

Social Media Advertising Influence on Users' Responses: Egypt

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to extend the knowledge of social media advertising by providing a deep understanding of the elements of social networking sites advertising (SNS ad) effectiveness that help create favorable users' responses via their attitude toward empathy expression in the Egyptian context. Qualitative research was developed. Sixteen semi-structured interviews were conducted which were analyzed by using thematic analysis. Findings indicate that the crucial elements that generate an effective SNS ad in Egypt particularly on Facebook are the advertising creativity and simplicity, followed by the advertising entertainment specifically the emotional appeal of joy, the interactivity, the clear information, and the trustworthiness derived from users' generated content. These elements influence on users' attitude toward empathy expression and lead to favorable users' responses. Additionally, it has been found that brand loyalty plays a vital role on influencing users' responses. Based on these findings, this research offers implications and proposes further research directions.

KEYWORDS

Egypt, Facebook, SNS Ad, Social Media, Users' Attitude, Users' Responses

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of social media has been accepted by its users leading several companies to change their communication strategies from traditional media to social media (Naeem, 2019). There is a great difference between social media and traditional media. Based on the individualization, social media simplify two-way communication between customers and between companies and customers, which is not applicable in traditional media (Diffley & McCole, 2019). Social media comprises various platforms such as: social networking sites (SNS) (e.g. Facebook), creativity works sharing sites (e.g. YouTube), business networking sites (e.g. LinkedIn), etc. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Mainly, SNS have become the core media through which companies communicate information about their brands (Naeem, 2019). SNS is considered as an attractive medium for increasing advertising success and effectiveness due to its dialogical potential, and its capability to track users' behavioral responses (Appel et al., 2020).

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Advertising through SNS supports a company's relationships with prospects, which benefits to identify correctly the target consumers (Naeem, 2019). Burg (2013) mentioned that the degree of a SNS ad effectiveness can be evaluated by examining the interactions (such as the number of "Likes" or "Shares"). Thus, for a SNS ad to be effective, it should be able to lead the user to a positive attitude toward empathy expression, which means the willingness of a user to respond in a favorable manner such as click like, share the ad or write comments toward SNS ad (Lee & Hong, 2016). The attitude toward empathy expression is theoretically rooted on the attitude toward the ad and it is more related with the nature of SNS (Lee & Hong, 2016). Therefore, many researchers have highlighted the importance of understanding the use of SNS ad in an effective way in the marketing communication strategies (Dao et al., 2014; Hamouda, 2018; Naeem, 2019). The SNS ad represents an evolving area as mentioned by Diffley and McCole (2019) which means that the body of knowledge of SNS ad is still developing (Appel et al., 2020). The Facebook is still the world's most used SNS. The monthly active users exceed 2.5 billion and user numbers is growing progressively within most countries in 2019. However, the marketers face a difficulty in reaching all these users using Facebook advertising (Digital, 2020). So, this research will focus on the effectiveness of SNS ad to grab the attention of more Facebook audience to be able to lead them to favorable responses via their attitude toward empathy expression.

Besides, some lacks have been found in the previous studies. First, few studies have examined some elements of the effective SNS ad (such as: Taylor et al., 2011; Logan et al., 2012; Lee & Hong, 2016; Hamouda, 2018) which reflects the need for further investigation. Second, the majority of the previous studies have focused on users' attitude toward advertising instead of users' attitude toward empathy expression. However, attitude toward empathy expression is more associated with the context of SNS as mentioned by Lee and Hong (2016). Third, most of the prior studies did not take into consideration the users' behavioral responses to a SNS ad. Based on Ha and Lee (2018), they recommended to pay more attention on users' behavioral responses to a SNS ad by including additional responses related to the SNS ad like sharing and writing posts, which are viewed more active user behavior than like the ad. Fourth, when evaluating the value of SNS ad in the earlier studies, the main focus was on the college students as the main sample. However, based on Digital (2020) the 18-24 age group only represents 24% of total active users specifically on Facebook, which means that previous studies have neglected the majority of active Facebook users. Fifth, there is a lack of research in the Middle East region, particularly Egypt, where the digital advertising industry is growing since the country has the highest increase in Internet penetration rate across the Arab world in recent years (59% in 2016 as opposed to 22% in 2013) (Santander, 2020).

Therefore, this study aims to fill the above mentioned gaps by providing qualitative insights to give a deeper clarification, and to determine the elements of SNS ad effectiveness and their influence on users' responses (taking into consideration the behavioral responses such as like, share and write posts) via their attitude toward empathy expression based on the active users of SNS ad in a new context, which is Egypt. This study presents the research work in six main sections. First, theoretical background and literature review of SNS ad effectiveness, users' attitude toward empathy expression, and users' behavioral responses. Second, the research methodology which includes the research approach, data collection method and analysis, population and sampling. Third, the results and analysis are given. Fourth, the conclusion and key findings are discussed. Fifth, the research implications and finally limitations and directions for further research are presented.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media and SNS Ad

Social media was defined as a set of internet-based applications that are based on ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media lets people to simply

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