Elements of advertisement and their impact on buying behaviour: A study of skincare products in Malaysia

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CHRONICLE	ABSTRACT
	This paper mainly aimed to identify the impact of critical factors of advertisement on consumer buying behaviour for skincare products. Data for this study were collected from 428 people from all around Malaysia using self-administered questionnaires. The acquired data went through an exhaustive process of screening and cleaning to ensure that it was ready for analyses in SPSS software. Various robust tests were conducted to reach the findings. These include, frequency tests, reliability tests, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, and also hypotheses testing. Structural equation modelling was used to test for the fitness of the proposed model. The results revealed that two elements of advertisement; namely, usefulness of advertisement and features of advertisement had significant positive impacts on consumer buying behaviour. A unique attempt was also made to search for a suitable nested model, where features of advertisement resulted in a strong positive significant impact on usefulness of advertisement. This research has invaluable implications for policy makers, especially in cosmetic and health industry of Malaysia. It is hoped that the findings of this study can be considered while making marketing plans for a skincare brand.

1. Introduction

Looking good is a priority for most people in the world, especially for females. From exercise, to make-up, dressing up and many other influencing factors, females are very conscious for their face. Capitalizing on this reason alone, many products and services are created to take advantage of this natural female instinct. Promoting a product which is naturally desired by the females requires the insight of how females think and behave. Thus, research on how to promote a certain product must fall within the natural scope of the psychology and sociological influence, which will tempt and draw their high interest to use the products or services. Currently, successful advertising over the media is presented by magnate personalities which naturally draws a huge followers, professionally scripted and attractively packaged to impact a strong desire among the target consumers.

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Observations made on advertisements of skin care products will always use beautiful models or famous celebrities as a natural draw. Photos or videos are carefully scripted and beautifully presented. Captions added to them are carefully worded sentences to awe and inspire the potential buyers, and if it is a television commercial, narration is done in the most provocative and attractive oration to invoke the potential customers' interest. Claims are made of the many benefits or advantages of using such products and reinforced by the beautiful image presented by the models representing or promoting such skincare products. To add value, supportive documents or verification from bodies of authority are presented alongside to gain public confidence. Playing on the psychology of the female consumers is not a difficult task, if they can be convinced that by using such a product they will look better and beautiful and they can be swayed irrespective of the cost or even the hidden potential risks which may be attached to them. The power of advertisement is to win over the mind and the heart of the potential customers, sometimes at whatever cost.

1.1. Objectives of the study

The general objective of this paper is, first, to extract the imperative factors from the extant literature that are related to advertising; second, to develop a hypothetical linkage in light of the literature; and third, to propose a conceptual model combining all the important factors with their impacts on consumer buying behaviour. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To find out the impact of the usefulness of various techniques of advertisements on consumer buying behaviour.
2. To identify the impact of exposure of information in advertisements on consumer buying behaviour.
3. To investigate the impact of features of advertisement on consumers buying behaviour.

In the following sections, the review of the literature is undertaken, where hypotheses are also put forward for empirical investigation. It is followed by presenting the proposed model of the study, research methodology, findings, and conclusion.

2. Literature review

2.1. Consumers Buying Behaviour

Consumers buying behaviour in relation to advertising and its effectiveness has always been important (Ajzen, 2012). Most of the time, consumers buying behaviour is influenced by the advertisement of the product (Rasool et al., 2012), especially in the skincare products (Fatima & Lodhi, 2015; Shallu & Gupta, 2013). Allen et al. (2016) argue that it is actually the emotional reaction that is developed after going through an advertisement of a product that influences the consumer behaviour. However, sometimes the advertisers exaggerate and over promise about the product's benefits and advantages in such a tactful manner that consumers get influenced subconsciously. Psychologically it brings the consumer under pressure through the persuasiveness and makes them buy the advertised product (Simons et al., 2017). The same holds for cosmetics or skincare products (Hayder, 2017). This market is highly competitive in nature and mainly comprises of the female. Consumer controls the market and marketers focus on different factors to attract greater number of customers. Such factors include the consumers' buying habits, preferences, taste, like and dislikes. People are highly connected to certain skincare brands due to its quality and evident results (Akhtar et al., 2016). They are associated emotionally with the brands and they can wait for the product when there is a shortage on a particular product or services. This particular behaviour of consumers is due to the fact that some skin care brands have effectively used advertising in order to attract and retain the customers.

