



Online media advertising and buying behavior of consumers: A systematic review

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Abstract

In this age of computer-mediated communication (CMC), advertisers are using new media for achieving their objectives and a variety of outlets can be found in the online marketing environment. In certain conditions, the effectiveness of online media advertising has always been a concern over its competition with traditional media platforms and the phenomenon of this competition got a substantial amount of attention from media scholars. Therefore, the present systematic review has been established by analyzing 43 research studies (selected on the principle of PRISMA) which have been conducted from 2001 to 2021. The majority of studies have concluded a positive association between online media advertising and buying behavior of consumers, but this media could not fade the value of traditional advertising completely as television and newspapers facilitate verifying information circulated through new media platforms. It was divulged that consumers also went for buying due to online media advertising as this



medium served as e-Word-of-mouth and celebrity-endorsement was resulted in creating a double dose effect on consumers' buying and credibility of online advertising. Based on the review, some areas have been suggested to encounter in future research.

Keywords: *Online advertising, Buying behavior, New media, Digital advertising, Credibility, Perceived usefulness, e-marketing*

Introduction

Over the last two decades, the rapid growth of the internet and digital technology has affected almost everyone's lives from various perspectives (Adhjarso, Utari & Hastjarjo, 2019), as the advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) ultimately shifted into a new paradigm of commercialization and emergence of innovative ideas which provided advertisers an opportunity to consume internet and social media platforms to achieve their objectives (El-Gohary, 2012). The first and foremost objective of every advertiser is to attract potential customers to maximize their sales and profit ratios and there is a historical background of multiple traditional mediums that many advertisers adopted for their marketing campaigns such as newspapers, television, magazines, and outdoor media (Asadollahi & Tanha, 2021), but these marketing techniques are gradually declining their effectiveness since new media exploded over advertising



landscape and individuals restricted themselves for physical movement into shopping stores (Clow & Baack, 2010). Therefore, advertisers have been moved towards deciding new business strategies, and the start of the 21st century has brought online media as a new platform for consumers in modern times (Nanji, 2015). The phenomenon of online media advertising is increasingly dominant among technologically advanced countries (Bourlakis, Papagiannidis & Fox, 2008) and developing countries i.e., Pakistan (Saad, 2021). Consumers are buying products through multiple online platforms in which personal websites of brands and others (i.e., Daraz.pk, Amazon, eBay) are involved. These websites have promotional pages on different social media platforms, which attract customers for buying who further recommend this buying to their friends or other group members in their social domain (Barenblatt, 2015).

In the Pakistani community, acceptance of online media advertising is seen as challenging because people are much hesitant about the products which are available to them through online platforms due to their negative experiences in a past. But the youth of Pakistan seems to be flexible with online buying either for clothing or other items (i.e., hardware, I.T.) which is dramatically increasing with passing time (Ahmed, Su, Rafique, Khan & Jamil, 2017), and the phenomenon is getting the attention of academic



researches. There have been several research studies on online media advertising in different domains, but very limited reviews were established in the aforementioned paradigm. Recently, Asadollahi and Tanha (2021) critically reviewed studies about television advertising and buying behavior of people therefore, the present study aims at reviewing studies that have been conducted by the scholars about online media advertising and buying behavior of consumers in the last two decades but with limitations of certain variables.

Objectives of the study

The study has been designed to review the researches which have been conducted regarding online media advertising and buying behavior of consumers from 2001 to 2021. Therefore, the basic objectives of this study are:

- To analyze results of the studies which have been conducted in the comparative domain i.e., traditional vs. online media advertising and buying behavior of consumers.
- To explore findings of the studies of online media advertising and buying behavior of consumers with certain variables e.g. the usefulness of online media, the credibility of online advertising.



Materials and method

The study has presented a review of the studies which have been conducted on online media advertising and buying behavior of consumers in the last two decades (2001-2021). Several kinds of research have been undertaken by the academicians in this time at both national and international levels but rationally it was impossible to include all studies in this review because of certain limitations (e.g. access, timeframe). Therefore, the present review has adopted a scientific approach for selecting studies on the principle of the PRISMA statement. The principle of PRISMA comprises extracting studies through four different stages of identification, screening, eligibility evaluation, and final selection as reflected in figure 1.

