Integrated Framework of Attitude Formation and Attitude Change Theories: Contextualizing Educational Advertising and Media Literacy in Controversial Product Campaigns in South Asia

Safeena Yaseen [a, b, *], Dina Septiani [b], Ibtesam Mazahir [c]

[a] Bahria University, Karachi, Pakistan
[b] Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia
[c] Mohammad Ali Jinnah University, Karachi, Pakistan

Abstract

This study analyzes attitude theories within the context of controversial product advertisements in the South Asian region, with a focus on their educational, cultural, and media literacy implications. Attitude theories are broadly classified into two competing streams: attitude formation theories, which propose that attitudes are learned predispositions developed through information or direct experience, and attitude change theories, which suggest that attitudes can be altered in response to persuasive messages. Theoretical frameworks, including the Theory of Reasoned Action, Theory of Planned Behavior, Uses & Gratification Theory, Psychological Reactance Theory, and Elaboration Likelihood Model, are examined to understand their contributions to these perspectives. This study highlights the mechanisms through which attitudes are formed and changed, emphasizing the role of cultural insights, persuasive communication, media literacy, and consumer education in influencing perceptions. By bridging the gap between attitude formation and change theories, the paper offers a comprehensive understanding of how advertising influences consumer attitudes. The findings hold significant implications for marketers aiming to design advertising strategies that incorporate educational components and promote media literacy to help audiences critically engage with advertising content, fostering awareness and acceptance while respecting cultural sensitivities.

Keywords: attitude change, attitude formation, attitude theories, controversial products, advertising, South Asia, media literacy, media education.

1. Introduction

"Attitude" towards advertising has long been a major concern for advertising professionals and academic scholars (Aaker et al., 2001; Ajzen, Fishbein, 1975; Alsharif et al., 2024; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2022), especially for advertisers in South Asian countries where advertising controversial products is a significant challenge (Jangbar, 2023; Koumans et al., 2020). Consumers in the South Asian region are strongly influenced by their cultural and religious beliefs; therefore, advertisers must put great effort into managing consumers' favorable attitudes toward advertising controversial products (Zaki, Elseidi, 2023). Media literacy plays a crucial role in this process, enabling consumers to critically engage with advertising content, differentiate between misinformation and factual messaging, and develop informed perspectives on controversial products. Education is pivotal in addressing misconceptions, raising awareness, and fostering

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* Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: safeena.yaseen@hotmail.com (S. Yaseen)

informed attitudes toward these products. By incorporating media literacy-focused educational campaigns into advertising strategies, marketers can mitigate resistance and promote cultural sensitivity. Failure to do so can result in negative reactions from consumers, including negative publicity, product boycotts, and demands for banning advertisements (Yeung, 2022).

Controversial products are defined as "products, services, or concepts that for reasons of delicacy, decency, morality, or even fear, tend to elicit reactions of distaste, disgust, offense, or outrage when mentioned or openly presented" (Amy, Thiery, 2015; Lee et al., 2020). Personal hygiene/sexually oriented products such as sanitary pads and condoms are widely discussed as 'controversial products' (Banyte et al., 2014; Ekici et al., 2020; Prendergast et al., 2002). In this context, media literacy helps consumers navigate the discourse surrounding these products, enabling them to assess advertising messages critically rather than reacting based solely on cultural taboos. Educational initiatives, such as public health awareness campaigns, can play a critical role in normalizing discussions about these products and reducing cultural resistance. By emphasizing their necessity and benefits through media-literate educational content, marketers can improve acceptance and encourage positive attitudes.

