The effect of advertising relevance on avoidance with advertising engagement: Perceived intrusiveness as mediation variable

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ABSTRACT

Despite many studies on online advertising and its effects, there are still few studies that try to examine the avoidance of advertising by a person. However, the number of advertisements that appears will make someone feel annoyed and trigger avoidance behavior towards the advertisement they see. Referring to psychological reactance theory, advertising can become a nuisance when it is considered unrelated and interferes with a person's freedom to access media which in turn can trigger avoidance behavior in an effort to regain his freedom. Using psychological reactance theory, the aim of this research was to further investigate the relationship between advertising linkage and advertising avoidance behavior mediated by advertising distraction and advertising engagement variables. This research uses Instagram as the object of research. Instagram was chosen because it is a social media whose number of users is growing every year and this is what triggers many marketers to place ads on Instagram. Respondents in this research were Instagram users who had avoided advertisements that appeared on their accounts, determining the number of samples in this research using a purposive sampling technique with a sample of 160 respondents. The method of collecting data is using a questionnaire, the data is analyzed using PLS-SEM.

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INTRODUCTION

Based on research conducted by wearesocial.com, until 2021 the number of social media users in Indonesia is recorded to reach 170 million users. The growing trend of using social media makes marketers start turning to online media to advertise. This is reflected in the cost of advertising on social media in Indonesia which reached $342 million in 2019 and increased to $439.2 million in 2020 (wearesocial.com, 2021). However, with all the conveniences obtained by marketers and the benefits obtained by social media platforms from online advertising, consumers have to be exposed to a lot of advertisements when using social media. The number of advertisements that appear can lead to ad avoidance behavior (Sujatmika, A, 2016). Although research related to the use of social media continues to grow (Zhang et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2020; Fu et al., 2020) there are still few research that has attempted to delve deeper into advertisement avoidance. Referring to the theory of psychological reactions (Brehm & Brehm, 1981), advertising avoidance behavior can arise due to the reaction of someone who perceives advertising as a distraction that limits their freedom.

Advertisement avoidance is a threat that causes advertisements to be ineffective and causes harm to advertisers (Jung, A. R., 2017). So, it is necessary to do research to find out things that can reduce the level of ad avoidance behavior by a person. Previous research (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020) argued that ad avoidance behavior is caused when advertisements are perceived as boring, uninformative and distracting. Meanwhile (Chang and Cho, 2004) show that avoidance of advertising behavior on the internet is caused by the perception of people who perceive messages from advertisements that are displayed as a nuisance. Research (Bang et al, 2018; Choi, YS, & Yu, S., 2018; Jung, AR 2017; Dodoo, NA, & Wen, J. 2019; Widodo, MS, & Kurniaiwati, M. 2020) advertising has an effect on reducing ad avoidance behavior. Previous research has focused on what can reduce ad avoidance rates (e.g. ad linkage, entertaining
ads and ad engagement)). However, research is still rare that tries to examine more deeply how the psychological mechanisms that occur to reduce the level of avoidance of an advertisement. However, advertising avoidance behavior is a drive that comes from within a person (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). For this reason, a psychological approach is needed to investigate more deeply about ad avoidance.

This study aims to investigate the relationship between advertising linkage and advertising avoidance behavior mediated by advertising distraction and advertising engagement variables. In this research, the interference caused by advertising and advertising engagement will be used as mediating variables to help explain the relationship between the relationship between advertising and ad avoidance behavior. Distraction by advertising reflects the form of negative reaction felt by a person when an advertisement that appears inappropriate and is perceived as a nuisance. The advertising engagement reflects a positive reaction when the ads that appear match what consumers are looking for. Instagram was chosen as the object of research because it has a growing number of users every year (wearesocial.com, 2021) making it an online medium that is often used to place online advertisements. In addition, the research environment that was not manipulated in this research was the development of previous research that manipulated the research environment (Bang et al, 2018; Yu, S., 2018; Höglund, G., & Syvertsson, A. 2018).

**Literature Review**

**Theoretical and Conceptual Background**

Reactance theory discusses the importance of freedom in making choices by illustrating it through the ways in which individuals reject or fight messages that are considered persuasive or invade their personal space (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). A similar view is also expressed by (Petrovici et al., 2017) where the importance of freedom in choosing something can cause a person to react to stimuli that are considered to interfere with their personal space. So if there is a stimulus in the form of a message that is considered to attack the individual's personal space, it can trigger a psychological reactance in the form of an unpleasant motivational state (Brehm and Brehm, 1981).

