

# Relationships between the advertising appeal and behavioral intention: The mediating role of the attitude towards advertising appeal and moderating role of cultural norm

Syed Hassan Raza  
Hassan Abu Bakar  
Bahtiar Mohamad

School of Multimedia Technology and Communication  
Universiti Utara, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

## Keywords

Advertising appeal, Behavioral intention, Attitude, Cultural norms, Theory of Planned Behavior, and Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE).

## Abstract

*Studies have identified the importance of the attitude in the association with advertising appeal. However, the factors involved in direct and indirect effects of attitude remain unaddressed in the advertising appeal literature. This article aims to provide insight of the theoretical framework that addresses cultural norms based on Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) cultural dimensions as the moderating factor in explaining the association between the advertising appeal and behavioral intention. In addition, this paper explores the possibility of the mediating role of the attitude in the association between advertising appeal and intention which may be studied further to determine the empirical finding based on the Theory of Planned Behavior.*

Corresponding author: Syed Hassan Raza

Email addresses for corresponding author: [sherazibzu@gmail.com](mailto:sherazibzu@gmail.com)

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## 1. Introduction

Studies have indicated that not only attitude predict the behavioral intention, in fact, recent studies based on planned behavioral intention framework have outlined many antecedents of behavioral intention (Kenney and Khanfar, 2009). Therefore, scholar such as Walden (2012) has called more studies to identify the underlying attitude process variables linking advertising appeal and behavioral outcomes in advertising. To date, the direct and indirect effect of attitude on behavioral intention remains lacking in term of empirical evidence in advertising studies. In fact, previous studies assume that attitude is directly link to advertising appeal and the behavioral intention specifically in the attitude towards advertising brand or product (Zarantonello and Schmitt, 2010). The recent direction in advertising appeal studies suggests that attitude might be the underlying mechanisms that link advertising appeal and behavioral intention. However, it remains lack of the systematic inquiry in explaining the mediation of the attitude to predict the behavioral intention and its association with the advertising appeals (Zarantonello and Schmitt, 2010).

Ajzen (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been criticized in several meta-analyses (see Armitage and Conner, 2001, Glasman and Albarracín, 2006, Sniehotta, Pesseau, and Araújo-Soares, 2014) as attitude explaining only 27% to 39% of the variance in predicting behavioral intentions. Mullan, Wong, and Kothe, (2013) assert that the other key antecedents of behavioral intentions need to be accounted for further investigation to clarify the part of the attitude. Many studies assume that advertising appeal due to its persuasion characteristic can be one of the antecedents in predicting intention (Ajzen, 2014, Crano and Prislín, 2008, Sniehotta, 2009). However, previous studies remain unclear in explaining attitude as the underlying mechanisms within the framework of the (TPB). Thus, this current study contributes to

an enhanced understanding of the mediating relationship of the attitude with the behavioral intention and the advertising appeal.

Furthermore, substantial body of literature addresses the factors that influence the behavioral intention based on the theory of the planned behavior (TPB) model (for review, see Mäntymäki, Merikivi, Verhagen, Feldberg, and Rajala 2014) only a few studies (e.g., Aaron, Jayne and Fam, 2013) have investigated how cultural norms influence effects of the advertising appeal on the behavioral intention. It is a notable development in a line of research that conceptualizes behavioral intention as a global phenomenon and closely examines the behavioral intention process and outcomes. Despite its emphasis on the dynamic of behavioral intention and the context of behavior promising findings in initial investigations, the TPB model remains largely detached from a consideration of the impact of cultural relational norms. We argue that incorporating the effects of cultural relational norms constitutes a significant advance in the model of TPB.

To address this research lacuna, this article explores the interaction effects of cultural norms and advertising appeal on behavioral intention. Broadly speaking, the theory of planned behavior suggests that the formulation of the intention-behavior due to the individual contextual factors (Aizen and Klobas, 2013). From this short description alone, we can see that the “contextual” approach to the behavioral intention requires a rethinking of the cultural variations. As stated by Ajzen (2011), it is not only the social pressure characteristics that determine behavior and attitude - behavior intention is also a function of individual cultural norms and value within the social context of that individual environment.