The concept of attitude has been a mainstay in social psychology since the 1920s, and in advertising literature, attitude-based theories have been adopted from psychology (Dillard, Pfau, 2002; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2022; Liu, 2020; Zhao, 2018). There are competing theoretical considerations about attitude in advertising. As proposed by Attitude Formation Theories, attitude is a learned predisposition formed favorably or unfavorably towards some psychological object (Ajzen, Fishbein, 1975, 1980; Tiwari et al., 2023). However, Attitude Change Theories suggest that attitudes can be changed in response to persuasive advertisements (Brehm, 1966, 1981). Both theoretical approaches emphasize the importance of education in shaping attitudes, whether through initial learning or through cognitive shifts triggered by persuasive messaging. Media literacy serves as a moderating factor in this process, equipping consumers with the ability to critically assess persuasive techniques used in advertising and resist manipulation. For example, informative advertising that incorporates educational elements can help build consumer trust and alleviate skepticism toward controversial products.

To analyze the advertising attitude theories in the context of controversial product advertisements in the South Asian region, this paper uses a systematic literature review methodology (Lee et al., 2020; Liew, Karia, 2024). This study aims to bridge the gap between attitude change theories and attitude formation theories. Considering the advertisements of controversial products, this study seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of cultural insights and their influence on consumers in the South Asia region. Additionally, the study highlights the role of media literacy and consumer education in fostering informed attitudes, reducing cultural resistance, and enabling the effective communication of product benefits. The findings of this research offer valuable implications for advertising professionals and academic scholars, emphasizing the need for media literacy integration to navigate the complex landscape of controversial product advertising in South Asian countries.

2. Materials and methods

This paper employs a systematic literature review methodology to explore advertising attitude theories in the context of controversial product advertisements in the South Asian region (Liew, Karia, 2024; Pfajfar et al., 2023). The review focuses on the dichotomy between Attitude Formation and Attitude Change theories, analyzing their relevance and application to advertising of controversial products (Dolnicar, Demeter, 2023). Additionally, the study examines the role of consumer education and media literacy as a tool for fostering informed attitudes and reducing resistance to controversial advertisements. Educational elements within advertising were evaluated for their potential to enhance understanding and reshape cultural perceptions. The primary data sources for this review include academic journals Scopus and Web of Sciences. The keywords used in the search are, "*attitude formation theories, attitude change theories, advertising attitudes, controversial product advertisements, digital advertising, South Asian consumer behavior, cultural influences in advertising.*" Table 1 summarizes the inclusion and exclusion criteria followed for data extraction.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Data Collection

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Type of Studies	Peer-reviewed articles listed in Scopus and Web of Sciences	Non-peer-reviewed articles, Peer-reviewed articles not listed in Scopus and Web of Sciences
Content	Studies addressing attitude theories in advertising	Studies not available in English.
Focus Area	Papers on consumer attitudes towards controversial products	Research focusing on regions outside South Asia without transferable insights
Context	Studies focusing on the South Asian context or providing significant cultural insights	Publications before 2000, unless they are seminal works
Publication Date	Publications from 2000 onwards	Published before 2000

Following the systematic literature review methodology (Lima et al., 2024), the study selection process included several stages, comprising identification of studies, removal of duplicates, screening, and assessment of full-text research studies. In total 1,050 studies were identified initially, with 1,000 through database searching and 50 through other sources. Later on, the studies were categorized into those addressing attitude theories, attitude change theories, attitude formation theories, and controversial products. After removing duplicates, 900 unique studies were retained for further screening. This step ensured that the analysis was based on distinct and non-redundant data. The 900 studies were screened for relevance. Studies that were non-peer-reviewed or not listed in Scopus and Web of Science were excluded, resulting in 700 studies being filtered out. During this stage, special attention was given to studies examining educational components and media literacy in advertising strategies. This rigorous screening ensured the inclusion of high-quality research only. The full texts of the remaining 200 studies were assessed for eligibility. Only peer-reviewed articles listed in Scopus and Web of Science that addressed relevant attitude theories in advertising, cultural education, and consumer attitudes towards controversial products, analyzed in the context of consumers' education or media literacy pertinent to the South Asian context were included.

The systematic literature review method ensures that the research findings are grounded in insightful research data, offering valuable insights for marketers and advertising professionals in the South Asian region. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of integrating media education into advertising frameworks to navigate cultural sensitivities effectively. Table 2 summarizes the studies searched, selected, and analyzed by theoretical focus and controversial products.