2.2. Usefulness of Advertising

In advertising, there are different types of medium that audience can access information from. Be it through television ads, social media, printed ads like magazines and newspapers, radio as well as individuals like friends, relatives, shopkeeper and beautician (in case of skin care). Every method is useful in its own way. An effective advertisement creates a desire in viewers, listeners or readers' mind. It also provides information on how to fulfil desire and how to make the potential customer feel good about products. Different companies use various methods of advertising depending on their targeted market segments. Those methods do not have to be standardized because it involves distinct cultures, languages, beliefs and the consumers' values. When a company makes its strategy for advertisement in UK through written ads like newspaper and magazine, it may not be the same as in Pakistan. This is because the people' living style in both countries are different. The people in UK are in habit of reading materials like books and magazines while in Pakistan, they are relying more on television. Hence, it is crucial to make a choice of medium of advertisement to deliver message. In recent years, advertising has become a critical issue and it requires ethical consideration since good advertising helps customers choose their products or services to fit their needs (Lee & Johnson, 2013). Moreover, if the consumers find that a particular advertisement has important or useful information, they tend to get influence by these advertisements (Lin & Kim, 2016; Muk & Chung, 2015), hence impacting their behaviour towards a product/ service. Based on the above literature, it is, therefore, hypothesised that:

H₁: Usefulness of advertisement has a positive impact on consumer buying behaviour.

2.3. Exposure to Information

The first step towards buying a product/service is once a person is informed about a particular product or service. Consumer will only plan to behave positively towards a product if they are properly informed about a product, hence signifying the importance of exposure to information. This view is called wear-in effects of advertisement, which means that a certain level of exposure to information has a significant positive impact on consumer behaviour (Schmidt & Eisend, 2015). According to Schmidt and Eisend (2015), when the information about a brand is exposed to the consumer different times, it increases the awareness, which eventually influences the purchase behaviour. However, there is a disagreement in the literature on the number of repeat exposure of information among scholars (Schmidt & Eisend, 2015; Yang et al., 2012). The literature does agree that exposure to information is an inevitable step to influence consumer's attitude and behaviour. The same holds for skincare industry. Janiszewski et al. (2003) and Schmidt and Eisend (2015) argue that apart from exposure to the advertisement's information, novelty is also important to attract people. Therefore, a unique skincare product name, trademarks, photos, figurative signs, and advertising, which provide information about the skincare company to the public will influence consumer behaviour. A significant number of the people depend on television, radio, newspapers, online reviews, and video review, especially when they are making buying decisions and choices. Further, due to the growth of social media, people now-a-days are exposed to information around them more conveniently. Once people are exposed to information, the next stage is familiarity with the brand and learning more about that particular brand (Schmidt & Eisend, 2015), hence impact their behaviour. Based on the above literature, it is, hypothesised that:

H₂: Exposure to information has a positive impact on consumer buying behaviour.

2.4. Features of Advertisements

Multimedia advertisements usually contain nonverbal auditory elements, such as music and sound effects as well as nonverbal visual elements such as images and logos. Those features are the main underlying causes of choosing a product. Brands usually would use several features of advertisement, namely, aspirational feature, celebrity endorsement, and social responsibility feature, to promote products (Ahmed &

Ashfaq, 2013). The same features of advertisement could be used in skincare products. Aspirational advertisement is a type of advertisement that can be called as the most effective for young people. It contains the slogans and tag lines that can influence them to purchase particular product. Aspirational advertisements normally contain three main elements which are perfection, sex appeal, and status. Further, another important feature of advertisement is "celebrity endorsement" (Ahmed & Ashfaq, 2013; Mittal, 2017). This kind of advertisement plays a very significant role and usually can attract almost every group of people. This is because celebrity has the power to gain the people' trust to purchase the product but no evidence proving that it could provide brand loyalty (Oakley, 2009). According to Ahmed and Ashfaq (2013), and Mittal (2017), when a celebrity endorses a brand, consumer's purchase decision is most likely influenced positively, particularly among young consumers. Next, social responsibility advertisements highlight some social awareness and factors that can have positive effects on the society at large. Many skincare brands use social responsible marketing in order to tell people that their products have minimum negative impacts on the environment. According to a survey, women wearing skincare products feel confident about themselves. Oakley (2009), and Tavassoli and Lee (2003) argue that many of the skincare brands use strong story line to attract the users, particularly women, by ensuring them that the use of their products will make them more confident to be part of the society. The aforementioned studies clearly highlight that various features on advertisements positively impact consumer behaviour. It is, therefore, hypothesised that:

H₃: Features of advertisement have positive impacts on consumer buying behaviour.

3. The proposed model

After an extensive review of the literature, the proposed model is presented with four variables; namely, usefulness of advertisement (UoA), exposure to information (ETI), feature of advertisement (FoA) and consumer buying behaviour (CBB). The model of this study is inspired from classical purchase behaviour model by Butler and Peppard (2008) where five important sequential stages are highlighted. In this research, the three (3) independent variables are related to information search stage. The dependent variable, consumer buying behaviour, can be related to the purchase stage of consumer decision making model. Fig. 1 depicts the model of this study.
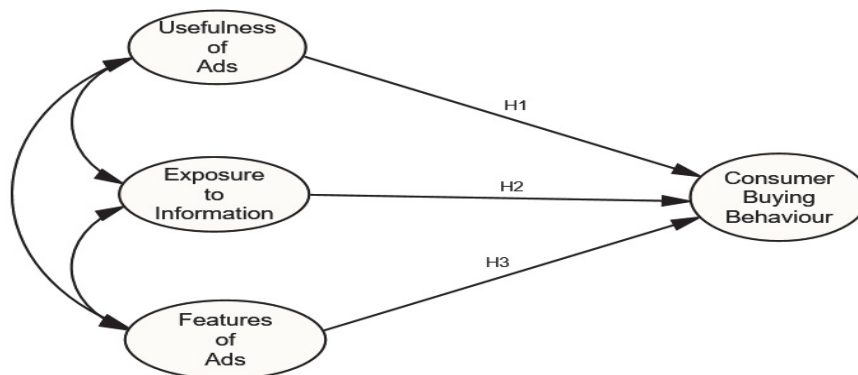

Fig. 1. Propose framework of the study

3.1. Research methodology

This research is quantitative in nature, where a self-administered questionnaire was developed from previous studies. The questions in the questionnaire was slightly altered to suit the scope of the present study, which was skincare products. Further, the final questionnaire was distributed to the selected respondents using social media, specifically, WhatsApp and Instagram. Participants were requested to answer questions to two major sections, where section A was on the four (4) variables of the study, and section B was on the demographic variables.

3.2. Data Collection

Data was collected for this research using a self-administered questionnaire distributed online using social media platforms. First, the questionnaire was developed virtually using Google forms, for the ease of sending it out online. Second, the link of the developed virtual (softcopy) questionnaire was shared with the potential respondents. The data was gathered from those people who use cosmetics (skincare) products. All the respondents reside in Malaysia. A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed but 428 usable questionnaires were selected for final data analysis. The collected data was analysed using SPSS and AMOS software.

3.3. Measurement Development

The questionnaire for this study was developed based on previously validated measures. It is important to note that all the items in the questionnaire were modified to fit the current study's context. A 5-point Likert scale was used, ranking from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