Therefore, this study contributes to enhance the understanding of the scope of the advertising appeal effects on the behavioral intention in line with the phenomena of the effects of cultural values (Zhou, Poon and Wang, 2015) within the cultural dimension's framework of the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) (House, Quigley and de Luque, 2010). To date, the connection of advertising appeal with the behavioral intention based on cultural variation by utilizing the cultural dimension's outline presented in the (GLOBE) which remains limited in marketing and communication literature (Terlutter et al., 2006, Teagarden, 2005). GLOBE cultural dimensions provide a more comprehensive framework to tap the cultural values compared to the Hofstede, Schwartz, Smith, and Inglehart frameworks.

## 2. Review of literature

**Theory of Planned Behavior:** The basic approach of the theory of planned behavior (TPB) shows the factors involved in the development of the certain intention (Ajzen, 2011). Though, it also indicates that how certain factors contribute to the processing of the individuals involved in the formulation of the intention to take a decision about the adoption of the behavior (Aizen and Klobas, 2013). According to the TPB, the intention to take the decision is determined due to the involvement of the certain deliberation which is consequent of the antecedents of the theory (Ajzen, 1991, 2011). However, each antecedent has its own impact on the intention formulation as its predictor. Chen and Tung (2014) noted that these antecedents of the (TPB) theory possibly get affected by many stimulus elements and need to be re-conceptualized. Therefore, studies such as Walden (2012) suggested working on said postulations to address this detachment of (TPB) with some factors like the advertising. Previous studies on (TPB) identified that some of the antecedents such as subjective norm and behavioral control remain weaker predictors of the intention (Sniehotta, 2009). Therefore, the inconsistency in predicting intention remains an issue in the literature based on the several reasons. For example, one of the studies identified that the notion of the subjective norm in the (TPB) is only limited to address the family influences. Therefore, it needs a more intensive explanation to improve the predictivity of the intention outcome. Similarly, Ajzen (2012) pointed toward the value of the element of the accurate information its effect on the individual's judgment about taking the decision about the intention. They also explain that how accurate information and previous knowledge can, in fact, affect attitude which is an important antecedent of the (TPB). Moreover, previous studies also indicate the disassociation of the stimuli factors such as information seeking and advertising with the behavioral intention. However, Ajzen, Joyce, Sheikh, and Cote (2011) indicated that predictors of the theory work positively in case if the information related to the values that individual holds. Subsequently, it enhances the scope of the cultural explanation of the (TPB) in the

context of the advertising appeal which also serves as the stimuli for the measures of the theory (Tsungkuangand Dong, 2009), but remains disassociate with such explanation.

**Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE):** House, Javidan, Hanges and Dorfman (2002) explained that behavioral practices of individuals of any culture can be examined by measuring individuals' responses on the cultural dimensions presented in GLOBE project. Additionally, these dimensions facilitate to improve different modes of learning about the cultural expectations in the response to any external phenomena involved to pursue the individuals of the said culture (House et al., 2002). However, the notion of norms is considered as the expectation related to the culture that one how to behave in a specific situation. Many researchers utilized this approach to measure the responses of the individuals to understand the diversity of any culture in terms of explaining the cultural variability (Minkov and Blagoev, 2012). Therefore, GLOBE dimensions are highly useful in different disciplines and its utilization in the sphere of advertising to explain cultural influences on the effects of advertising on the intention remains a minimal issue in the previous literature.

Further, the GLOBE dimensions of culture unlike previous cultural frameworks such as Hofstede and Schwartz have fewer validation issues. Hence, House et al. (2010) stated that GLOBE framework may be used to better interpret the cultural aspects to measure cultural influences on individuals' actions on the individual and societal level at a time. Diehl, Mueller, and Terlutter (2014) also noted that notion of the cultural variation can be helpful to understand the cultural context in the discipline of the advertising. For example, it may help to explain that how individual thinks to adopt a certain behavior in the response to an advertisement. Therefore, the GLOBE dimensions can also be supportive to explain the role of the advertising about the cultural preferences of the individual towards the behavioral intent (Engelen and Brettel, 2011). However, some previous studies considered GLOBE dimensions to measure the influence of the culture on the advertising effects and utilized some of its dimensions but remain minimal explanatory because of the limited consideration of dimensions in term of measuring the relation (Terlutter et al., 2006). Consequently, the deliberation of all nine dimensions presented in the GLOBE framework can explicit the diverse relation of the influence of the cultural norms and in defining the advertising link to the individual's culturally preferences towards the magnification of the intention.