Table 2. Stages of Studies Search, Selection, and Analysis

S. No	Stage	Total Studies	Attitude Theories	Attitude Change	Attitude Formation	Controversial Products
1.	Total studies identified	1,050	250	200	300	300
	Through database searching	1,000	240	190	280	290
	Through other sources	50	10	10	20	10
2.	Studies after duplicates removed	900	210	180	270	240
3.	Studies screened	900	210	180	270	240
	Non-peer-reviewed articles, peer-reviewed	700	160	140	210	190

S. No	Stage	Total Studies	Attitude Theories	Attitude Change	Attitude Formation	Controversial Products
	articles not listed in Scopus and Web of Sciences excluded based on initial screening.					
4.	Full-text peer-reviewed articles listed in Scopus and Web of Sciences articles included in the study	200	50	40	60	50

3. Discussion

Integrating attitude formation and attitude change theories provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and influencing consumer attitudes towards controversial products in advertising research. Attitude formation theories, such as the Theory of Reasoned Action, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and UGT elucidate the cognitive and social processes through which individuals develop attitudes based on beliefs, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Fauzi et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2020; Rutledge, 2024). These theories offer insights into the initial formation of attitudes towards controversial products, highlighting the importance of individual perceptions, social influences, and past experiences (Dillard, Pfau, 2002; Ilias et al., 2021; Ofosu Ampong, 2024). Education plays a vital role here by enhancing awareness and providing factual, stigma-free information that facilitates informed attitude formation, especially about culturally sensitive products. Educational and media literacy campaigns can serve as a bridge between consumers' perceptions and advertisers' messaging, helping to align consumer beliefs with product benefits.

On the other hand, attitude change theories, including Psychological Reactance Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model, focus on the mechanisms through which existing attitudes can be modified or altered in response to persuasive messages (Amarnath, Jaidev, 2020; Dillard, Pfau, 2002; Petty, Cacioppo, 1986; Zhang et al., 2023). These theories emphasize factors such as message content, source credibility, and audience receptivity in facilitating attitude change (Amarnath, Jaidev, 2020; Kurdi, Charlesworth, 2023; Massey et al., 2013). Incorporating media education into persuasive strategies enhances message effectiveness by equipping consumers with the knowledge needed to critically assess product information and overcome cultural biases. For instance, advertisements with an educational focus can reduce psychological resistance by addressing misconceptions directly and building trust by employing techniques such as fear appeals, social proof, or cognitive dissonance reduction, advertisers can strategically influence consumers' attitudes towards controversial products.

The integration of attitude formation and attitude change theories enables advertising researchers to develop comprehensive strategies for managing consumer attitudes towards controversial products. When combined with educational approaches, these strategies become more impactful by addressing not only the cognitive and emotional aspects of attitudes but also the informational gaps that often fuel resistance to controversial products. By understanding the interplay between these theoretical perspectives, marketers can tailor advertising messages to resonate with consumers' existing beliefs and values while strategically employing persuasive communication techniques to influence attitudes. This integrated approach facilitates a detailed understanding of how advertising influences consumer attitudes and provides valuable insights for designing effective advertising campaigns that drive desired outcomes in diverse market contexts.

In the cultural context of the South Asian region, particularly concerning controversial product advertisements (Amul, 2020), understanding both attitude formation and attitude change becomes crucial due to the unique socio-cultural dynamics at play (Ansari, Hyder, 2023; Shah et al., 2022). Attitudes in South Asian societies are often deeply rooted in cultural norms, religious beliefs, and societal values, which significantly influence consumers' perceptions and behaviors

towards controversial products (Raza et al., 2018). Education and media literacy in this context can help bridge cultural divides by fostering open dialogue and creating awareness about the benefits of these products while respecting societal values. For example, health education campaigns addressing the necessity of sanitary products can reduce stigma and encourage acceptance.

