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ADVERTISING LITERACY AMONG LOW-INCOME COMMUNITY IN THE CONTEXT OF FLY POSTINGS IN MALAYSIA'S REALITY DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Neesa Ameera Mohammed Salim [1], Mohd Nor Shahizan Ali[2], Syahrini Shawalludin[3], and Faryna Mohd Khalis[4]

[1,3,4] Faculty of Art and Design, Universiti Teknologi MARA(UiTM), Malaysia
[2]Centre for Communication and Digital Society, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Digital inclusion is the ability of an individual or a group to access and acquire information in the context of communication technologies. The digital age today permeates the society through vehicles of information including advertising. The society are able to access any sorts of advertising messages even from the palm of their hands. However, the issue is no longer in the context of accessing the information, but the literacy skills, or specifically the advertising literacy skills in carefully selecting valid and reliable information with the focus on the aspect of security in today's digital environment. This study aims to identify the advertising literacy and how the digital inclusion impinges the low- income community in the context of fly posting in Malaysia. This is a quantitative study which used survey as a research design by distributing questionnaires to a total of 574 respondents from five selected Public Housing Program (PHP) in Klang Valley, Kuala Lumpur which have been selected based on the random stratified sampling to represent the low-income distribution. Findings revealed that the low-incomes' advertising literacy level is high due to digital inclusion factor. This study reveals how digital and media research in the advertising landscape affects the literacy level of the low-income community as the discussion provided in this study adds on to the discussion of the current advertising research.

1. Introduction

Information has been fundamental to the society since the beginning of humankind till today's digital age today. Information consist of data and knowledge and has always been a necessity which are conveyed through various platforms through visuals, languages, arts, and symbols in order to help communicate information to one another. In fact, with the emergence of technology, information has been increasing rapidly. Today, the society are saturated with abundance of information where information is accessible from the palm of their hands by using digital tools

and platforms such as the usage of smartphones. The digital age today or commonly known as the "Knowledge Age" is filled with numerous and various pieces of information. Most of the recent communication activities involves with technology which helps with the development of the economic growth of the country since it is able to deliver information, activities and communication networks between organizations (Southwell 2005; Chatterji 2006). It is evident that information and technology reinforce each other as it contributes to the growth differential across countries (Moradi & Kebrayee 2010).

Information is obtainable in many contexts. There are many vehicles of information available today in the society and one of the many information that has been increasing at a rapid pace is advertising. Advertising is commonly known in supplying information from the business world to the consumer world and has been reflected as the economic growth engine providing countless information in today's digital environment (Bughin & Spittaels 2012). Other than contributing to the economic growth and being part of the culture in the society today, advertisers seize the opportunity by utilizing every means and strategic marketing tools in communication the advertising messages through advertisements. Advertisements, which consist of texts, visuals, sound or motion, have the same aim which is to deliver the advertising messages to reach the right target audience and to obtain the right response. The growth of advertising industry is expanding rapidly, which reflects the significance of the industry. Advertisers use every means of strategy by exploiting the power of media through every possible advertising media which include television, newspaper, magazines (or other printed materials) and recently, the Internet to spread various advertising messages (Eng May Chuen et al. 2016). With the emergence of technology, advertisements have evolved and proliferated grabbing every opportunity available to reach a wide range of target audience. Advertising media has evolved from the basic print advertisements (posters, newspapers, magazines, brochures, fliers) to interactive advertisements or Internet based messages (social media advertisements, smart phone application advertisements) (Media 1990; Belch & Belch 2014; Pillai 2010; Trehan & Trehan 2015).

Technology has a profound effect on advertising communication and made significant changes in the advertising industry. In Malaysia, the society are able to access information from the advancement of print to electronic media with all the evolution and emergence of advertising media available today (Mohd Nor Shahizan et al. 2017). All the vehicles of advertising media contribute to the media-saturated environment in today's digital environment today. Since the lives of society are flooded with incalculable advertising messages, it is impossible for the society to grasp all kind of information. Even as technology progresses, the issue is not on how to access the information, but how literate the society are in facing the media challenges especially in the context of security challenges by choosing the valid and reliable information in analysing, and synthesising before making any intellectual judgements (Potter 2004; Bucy & Newhagen 2004 Noor Bathi 2002; Verser & Wicks 2006). Due to this issue, the society need advertising literacy. Advertising literacy is basically the advertising knowledge which acts as a filter in processing advertising messages (Livingstone & Helsper 2006).