4. The results

In the questionnaire, a section on the respondents' profile was included in order to obtain some basic information about them. The first step in the data analyses considered important was to determine the sample's characteristics. For this purpose, descriptive statistics were employed. Overall, 80.8 percent of the females responded to the survey followed by 19.2 percent of males, indicating a higher influence of the female group. The figures also revealed that 54.9 percent of the respondents were from 21 to 25 years old, whereas the category of 16 to 20 years old was the second major age group with 31.3 percent response. Almost all respondents were Malaysian with the number of 418 respondents (97.7%). For respondents' education, the majority (262 or 61.2%) were degree holders followed by diploma students with a total contribution of 24.1 percent. Detailed descriptive analyses is provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Variables		Research sample (n = 428)	
		Number of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	346	80.8
	Female	82	19.2
Age	16 – 20 years	134	31.3
	21 – 25 years	235	54.9
	26 – 30 years	48	11.2
	31 – 35 years	8	1.9
	36 – 40 years	1	0.2
	40 and above	2	0.5
Nationality	Malaysian	418	97.7
	Non Malaysian	10	2.3
Marital Status	Single	392	91.6
	Married	36	8.4
Educational background	Primary education	2	0.5
	High School	34	7.9
	Certificate	18	4.2
	Diploma	103	24.1
	Degree	262	61.2
	Masters	7	1.6
	PhD	2	0.5

Almost 68.5 percent of the respondents fall in the student group and 108 respondents (or 25.2%) were employed. In terms of skincare products, the results revealed that 79 percent of the respondents had used facial cleanser regularly compared with toner, serum, moisturizer, anti-aging cream and sun screen. The outcome also showed that majority (281 or 65.7%) purchased skincare products only when they needed

it, whereas 17.1 percent of the respondents bought skincare products once a month. With regard to spending, 49.1 percent of the total respondents claimed that they were average spender and only 5.8% (25 respondents) states that they were the heavy spender. Lastly, the results of usage frequency of skincare products showed that almost 80.8 percent (or 346) respondents used it daily, whereas 5.1 percent of the respondents used skincare products rarely. Detailed descriptive analyses are found in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Variables		Research sample (n = 428)	
		Number of Respondents	Percentage
Occupation	Student	293	68.5
	Employed	108	25.2
	Unemployed	24	5.6
	Retired	3	0.7
Income	< RM 1000	295	68.9
	RM 1000- RM 3000	91	21.3
	RM 3000 – RM 5000	31	7.2
	> RM 5000	11	2.6
Skincare Product	Facial Cleanser	338	79
	Toner	7	1.6
	Serum	10	2.3
	Moisturizer	37	8.6
	Anti-Aging Cream	3	0.7
	Sun Screen	33	7.7
Frequency of buying	Once a month	73	17.1
	Twice a month	32	7.5
	Once in two months	42	9.8
Spending on skincare	As per need	281	65.7
	Heavy Spender	25	5.8
	Moderate Spender	164	38.3
	Average Spender	210	49.1
	Don't spend at all	29	6.8
Frequency of use	Daily	346	80.8
	Frequently	41	9.6
	Occasionally	19	4.4
	Rarely	22	5.1

4.1. Attributes of the questionnaire

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient and the item to-total correlation were calculated to examine the stability and consistency of the research instrument. According to Nunnally (1978), the value of Cronbach's alpha closer to 1 indicates greater stability and consistency; however, the threshold value in most research studies is set at 0.60. The present research instrument resulted in an alpha value of 0.857, attesting an acceptable consistency and stability of the research instrument (see Table 3).

Table 3

Reliability Statistics of the Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
0.851	0.857	38

4.2 Exploratory factor analysis

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were examined to investigate the correlations among variables. In this case, KMO was 0.842 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant

at p < 0.001, indicating that the present data was suitable for factor analysis and there is sufficient correlations between the variables.

Table 4
KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.846
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4642.63
	df	351
	Sig.	.000

The result of exploratory factor analysis (hereafter, EFA) indicated a clean four-factor structure using the criteria of an eigenvalue greater than 1. The extracted factors accounted for 49.74 percent of the total variance. Factor loadings were all higher than 0.4 on its own factor and therefore, each item loaded higher on its associated construct than on any other construct; supporting discriminant validity of the measurement. The results of EFA are shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Results of Factor Analysis

	Component			
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Items (Variables)	Features of Ads	Usefulness of Ads	Exposure to Information	Consumer Buying Behaviour
FoA10	0.753			
FoA13	0.745			
FoA11	0.743			
FoA12	0.740			
FoA9	0.739			
FoA14	0.718			
FoA6	0.660			
FoA8	0.624			
FoA7	0.616			
FoA4	0.537			
FoA5	0.465			
FoA3	0.426			
UoA3		0.841		
UoA2		0.772		
UoA4		0.743		
UoA9		0.612		
UoA8		0.470		
UoA7		0.413		
ETI7			0.779	
ETI6			0.715	
ETI8			0.658	
ETI5			0.641	
ETI2			0.452	
CBB2				0.781
CBB1				0.751
CBB6				0.584
CBB5				0.565
Initial Eigenvalues	6.897	2.793	2.025	1.715
% of Variance	19.994	11.416	10.775	7.556
Cumulative %	19.994	31.410	42.185	49.741