Attitude formation in the South Asian context is heavily influenced by cultural factors, such as collectivism, respect for authority, and traditional gender roles (Arora et al., 2023). For instance, attitudes towards products related to personal hygiene or sexuality may be shaped by cultural taboos and societal expectations surrounding these topics (Sierra et al., 2021). Advertisers need to consider these cultural insights when developing advertising strategies to ensure that messages resonate with the target audience while respecting cultural sensitivities (Yeung, 2022). Incorporating educational and media literacy elements into these strategies allows advertisers to address cultural taboos more effectively by offering scientific explanations or social endorsements, making such products more socially acceptable.

Moreover, the process of attitude change in South Asia requires careful navigation of cultural norms and values (Hosain, Mamun, 2023). Persuasive messages that challenge existing attitudes towards controversial products must be culturally sensitive and contextually relevant to avoid resistance or backlash from consumers (Jangbar, 2023). Advertisers may need to adopt indirect or subtle persuasion techniques that align with cultural norms, such as storytelling, symbolism, or appeals to social conformity (Ali, 2021; Braca, Dondio, 2023). Educational campaigns that incorporate culturally relevant narratives or role models can further support these messages, making them more relatable and impactful.

Furthermore, the role of social influence and interpersonal communication is paramount in the South Asian context (Shafi et al., 2023). Consumers often rely on word-of-mouth recommendations and social networks for product-related information and decision-making (Azemi et al., 2020). Therefore, advertisers can leverage social norms and peer influence to facilitate attitude change towards controversial products, emphasizing social acceptance and endorsement within the community (Olmedo et al., 2020). When combined with consumer educational campaigns, such strategies can enhance credibility and encourage group-level acceptance by fostering informed discussions within communities.

However, it's essential to recognize that attitudes towards controversial products in South Asia may be resistant to change due to deeply ingrained cultural beliefs and societal taboos (Narayan, Oru, 2024). Advertisers must approach attitude change with sensitivity and caution, acknowledging the complexities of cultural identity and the potential for unintended consequences (Khalid et al., 2023). Educational advertising campaigns can act as a buffer to these challenges by providing a gradual, knowledge-based approach to altering perceptions while respecting cultural boundaries.

Incorporating attitude formation and attitude change theories into controversial product advertisements in the South Asian region requires a comprehensive understanding of cultural dynamics and consumer behavior. When paired with educational advertising and media literacy initiatives, this integration becomes even more effective, as education empowers consumers with the knowledge to make informed decisions and reduces resistance stemming from cultural taboos. Advertisers must navigate the delicate balance between challenging existing attitudes and respecting cultural sensitivities to effectively influence consumer perceptions and behaviors. By integrating cultural insights into advertising strategies, marketers can foster positive attitudes towards controversial products while mitigating the risk of cultural backlash or regulatory scrutiny.

4. Results
The theories identified in the full texts of filtered out 200 studies included in the final analysis encompassed both attitude formation theories and attitude change theories in the context of consumers' literacy bout controversial product advertisements. Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and Uses & Gratification Theory (UGT) were identified as *Attitude Formation Theories* and Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and Psychological Reactance Theory (PRT) were identified as *Attitude Change Theories*. Mainly, consumers' education emerged as a context influencing both the formation and change of attitudes, as it equips consumers with the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions, particularly about culturally sensitive products. After the article selection process, the themes were extracted following the Grounded Theory for in depth analysis (Bryant, Charmaz, 2019; Charmaz, 2014; Connor et al., 2018).

Open codes were labeled initially by breaking down the text to identify fundamental concepts. Open codes were then organized into broader categories, known as axial codes, to highlight the relationships between concepts. Finally, themes were extracted that encapsulate the core theoretical constructs and their implications for attitude formation and change, particularly for controversial products in South Asia. Media literacy and Educational dimensions, such as public awareness initiatives and culturally informed learning strategies, were integrated into these themes, reflecting their potential to enhance understanding and mitigate resistance. Table 3 summarizes the themes extracted.