**Ads Relevance**

Advertising linkage was identified as an important factor for predicting the perceived value of advertising and as a factor that drives consumer attitudes and behavior towards marketing communications (Varnali, K. 2014). The linkage of content to advertisements not only makes the marketing message more attractive and useful, but also reduces the perceived distraction of the advertisement (Varnali, K. 2014). Thus, the high level of ad relatedness perceived by a consumer will increase his attention to the advertisement he sees (Celsi, RL, & Olson, IC 1988; Stewart, DW, 1990) so that it can reduce the level of ad avoidance (Bang, H et al. 2018). As for measuring the relevance of advertising, there are three indicators adapted from Jung, A. R., (2017) & Bang, H et al. (2018), namely: ads that appear on Instagram are considered valuable, ads that appear on Instagram are felt to be relevant to my wishes, advertisements that appear on Instagram are felt to be aimed at me.

**Ads Engagement**

Advertising engagement is defined as the extent to which consumers cognitively (consciously and interestedly), emotionally, and physically respond to an advertisement they see (Kim, Ahn, Kwon, & Reid., 2017). That is, when people engage with an advertisement, they are cognitively and emotionally immersed in it, this makes consumers will process the advertisement they see further (Bang, Kim, & Choi., 2018). As for measuring advertising engagement, there are four indicators adapted from Kim et al., (2015) and Bang et al, (2018), namely: ads that appear on Instagram are related to me, I feel like I want more information from ads on Instagram, the ads on Instagram are entertaining and the ads on Instagram attract attention.

**Ads Perceived Intrusiveness**

Advertising induced distraction is formed when advertising exposure is imposed on consumers (Höglund, G., & Syvertsson, A., 2018). Advertising-induced distraction describes the mechanism by which advertising evokes negative emotional reactions, such as irritation or annoyance (Li et al., 2002). To the extent that advertising is considered a nuisance, unpleasant feelings are likely to occur. In particular, advertisements that are considered intrusive will lead to advertisements that are not well received (Li et al., 2002). As for measuring the disturbance caused by advertising, there are three indicators adapted from (Petrovici, DA, Marinova, ST, & Marinov, MA 2017) and (Rezaei, S et al., 2018), namely: advertisements that appear on Instagram are considered disturbing, the ads that appear on Instagram are felt to be blocking, the ads that appear on Instagram are felt to be annoying and the ads that appear on Instagram are felt to be forced.

**Ads Avoidance**

Avoidance behaviors are all actions taken by media users to reduce their exposure to advertising content (Speck and Elliott, 1997). Referring to the definition of advertising which is any form of information to convey ideas or ideas related to a product or organization, (Guo et al., 2020) defines information avoidance behavior on social networks as a type of passive usage behavior, where users consciously ignore and avoid some information due to lack of time, energy, knowledge, or self-interest. Meanwhile, in measuring avoidance behavior, there are five indicators adapted from (Petrovici, DA, Marinova, ST, & Marinov, MA 2017) and (Bang et al., 2018), namely: hating ads that appear on Instagram, deliberately not paying attention to ads that appear on Instagram.
appear on Instagram, don't want to click on ads that appear on Instagram even though the ads are attracting attention, scroll up or down the Instagram page to avoid ads that appear, avoid advertisements that appear on Instagram.

**Conceptual Framework of the Research**

This research investigates four main constructs consisting of one independent variable (ads relevance) and one dependent variable (ads avoidance). In addition, this study also adds two mediating variables ads engagement and ads avoidance. For more details, see Figure 1 below:

![Figure 1: Research Framework and Hypothesis](image)

The hypotheses of this study are:

H1: Ads relevance has a significant effect on ads avoidance  
H2: Ads relevance has a significant effect on ads engagement  
H3: Ads relevance has a significant effect on ads perceived intrusiveness  
H4: Ads engagement has a significant effect on ads avoidance result  
H5: Ads perceived intrusiveness has a significant effect on Ads Avoidance  
H6: The effect of ads relevance on ads avoidance is mediated by ads engagement.  
H7: The effect of ads relevance on ads avoidance is mediated by ads perceived intrusiveness.

**Research and Methodology**

**Participants and Data Collection**

Instagram application users in East Java have avoided the ads that appear in the application. Because there are certain criteria for selecting the sample, a non-probability approach with a purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample in this study. The sample in this study amounted to 160. The technique of data collection in this research used a questionnaire.

**Data Analysis**

The method of data analysis uses SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) based on Partial Least Square (PLS) that uses SmartPLS 3.0 software application.

