Beliefs and Attitudes towards Social Networks Advertising: a Cross Cultural Study of Saudi and Sudanese Females

Ilham Hassan Fathelrahman H. Mansour,
School of Management Studies, University of Khartoum
Email:e.mansour@uofk.edu

Abstract

The study aims to investigate the possible differences in beliefs and attitudes towards social networks advertising that may exist between females in Saudi Arabia and Sudan and to specify the factors that influence their attitude towards social networks advertising. Datasets of two samples from Saudi Arabia (169) and Sudan (195) were collected using a survey of female students from both countries. A t-test methodology was then applied on the processed data together with correlation and regression analysis in order to answer the posited research questions.

The results revealed no significant differences in attitude towards social media advertising between the two samples, although significant differences in beliefs about social networks advertising were documented. In addition, the results indicate that five of the individual different factors are statistically significant: these are prior Web experience, entertainment, credibility, and social norms for Saudi sample and informativeness, entertainment, credibility and irritation for Sudanese sample.

This study provides insights for international marketers in terms of attitudes and beliefs towards social networks advertising. The results may offer some valuable information that may aspire to improve marketing-related activities aimed at social media users.

Keywords: Social networks; Advertising; Attitude; Cross culture; Saudi Arabia; Sudan.

Introduction

Globally, social networks sites are growing in number and size specifically among young people. Social network sites are user-generated content sites that provide a platform for sharing the interests and social relations amongst various users' groups with common thoughts. These sites have changed the way people communicate with each other, helping users find a social network,
share common interests, connect with friends, participate in discussion forums, and express themselves through a personalized blog or mini homepage (Kim et al, 2011). According to Kaplan (2010) Social Media is defined as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 applications that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.

Recently, the Arab countries witnessed a tremendous internet growth rate. According to the 5th Arab social media report (2014) internet users in the Arab region reached more than 135 million and more than 71 million are actively using social network sites, with a 33.4% female users. The popular social networks sites especially in the Arab world are Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The total number of Facebook users in the Arab world as of end of May 2014 is 81,302,064. The number of active Twitter users in the region has also grown exponentially up to 5,797,500 users and 4,716,515 users for LinkedIn.

This rapid rise in popularity of social networks sites and its billions of users worldwide has created a great opportunity for social networks sites as a promising marketing channel. Companies around the world are trying to exploit and take advantage and the opportunity created by this promising channel. Marketers used different platforms of social media to enhance their corporate and brand images. In addition, marketers use social media advertising to persuade consumers that the company, products, and/or services are worthwhile (Neti, 2011).

However, the effectiveness of social networks sites as marketing channels depends largely on the attitude of users towards the marketing messages displayed on social network sites. Understanding consumers' attitude towards social networks advertising is important to advertisers as an indicator of advertising effectiveness. When attitude towards advertising is favorable, consumers would recall more advertisements and be more persuaded by the
advertisements (Mehta, 1995). However, attitude towards advertising may be affected by various factors, such as religion, culture, gender, and ethnic origins.

In spite of the rapid growth of social media worldwide and its impact on its users' attitude, research in this area is still at exploratory stage particularly in Arab countries. The majority of studies that have examined consumer attitudes toward social media marketing have been conducted in western countries. Thus, this study aims to examine the attitude towards social networks advertising from Arabs and Muslims perspectives and to explore the possible cross-cultural differences in attitudes towards social network advertising that may exist between the same gender in Saudi Arabia and Sudan as two Arab Islamic countries. More specifically, the study aims to examine and compare the attitude of Saudi females and their Sudanese counterparts, as well as determining the factors that might affect their attitude towards social networks advertising.

Despite the heavy investment of companies in social networks advertising, the nature and implications of how customers perceive advertising in this media have yet to be fully understood and accordingly studies need to be conducted towards this goal. Because social network advertising is relatively new, it is important to know about consumers’ attitudes towards social network advertising and what factors or beliefs might affect consumers’ attitudes towards advertising displayed on social network sites. Particularly, prior researches have yet to explore how culture could affect consumers’ attitude and behavior towards social network advertising messages and what differences might exist among countries with similar cultures. Understanding the nature and influences of cultural differences is central to international marketing. Melewar et al. (2000), for example, argued that companies view the Middle East as a single region that share similar cultures and beliefs and do not see the cultural differences among the various countries of
the region. For new entrants the cultural differences might be perceived as a higher disadvantage, whereas more experienced companies in this region do no longer see such differences as barriers.