Table 3. Theme Extraction Based on Grounded Theory

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Themes	TRA	TPB	UGT	ELM	PRT	# of Papers
Cognitive evaluation, social norms, behavioral intentions	Cognitive and Social Processes	Cognitive and Social Processes	✓	✓				45
Belief outcomes, social pressures, normative beliefs	Beliefs, Attitudes, and Norms	Beliefs, Subjective Norms	✓	✓				38
Personal beliefs, peer expectations, societal norms	Personal and Social Influences	Individual Perception and Social Influences	✓	✓				30
Previous interactions, learned responses, habitual behaviors	Experience-based Attitude Formation	Past Experiences	✓					28
Cultural prohibitions, social acceptability, traditional norms	Cultural and Societal Norms	Cultural Taboos and Societal Expectations	✓	✓				25
Group loyalty, deference to authority, societal hierarchy	Social Hierarchy and Collectivism	Collectivism and Respect for Authority	✓	✓				22
Gender norms, role expectations, societal gender beliefs	Gender-based Attitude Formation	Traditional Gender Roles	✓	✓				20
Perceived ease, control beliefs, self-efficacy	Behavioral Control	Perceived Behavioral Controls		✓				40
Peer communication, social integration, interpersonal feedback	Interpersonal Influence	Social Influence and Interpersonal Communication	✓	✓	✓			18
Peer recommendations, social media influence, community discussions	Social Networks and Word-of-Mouth Influence	Word of Mouth and Social Networks	✓	✓	✓			35
Narrative techniques, symbolic meanings, cultural	Narrative Persuasion	Storytelling and symbolism			✓			32

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Themes	TRA	TPB	UGT	ELM	PRT	# of Papers
references								
Message quality, source trustworthiness, expertise	Persuasive Message Content	Message content and source credibility				✓		28
Attention, interest, willingness to engage	Audience Engagement	Audience receptivity				✓		36
Threat perception, conformity, peer influence	Persuasive Techniques	Fear appeals and social proof					✓	34
Discomfort, attitude-behavior consistency, resolution strategies	Dissonance Mitigation	Cognitive dissonance reduction					✓	26
Subtle messaging, indirect cues, non-directive influence	Subtle Persuasion	Indirect persuasion techniques	✓	✓				29
Social validation, community approval, peer endorsement	Social Endorsement	Social acceptance and endorsement					✓	24

Educational and media literacy campaigns were identified as cross-cutting themes, particularly in areas such as cognitive and social processes, cultural taboos, and interpersonal influence. By integrating education and awareness into strategies aligned with these themes, advertisers can promote informed decision-making and reduce resistance to controversial products.

The integration of Attitude Formation and Attitude Change theories provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and influencing consumer attitudes towards controversial products in South Asia. While Attitude Formation theories like TRA, TPB and UGT emphasize the role of cognitive and social processes, beliefs, and subjective norms (Bagozzi, 1986; Fauzi et al., 2023; Warraich et al., 2024), Attitude Change theories such as ELM and PRT focus on the mechanisms of persuasive communication and resistance to change (Brehm, 1966; Petty, Cacioppo, 1986). Media literacy campaigns complement these theoretical frameworks by fostering awareness, reducing misinformation, and encouraging a more open dialogue around controversial products.

The debate between Attitude Formation and Attitude Change theories highlights the dynamic nature of consumer attitudes (Kumar et al., 2023). While attitudes are initially formed through cognitive and social processes, they can be altered through persuasive messages that leverage cultural insights and social influences (Yoon, Lee, 2021). Cognitive and social processes are fundamental to both the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Bagozzi, 1986; Fauzi et al., 2023). The findings of this research confirm that attitudes are shaped through cognitive evaluations of expected outcomes and perceived social pressures. The dominance of this theme, reflected in 45 papers, features its broad applicability in understanding consumer attitudes towards controversial products. In South Asian cultures, where social norms and collective behaviors are paramount, educational and media literacy campaigns can play a transformative role by creating culturally resonant messages that align with societal values. For example, health education campaigns addressing the use of sanitary products or contraceptives can demystify these products and mitigate cultural resistance. Educational advertising campaign incorporated with media literacy initiatives efforts also amplify the effectiveness of persuasive techniques by providing a factual basis for message content, increasing audience receptivity, and building trust. This theme also resonates with the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), which emphasizes the active role of media consumers in seeking content that satisfies their cognitive and social needs (Blumler, Katz, 1974; Warraich et al., 2024).

