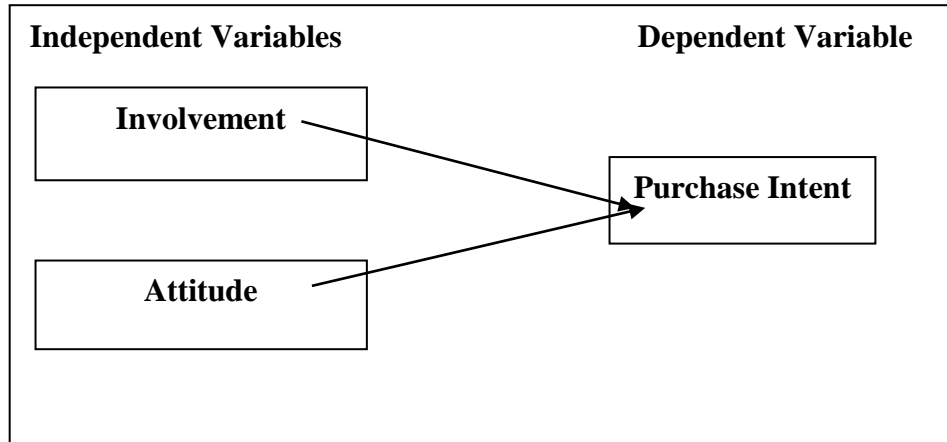


Figure 1: Framework of the Research

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

Involvement: Krugman (1965) proposed the concept of involvement that characterized the level of perceived personal importance with which consumers approach their dealings in the marketplace. Involvement was also defined as one of the dimensions of the type of processing that occurs during exposure to the advertisements. In brief, involvement could be referred to as an antecedent to the elaboration of message (Te'eni-Hahari et al., 2009).

Attitude: As defined by Agryriou and Melewar (2011) attitude is a relatively stable object-oriented or temporarily constructed evaluation based on information processing or contextual and affect-based information procedure. Attitudes was said to drive responses given by consumers that indicate either their positive or negative evaluation of a certain product. It is also therefore regarded as the motive for activity that is presumed as a response to objects or stimuli. Thus an attitude can be concluded as a person's overall and enduring evaluation of a concept or object such as a person, a brand or a service (Arnould, 2002)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Consumers were affected by religion in many ways, for example the prescription of proper behavior, eating habits, work habits and in Islam it was even to the effect of the way of life. In stressing the importance of studying the religious factor in advertising,

Michell and Al-Mossawi (1999) were of the opinion that there was a need to closely examine the factors of religion and advertising. Consequently this was supported by a study by Hirschman (1981) that stressed the fact that religious affiliation plays a significant role in attitude formation and was especially related to the questions of why people consumed. The uniqueness of Islamic culture lies in its values and principles. Muslims do not separate between the religious and the secular, since Islam is considered as the way of life (Mawdudi, 1987). Due to the different religious belief, Hirschman (1981) in his study suggested that segmentation according to religion can be used in the markets. The study was conducted to examine consumer behaviors by religious affiliation. The study showed a significant behavioral differences between American respondents who were “Jewish,” as compared to the “non-Jewish.” The “Jewish,” respondents were identified as being more innovative and likely to be opinion leaders. It was inferred that “*Jewishness*,” represented a viable variable for market segmentation.

While representation refers to anything that can clearly project or symbolizes an object or image. As explained by Webb (2009) representation is constructing meaning where the discussion of meaning occurred through the production and organization of signs. For example the Islamic representation can be seen from the image of Muslim model who donned a “*hijab*” in an advertisement either in the print or electronic media. These symbols play an important role in the mental life of individual. Each symbol that was used would transmit a certain meaning (Gibson, 1998)

As explained by Zwick and Chelariu (2006), religious symbols reflect a certain sacredness that offer a strong presence and power in people’s daily lives. For instance the wearing of religious dress and symbols are important expression of an individual’s religious identity. For the Muslim women, the wearing of *hijab* is seen as a way of projecting a Muslim identity (Bullock, 2000). The last two decades have seen the interest in religion’s effects on consumer behavior increased due to Globalization. For instance a study by Al-Makaty et al., (1996) examined the attitudes toward advertising in Islam. They attempted to examine the socio cultural perceptions of television advertising among Saudi males. By the utilizing the Q-Methodology, the study found that respondents

agreed that the most salient factors of the advertising of imported products was that it encouraged people to imitate the behavior of other countries. They were also of the opinion that advertisements do not appeal to intelligence. The study found that some male Saudis believed that television advertising represented a serious cultural threat and has adverse implications for their nation's economic development.