Among all the available advertising media available today, this study focuses only on one type of advertising media, which is fly posting. Fly posting is an old form of advertising and commonly known as "wild posting", "handbills", or "bill sticking". Even though advertising media has evolved from basic print medium to Internet based advertising messages, fly posting is still dominating the neighbourhood especially the low-income neighbourhood. This is further supported by Anon (2013) in a local newspaper article (Sinar Online) titled "Iklan Haram: Rumah Kos Rendah Jadi Sasaran" or "Fly Posting Targets the Low-Cost Residential Areas". The article stated that this is the latest strategy by

the advertisers by distributing advertisements in the resident's mailbox, placing advertisements under the car wiper, or even in the baskets of the motorcycles. In fact, a study by Nor Rashidah Zainal et al. 2012) discussed that these has become the targeted areas due to the high population of the urban poor mainly areas located in the cities of Kuala Lumpur. According to Ravindran (2016) and Bavani (2017), fly posting has been a national issue for decades and is labelled as an illegal form of advertisement since it is placed at unauthorized places without the consent of the local authority which in this case is Kuala Lumpur City Hall (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL)). From January 2015 to February 2016, DBKL has successfully removed a total of 1,453,164 million advertisements in various forms which includes posters, banners, and stickers, and a total number of 1,239 telephone numbers displayed on the advertisements were terminated by the Malaysia Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) and a total of 603 compounds were issued.

Hence, this study aims to identify the advertising literacy and how the digital inclusion impinges the low- income community in the context of fly posting in Malaysia. It is crucial to identify whether the low-income community update themselves with the current communication technology and implement the technology in facing the media challenges today. According to Malmelin (2010), the skill to identify, understand, evaluate and responds towards all the information is necessary. The society need to be diligent and have high self-efficacy in evaluating and processing an advertising medium. For example, advertisements pertaining to health products or services should be processed by an individual with rich knowledge on health before making any intellectual judgements (Mohammad Rezal Hamzah, Emma Mohamad and Mohd Yusof Abdullah 2016). Thus, the skill to be an advertising literate individual is believed to be a necessary skill in influencing the purchasing decision of an individual. Furthermore, how digital inclusion affects the level of literacy are being discussed.

2. Methodology

The sampling method implemented to select the sample in this study is random stratified sampling since the society today is identified in stratified or in a layered perspective. Once the strata are identified, the selection is done by random (Mat Pauzi and Mohd Nor Shahizan 2016). Thus, the sampling for this study was narrowed down towards the low-income community respondents. A total of 574 participants from five locations of the Public Housing Program (PHP) were selected to represent the low-income distribution. The locations selected were PHP Hiliran Ampang, PHP Seri Cempaka, PHP Wangsa Sari, PHP Taman Mulia and PHP Radya Permai which are located in the Klang Valley, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Based on the statistics provided by the Ministry of Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government (2015), the total population of PHP residents in Malaysia is 60,291 and 30,276 of them are in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur.

2.1 Instrument (Survey Questionnaire)

An instrument in a form of questionnaire was used in this study to collect the required data. The instrument was divided into two sections; Section A: Respondent's Background Information and Section B: Advertising Literacy Skills. For Section A, the items constructed are basic demographic items as well as items pertaining to the respondent's digital inclusion.

Section B are items constructed which focuses on advertising literacy skills in order to measure the advertising literacy level in relation to the consumption of fly posting among the low-income community. In order to measure the advertising literacy skills, the instrument was

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developed based the cognitive model of media literacy (Potter 2004) and the advertising literacy model (Malmelin, 2010). As seen in Figure 1, the cognitive model of media literacy focuses on four factors: knowledge structure, personal locus, competencies and skills, and information processing task. The cognitive model of media literacy is basically on media literacy and the advertising literacy modeled by Malmelin (2010) implemented in this study focuses specifically on advertising literacy which includes information literacy, visual/aesthetic literacy, rhetorical literacy and promotional literacy.
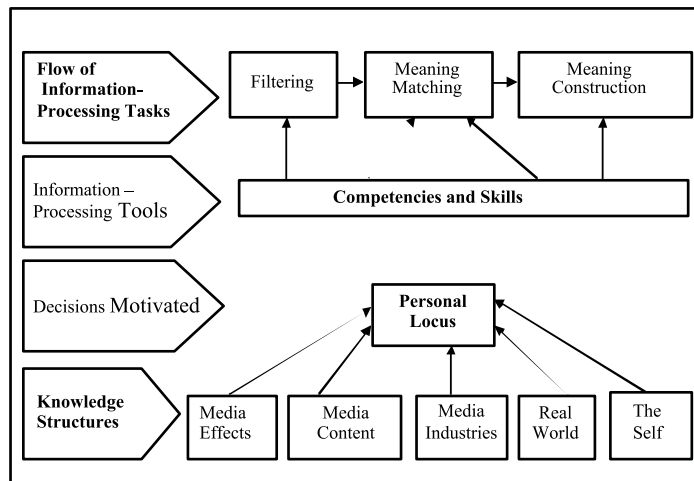
Figure 1: Cognitive Model of Media Literacy (Potter 2004)