Beliefs and subjective norms, central to TRA and TPB, directly influence attitudes and behavioral intentions (Zahari, Zain, 2024). This theme, addressed in 38 papers, highlights the significance of

individual beliefs about product outcomes and the social expectations that shape these beliefs. In the South Asian context, societal norms and community expectations heavily impact consumer behavior, making this theme critical for designing culturally resonant advertising messages.

Individual Perception and Social Influences encompass the personal and societal factors influencing attitude formation, aligning with both TRA and TPB (Saleem, Mirza, 2023). The 30 papers focusing on this theme highlight the complex interplay between personal beliefs and social expectations. In South Asian societies, where collective behavior and social conformity are highly valued, understanding these influences is crucial for managing consumer attitudes towards controversial products.

Past experiences play a significant role in shaping current attitudes, as noted in 28 papers. This theme aligns with the Experience-based Attitude Formation, suggesting that previous interactions and learned responses are crucial in the formation of attitudes towards controversial products (Bessen, Connell, 2024). In South Asia, past experiences are often intertwined with cultural and societal norms, reinforcing existing attitudes.

Extracted from 25 papers, cultural taboos and societal expectations themes is critical in shaping attitudes towards controversial products (Badewi et al., 2022). This theme highlights the importance of cultural prohibitions and social acceptability in attitude formation, particularly relevant in South Asian societies where cultural norms and traditional values are deeply entrenched.

Collectivism and Respect for Authority explored in 22 papers, emphasizes the influence of group loyalty, deference to authority, and societal hierarchy on attitude formation (Cantarero et al., 2021). In South Asian cultures, the collective nature of society and high regard for authority figures significantly impact consumer attitudes towards controversial products.

Traditional gender roles, addressed in 20 papers, shape attitudes towards certain controversial products (Gurrieri et al., 2016; Yaseen et al., 2020). This theme highlights the influence of societal gender beliefs and role expectations, which are particularly strong in South Asian cultures, affecting consumer perceptions and behaviors.

Perceived behavioral control, a core component of TPB (Vamvaka et al., 2020), is critical in understanding attitude formation, as noted in 40 papers. This theme reflects the importance of perceived ease, control beliefs, and self-efficacy in shaping attitudes towards controversial products.

Social influence and interpersonal communication, explored in 18 papers, emphasize the role of peer communication, social integration, and interpersonal feedback in attitude formation. This theme aligns with both TRA and TPB, as well as UGT (Abbas Naqvi et al., 2020; Wu, Kuang, 2021), highlighting the significance of social interactions in shaping consumer attitudes in South Asia.

The influence of word of mouth and social networks, addressed in 35 papers, is crucial in shaping consumer attitudes. This theme reflects the importance of peer recommendations, social media influence, and community discussions, aligning with TRA, TPB, and UGT (Kim, Cake, 2024).

Storytelling and symbolism, explored in 32 papers, are effective in narrative persuasion, a key component of UGT (Shagba et al., 2023). This theme highlights the power of narrative techniques and cultural references in influencing consumer attitudes towards controversial products.

Message content and source credibility, critical in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), are essential for persuasive message content (Ibrahim et al., 2024). This theme, noted in 28 papers, highlights the importance of message quality and source trustworthiness in changing attitudes.