At the initial stage of the filtration process, research studies have been identified through multiple open and partially-access databases which could have been explored. These databases include Google Scholar, ProQuest, Pakistan Research Repository, OATD, OVID, and Ethos. For extracting research studies, multiple keywords have been used across all these databases according to relevance e.g. online media advertising and buying behavior of consumers, usefulness of online media and buying behavior, effect of new media advertising on consumer buying behavior, traditional vs. online advertising, credibility of new media advertising, perceived risk



and online buying behavior and impact of online advertising. These keywords identified all the studies (research papers and dissertations) which were focused on specified areas in the context of their similarities with abstract, title, and keyword of publications.

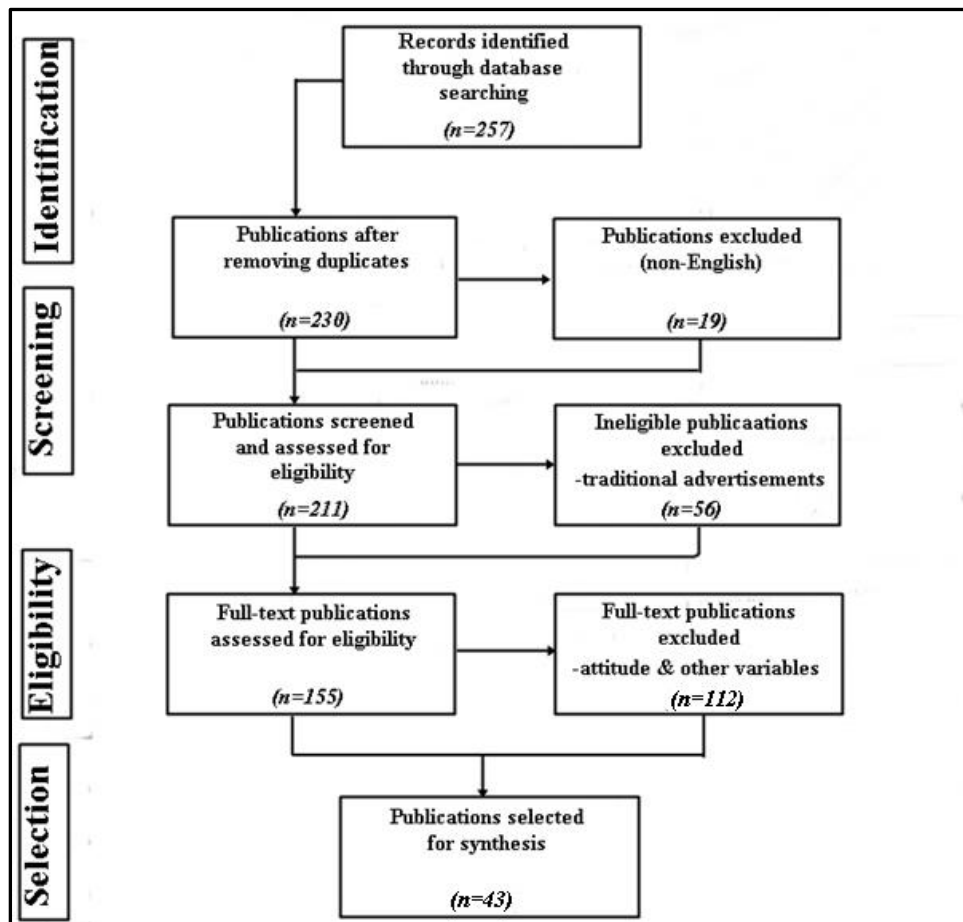


Figure 1: PRISMA flow chart for selection of studies

At the very first stage of identification, 257 research papers and dissertations were collected. Through manual evaluation and readings, 27 duplications and 19 non-English publications were removed from the collected studies



(both from research papers and dissertations) that filtered 211 studies in the 2nd stage of screening. At the 3rd stage, 56 studies have been excluded because they were not eligible to fulfill criteria based on the current relevance (they were associated with only traditional media advertisement). Next, the remaining 155 publications have been assessed for their eligibility and then 112 studies related to the “effect on the attitude of online buying and other irrelevant variables” were excluded from the group. At last, 43 full-text articles and dissertations were left finally for the selection that has been reviewed for synthesis according to objectives in the present study.