Table 1 below explains each dimension in more depth and each item constructed in the instrument are based on the guideline above. All the items in each dimension are carefully constructed to measure the advertising literacy level in relation to the consumption of fly posting among the low-income community. All four dimensions are vital and each dimension reinforce each other in determining the level of the advertising literacy.

Literacy	Informational Literacy	Visual/ Aesthetic Literacy	Rhetorical Literacy	Promotional Literacy
Focus on	Sources of Information and knowledge	Aesthetics, design and entertainment	The means and tactics of persuasion	Commercial functions and functional partnerships in the media
What is analysed?	Ability to use various sources of information and to evaluate the correctness of information	Understanding the forms of auditory and visual expressions such as styles, stories and references.	Understanding the strategies, goals and target groups of marketing	Understanding of the logic of product placement, branded media contents, sponsorship and publicity

Table 1: The Model of Advertising Literacy (Malmelin 2010)

3. Findings & Discussion

3.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 2: Demographic Profile

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Education		
Secondary	401	69.8
Post-secondary	173	30.2
Income		
No Income	167	29.1
Below RM1000	109	19
RM1001-RM2000	171	29.8
RM2001-RM3000	90	15.7
More than RM3001	37	6.4
Preferred Advertising Media		
Television	449	78
Radio	216	38
Newspaper Ad	254	44
Internet	323	56
Smartphone Applications *Apps*	149	26
Magazine Ad	161	28
Fly posting	28	5
Type of Gadget		
Normal Mobile Phone	100	17.4
Smart Phone	457	79.6
Tablet/ Ipad	50	8.7
Laptop	74	12.9
Social Media Application		
WhatsApp	138	76.1
Facebook	325	56.6
YouTube	180	31.4
Online Portal (e.g *Utusan Online*)	42	7.3
Others (e.g Twitter, Line, etc.)	13	3.3
Time Spent on Technology / Internet		
None	102	17.8
Less than 3 hours	209	36.4
3 hours to 6 hours	145	25.3
6 hours to 12 hours	77	13.4
More than 12 hours	41	7.1
Time Spent on Searching Information on Fly Posting		
None	434	75.6
Less than 3 hours	125	21.8
3 hours to 6 hours	14	2.4
6 hours to 12 hours	0	0
More than 12 hours	1	0.2
In your opinion, is it important to be aware with the current technology in today's 21st century?		
Yes	529	92.2
More than 12 hours	45	7.8

N=574

Table 2 summarizes the demographic of the low-income respondents. In terms of academic qualification, most of the respondents had completed the secondary education with a percentage of

69.8. Only 30.2 percent of the respondents obtained post-secondary education. As for income, 29.8 percent earning between RM1001 to RM 2000, 29.1 percent claimed they had no income, 19 percent with income below RM1000, 15.7 percent earning RM2001 to RM3000 and only 6.4 percent earning more than RM3001. The findings also revealed the types of media advertising preferred by the low-income community. Living in a media driven world, the television stays relevant and dominates with 78 percent if the people subscribing to it. In comparison to the Internet which comes in second. This is not a surprise as television broadcast occurs in the same space and time, while the Internet does not function in such a manner. This proves that the television is a territorial medium (Castells 2011). Only 5 percent preferred fly posting as a medium of communication. This could be the reasoning behind why fly posting still occurs as this minority group still seek for information from this medium. This justifies that fly posting is an informative medium yet a public nuisance (Neesa Ameera et al. 2016). In the context of digital inclusion, the respondents were asked questions pertaining to digital and communication technologies. Among all the types of gadget listed, findings revealed that a total of 79.6 percent of the low-income respondents own a smart phone. This explains that the low-income community update themselves with the current communication technology. This is supported by the findings that the low-income community are active on social media platforms.