This study contributes to the international marketing literature in several ways: First, by examining beliefs and attitudes towards social media advertising in Saudi Arabia and the Sudan it extends current research on social media advertising to a cross-cultural context. Second, examining the relationships among those beliefs and attitudes helps enhancing the advertising effectiveness of social media advertising as a new advertising medium. The study may also help marketers to adapt their advertisements according to the cultural values and attitudes of the people, which reflect their personality. It may also help companies segmenting their customers according to their beliefs and attitudes towards advertisement, which in turn may help companies to gain competitive advantage and increase profitability.

**Theoretical framework & Literature review:**

2.1. *Attitude toward Social Media Marketing*

Attitude toward advertising generally defined as a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner toward advertising in general, or the viewer likes or dislikes the adverts (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). Kotler (2000) further elaborates on attitude as an individual personal evaluation, emotional feeling attached and action tendency towards some objects or ideas. Consumers’ beliefs and attitudes toward advertising are important indicators of advertising effectiveness (Mehta, 2000). Beliefs and attitudes are closely linked and beliefs bring variations in attitude (Andersen, 1972). Attitudes can shape people’s minds, making them like or dislike an object, moving them toward or away from that object (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Past research works demonstrate that consumers' attitudes toward advertising are shaped by their beliefs. For example, Ducoffe (1995, 1996) identifies entertainment, informativeness, and
irritation as factors contributing to consumers' evaluations of ad values and thus attitudes toward ads. Brackett and Carr (2001) further validate Ducoffe's model and extend it to include credibility and consumer demographics. Wang and Sun (2010) identified five belief dimensions of online advertising: information, entertainment, credibility, economy, and value. On the context of attitude towards social network advertising, some scholars examined consumers attitude towards advertising on those sites, for example, Zafar & Majid Khan (2011) investigated the attitude of young consumers towards social network advertising where factors such as credibility, informativeness, entertainment, irritation were considered to measure such attitude. Yang (2013) also argued that young Chinese consumers’ subjective norm and pleasure influenced their viral marketing attitudes. A previous study by Zeng et. al (2009) found that responses to online advertising via social media networks heavily depended on perceptions of advertising relevance and value, as well as being influenced by social identity and group norms.

Other studies have examined the factors that encourage the adoption and use of social network sites. For example, Akar & Topçu (2011) stated that consumers’ use of social media, their knowledge of social media, their following of social media and their fears about marketing with social media all affect their attitudes towards marketing via social media. The more familiar people are with a medium, because of their frequent use of it, the more favorably they feel towards that medium (Cha, 2009).

On the other hand, past researchers have explored the attitudinal differences between countries with respect to new media extensively. For example in the context of mobile marketing, liu, et al (2012) found that infotainment and credibility are key factors predicting advertising value among Austrians and the Japanese but the impact of credibility on the perceived value of mobile advertising is higher for the Japanese sample than for the Austrian sample. Japanese customers
are more irritated by mobile advertising than are Austrian respondents. Wang & Sun (2010) found significant differences of beliefs and attitudes toward online advertising among Romanian, American, and Chinese consumers. Romanians reported more positive attitudes towards online advertising than Americans and Chinese. Furthermore, Romanians tend to believe that online advertising was more informative and credible than did American and Chinese consumers. In another related study, Wang & Sun (2010) found significant differences between the Romanian and American cultures. Compared with Americans, Romanians held more favorable general attitudes towards online advertising and tend to view online advertising as more informative, credible, economically beneficial and of less value corruption.