Results

This section comprises a review of studies that have been synthesized in light of the designed objectives in the study. The first section described those research studies which have been conducted in a comparative domain to evaluate consumer preferences and effects on their buying behavior. Second, the usefulness of online media was undertaken as a variable that presented the results of studies based on the benefits that persuaded consumers for buying products.

1. Traditional vs. online media advertising

It is evident in the literature that both old and new media have different effects on consumers’ behavior because of their different features e.g.



availability of choices, diversity, and interactivity (Reeves & Nass, 2001). Therefore, new media provides advertisers a chance for generating content that facilitates them to achieve their objectives and allows people for doing immediate reactions (Al-Meshal & Almotairi, 2013). Several researchers have attempted to analyze the comparative effectiveness of advertisements given through both traditional and online media channels as Talafuse and Brizek (2015) found that online mediums were ineffective to move individuals towards products' buying and traditional media was preferred by the respondents. But the qualitative study of Durmaz and Efendioglu (2016) divulged different results and argued about more effectiveness of non-conventional media advertising and further highlighted its importance in the era of computer-mediated communication (CMC). The authors further reported that advertisements proved to be more effective which were placed at the same time on both old and new media platforms. Difference of demographics to assess the influence of comparative media advertising was also noticed by the other studies in the literature in which persuasiveness and attraction factors were found attributed with print media advertisements by certain respondents whereas interactivity and recall factors were associated with new media advertising (CM & Mehrotra, 2018).



Similarly, the study for evaluating the comparative effectiveness of modern and traditional media advertising was undertaken by Korenkonva, Maros, Levicky and Fila (2020) which revealed that respondents were more inclined towards advertising over the internet and social media platforms because of their feature for presenting in-depth and credible information which they intend to examine for purchasing their desired products. Although in a few cases, television advertising was found to be informative which influenced consumers' buying behavior and content of advertisement over both mediums played a significant role. Demonstrations and action-oriented contents in television advertisement were more effective than emotion-based content of digital media advertising (Liaukonyte, Teixeira & Wilbur, 2015). This phenomenon concludes that both (new and traditional) media advertising have their specific characteristics which influence consumers in different domains as evident in the research of Sama (2019) that revealed newspapers as a more persuasive platform for moving individuals towards buying products whereas television and internet were found to be more significant for creating awareness, interest, and conviction among potential consumers. Some other factors have been argued by the scholars in the comparative study that proved new media advertising more effective rather than traditional media advertising such as choices for



selection of products and special offers/discounts given by the advertisers (Koparkar & Rai, 2019).

Kovachki (2018) also conducted a study by using both qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyze the comparative influence of advertisements and the results found that traditional media advertising is still effective to impact the buying behavior of consumers and further named the merge of traditional and non-traditional media advertising with “new classic advertising.” In a related study, Tarik and Adnan (2018) comparatively investigated challenges that traditional media advertising faces with the existence of online media and divulged that now consumers want to know everything by internet and social networking websites especially the advertisements of telecommunication found more attention of consumers on new media whereas television and magazines advertisements were found having declined their effectiveness which attributed as a waste of resources. Similarly, Bhayani and Vachhani (2014) divulged that internet advertising influenced consumers’ buying behavior in comparison to conventional marketing techniques because individuals prefer using technological gadgets in modern times. Sarar (2016) attributed traditional vs. non-traditional media advertisements with the products being advertised and argued that items e.g. toilet papers advertisement, are more effective on



conventional media whereas online media platforms were found effective only for the recalling of advertisements seen through traditional media channels.