From the findings, WhatsApp is the most popular social media utilized by the low-income community. A total of 76.1 percent is active on WhatsApp, 56.6 percent are Facebook users, 31.4 percent watch videos on YouTube and only minority with a percentage of 7.3 percent use online portal such as Utusan Online to search information. When the respondents were asked how much time they spent on technology/Internet, findings revealed that majority of the low-income community spent less than 3 hours (36.4 percent) daily. This is followed by a total percentage of 25.3 percent spent between 3 hours to 6 hours daily. Findings revealed that even most of the low-income respondents own a smart phone, the time spent on the technology/ Internet are less than 6 hours daily. The respondents were asked question on "Time spent on searching information on fly posting", a total of 75.6 percent claimed that none hours were spent to find more information on this particular advertising medium. However, only 21.3 percent did search information, however it was less than 3 hours, followed by 2.4 percent spent between 3 to 6 hours and only 0.2 percent spent more than 12 hours finding information on fly posting. This justifies that the low-income community do not use the technology or the Internet to find the valid and reliability of the information displayed by fly posting, but are more inclined towards social communication using social media. However, most of the respondents with a total percentage of 92.2 percent agree that it is important to be aware with the current technology in today's 21st century. This reflects that the low-income community are aware in updating themselves with the recent communication technology to be at the same par with other segments in the society.

3.2 Reliability Analysis

Table 3 shows the reliability of the ordinal variables (items with scales) used in the instrument. The cronbach's alpha is a statistical treatment to establish reliability coefficient and the reliability coefficient (alpha) should be near 1.00 as possible, and accepted if the value is above .60 (marginally accepted). (Lee et. al, 2015; Bann, 2012; Primack, 2006; Radhakrishna, 2007; Reinard,2001)

Variable	Cronbach Alpha (α)	Number of Items
Cognitive Model of Media Literacy (Potter 2004)		
Knowledge Structure	.847	12
Personal Locus	.854	9
Competencies and Skills	.813	10
Information Task	.770	8
Advertising Literacy (Malmelin 2010)		
Information literacy	.770	8
Visual literacy	.730	8
Rhetorical literacy	.782	7
Promotional literacy	.755	8

Table 3: Reliability Analysis

3.3 Mean Analysis

Table 4 shows the mean analysis of each items constructed to measure the level of advertising literacy among the low-income community. According to Mohd Hasril et al. (2016), the mean score represents the level of literacy; 1.00-2.00 (low); 2.00-3.00 (average); 3.00-4.00 (high); and 4.00-5.00 (very high). Based on the cognitive model of media literacy and the advertising literacy model, findings revealed that level of advertising literacy of the low-income community is high. The low-income community's knowledge structure, personal locus, competencies and skills and information tasks specify that the low-income community in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia are advertising literate individuals. Despite the reality that the low-income community are surrounded and saturated by incalculable advertising messages, findings justify that the low-income community have the skills and ability to evaluate, understand and construct meaning of the advertisements exposed towards them. The low-income community are comprised of advertising literate individuals in carefully selecting valid and reliable information with the focus on the aspect of security in today's digital environment. In relation to fly posting, findings revealed that the low-income community are highly literate in each components and factors constructed in the instrument. Evidently, the low-income community have high knowledge structures, personal locus, competencies and skills, information tasks which have also proved that they are able to face the media challenges in the context of being informational literate, visual literate, rhetorical literate and promotional literate before

Variable	Mean	Standard
Cognitive Model of Media Literacy (Potter 2004)		
Knowledge Structure	4.104	.595
Personal Locus	4.234	.612
Competencies and Skills	4.205	.731
Information Task	4.235	.687
Advertising Literacy (Malmelin 2010)		
Information literacy	3.128	.799
Visual literacy	3.143	.500
Rhetorical literacy	3.705	.726
Promotional literacy	3.899	.607

Table 4: Mean Analysis

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4. Conclusion

Findings have revealed that the low-income community are digital literate since most of the respondents own a smart phone and are active on social media. This demonstrates that the low-income community are in sync with the digital environment and in fact, findings provide empirical evidence that the low-income community are advertising literate community despite the numerous amounts of advertising media and technology advancements surrounding them. According to Tichenor et al. (1970), it has been a dispute on how the knowledge gap widens between the high-income and low-income community as the information enters the society which are due to the education and income factor. Hence, this study has proved that these two factors are no longer relevant in determining the literacy level of an individual. In fact, Potter (2005) claimed that as technology progresses, the literacy level increases. This justifies that digital inclusion and the role of technology is essential in creating intellectual communities as media, literacy and technology challenges an individual to comprehend the current media phenomena and how the media universe is in constant change (Potter 2005; Poore 2011; Parry et al.2016). The role of technology contributes to the impact of media landscape in Malaysia creating a competitive media environment (Azmah & Samsudin 2013).

Acknowledgement

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