Muslim activities are categorized as Lawful (*halal*) and prohibited (*haram*) which constituted a system of values for assessing on how or what other's speak as well as their behavior. Some of these values which Muslims should follow are truth, honesty, politeness, social, collective obligations and responsibilities. Muslims should keep away from falsehood and deception everywhere in general and in trade and financial dealings with others in specific (Rice and Al-Mossawi, 2002). They could not tell a lie and should avoid exaggeration. Eating pork, gambling, drinking alcohol and nudity is forbidden in Islam. In addition, Muslims must not idol worship (statutes inclusive), must conform to sexual codes as guides on what is prohibited and what is allowed to be shown. Islam controls the ways of society and factors associated with family, dress, cleanliness and ethics (Fam, Waller and Erdogan, 2004).

Similarly a study conducted by Keenan and Shoreh (2000) in Saudi Arabia has also shown that over 70 % of their respondents viewed advertising as a threat to Islamic culture. Yet, on the contrary, Rice and Al-Mossawi (2002) mentioned that the Quran does not prohibit advertising if it was used to promote products, services and faith. Waller (2000) studied the cultural values and advertising in Malaysia from the perspectives of the professionals in the advertising industry and found that culture and religion played an important role in shaping the types of advertisements in the country. The survey conducted on 120 media professionals showed that the reason for the prohibitions were not only due to the religious issues but also because of government restrictions. The study showed that products or services that were restricted were racially extremist groups, guns and armaments, gambling and funeral homes. However there were products that were allowed but limitations. Such were the advertisements for

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (AIDS, STD prevention) Charities and weight loss programs.

Prior study has also shown that cultural and religious factors not only restricted the advertising activities in terms of the products and services that were allowed to be advertised, the factors have also played a significant roles in affecting the use of standardized or directly translated advertisements produced in one country to be used for international market. As shown by a study conducted by Mostafa (2005), advertisements produced by one country cannot simply be standardized or used directly in another market especially if they were of different culture. In the study, Mostafa (2005) using the experimental approach investigated Egyptian consumers' attitudes towards surrealism in advertising by sampling 976 respondents. He found that there was a significant interaction between advertisements type and gender. By investigating the Egyptian consumers' attitudes towards surrealism, the study will facilitate a better understanding of how Western-oriented advertising practices need to be modified to accommodate the cultural beliefs, traditions and lifestyles of the Arab world.

There have also been comparative studies on the cultural values reflected in both the Arab and the American Television Advertising. Kalliny and Gentry (2007) examined cultural values as reflected in U.S and Arab world television advertising. A content analysis was conducted on 866 television commercials from Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and the United States. The study presented some interesting findings in relations to the similarities and differences between the United States and the Arab world. Although women in some Arab countries for example Saudi Arabia were required to cover their faces, yet when it comes to the cultural value "beauty enhancement" it appeared as an important factor in the Arab culture. While there were similarities reported, the study has also shown some differences that advertisers should give more attention to. The Arab consumers do not tolerate comparative advertising and such advertisements may confuse them.

An example that can be included saw Sunsilk's Lively Clean & Fresh shampoo showing a young, smiling woman as the star, but there is not a strand of hair in sight in the advertisement. Her tresses are completely covered by a *hijab*, the head scarf worn by many Muslim women in Malaysia. The pitch that was used was Lively Clean & Fresh helps remove excess oil from the scalp and hair which was deemed as a common problem among wearers of *hijab*, according to Unilever, the manufacturer. The company says the product is the first shampoo to speak directly to the "lifestyle of a *hijab* wearer." Unilever says the Sunsilk Lively Clean & Fresh shampoo, which is sold in Malaysia and Singapore, was created for people who suffer from oily scalps after wearing any head covering, be it a baseball hat or head scarf. After company research showed that many women who wear the *hijab* complained of oily scalps, it introduced the television advertisement aimed at them. The ad begins with a young woman saying that now she can do what she wants because she no longer has to worry about itchiness, before she goes on to kick a goal in a coed soccer game.