Even though the literature on the adoption and use of online advertising is quite extensive, few studies have explored the motivations for using the recent Social Networks Sites in a cross-cultural manner. Vasalou et al (2010) stated that experience with the site and even more so, culture, have an effect on users’ motivations for using Facebook, as well as their instrumental uses and the time they invest on the site. Kim et al (2010) examined how cultural contexts shape the use of communication technology by examining the motives for and patterns of using social network sites among college students in the US and Korea. The findings of this study suggest that the major motives for using social network sites – seeking friends, social support, entertainment, information, and convenience – are similar between the two countries, though the weights placed on these motives are different. Reflecting on the unique social nature of the medium, Korean college students put more weight on obtaining social support from existing social relationships, while American students place relatively greater emphasis on seeking entertainment. Additionally, American college students’ networks in an online social venue are far larger than their Korean counterparts, which may reflect the cultural difference between the
two countries regarding developing and managing social relationships. Shin (2010) examined the differences between USA, and Korean users’ motivations for engaging in social networks through online social networks sites services (SNS) compared with their behavior. The results show that Korean users’ primary motivation is enjoyment, which is greatly influenced by perceived involvement, whereas the US users’ main motivation is dependent on how useful they perceive SNSs to be, which is heavily influenced by users’ feelings of connectedness. In a more recent study K. Goodrich and M. de Mooij (2014) found that the use of information sources that influence online purchase decisions strongly do vary by culture. That is relationship-oriented collectivists rely, to a greater extent than individualists, on social media as an alternative for interpersonal word of mouth communication. Moreover, results indicated that culture affects the influence of social media on purchases differently than the influence of traditional word of mouth through family or friends.

Other studies addressed the impact of culture on consumers’ attitudes towards advertising. Gregory and Munch (1997) found that advertisements portraying norms and roles in line with local cultural values are more effective. Taylor et al (1997) also found that consumers from low context cultures preferred informative commercials. Han and Shavitt (1994) and Zhang and Gelb (1996) found that advertising based on individualistic values was more persuasive in the US but that the converse was true of Korea.

**Saudi Arabia**

The internet officially made available in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1997 and the public access finally debuted in 1999 (Internet.gov.sa). According to Social Bakers 2014, Saudi Arabia is in the lead of overall internet usage. The kingdom has the highest home broadband
penetration, highest number of Internet accounts, highest number of active domains, and the second highest mobile Internet usage in the region.

According to the internet world statistics as of 2014, there are over 18 million Internet users, with a penetration rate of 65.9% of the total population. The estimated proportion of women who use the Internet in Saudi Arabia is 41%. A large number of Saudi Internet users also use Social Network Sites (SNS) such as Facebook, which is currently the most commonly-used online social network among Arabs. The total number of Facebook users in Saudi Arabia exceeds 7.6 million users with a penetration rate of 28% of the country's population, 68% males, and 32% females (socialbakers.com, 2014).

Sudan

Sudan is a country in North Africa, south of Egypt. The population of Sudan (a mix of Arab and African) is about 30 million (Sudan population census, 2008). The Internet service was introduced in Sudan in 1996. According to internetlivestats.com, the estimated number of internet users is 9,307,189 in 2014 with a penetration rate of 24% of the total population. Facebook users are about 1.6 of the total population, with a penetration rate of 4.26%. There is no data on gender breakdown of Facebook users in Sudan because of the technology sanctions imposed by US government (Arab Social media Report, 2013).

Although Saudi Arabia and Sudan share many social and cultural characteristics of Arab and Muslim societies, the situation of females are very different in both countries. Saudi Arabia is a conservative society; with strict gender segregation sanctioned by the state and society. Women do not adequately participate in the Saudi workforce. There are rigid boundaries in social roles and expectations for women compared to men in Saudi Arabia. Thus, there are far fewer women in professional knowledge worker roles (Al-Gahtani et al. 2007). Saudi women are not so far
elected to high political positions and are not allowed to drive and their participation in workforce is only 21% (Zakeria, 2011)

On the other hand, Sudan had one of the first and most active women's movements in comparison with women in many other African and Middle Eastern countries. Sudanese women have become relatively well- represented in public life and play a key role in the economic field, with females constituting 66.5 percent of the total labor force. Sudan's 1998 Constitution clearly states that all Sudanese are equal before the law without discrimination as to sex or race. Politically, women are well-represented and participated in the elections of the first Parliament of Sudan in 1954, which is raised now to a stipulated 25% of the federal and state parliaments.

2.2. Cultural differences and advertising:

Understanding cultures is increasingly important for global advertising. Standardized advertisement across global market is not as much effective as adaptative strategies for local markets; therefore, it has become increasingly important to understand people’s cultures (Dow, 2005). Different cultures have different values and belief systems. Values that can be important for one group of people may not be as important to another. Therefore, cultures affect the marketing behavior and urge business organizations to promote their products and services according to certain culture for promotion of products and services (Jain, 1993).

