Article

The Role of General Beliefs, Emotions and Attitudes toward Controversial Advertising of FMCG Products in Vietnam

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Abstract: The fast development of social media and online marketing brings a lot of benefits to business. In marketing, the use of controversial advertisements has increased in the last 2 decades. Nevertheless, the opinions of consumers on controversial advertisements are ambiguous, as they could be either favorable or unfavorable. Even though the opinions of consumers on rival brands influence their choices of what to buy, controversial messages could make them have unfavorable views and discourage them from buying. In the context of developed countries, there has been extensive discussion about controversial advertising. However, in developing nations like Vietnam, research on this topic has been relatively limited. This study focuses on exploring the factors affecting the attitude toward controversial advertising of consumers about FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) products in Vietnam and suggesting solutions for applying controversial advertising in the Vietnamese context. Based on the related research, a research model is proposed including five variables: general beliefs, positive emotions, negative emotions, affective attitudes, and cognitive attitudes. Through a survey of 286 valid samples, the research model has been tested using SEM/AMOS. The results show that all 6 hypotheses are supported. The research provides valuable guidance for any FMCG brand on how to choose a controversial advertising strategy in the Vietnamese market.

Keywords: controversial advertising; general belief; emotions; attitude; marketing; FMCG; Vietnam

1. Introduction

In the VUCA (standing for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) world, the strategy for reaching out to many consumers has been changed continuously to maximize reaching targets most cost-effectively. Different media such as television, newspapers, radio, banners, pamphlets, websites, and so on can be used to accomplish this goal. A consumer is someone constantly seeking out and manipulating information to make choices between consumer goods and services; they just consume the information they need. Thus, the pressure of advertisements is growing day by day in the current context.

Besides the conventional news media, the Internet era also offers many other sources or platforms for news, such as websites for online news, news aggregators, content, content farms, and social media [1]. Mobile phones and social media are the sources of news messages for people nowadays [2]. Fake news, hence, is a growing issue coming along with Internet development. Molina et al. showed that fake news is more than just untrue information [3]. Most studies on fake news claim that fake news is news with fabricated facts. In advertising, it is such a dangerous game. According to the 2012 Advertising Law, there are 16 forbidden behaviours in advertising, such as: giving false or deceptive information about the capacity, the products, goods, and services of

the organizations and individuals who sell them; about the amount, quality, cost, usefulness, appearance, wrapping, brand, source, kind, way of service, guarantee time of the products, goods and services that are registered or declared. Nevertheless, some advertisers have used fake news to push their products in some ways. They admit that it is, in part, a marketing ploy that works for a short time. However, it is quickly exposed for what it is and becomes a controversial topic in the public.

As social media becomes more widely used, marketing experts need to work harder and smarter to connect with customers and attract more people [4]. Pham et al. found that the use of social network services influences the reputation of an organization [5]. However, the pressure to be outstanding in the competitive marketplace challenges brands to educate false advertising messages about products to consumers.

Consumer choice suffers when advertisers use dishonest or untrue advertising because consumers are swayed by the advertisers' claims, which influence their decision-making. It makes the product look different from what it is, which can harm many people involved, especially the buyers. Even though most countries ban the most obvious cases of false advertising, advertisers still trick consumers with methods that are either allowed or against the law but are hard to stop.

In 2010, yogurt brand Activia emphasized its products as "medically and scientifically proven" which helps consumers improve their immune system and digestive system to sell the products at higher prices than competitors. After being reviewed, the brand faced a $45 million fine for its false advertising and had to remove "scientifically proven" phases in the other media campaigns. Advertisements do not always aim to boost sales but instead try to strengthen the brand's worth, the awareness among customers, the recognition of the brand, and other goals [6]. The marketing teams can do a perfect job and create a remarkable marketing strategy to wow their potential customers. The ads use various styles or techniques, such as jokes, celebrities, imagination, the beliefs of social groups, influential people or professional skills, and other ways [7]. In 2016, the Dien May Xanh brand's advertising campaign exploded and created a trend on social networks through video series introducing their product categories. The blue characters dancing to the humorous music made the audience dazzled, and these videos were discussed widely by the public. The uniqueness and humor make the video marketing campaign of this brand unexpectedly successful and viral.

Such advertisements can have either a positive or negative impact on a specific brand [8]. Advertisers sometimes intentionally use images and messages that shock or offend people to get their attention and make them curious. Their awful ads create a lot of problems, and many people stop buying their products. The lotion ad of Dove released in 2017 is credited with provocative advertising images. The ad displayed a black woman taking off her shirt to show a white woman below her after applying Dove's body cream. The ad is not only prejudiced but also rude to the audience. The ad, then, was instantly removed from their Facebook fan page with an apologizing statement for the image. The slogan "Mở lon Việt Nam" for a special collection of soft drink cans version in Coca-Cola's advertising campaign in 2019 is another case. The provocative word "lon" is adjacent to Viet Nam - a country's name causes controversy on social media and dissatisfies the experts. In accordance with the Agency of Foundation Culture's requirement, the company had to replace it with a new one in their promotion activities and advertising content. The selection of words for this campaign was poorly made, which is not only costly for the brand to withdraw and relaunch but also makes a negative impression on the consumers [9]. Controversial advertisements are not against the law, but all marketers need to think about different ethical issues and decide if they want to use such ads that could upset some group(s) of people in any way [10].