METHODS

Data Collection

Data was obtained from a one group post-test only experiment that was conducted on 76 women attending a workshop at the Kuala Lumpur office of the National Population and Family Community Development in May 2012. The ages of the subjects range from less than 30 years old to more than 40 years old. All questionnaires were self-administered by the subjects without interference from the researcher. The subjects were shown four TV advertisements and later given the questionnaires. The advertisements that were shown were purposely chosen from amongst products that had used Islamic symbols such as women in *hijab*, the use of the "halal," logo and also advertisement that had in the dialogue the usage of Islamic terminology such as the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Measures

The study uses multi-item scales to measure the constructs of the research objective. All items in the questionnaires were measured on a five-point Likert-styled scale anchored from “strongly uninvolved” (1) to “strongly involved” (5). Two items were used to measure involvement towards the four advertisements. In order to measure reliability of the questionnaires, a pre-test was conducted on 30 respondents. The Cronbach’s Alpha for the Involvement was 0.71 and the Purchase intent was 0.92. Thus, showing the applied questionnaires enjoyed the measuring reliability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the data of the involvement towards ads on TV. Data was collected from the following ads; Sunsilk Shampoo, Colgate toothpaste, Maggi Noodles and HSBC financial services. The study shows that the highest level of involvement was obtained from the Sunsilk shampoo ads (mean=4.18), followed by the Maggi noodle ad (mean=4.06), Colgate toothpaste (mean=3.96) and HSBC financial service (mean=3.43). There was a high involvement on Sunsilk shampoo ads since the ads clearly showed a female model who was in a *hijab* and showing her skills in playing and scoring a goal with a flying kick in a futsal game. Since *hijab* is an obvious symbol of Islam therefore it was clearly identified. Thus, showing that the Islamic symbol in a hijab showed the representation of Islam. Rosminawati Hussin et al., (2015) in her study on Islamic representation in TV advertising had also discussed that *hijab* has been used as an Islamic symbol.

Furthermore, an image of a woman in *hijab* is definitely a representation of Islam. Hence, the usage of such symbol not only makes it very obvious that there was a representation of Islam yet, the symbol *hijab* would easily be notified as Islam. Similarly, the advertisement for Maggi has also been able to capture the attention towards the Islamic symbol that was used. Yet, both the Colgate ads and the HSBC ads that showed a small “*Halal*” logo and the term “*Amanah*” respectively were unable to create an understanding towards the Islamic cues. Therefore, to ensure that consumers would be able to comprehend the cues of the messages in ads, advertisers need to ensure that the

use of such image were clear and easily identified. The use of cues that were easily noticed would allow for less involvement to process the information about the product or services. This would enable consumers to relate with Islam and therefore would be able to purchase such product without any doubt. Thus it can then be concluded that there was a possibility that should an obvious Islamic symbol is being used in an advertisement, that symbol may contribute to the involvement towards the products that were advertised.

Table 1 : Distribution of Percentage, Mean and SD of Involvement towards Ads (Sunsilk, Colgate, Maggi and HSBC)

Items (n=76)	(%)					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Product Sunsilk	1.3	2.6	13.2	42.1	40.8	4.18	0.86
Product Colgate		7.9	23.7	32.9	35.5	3.96	0.96
Product Maggi		5.3	18.4	40.8	35.5	4.06	0.87
Product HSBC	9.2	18.4	19.7	25	27.6	3.43	1.32

Table 2 shows that the respondents showed the highest level of attitude on the Sunsilk advertisements (mean=4.17) followed by Colgate (mean=4.15), Maggi (Mean=3.96) and HSBC (Mean=3.65). While the attitude towards Sunsilk ads was the highest yet, their overall attitude was moderate. The Sunsilk ads showed the symbol of *hijab* and thus it was easily represented. The result suggested that using symbols that were representation of Islam would help contribute towards a positive attitude about the products. There is also the possibility that *hijab* as an Islamic cue would allow consumers to relate the products as permissible (*halal*).