Hofstede (1980) identified four factors that contribute to the understanding of national cultural values and explain differences in human behavior in terms of Power Distance (PD), Individualism/Collectivism (IDV), Uncertainty avoidance (UA) and Masculinity/Femininity (MAS). In developing his model, Hofstede examined Arabic-speaking countries, which he amalgamated together into a single region, based on his assumption that those countries had
identical cultural traits and share similar traditions beliefs. According to Hofstede (1983) Arab countries, as a group, scored high on the power distance (80), and uncertainty avoidance (68), where society is highly rule-oriented, risk adverse and does not readily accept change, and the masculinity (53) dimensions, while scoring low on the individualism (38) dimension, indicating a collectivist culture where loyalty and close long-term commitment to groups such as family is paramount. In the High- and Low-Context theoretical framework Hall (1982) categorized Arab culture as high context/collectivistic.

Although there are significant similarities and shared beliefs and attitudes by many Arab countries, there are also significant differences. These differences can be attributed to the level of education, wealth, and religious affiliation. Thus, it is not possible to generalize about all or most cultural values across the Arab world. Keegan and Green (2011) stated that there are many differences among the countries in the Middle East even though of the apparent homogeneity, since the majority of the population is Arab and follows the Islamic religion which plays an important role in the Arabs culture especially in Saudi Arabia and Sudan compared to the other countries. These differences play an important role in determining what considered culturally acceptable and culturally forbidden.

Intentionally there are some who treat Arabs as one unit, while other treat them as separate entities. Melewar et al. (2000) believe that few companies view the Middle East as a single region that share similar cultures and beliefs so they do not see the differences among various countries. Arabs are considered sharing a common heritage of customs, collective feelings, language, and social and religious views coupled with other factors such as sharing cultural, geographical, economic realities, as well as common history. On the other side, it is argued that
these same unifying factors are so varied, and sometimes even so different, that there is a temptation to consider these countries not as a composite and consistent unit.

Hofstede (1983) chose in his study a few countries as representatives of Arab culture (Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Lebanon) and generalized the findings obtained to all Arab countries including Sudan in a group as “Arabic-speaking countries”. This is due to his view that those countries share similar aspects like Islam and Arabic language.

Research Framework:

Based on the existing literature about attitudes toward advertising and consumer behaviour models, a research framework is constructed to illustrate the factors affecting consumer attitudes toward advertising displayed on social networks sites and their relationships to attitudes. Ducoffe (1996) and Brackett and Carr (2001) past research on attitudes of consumers towards advertising on the Internet, identify four factors as characteristics of internet advertising that might affect attitude towards internet advertising which are informativeness, entertainment, and irritation and credibility. As all of the advertising on social media is carried out on internet, it shares some of the common characteristics of internet advertising identified by Ducoffe and Brackett and Carr. Hence the following research questions are addressed:

I. Is there any cross-national differences in attitude towards advertising displayed on social networks sites between Saudi and Sudanese females?

II. Is there any significant differences in females beliefs about attitude towards advertising displayed on social networks sites between Saudi and Sudanese females?

III. What are the key factors that affect attitude towards advertising displayed on social networks sites between female users in each country?
3. Research Method:

To answer these questions, a survey methodology employed, where data was gathered from two samples. For the Saudi (SA) sample, data was collected from King Saud University in Riyadh (Female campus) and Sudanese females (SU) sample comes from the University of Khartoum using undergraduate female students from the college of business administration of two universities. The use of a college student sample is reasonable in this study because college students represent a significant portion of the demographic age group that uses internet and social networking. Demographically, the Arab region is a youthful one, where youth population between the ages of 15 and 29 makes around one-third of the population (Arab social media report, 2011). The questionnaire was developed in English then translated into Arabic.

Findings:

Out of 450 questionnaires distributed in both countries, 172 were received from Saudi Arabia and 217 questionnaires from Sudan with a response rate of 85% and 87% respectively. After excluding the incomplete and unusable responses a total of 364 questionnaires were included in the analysis (169 from Saudi Arabia and 195 from Sudan). Most of the respondents from the two countries were familiar and experienced with the social networks where 93% of the Saudi participants and 57% of the Sudanese participants stated that they have been using social networks sites for more than a year. Concerning the time spent on social networks sites in hour per day, about 31% of the Saudi females stated that they spent more than one hour daily on social networks sites, 53% spent between 2-3 hours, and the remaining 16% spent more than 4 hours. Whereas, for the Sudanese sample 43% spent about one hour each day on the social networks sites, 40% between 2-3 hours, and 17% spent more than 4 hours per day on the social
network. Therefore, most of the respondents can be considered experienced users for the purpose of this study.