Audience receptivity, a focus of ELM, is crucial in determining the effectiveness of persuasive communication (Xiao, Burke, 2024). This theme, addressed in 36 papers, highlights the role of attention, interest, and willingness to engage in attitude change.
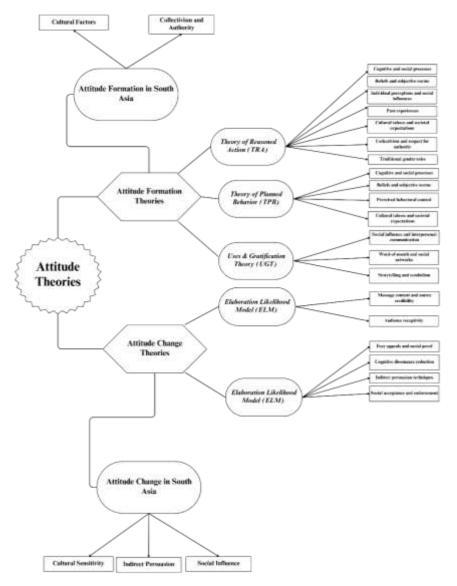
Fear appeals and social proof, explored in 34 papers, are persuasive techniques that can influence attitudes by highlighting threat perceptions and leveraging peer influence. This theme aligns with Psychological Reactance Theory (PRT), emphasizing the use of fear and conformity in changing attitudes (Boukamcha, 2024; Quick et al., 2023).

Cognitive dissonance reduction, a focus of PRT, is crucial for resolving discomfort and maintaining attitude-behavior consistency (Vaidis et al., 2024). This theme, noted in 26 papers, highlights the strategies for mitigating dissonance to facilitate attitude change.

Indirect persuasion techniques, explored in 29 papers, emphasize subtle messaging and indirect cues to influence attitudes (De Vooght, Hudders, 2023). This theme aligns with both TRA and TPB, highlighting the effectiveness of non-directive influence in changing attitudes.

Social acceptance and endorsement, addressed in 24 papers, are crucial for gaining community approval and peer endorsement (Sutia et al., 2023). This theme highlights the importance of social validation in facilitating attitude change, hence aligned with PRT.

Moreover, the integration of attitude formation and attitude change theories offers a robust theoretical framework. Derived from multiple theories highlighting the complex interplay of cognitive, social, and cultural factors that influence both the attitude formation and attitude change of consumer, this research conceptualized a comprehensive theoretical model for understanding the interaction of attitude formation and attitude change theories, and their influence on consumer attitudes towards advertising of controversial products. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical model built upon the insights derived from the systematic literature review of 200 articles, with each theory contributing distinct elements to the overall framework.

Fig. 1. Integrated Framework of Attitude Formation and Attitude Change Theories

The integration of attitude formation and attitude change theories offers a comprehensive approach to managing consumer attitudes towards controversial products. By understanding the cognitive and social processes underlying attitude formation and the mechanisms through which attitudes can be changed, advertisers can develop strategies that resonate with consumers' existing beliefs and values. This integrated approach facilitates an in depth understanding of how advertising influences consumer attitudes and provides valuable insights for designing effective educational advertising campaigns that drive desired outcomes in diverse market contexts.

The incorporation of educational initiatives into this theoretical framework provides advertisers with an actionable strategy for managing consumer attitudes towards controversial products. Education and media literacy serves as a unifying factor that supports both attitude formation and change by addressing cultural taboos, fostering informed discussions, and empowering consumers to make better-informed decisions.

In summary, the model demonstrates the complementary nature of attitude formation and attitude change theories, enhanced by education's transformative potential. Advertisers can leverage this integrated framework to navigate the complex landscape of controversial product advertising, ensuring their messages are not only culturally sensitive and persuasive but also educationally impactful.

5. Conclusion

In This study integrates Attitude Formation and Attitude Change theories by exploring their relevance and application to controversial product advertisements. Further, this research provides a comprehensive theoretical model by integrating these theories while incorporating education and media literacy as critical elements. This addition introduces a new dimension, emphasizing their transformative potential in shaping and modifying consumer attitudes. The theoretical model developed in this study is an original contribution to the existing body of knowledge, providing a baseline to understand how attitude formation and change theories interact within the digital advertising landscape of controversial products in South Asia.