4.3. Confirmatory factor analysis

This study adopted a two-stage structural equation modelling technique, where the extracted factors during EFA were confirmed followed by testing the fitness of full structural model and testing the hypotheses. For this purpose, AMOS software was used with maximum likelihood estimation (MLE). In order

to perform confirmatory factor analysis (hereafter, CFA), recommendations of scholars (Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2011) were kept in mind. These recommendations include checking Chi-square (χ^2), the comparative fit index (CFI), the using normed chi-square (χ^2/df), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Fig. 2 presents the measurement model of the study.
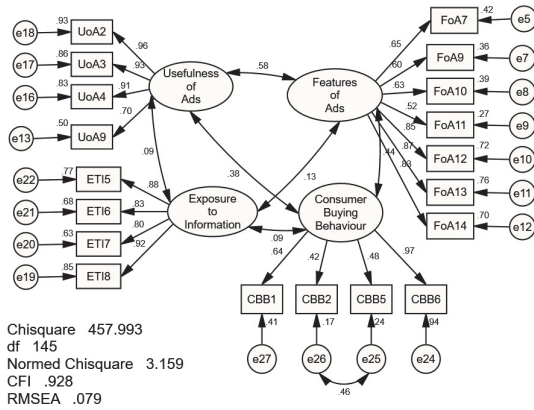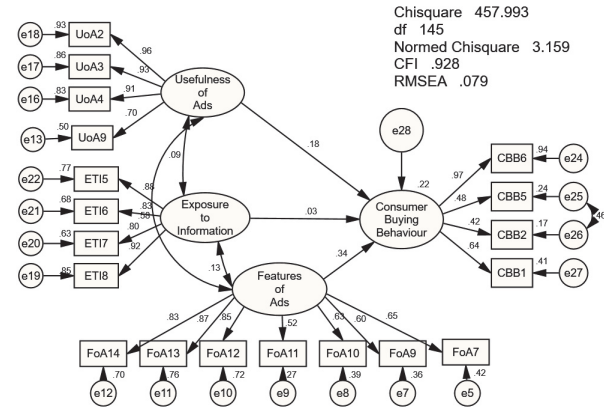

Fig. 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Fig. 3. Full Structural Model

The result of the CFA indicated a good fit with the normed Chi-square (χ^2/df) value of 3.15, which is well below the threshold of 5.0. Similarly, other fit indices like CFI was also acceptable with the value of 0.928 (which is also above the recommended value of 0.9). Lastly, the value of RMSEA below 0.08 is considered acceptable, in the present case, it was 0.079, which attests a good fit of the measurement.

4.4 Full Structural Modelling

In the two-stage SEM approach, once the measurement model is fit, one can proceed with testing the fitness of full structural model and to perform hypotheses testing. In order to test the full-fledge model, the fit indices considered were Chi-square (χ^2), the comparative fit index (CFI), the using normed Chi-square (χ^2/df), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), as recommended by Byrne (2010), Hair et al. (2010), and Kline (2011). Fig. 3 depicts the full-fledged structural model followed by hypotheses testing. The final structural model also resulted in a very good fit with the normed Chi-square (χ^2/df) value of 3.15. This value of normed chi-square (χ^2/df) is below the recommended threshold of 5.0. The value of CFI was also above 0.9 (in this case 0.928), and RMSEA below 0.08 (in this case 0.07), all indicating a good fit of the final structural model. The hypothesized causal linkages were also observed and we found enough evidence to support only two linkages (the causal link between 'features of ads' and 'consumer buying behaviour' with the β value of 0.34 and p < 0.001, and 'usefulness of ads' and 'consumer buying behaviour' with the β value of 0.18 and p < 0.001), whereas, this study did not find evidence to support the causal link between 'exposure to information' and 'consumer buying behaviour'. This means that H_1 and H_3 are supported, whereas, H2 is not supported. Table 6 summarises the results of hypotheses testing.