4.1. Beliefs about Social Network Advertising

In order to identify key features influencing consumer’s attitudes toward social networks, five well established dimensions of beliefs were constructed on the basis of past literature (Ducoffe, 1996; Tsang, 2004) and employed to measure the construct: informativeness, entertainment, irritation, credibility, prior experience and subjective norm (Ajzen, 1991). Measures of attitude and intention were based on the suggestions of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). The attitude towards social networks advertising was measured by three items. Respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement to each item on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The mean and standard deviation of all variables is displayed in Table (1) below.

4.2. Data Reliability

The data were first tested for reliability. Internal consistency reliability of the constructs was examined using Cronbach’s alpha. Table (1) provides an overview of the reliabilities (Cronbach’s alpha) of the investigated items. Most variables, except the informativeness and social norms in Saudi sample show alpha levels .7 or above which are considered reliable and suitable for further analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belief Measures</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior Knowledge / experience of SNS (EXP)</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Informativeness (INFO)</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived entertainment (ENT)</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Credibility (CRD)</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Irritation (IRR)</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Norms (SN)</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3. Differences in Beliefs and Attitude towards social network advertising

To examine the differences in females' beliefs about attitude towards advertising displayed on social networks sites between Saudi and Sudanese females an independent t-test was run for testing the differences. Table (2) shows that the level of attitude of Sudanese females (3.52) is higher than that of Saudi females (3.48). The standard deviation of Sudanese females is also more than Saudi females. However, the t-test results show that the means between Saudi and Sudanese female are not significantly different (sig 0.344 > 0.05). The results also indicated that both Saudi and Sudanese female students had positive overall attitude towards social network advertising, the average score (SA= 3.48, SU= 3.52) is higher than the neutral score of three but there is no significant difference between the two samples.

The results in Table (2) indicate that the Saudi and Sudanese female students differ in four of the belief measures employed. These are the prior knowledge /experience with the site, credibility and irritation. Prior experience impact on beliefs about social networks advertising is more clear in the Saudi sample than the Sudanese one. Whereas, compared to the Sudanese, Saudi females viewed social networks advertising as more credible and more irritating. However, the Sudanese females were more likely affected by social norms than do Saudi females. There were no significant differences in beliefs on informativeness and entertainment measures, as both Saudis and Sudanese females believe that social media advertising was informative and entertaining.
Table 2: Independent Sample t test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SU</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXP</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFO</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENT</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDR</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRR</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SN</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to explore the key factors that might affect attitude towards social networks advertising, the data was analyzed using correlation and regression techniques. Table (3) presents the intercorrelations among the beliefs variables and attitude. As noted earlier, attitude towards social networks advertising is significantly correlated with most of the variables for the two samples except prior experience for the Sudanese sample. Prior experience, informativeness, and credibility are positively correlated to overall attitude, whereas irritation variable is negatively correlated with the overall attitude, which indicates the inverse relationship.
To explore important factors affecting attitudes towards social media and to measure the individual contribution of each variable in affecting attitude a regression analysis was used for each sample. Table (4) presents the regression results. The individual difference factors explained 50% of the variance in attitude for the Saudi Sample, (The $R^2$ of 52% in the Saudi sample) indicates a high explanatory power of the model, that is, the impact of beliefs on attitude and 45% of the variance in attitude for the Sudanese sample ($R^2$ of 45% in Sudanese sample). Examination of the model results indicates that four of the factors yielded statistically significant
standardized coefficient estimates – credibility, entertainment, prior experience, and social norms for Saudi sample while informativeness and entertainment, credibility and irritation factors found significant in Sudanese sample. Thus, the model results support the influence of these variables as predictors of the consumer's attitude towards social media advertising.