Attitude Formation Theories, such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and the Uses & Gratification Theory (UGT), elucidate the cognitive and social processes that underlie the development of attitudes (Bagozzi, 1986; Kim, Cake, 2024; Zahari, Zain, 2024). These theories emphasize the importance of individual beliefs, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in shaping attitudes (Banerjee, Ho, 2020). In the South Asian context, additional cultural factors such as collectivism, respect for authority, and traditional gender roles play a crucial role in attitude formation. Media literacy strengthens this process by empowering consumers to critically evaluate advertising narratives, distinguish between persuasive intent and genuine information, and make informed judgments rather than relying solely on cultural biases. Educational efforts can reinforce these processes by addressing misconceptions and creating awareness about controversial products, thereby enabling informed attitude formation.

Attitude Change Theories, including the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and Psychological Reactance Theory (PRT), focus on the mechanisms through which existing attitudes can be modified (Ahn, Ham, 2022). These theories highlight the significance of message content, source credibility, and audience receptivity in facilitating attitude change (Dayton, Dragojevic, 2024). Media literacy enhances these mechanisms by equipping consumers with analytical skills to assess credibility, recognize manipulation tactics, and engage thoughtfully with advertising messages. In South Asia, culturally tailored educational and media literacy campaigns can address deeply rooted societal norms, reduce resistance, and promote acceptance of controversial products by fostering critical engagement with advertising content rather than passive reception.

The model demonstrates that an integrated approach, combining both attitude formation and change theories, enables advertisers to develop insightful strategies that resonate with consumers' existing beliefs and values while effectively influencing their attitudes. Media literacy complements educational campaigns by fostering trust, increasing consumer understanding, and addressing cultural taboos in a sensitive and informed manner. This comprehensive approach is particularly relevant in South Asia's culturally diverse and sensitive market, where societal values significantly impact consumer behavior. By enhancing consumers' media literacy skills, advertising strategies can promote transparency and empower consumers to interpret advertising messages with greater autonomy.

The integration of these theories provides valuable insights for advertising professionals and academic scholars to examine their interaction. Further, academic scholars can empirically test the theoretical model derived from this research. Media literacy-based educational initiatives can also serve as experimental platforms to validate the impact of integrating education and critical media engagement into attitude formation and change strategies. Moreover, advertising professionals can use these insights to design effective and ethically responsible advertising campaigns for controversial products. By leveraging the cognitive and social processes of attitude formation, the persuasive mechanisms of attitude change, and the informational power of educational and

media literacy campaigns, advertisers can create campaigns that are not only culturally sensitive but also equip consumers with critical thinking skills.

Additionally, the research calls attention to the pivotal role of cultural insights, persuasive communication strategies, and media literacy in shaping consumer attitudes in South Asia. Media literacy serves as a pragmatic tool to overcome cultural barriers by encouraging informed discussions, enabling consumers to decode advertising messages more critically, and reducing the impact of misleading or stigmatized portrayals of controversial products. Cultural norms and societal values exert significant influence on attitude formation, presenting distinctive challenges for advertisers. Keeping in view these cultural barriers, marketers can effectively shape consumer perceptions by integrating both cultural sensitivity and media literacy into advertising strategies.

Looking ahead, marketers must continue to integrate theoretical insights, media literacy, and educational strategies into their advertising campaigns while remaining attuned to cultural sensitivities. By incorporating media literacy-driven educational advertising campaigns as a foundational element, marketers can foster trust, build credibility, and empower consumers with the critical knowledge needed to navigate advertising messages effectively. This approach not only mitigates the risk of backlash or regulatory scrutiny but also creates a media-literate, informed consumer base. Ultimately, this study emphasizes the importance of a nuanced, culturally informed, and media literacy-driven approach to advertising in South Asia, enabling marketers to craft impactful, ethical, and socially responsible campaigns that resonate with consumers in this diverse and dynamic region.

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