Advertising has developed as a marketing method by following the rules of honesty and precision [11]. Such controversial ads have become more common in the past two decades and can have either a positive or negative effect on a specific brand [1]. People's opinions on these shocking ads are not obvious, and they could be either good or bad. Also, the idea is that customers' opinions on rival brands affect their choices of what to buy [12]. Chan et al. discovered that shocking words and pictures catch people's eyes but make them feel bad, which affects the brand and hurts their buying choices [13]. There is not much research on how people in Asian developing countries, especially Vietnam, feel about ads that are controversial or rude, even though this problem has been discussed in Western countries [14]. Therefore, this study aims to explore and evaluate the factors affecting the attitude toward controversial advertising of consumers about FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) products in Vietnam and suggest solutions for controversial advertising in the Vietnamese context. The research is expected to bring meaningful insights for any brand applying a controversial advertising strategy in the Vietnamese market.

The structure of this article includes 5 sections. Section 2 describes the literature review and main concepts. Section 3 presents the research method and measurement scales. Section 4 summarizes the main analysis results and discussions. Section 5 presents the main results and suggests ideas for future studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Main Concepts

2.1.1 Controversial Advertising

Controversial ads have become more common lately. According to Kerr et al., shocking ads are usually not shocking because of what they say, but how they say it [15]. Advertisers often use ads that are controversial to make people notice their brands and what they offer [5,16]. They use controversial ads to make people pay attention to their brands and to increase sales (e.g. [5,7,17]). Ads like the ones from Benetton got prizes for raising people's attention to social problems but also caused anger and complaints from the public [18]. Previous research has found two cases where people see ads as controversial, which are ads about products or ads about methods that are controversial [19]. Controversial issues also happen when misleading messages are spread in the advertising on purpose. False advertising is when advertisers say things about a product or service that are not true, and they want to trick customers into thinking something about the product or service [20]. According to García-Nieto et al., in article 2 of the Directive 2006/114/EC of the European regulations, misleading advertising is defined as any advertising that, by how it looks or what it says, tricks or could trick the people who see it or are affected by it and that, because it is not honest, could change how they spend money or, for these reasons, hurt or could hurt a rival [21]. Further, Sharma & Chander said that a false advertisement is one that lies about the product it is promoting [22]. It may have one or more features that trick the people who watch it, such as false information, dishonest prices, overstatement, etc. According to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, there are six advertising techniques that can mislead including price claims, fine print and qualifications, comparative advertising, bait advertising, country, or place of origin, and premium or benefit claims. False advertising also covers dishonest prices, sizes, amounts, unfair comparisons, fake promises or guarantees, wrong pictures, and so on. A false advertisement may be effective in the short term but creates increasing false beliefs about expected product performance and downturn beliefs on brands generally. Consumers may end up buying products or services that are more expensive, lower quality, or different from what they intended, because of deceptive marketing [22]. Misleading advertising directly harms consumers which leads to controversy [21].

2.1.2 Consumer Attitude toward Controversial Advertising

Marketing objects, such as brands or stores, elicit different beliefs, emotions, and actions from consumers. Attitude is how consumers react to an object, either positively or negatively (e.g., [23,24]). Particularly, the attitude toward ads is how an ad makes someone feel or act, either positively or negatively [25,26]. Attitude can be divided into two different aspects which are affective and cognitive ones reflecting the emotions evoked by the advertising and how well-made and useful the message the brand delivers via their ads respectively. Some research regarding how controversial advertisements affect the consumer's attitude has been found. Dens et al. concluded that ads that use disgust make people feel or act more negatively about them than ads that do not use disgust [27]. Hansen and Christensen claimed that how people feel emotionally can make them form both good and bad opinions about the way the marketing message tries to get their attention [28]. Jamal & Mohammed emphasize how important it is for marketers to consider how a brand's message relates to the self-image and happiness of consumers [29]. Consumers who do not see themselves in the brand would be happier with ads that focus on facts and details [29]. To understand what influences how we perceive things, we need to know about two processes, thinking and feeling, that make us accept or reject the things we perceive.

Cognitive Processes (thinking): What we think depends on both what we know and what we believe, which come from our previous experiences and memories [30–32]. Ruiz and Sicilia argued that how consumers feel about the ad depends on what the ad says or shows. The desire for people must think deeply about ad messages is known as the need for cognition (NFC) [30,32]. People who like to think deeply about ads tend to view them

objectively and judge them by their reasoning. Geuens & De Pelsmacker demonstrated that people with high NFC prefer an ad that provides enough relevant details about a product [33]. Truly, people who have high NFC are motivated by the reasoning process and the deeper meaning behind a message [31]. Per contra, Miller et al. note that people with low levels of NFC are not interested in informative ads and like ads that are more fun [31].