The same results were found by Lawrence, Deshmukh and Navajivan (2018) who argued that now advertisements on both media platforms (traditional and new) are dependent on one another. Kapoor and Kapoor (2021) in their qualitative study reported that online media advertising has been successful to increase hotel bookings vs. traditional media advertising and now organizations are moving towards this medium from old media platforms because of the rapid transition from traditional to new media has been noticed among consumers by the policymakers in recent years.

2. The usefulness of online media

The usefulness of online media depends upon available information structure and design attractiveness which can instigate consumers to act favorably or unfavorably and move them for online buying from the websites (Yilmaz, 2004). The usefulness of online websites is also linked with the effectiveness of technological features including the latest search engines and the efficient services given by advertisers to online consumers (Kim & Song, 2010). Several research studies investigated the usefulness of online media as an antecedent of online buying behavior as Liao, Palvia and



Lin (2010) divulged that online websites provide consumers satisfaction as detailed information is available about their desired products which move towards buying. Similar results have been reported by Sohn (2017) in the study related to mobile purchasing from online stores. The author further argued that consumers go towards online buying if online websites are useful in satisfying their particular needs, furthermore a positive correlation was established between perceived usefulness and online buying behavior. Matute, Polo-Redondo and Utrillas (2016) reported perceived usefulness as mediating factor in online buying and further argued that consumers move towards online media if it attracts them with features of trust and quality products.

Park and Gretzel (2010) comparatively analyzed the usefulness of different shopping websites and divulged that consumers are attracted by those websites which provide efficient prices, this factor is more valued than others irrespective of the structures and designs of online stores. Consumers were found inclined towards those websites which had easier interface and cash-on-delivery options, hence it has been argued that such features in the online media are perceived as useful which convince people for buying products (Tandon, Kiran & Sah, 2016). Park and Kim (2003) asserted that online platforms which are easy to use, influence users' experiences and



instigate them towards buying products. Online consumers seek relevant information about the product and if it is available to them easily for saving their searching time and cost, impact their behavior towards online buying positively (Griffith, Krampf & Palmer, 2001).

Advertisements on online platforms have emerged with innovative ways of marketing and increased facilities of buying with credit cards, instant credits, and home delivery networks that incline customers to buy from online platforms (Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004). Along with the functioning aspects, the existence of quality information is another element related to online media which has been perceived as useful for online buying (Wang, 2016). Haque, Ali and Mahfuz (2015) also noted a significant association between the usefulness of online media and buying behavior of consumers.

3. The credibility of online advertising

The buying behavior of consumers in the online environment is associated with the credibility of media itself through which advertising may or may not create a significant effect on individuals (Azeem & Haq, 2012; Haque et al., 2015). Several research studies have discussed the factor of credibility when considering online advertising effect on buying behavior of consumers as Wang and Sun (2010) conducted comparative research in



three different countries and found that Romania and the US online media was perceived as credible which moved individuals towards buying of products whereas findings were different in China. But Wang, Sun, Lei and Toncar (2009) divulged opposite results and buying behavior of Chinese has been argued positive as they perceived online media advertisements as trustworthy in all aspects of products information. Tobi, Ayodele and Akindele (2020) also found a significant association between the credibility of online media advertising and buying behavior of consumers. The authors argued that consumers were inclined to buy those products which were presented in more detail and individuals verified their information from other sources (Salem, Che & Mohamad, 2016). Kumar and Mehrotra (2018) supported that online advertising becomes credible when individuals use print media for verifying information, favorable evaluation results in changing buying behavior of consumers. Chen and Barnes (2007) noted that individuals verified the available information from other sources which developed their trust towards online media and also made them familiar to buy something from the online markets. Katawetawaraks and Wang (2011) endorsed these findings and further asserted that the availability of detailed information and cross-verification were proved as essential elements for



positive persuasion whereas the risk associated with the intangibility of a product has impeded the online buying behavior of consumers.