Table 2 : Distribution of Percentage, Mean and SD of attitude towards ads (Sunsilk, Colgate, Maggi dan HSBC)

Items (n=76)	(%)					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Product Sunsilk	1.3	3.9	11.8	42.1	40.8	4.17	0.89
Product Colgate			22.4	39.5	38.2	4.15	0.78
Product Maggi	2.6	9.2	19.7	26.3	42.1	3.96	1.11
Product HSBC	6.6	14.5	18.4	27.6	32.9	3.65	1.26

Table 3 shows the correlation analysis of the test that was conducted between the two independent variables to that of the dependent variable. There was a moderately positive and significant relationship between Involvement towards ads with Islamic symbols to that of purchase intent ($r=0.77, p=0.00$). Thus, the H1 was supported. Based on the findings, it can then therefore be concluded that the Involvement towards the cue or the Islamic symbols shown in the ads would affect the purchase intent of the respondents. Therefore, a better representation of Islamic cues would obviously contribute significantly to consumers purchase intent. It is important that advertisers construct cues that are easily understood. Similarly, manufacturers of Muslims' products could help the *Ummah* have better access to “*halal*” products if the use of Islamic image or symbols were easily recognizable. A clear cues that were used would also contribute positively towards allowing consumers to be more involved in their information search when purchasing products.

Table 3 also shows that there was a positive and strong relationship between the attitude towards ads with Islamic symbols and purchase intent. The relationship was found to be strong. Therefore, the H2 was also supported. A positive attitude shown towards Islamic symbols used in ads would clearly contribute to the purchase intent. Consumers with positive attitude towards an advertisement would probably purchase the products advertised. Thus, the positive attitude towards the ads that have the Islamic symbols also clearly explain that the use of meaningful and obvious Islamic symbols would contribute to the possibility of consumers purchase intent.

Table 3 : Correlation test between Independent variables and Dependent variable

Variable	Purchase intent	
	r	p
Involvement towards ads with Islamic symbols	0.77	0.00
Attitude towards ads with Islamic symbols	0.83	0.00

H1: Involvement towards TV ads with Islamic symbol is positively related to purchase intent.

H2: Attitude toward TV ads with Islamic symbol is positively related to purchase intent.

The study has demonstrated the central importance of the symbol *hijab* in generating favorable disposition to the advertisement. The Islamic symbol of *hijab* was also found to have a significant relationship on involvement and attitude towards advertisement. The overall finding showed that there was the influence of religious symbol especially the *hijab* on the involvement and attitude towards advertisement.

The shampoo product, Sunsilk that portrayed the spokesperson wearing a *hijab* showed a positive response amongst subjects of the study. The study also reveals that attitude towards advertisement has an effect on purchase intent. Thus, the study finds that the subjects were impressed by the symbol *hijab* and thereupon affected their purchase intent. However, the study also showed that while there were other Islamic symbols that were used in the advertisements yet, some were ineffective to capture the attention of the audience. For example the use of a small *halal* logo would not be able to serve the purpose of offering Islamic cue in advertisement.

CONCLUSION

The study shows the impact of the Islamic symbol of *hijab* to the involvement and attitude factors toward the advertisement. This can thus be suggested that cues such as *hijab* for Muslims' women can be regarded as "central cues" instead of the "peripheral cues" discussed from the Elaboration Likelihood Model's perspective. Although ELM explains that peripheral cues work better in low involvement situation, yet central cues play a significant role in information processing regardless of the level of involvement. However, the study also shows that Islamic symbols such as color or logo would only contribute significantly should it be used more appropriately.

Therefore, the study suggested that it is important for advertisers to ensure that in producing advertisements using Islamic symbols as cue for representation of Islam there is a need to produce advertisement using clear Islamic symbols and at the same time the production need also to adhere to the Islamic ethics.

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