**Measurements**

All indicators to measure the four variables were adopted from several previous studies. Indicators of ads relevance variables were adapted from Jung, A. R., 2017 & Bang, H et al. 2018 study which consisted of 3 indicators. Ads avoidance variables were measured through 5 indicators from Petrovici, D. A., Marinova, S. T., & Marinov, M. A. 2017) and (Bang et al., 2018). Ads engagement variables were measured through 4 indicators from Kim et al., (2015) dan Bang et al., (2018). Ads perceived intrusiveness variables were measured through 3 indicators from (Petrovici, D. A., Marinova, S. T., & Marinov, M. A. 2017) and (Rezaei, S et al., 2018).

**Analysis and Findings**

Statistical tests were conducted to measure the validity and reliability in this research. Table 1 indicates that the scale, magnitude, and statistical concordance have been accepted. The average variance extracted (AVE) value of all latent variables shows a score of 0.714 for the Ads Relevance variable, 0.676 for the Ads Engagement variable, 0.661 for the Ads Intrusiveness variable, and 0.626...
for the Ads Avoidance variable. Cronbach's alpha value for the reliability criteria is quite high; Ads Avoidance has the highest cronbach alpha value. Sequentially, the value of the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the four variables used in this research ranged from 0.8 to 0.85, they were acceptable.

Table 1: Composite Reliability, Cronbach Alpha, AVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Composite Reliability</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ads Relevance</td>
<td>0.822</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ads Engagement</td>
<td>0.893</td>
<td>0.839</td>
<td>0.676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ads Perceived Intrusiveness</td>
<td>0.886</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td>0.661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ads Avoidance</td>
<td>0.893</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.626</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data processed, 2021

Composite reliability (CR) values are 0.822, 0.893, 0.886, 0.893 (above 0.80), respectively. It can be concluded that all constructs are reliable, both according to composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. The R-square value of the E-loyalty variable in this research model is 0.659. Goodness of Fit (GoF) in this research is calculated using the equation $Q^2 = 1 - (1-R12) x (1 - R22) x (1 - R32) = 1 - (1 - 0.652) (1 - 0.452)(1-0.698) = 0.942$. A score of 0.942 on the Q-Square calculation shows that the model in this research can be said to have a good goodness of fit.

Table 2: Hypothesis Testing Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Relationship Between Variable</th>
<th>Path Coefficient</th>
<th>t-statistics</th>
<th>p-values</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Ads Relevance → Ads Avoidance</td>
<td>-0.246</td>
<td>2.450</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Ads Relevance → Ads Engagement</td>
<td>0.807</td>
<td>26.379</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>Ads Relevance → Ads Perceived Intrusiveness</td>
<td>-0.673</td>
<td>13.248</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td>Ads Engagement → Ads Avoidance</td>
<td>-0.459</td>
<td>4.547</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5</td>
<td>Ads Perceived Intrusiveness → Ads Avoidance</td>
<td>0.193</td>
<td>2.403</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6</td>
<td>Ads Relevance → Ads Engagement → Ads Avoidance</td>
<td>-0.370</td>
<td>4.255</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7</td>
<td>Ads Relevance → Ads Perceived Intrusiveness → Ads Avoidance</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>2.394</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2022

Based on the results of the analysis in table 2, it is known that the effect of ad linkage on advertising engagement has a t-statistic value greater than the t-table value (2.450 > 1.96). It can be concluded that the ad linkage variable has a significant effect on ad avoidance, so H1 is accepted. The effect of ad linkage on advertising engagement has a t-statistic value greater than the t-table value (26.379 > 1.96). It can be concluded that the advertising linkage variable has a significant effect on advertising engagement, so H2 is accepted. The effect of the linkage of advertisements on interference by advertisements has a t-statistic value greater than the t-table value (13.248 > 1.96), concluded that the advertising linkage variable had a significant effect on interference by advertising, so H3 was accepted. The effect of ad linkage on advertising engagement has a t-statistic value greater than the t-table value (4.547 > 1.96), concluded that the variable of advertising engagement has a significant effect on ad avoidance, so H4 is accepted. The effect of distraction by advertising on ad avoidance has a t-statistic value greater than the t-table value (2.403 > 1.96) concluded that, the variable interference by advertising has a significant effect on ad avoidance, so H5 is accepted. The effect of ad linkage on ad avoidance through ad engagement has a t-statistic value greater than the t-table value (4.255 > 1.96). It can be concluded that, the advertising linkage variable has a significant effect on ad avoidance through advertising engagement, so H6 is accepted. The effect of ad linkage on ad avoidance through distraction by advertising has a t-statistic value greater than the t-table value (2.197 > 1.96), it can be concluded that, the advertising linkage variable has a significant effect on ad avoidance through interference by advertisements, so H7 is accepted.