Table 6

Results of hypotheses testing

Structural path	Hypothesised Relationship	Std. Reg. Weight	S. E.	C. R.	P
Usefulness of Ads → Consumer Buying Behaviour	H1[s]	0.178	0.091	2.754	0.006
Exposure to Information → Consumer Buying Behaviour	H2[ns]	0.032	0.037	0.618	0.537
Features of Ads → Consumer Buying Behaviour	H3[s]	0.338	0.091	4.823	***
Statistic		Suggested		Obtained	
Chi-square significance		≥ 0.05		0.000	
Normed chi-square (CMIN/*df*)		≤ 5.00		3.159	
Comparative fit index (CFI)		≥ 0.90		0.928	
Root mean error square of approximation (RMSEA)		≤ 0.08		0.079	

s = Supported, ns = Not supported

Table 6 shows the detailed results of hypotheses testing along with the fit indices of the final structural model. In this case, H_1 (Usefulness of ads have a positive impact on consumer buying behaviour) and H_3 (features of ads have a positive impact on consumer buying behaviour) emerged with positive significant relationship, as envisaged. However, H_2 (exposure to information have a positive impact on consumer buying behaviour) does not result in significance.

4.5. Nested Model

An interesting and a novel attempt was made in the present research by exploring various causal relationships and testing them for significance and robustness using fit indices. This attempt was apart from the proposed model, where three (3) causal linkages were developed based on the review of the literature, and were tested using SEM. The process of searching for possible relationships in the existing model and coming up with another good and sensible model is called nested modelling. In the present case, various unique relationships were tested but one stood-out from the rest and is presented in Fig. 4.
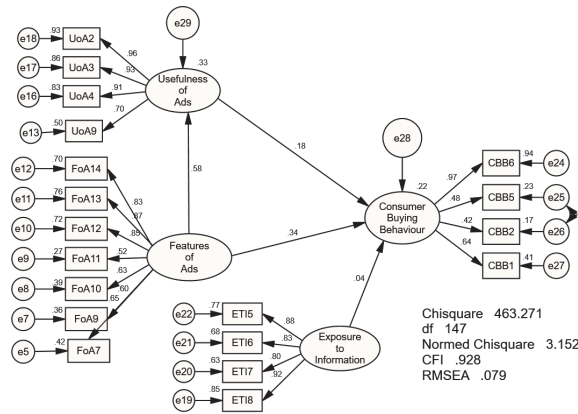

Fig. 4. Nested Model

As evident, in the nested model a new causal link was tested (which is the link between 'features of ads' and 'usefulness of ads'). Interestingly, this link emerged with a very strong positive significant impact. In this case, the β value of 0.58 and p-value of less than 0.00 attest a very strong impact. The overall fit of the model also slightly improved and are acceptable. This particular link means that various features of advertisement strongly impact the usefulness of advertisement, which eventually impacts the buying behaviour of consumers.

5. Conclusion, implication and direction for future research

The main purpose of this research was to analyse the impact of various elements of advertisement on consumer buying behaviour. The findings of this research have identified and tested factors that are responsible for consumers buying behaviour with skincare products in Malaysia. It was revealed that in the elements of advertisement, two (2) elements are of prime importance, namely; usefulness of advertisement and features of advertisement. Even though exposure to information is also important but this research did not find evidence to support it. Consumers demand for different items based on their tastes, preferences and also the influence from third party. How useful an ad is, determines people's behaviour towards the company and product. Similarly, features of ads also alter people's behaviour positively. This means that companies, particularly, skincare products producers have to focus on the usefulness of advertisements, along with paying attention to enhancing the features of their ads. It is because these two will eventually positively influence consumers buying behaviour. Future researchers may replicate the model of the present study in other countries and other industries. A promising attempt would be to test the nested model proposed in this study. Moreover, future researchers may consider undertaking a qualitative approach to acquire more in-depth information about the elements of advertisement and their impact on consumer buying behaviour.

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