Table 4: Structural Model Results Saudi Arabia and Sudan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paths</th>
<th>SAUDI</th>
<th>SUDAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXP → ATT</td>
<td>.221</td>
<td>4.334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PU → ATT</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENT → ATT</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>4.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRD → ATT</td>
<td>.294</td>
<td>6.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRR → ATT</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>-1.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SN → ATT</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>2.335</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Discussion:

The concept of attitude towards online advertisement and beliefs shaping it has been widely studied in a number of works. However, current research shows a lack of studies regarding advertisements displayed on social networking sites in cross-cultural contexts, which served as a motivating factor to undertake the current research. The present study attempts to examine the possible differences in beliefs and attitude towards advertising across two countries, Saudi Arabia and Sudan. As a limited number of studies have been done on social media advertising especially in the Arab world, this paper provides an empirical ground for measuring the attitude towards social media advertising in cross culture context. Moreover, we also test whether users'
beliefs about social media advertising could affect attitudes towards it. The results confirmed the findings of previous studies that the users' beliefs about social media advertising such as informativeness, entertainment, credibility, and irritation influence the attitude (Ducoffe, 1996; Wang & Sun, 2010, Zafar & Khan 2011).

Unlike other previous research (Wang, 2010; Wang & Sun, 2010), there is no significant difference in attitude towards social media advertising between Saudi and Sudanese females. This is may be due to the fact that the two countries are similar in cultural values. However, the results showed that there is a significant difference between Saudi and Sudanese females in beliefs and motives such as experience with social networks, credibility of the advertisement, irritation of the advertisement and social norms. Sudanese female showed more positive attitude towards social network advertising than Saudis did and they are more likely affected by social norms than do Saudi females. The study also found two common factors affecting the consumers' attitude across the Saudi and Sudanese samples: Entertainment and credibility. It was found in both countries that users who perceive advertisement displayed in social network sites as entertaining and credible generally showed positive attitude towards them. In addition, the results revealed that Credibility was the most significant of the factors affecting respondents’ attitudes, followed by entertainment and prior experience for the Saudi sample while informativeness was the most significant factor, followed by entertainment and credibility for the Sudanese sample. This is consistent with the Ducoffe model and the previous literature on the subject.

**Conclusion:**

The study showed that model developed by Decoffe (1995, 1996) and Brackett and Carr (2001) was satisfactory in explaining the attitudes towards advertising on social media sites of both
Saudi and Sudanese consumers. For both Saudi and Sudanese samples: Entertainment and credibility factors were found to be the most important variance in shaping the overall attitude. This supports the theory that those factors are critical to advertising effectiveness (Ducoffe, 1996; Brackett and Carr (2001). However, the results also confirmed the differences in attitude towards advertisement displayed in social network sites between the two samples. Prior experience and social norms have significant effects on Saudi females' attitudes towards advertising, while informativeness and irritation have significant effect in shaping Sudanese females attitude. Considering these differences, it can be argued that consumers' beliefs in different contexts are an important explanatory variable when determining cross-national attitude towards advertisement displayed on social network sites.

**Practical Implications:**

The study results suggest important practical implications for marketers aiming at taking advantage of the marketing potentials of advertising on social networks sites. Understanding what affect young female consumers' attitude towards advertisement displayed in social network sites is essential to maximize these new marketing technologies. Research findings may help enhance the understanding of attitude towards advertisement displayed in social network sites in a cross-national context and provides useful information for both domestic and international marketers. Moreover, this study provides insight for international marketers that may be applicable to Arab consumers in terms of attitude and beliefs towards social networks advertising. This could provide some valuable information that may aspire to improve marketing related activities aimed at social media users in Saudi Arabia and Sudan.
Limitations:

This study has nevertheless its own limitation. First, the sample drawn was a convenience sample of university female students. This may limit the generalization of research findings and limits the validity of findings to some extent. Future research could examine a broader profile of social networks users including males, and compare their attitude towards advertisement displayed on these sites across different consumer profiles. The study use of a cross-sectional design may not capture the rapid change or continuous evolution in social networks sites. To that end, a longitudinal study may provide more insights into beliefs and attitudes towards social media advertising.
References:


**Internet references:**


Contact details:

Ilham Hassan Fathelrahman H. Mansour
School of Management studies, University of Khartoum
P.O. Box 321, Khartoum 11115,
Barlaman Avenue, Khartoum.
Email: e.mansour@uofk.edu
Tel. +249 9 16143131

Author’s bio:

Dr. Ilham is an Assistant Professor of Marketing at School of Management Studies, University of Khartoum since 2012. She graduated with honors from University of Khartoum, where she also received her MSc. (1998) and PhD (2010). Her research focuses on new media and digital marketing, advertising, consumer behavior with a current emphasis on Islamic Marketing.