**The relationship between Advertising Appeal and Attitude:** "Advertising appeal is the defined as the features of the advertising managed and arranged in the advertisements to grab the attention of the potential purchasers" (Schmidt and Eisend, 2015p.231). Advertising appeal is also considered as the key objective of the advertising as it tempted to give appeal to the targeted audience. The advertisers use several modes of the advertising ranging from the television advertising to the billboards and appropriate appeals are designed to it. Additionally, this is also one of the vital aims of any advertiser to use the appropriate advertising appeal in the advertisements. As Wang, Shih and Peracchio (2013) also noted that the use of appropriate appeals probably increases the chances to attain the basic objectives of the advertising. Whereas, attitude is considered as an expression of the goodwill or the disapproval of the thing, idea or the person. Attitude is also described as the position of the individual based on its internal evaluation in respect of the tendency or the orientation towards the person, character or the object and depends on the experiences and motivation (Sallam and Wahid, 2012). Furthermore, attitude differs based on the motivation asked towards the specific stimulus in the form of an idea, person or product so that the attitude formulation is highly dependent on the position of the asked phenomena. Dianoux, Linhart, and Vnouckova (2014) explained that advertising motivates the individual to adopt positive attitude through manipulating the thought process of an individual.

Furthermore, the advertising is the input for constructing, generating and supporting the ideas. Therefore, advertisements may participate a key position in convincing, enlightening and deliberate both probable and existing consumers towards changing their attitude which consequences positive intention (Bisht, 2013, Luna-Nevarez and Torres, 2015). Therefore, advertising appeal takes part in the significant and visible change in the attitude by shaping imaginings and ambitions which help individuals to take conscious behavioral decisions.

Therefore, based on the above-review of literature, it is expected that attitude and advertising appeal have a direct dynamic connection. This further defines the relationship between advertising and behavioral intention. This issue remains some uncertain phenomena in the body of literature. Therefore,

there is a probability that in the case of the positive attitude-advertising appeal connection, a positive intention may be formulated. At the same time, there is the probability that in the case of negative connection, the results may be reversed. Thus, we propose the following proposition:

**Proposition 1:** There is a direct positive relation between Advertising appeal and attitude.

**The relationship between Attitude and Behavioral Intention:** The Behavioral intention is known as “the individuals' apparent chance of the likeness or subjective prospect to adopt or engage in the certain behavior” (Ajzen, 2011 p.13). Besides, it is also an assumption of the TPB model that attitude is the direct predictor of the behavioral intention. As Kidwell (2007) explained it as the one's readiness and willingness to complete the certain action. Additionally, behavioral intention is a well-established predictor of one's behavior, but on the other hand, its formulation depends on one's attitude as deliberated in the (TPB). As Zemore and Ajzen (2014) stated that the attitude is one of the significant predictors of the intention.

In the existing literature on the process formulation of the behavioral intention, attitude is considered significant among all the involved antecedents in the dimension to the effect and explaining behavioral intention (Ajzen, 2011, Alam and Sayuti, 2011, Glasman and Albarracín, 2006). Many studies in the previous literature indicate that attitude is a powerful predictor of the behavioral intention. Hence, it has a significant relationship with the process of the developing behavioral intention of the individual towards any phenomena (Amaro and Duarte, 2015).

Additionally, there is enough literature is available which suggested some other factors like low involvement and high involvement also directly affects the attitude in the direction of the behavioral intention (Chun, Song, Hollenbeck and Lee, 2014, Sallam and Wahid, 2012). Chun et al. (2014) consequently in their study found that individuals demonstrate more inclined and have a positive attitude towards contextually appropriate advertising which enhances the involvement of the individual towards the behavioral intention. However, attitude gets direct influence from the certain advertised aspects which help to determine the behavioral intention but needs systematic explanation. Therefore, the current study is a focus to explain this mediating effect of the attitude on the behavioral intention. Therefore, to explain the said phenomena we propose that:

**Proposition 2:** There is a positive relation between attitude and behavioral intention

**The relationship between Advertising Appeal and Behavioral Intention:** It is suggested that advertising appeal has more effectiveness and its exposure is considered as the foremost instrument frequently used in the marketing to persuade the individuals. For instance, repetition of the advertising appeal is effective in the marketing strategy to enhance the chances to get the behavioral change. As suggested by Bisht (2013) that the intentional related changes may be routed through the effect of advertising initially on the attitude. There are many other studies such as Dianoux, Linhart, and Vnouckova (2014) which tempted to address the effectivity of the advertising appeal and its connection with the behavioral intention. However, previous studies also found involvement of many significant factors in giving strength to their direct connection (Alam and Sayuti, 2011, Bamoriya and Singh, 2011).