Discussion

The effect of Ads Relevance on Ads Avoidance

This research resulted in the finding that advertising linkage has a negative and significant effect on ad avoidance. This can be interpreted that the decreased level of perceived ad relevance will increase the level of ad avoidance by someone and vice versa, by increasing someone's relationship with an advertisement it will reduce the level of ad avoidance. In addition, the results of the research also show that consumers avoid advertising if the advertisements they see are deemed worthless and related to their desires.
Advertising linkage is a condition where the advertised product or information is related to the consumer's personal needs (Jung, A. R., 2017). Therefore, it is important for advertisers to determine the target of the ads they create and make these ads valuable for the consumers who see them. This research also supports the results of several previous studies including (Bang et al., 2018; Jung, AR 2017; Li, X., et al., 2020; Dodoo, NA, & Wen, J. 2019) which found a significant relationship between advertising linkage variables and ad avoidance.

The Effect of Ads Relevance on Ads Engagement

Advertising engagement is a psychological experience that makes a person feel involved in an advertisement (Kim, Ahn, Kwon, & Reid., 2017). That is, when someone feels involved with an advertisement, they will enjoy the advertisement more, the positive response will increase a person's desire to process the ad further (Bang et al, 2018). From the results of the analysis of the direct influence between the linkages of advertising with advertising engagement, it was found that the linkage of advertising had a positive and significant effect on advertising engagement, so that the second hypothesis, namely the linkage of advertising, had an effect on advertising engagement. As for the results of the frequency distribution of the advertising engagement variable, it is known that consumers who avoid advertising perceive the information they get is not related to them. Next, they feel like they don't want more information from the ads they avoid on Instagram. Furthermore, they feel that the advertisements they avoid are unattractive and not entertaining. This research also supports several previous studies including (Kelly et al., 2010; Widodo et al., 2020; Kim, J et al., 2017; Kim, et al., 2015) which revealed a significant positive relationship between advertising linkage variables with the advertising engagement variable. That is, the more a consumer has a high degree of relevance to an advertisement, the more a person's engagement with the advertisement will be. Therefore, advertisers must pay attention to several indicators related to advertising engagement variables such as: information content contained in advertisements, attractive advertisement displays and entertaining content, so as to reduce advertising avoidance behavior by consumers.

The Effect of Ads Relevance on Advertisement Perceived Intrusiveness

The results of the analysis of the direct influence between the linkage of advertisements to interference by advertisements show that the linkage of advertisements has a negative and significant effect on interference by advertisements. Thus, the third hypothesis is that the linkage of advertisements has a negative effect on interference by received advertisements. That is, when consumers have a low level of attachment to an ad, it will increase the level of distraction they feel from the ad. Vice versa, these results support several previous studies including (Höglund & Syvertsson., 2018; Dodoo & Wen., 2019; Varnali., 2014; Mercanti-Guérin., 2020., Wehmeyer., 2007).

The Effect of Ads Engagement on Ads Avoidance

The results of this research indicate that advertising engagement has a significant negative effect on advertisement avoidance. It means that the low engagement t felt by an individual when viewing an advertisement will increase the level of ad avoidance. As for their research, Bang et al (2018) revealed that when someone feels involved with an advertisement, they will enjoy the advertisement more, while the positive response arising from the engagement of the advertisement will increase a person's desire to process the advertisement further. Thus, when an individual does not feel involved in an advertisement, it will cause a negative response that leads to advertisement avoidance. The results of the research are in line with research (Widodo & Kurniawati., 2020; Bang et al., 2018; Choi & Yu., 2018) which found that advertising engagement had a significant negative effect on ad avoidance.

The Effect of Ads Perceived Intrusiveness on Ads Avoidance

Distraction caused by advertising is formed when advertising exposure is forced on consumers (Höglund, G., & Syvertsson, A., 2018). Advertising-induced distraction describes the mechanism by which advertising evokes negative emotional reactions, such as irritation (Li et al., 2002). The results of this research indicate that distraction by advertising has a significant positive effect on ad avoidance. It means that the higher disturbance felt by an individual when viewing advertisements, the higher the level of ad avoidance. The results are in line with research (Dodoo & Wen., 2019; Li et al., 2002; Youn & Kim., 2019; Choi & Yu 2018; Goodrich et al., 2015) which found that distraction by advertising had a significant positive effect on advertisement avoidance. In theory, these results are in accordance with the psychological reactance theory of Brehm & Brehm (1981) where when someone is forced to see an advertisement that they do not want, they will perceive the advertisement as a distraction that disturbs their personal space and will cause negative responses such as avoidance. Therefore, it is important for advertisers to design an appropriate advertising content in order to reduce the annoyance experienced by consumers.