Jones and Kim (2010) divulged that online media advertising related to clothing has been effective because participants trusted the advertiser while Shiao and Luo (2012) argued that the consumers' satisfaction with an advertiser is also important in clothing advertisements, and the elements of trust and creativity in online media advertising has been argued as equally important for persuading individuals towards buying of products. Hence, it has been established that the trust element is more significant for effective online media advertising and similarly, Akroush and Al-Debei (2015) asserted that the reputation of the advertiser has been a dominant factor as it built trust in the targeted community for moving them towards buying of products in the online environment.

Furthermore, it was revealed that consumers have been more inclined towards those sellers that possessed image and repute in the society because they trusted those advertisers at the online media platforms and went for the products' buying without any hesitation (Bilgihan, 2016). Bakshi (2013) conducted experimental research and found that consumers had a more positive attitude towards well-recognized online advertisers and moved for



buying products resultantly. Even, Kim, Xu and Gupta (2012) also supported these findings and divulged trust as a more significant element than the prices of products which have been used as an appealing factor in online media advertising especially those which have been presented through social media platforms. Another study by Ling Chi and Piew (2010) emphasized that previous shopping experience also has a vital role in creating trust among individuals which makes online media advertising more effective for increasing advertiser's sales and profit ratios.

Discussion

In comparative media advertising (traditional vs. online) and its effect on buying behavior of consumers, several elements established their significance in a particular area that affected the choices of individuals. In getting persuasion from traditional or online media, many intervening factors were involved such as demographics of individuals and their desires of exposure towards particular media. Higher consumption of new media was found associated positively with buying behavior while interactivity, peers discussion, feedback to advertisers, and recalling elements of online media persuaded individuals for buying products. The second area in this review was related to the usefulness of online media and buying behavior of consumers. It was found that features of online platforms such as 'facility



to search products’ and ‘cash-on-delivery’ have attracted individuals for buying from these platforms. Consumers perceived a particular website as useful because of its easier interface and faster processing.

Credibility was another factor that facilitated deciding buying behavior of consumers. Individuals verified information from traditional channels (i.e. newspapers, TV) which still reflect their importance in this modern era. But the inability to touch products was also a significant factor that impeded online buying. Consumers moved towards buying from those advertisers which had reputation in society. Here, celebrity endorsement was also found as a predictor of credibility which created a double dose effect on consumers. It is pertinent to mention that the studies in the context of Pakistan have also divulged credibility issues before 2015-16 when online advertising started to grow in this region whereas later on results were different but still the risk is positively associated particularly when individuals buy something from online platforms. It may be due to the bad experiences of consumers in the past. Furthermore, ‘reviews by previous consumers’ were also found as a significant element in making credibility of online advertising which persuaded individuals for buying products.



Conclusion

The present review has analyzed 43 research studies associated with online media advertising and buying behavior of consumers. It was an attempt to give insights into what has been divulged by the researchers in the past for moving into the direction of future research. In this time of CMC (computer-mediated communication), online channels were found effective for moving individuals towards buying. But it is concluded that they cannot fade the value of traditional media completely because people verify information from traditional media channels which convince them to buy something as a result of the exposure towards advertisements placed on online media platforms.

Gaps in the literature and suggestions for further research

Although studies have been conducted in detail, however, some areas were still left investigated and can be explored by future researchers. Based on the critical review, the areas which need to be addressed, are given below:

- Based on a digital divide, comparative studies should be conducted with a sample of urban and rural areas on common grounds (e.g. accessibility of internet, education, economic status).
- In the Pakistani context, the credibility of online advertising should be explored because the latest dynamics are altogether changed.



- Along with celebrity endorsement, prices, and interaction, more appealing factors of online media should be explored.
- In the context of developing countries i.e. Pakistan, a comparison of Generation-X and Generation-Y should be conducted because elders are observed more hesitant towards online media than youngsters.

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Pak. Journal of Media Sciences, Vol 2, Issue 2 (2021) Online media advertising

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