Cochoy (2015) explicit that advertising serves as a tendency to act in response to a positive or adverse mode to precise advertising motivation through its exposure. Furthermore, he found that advertising enhances the aspiration of the individuals which lead them to the reshaping of their behavioral intent by influencing their attitude at the same time. Therefore, the attitude of the individuals towards the advertising has a strong relationship which further engages noteworthy role in the modification the behavioral intent (Myers, Royneand Deitz, 2011).

Whereas, individual's behavioral intention has a direct link to the advertising appeal as it has specifically designed contents and considered as the deliberate effort to reshape the behavior of the people (Dao et al., 2014, Tsung-kuang and Dong, 2009, Fullerton et al., 2013). However, this is also a fact that advertising success is also measured the change in the behavior of the individuals as it is amongst the vital objective of the advertising appeal (George, 2004). Hence, there are many previous studies accessible which indicate the significance of this relationship, but, remain less explained in terms of addressing this relationship by using TPB framework. Therefore, we propose following a proposition:

**Proposition 3:** There is a positive relation between the advertising appeal and behavioral intention.

**The Mediating Effects of Attitude:** Fullerton et al. (2013) conducted a study and explored that there is inconsistency in the results of the previous studies in defining the relationship of the attitude and behavior. This provides strength to the idea of mediation of attitude as intention may have an indirect connection with the advertising appeal. For example, advertising appeal may improve the attitude which leads towards the definite behavioral intention (Upadhyay, 2014, Wang and Sun, 2010). Myers et al. (2011) also indicated that the primary objective of the advertising is to manipulate the behavior which may be routed through the attitude. Furthermore, this link is highly appraised and depended on the content of the advertising as well. Therefore, Upadhyay (2014) suggested for conducting more effort to give a better explanation of the relationship between the behavioral intent and advertising appeal as their link is highly dependent on the factor of attitude formation.

On the other hand, advertising may consequence a positive behavior towards the ideas, products, or services by affecting the intention of the individual (Cochoy, 2015, Raza, Bakar, & Mohamad, 2017). Therefore, the advertiser uses such advertising appeal that may affect the intention of the individuals through changing attitudes. For example, nowadays advertisers are using more innovative and sophisticated ways such as using folk music in the advertisements to pursue the attitude of the individuals which may affect their behavioral intentions (Carlson, 2015). Many studies (for review see Myers et al., 2011, Wang and Sun, 2010) conducted in the past found a significant level of the manipulation of new innovative ideas through the advertising. Hence, these studies also indicated some mediating factors and suggested to do more research to explicit this phenomenon. Thus, the use of innovative contexts in future studies may suggest interesting findings by considering the attitudes underlying mechanism. Based on the above gap in the literature, we propose that:

**Proposition 4:** The relation between the advertising appeal and behavioral intention is mediated by attitude.

**Moderation of Cultural Norms in the Relationship between Behavioral Intentions and Advertising Appeal:** There is a growing number of the literature which points towards the cross-cultural perspective to determine the effect of the cultural differences in the formulation of the behavioral intention. However, researchers found it as a significant factor which influences the behavioral intention (Muk and Chung, 2014, See, 2013). Muk and Chung (2014) described that there is an affirmative relation to the influence of the culture on the intention in its link with the advertising as they found consistency variation of 0.81 to 0.95. However, these findings clearly indicate that more work in this discipline because the nature of the culture is the aspect which can determine the variation of the culture. Therefore, the influence of the culture on the intention can be clearly explicit by considering the factor of variation by applying appropriate cultural dimension model which also determines the dynamics of cultural norms in detail in respect of their influence on the individual's culturally preferences towards the intention (de Mooij and Hofstede, 2010).

Despite, that the cultural norms affect the intention by influencing it on the motivational level of the individual it would be interesting to find that how it determines the ad-intention link (Lee and Sean, 2015). Additionally, it is also suggested in the literature that there is enough evidence that the advertising appeal stimulates the desired intention towards the idea or thing (Fullerton et al., 2013, Hsiao and Chang, 2013, Lee, Hamand Kim, 2013). Consequently, it shows that this relationship is complex in nature and need more insight view by consideration of the dynamics of cultural varies to determine the significance of this influence on the link between advertising appeal and behavioral intention (Mueller, Diehl and Terlutter, 2015, de Mooij and Hofstede, 2010).