The Effect of Ads Relevance on Ads Avoidance is mediated by Ads Engagement.

The results of the research indicate that the linkage of advertising has a significant effect on the avoidance of advertising through advertising engagement. The mediating impact of advertising engagement is known to be partial mediation. This means that the low engagement felt by a consumer in an advertisement has an impact on consumer behavior to avoid advertising. These results are in line with research (Bang et al., 2018 & Kim, J et al., 2017). The low level of connectedness felt by consumers to an advertisement is a factor causing ad avoidance. Referring to the S-O-R framework (stimulus, organism, response) the mediating role of the advertising engagement variable shows what consumers feel when they get a stimulus in the form of an advertisement they see and then give a response to the advertisement. Meanwhile, in this research, consumers who avoid advertising perceive the relevance of advertising as
a stimulus they get from the environment, has a low level of linkage. So that the low relevance of the advertisement causes consumers to feel uninvolved and do not want to process the ad further which in turn causes ad avoidance behavior.

The Effect of Ads Relevance on Ads Avoidance is mediated by Ads Perceived Intrusiveness

The results showed that the linkage of advertisements had a significant effect on the avoidance of advertisements through interference by advertisements. The impact of mediating interference by advertising is known to be partial mediation. These results are in line with research (Li, B., & Yin, S. (2021). It means that, the low level of relevance of advertising perceived by a consumer in an advertisement has an impact on consumer behavior to avoid advertising. Consumers towards an advertisement is a factor causing ad avoidance Referring to the SOR framework (stimulus, organism, response) the mediating role of interference variables by advertising shows what consumers feel when they get a stimulus in the form of an advertisement they see and then give a response to the advertisement. Meanwhile, in this research, consumers who avoid advertising perceive the linkage of advertisements as a stimulus they get from the environment, has a low level of relevance, so that the low linkage of these advertisements causes consumers to feel disturbed by the presence of these advertisements which in turn leads to ad avoidance behavior. As for referring to the psychological reactance theory of Brehm & Brehm (1981) it is explained that an individual feels disturbed when his personal space has been invaded by things, they do not want which cause a negative reaction from the individual. That is, the perceived distraction by advertising is the impact of advertising that is too forced on consumers to interfere with their personal space and lead to negative reactions such as advertisement avoidance.

Conclusion

The results of this research can be concluded that ads relevance can directly affect ads avoidance, and is partially mediated by ads engagement and ads perceived intrusiveness. Consumers will avoid advertisements if they feel that the advertisements, they see on Instagram are not related to their needs and wants. When a consumer feels that the advertisements they see are related to their wants or needs, it will increase the level of consumer ads engagement to process the ad further thereby reducing the level of ads avoidance. Conversely, when consumers feel that the advertisements they see are not related to their wants and needs, it will increase the level of ads perceived intrusiveness which makes consumers uncomfortable so that it will increase the level of ads avoidance. Therefore, it is important for advertisers to pay attention to the level of relevance of the ads they will display with their target consumers.

This research is limited to Instagram users who avoid advertising in the East Java region. Further research can be done by choosing other research locations by considering the number of Instagram users in the area. This research model should also be tested on other social media, such as social media Facebook, Youtube and Tik-Tok to see the consistency of research results using the same research model as this research model. Further research can also add control variables of age, gender, education level and occupation for more in-depth results. This research in the future still needs to be enriched by increasing the number of respondents used as research samples, because the larger the number of research samples is expected to provide better research results.

Acknowledgement

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, MC., AD., SP.; Methodology, MC., AD., SP.; Data Collection, MC., AD., SP.; Formal Analysis, MC., AD., SP.; Writing—Original Draft Preparation, MC., AD., SP.; Writing—Review And Editing, MC., AD., SP. All authors have read and agreed to the published the final version of the manuscript.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study, due to that the research does not deal with vulnerable groups or sensitive issues.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Reference


Rezaei, S., Emami, M., & Ismail, N. (2018). Paid internet advertising (PIA) and frequency of apps stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.


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