Therefore, the current study is proposing a model based on the GLOBE dimensions which may contribute to give a cultural insight of the dynamic link between advertising and intention. It also may improve the prediction of the intention through TPB notion of the subjective norm as we proposed to re-conceptualize it with GLOBE dimensions. The cultural context of the individuals that they utilize to evaluate the advertising is not fully cleared as the previous models used the ecological approach instead of onion one (Diehl et al., 2014, House et al., 2010). Even though, Fullerton et al. (2013) found that the

advertising stimulates the individuals to motivate them towards the desired behavioral intention. However, how intention in the result of the advertising appeal can be predicted based on the cultural preferences of the individuals is still an unaddressed query in the literature. For that reason, we propose the following proposition and conceptual model to tap the influence of the cultural norms in the relationship of the advertising appeal and behavioral:

**Proposition 5:** The relation between Advertising appeal and Behavioral Intention are strongest when the individual's predisposition is positive towards the Advertising appeal due to its similarity to the cultural norms.

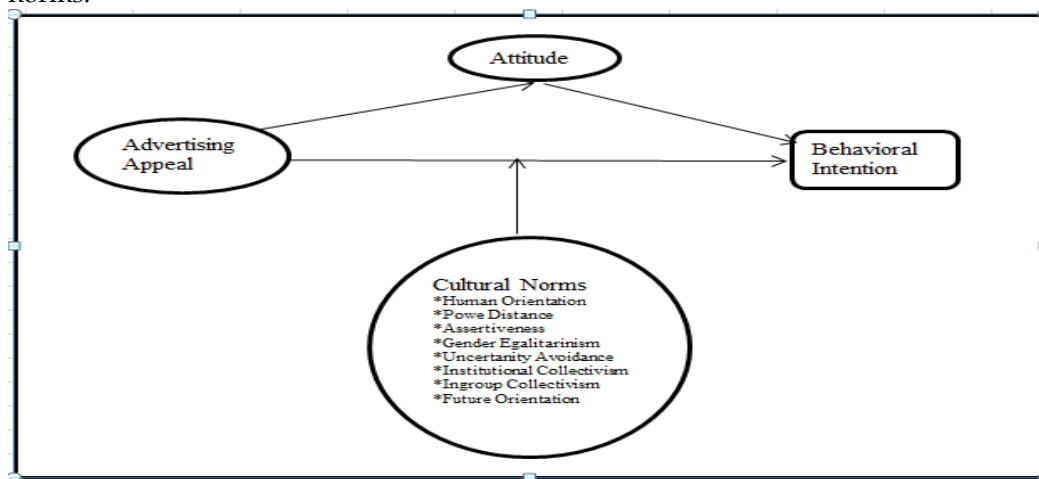


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Model.

### 3. Limitations and future directions

The paper is a theoretical contribution, but still, some limitations are expected. The vital limitation of this paper is the only temp to explain the advertising appeal-behavioral intention relation by identifying some possible moderated and mediating variables such as the attitude. Prior studies remain inconsistent in explaining some elements like dependency of individuals for the purpose of the information seeking on the advertising and modern usage or involvement of digital age on advertising. These factors may be explained in future research to fully understand some more antecedents which possibly affect the behavioral intention. Bamoriya and Singh (2011) suggested doing future research on these aforesaid areas; it would be interesting to study these elements and their effects on the mediating role of the attitude.

Secondly, there are few limitations of the current study, there is need to have cultural explanation of the relationship between the advertising appeal as it is mentioned in the literature (e.g Minkov and Blagoev, 2012, Terlutter et al., 2006) that the cultural dimensions proposed in the GLOBE project enhance the scope of the determining the cultural aspects of the advertising effects on the individuals. Diehl et al., (2014) suggests that these dimensions are useful to understand the process of the individual's perception towards the adoption of the certain intention so it is quite interesting to determine the cultural influence in the dynamic link of the advertising with the intention, but it is not the predictor of the actual behavior of the (TPB). At the same time, the cultural explanation of the (TPB) in this context has a limitation of this study just limited to identifying the cultural influence on intention but remains unclear about the behavior actions.

Lastly, as this paper is only a theoretical exploration, not the empirical one. It is probable that this conceptual model may improve the understanding about moderation of the norms and the mediating role of the attitude to address the relation of the advertising appeal and intention. The proposed model may be empirically examined in different contexts and culture to determine the cultural explanation of the (TPB). This is in line with the Mäntymäki et al., (2014) suggestion to further explain the (TPB)'s antecedents and their positioning which is not completely investigated specifically, about the explanation of the mediating roles of (TPB) antecedents.

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