Affective Processes (feeling): According to the hierarchy of effects model, audiences respond to messages in an ordered way: cognitively (thinking), affectively (feeling), and conatively (doing) [34]. Wijaya proposed the AISDALSLove model, which stands for Attention, Interest, Search, Desire, Action, Like, Share, and Love respectively [35]. This model indicates the short-term effects of advertising on product purchase action and the long-term effect of building a brand through the Love stage where consumers express their feelings towards the advertised brand and product. Hirschman & Holbrook emphasize how emotions and feelings influence how consumers perceive reality [36]. People experience emotions and feelings differently, which makes them a sensitive subject. People have either strong or weak emotions, just like they have different levels of NFC. Roseman classifies emotional response in five distinct families of emotion [37]. Also, Holbrook & Westwood found four main emotions (i.e. joy, acceptance/ anticipation, fear/ sadness) and two aspects (i.e. negative-positive and serious light) that showed how people felt when they saw TV ads [38]. Moreover, Lutz et al. showed that affective processes help to identify fake news through social media [39].

2.1.3 General Beliefs and Attitudes Relationship

Furthermore, Anjos summarizes attitudes hold and integrate beliefs, in a reverse way, beliefs emerge to justify the attitude [40]. Beliefs are how a person estimates the likelihood of something in his world that he can tell apart; they relate to how he sees himself and his surroundings. People may keep some beliefs for a long time, lose some beliefs, and develop new beliefs. In the same way, some attitudes may last for a long time, others may be changed often. How a person feels about something at a given time may depend on what he thinks is important about it [24]. Beliefs about the object's attributes and self-evaluation of those attributes serve as the primary determinants of one's attitude toward that object, action, or event. Following the expectancy-value model, a person's attitude toward any object has a relationship to the strength of one belief linking the object to various attributes multiplied by evaluations of the attributes [24]. A clear relationship between one's beliefs and attitudes support the examined model in this study between two variables in testing its relationship in the advertising aspect.

2.1.4 Emotions in Advertising and Its Mediating Role between General Beliefs and Attitudes

Because consumers' actions and choices are influenced by their emotions [41]. The role of emotion in advertising has been researched for a long time and has laid a theoretical and empirical framework for works. Holbrook and John described the complete emotional experience in the model of the emotional process [42]. More precisely, the thinking parts that deal with beliefs, values, and judgments and the physical changes in emotions, and wants that cause actions that show feelings. The authors also concluded that emotion involves cognition in at least two senses, appraisal, and attribution, which is the foundation for this study to build on the measurement scale for emotional variables aligned with the context. Ads that use emotions can make people feel good or bad, which affects how they buy things. Research has revealed that a powerful ad can be made by choosing the right colour, image quality, music and message being delivered [8,15,43–46]. Even though people usually think it can be divided into many clear and defined aspects, there are more emotions involved than this simple distinction shows [6]. Emotions in general imply the prediction of behaviour.

2.2. Related Research

2.2.1. Arnaud, Curtis, & Waguespack

Arnaud et al. contributes to the existing knowledge and examines how consumer opinions are influenced by provocative ads through the marketing approach of Spirit Airlines by surveying a private university in the Southeastern US [47]. Based on the survey of 234 students, the research findings suggest that general beliefs are affected only when consumers pay attention closely to the adverts, remember and agree with the content, and beliefs are not the main factor in how people feel about those ads. Positive general beliefs toward the

controversial ads keep the audience positive emotions experience when viewing these controversial ones which leads to a more positive attitude towards ads, products, and brands as well. The study also supports the Hierarchy-of-effect model which explains the effect of advertisement messages on attitudes. Some recommendations for the advertisers are indicated. Marketers need to study well who they are targeting and what they believe and stay away from content that shocks, because even if consumers usually like provocative ads, they may dislike them in some situations. The company's vision, strategy, and brand image should guide all the main messages that aim to influence the emotions of the customers. The advertising effectiveness assessment is also involved in determining the level of advertising consumption of target customers compared to the marketing campaign objectives.

2.2.2. Singh & Chahal

Singh & Chahal studied the Indian perspective in different demographic segments through a structured questionnaire [48]. Ten categories of products/services with 6 advertisement techniques are involved in asking 609 respondents from different ages, genders, and educational groups. A large sample participating in the survey is advantageous for the study to demonstrate for the researched population. The survey targets respondents who watch television only and there is one unqualified respondent for further analysis. Unlike previous studies, the findings found that political advertising is assessed to be the most controversial because viewers gain no more information value, these ads are supported for calling to vote during an election only. Due to the impact of Western cultural context and the occupation, there are observed differences in gender and age of respondents toward controversial advertisements. Older respondents (above 40 years group) get more offended by controversial adverts, women were found to be more offended by female underwear advertisements while males were offended more by political ones. The study reveals that the higher the education level, the lower the controversy related to it. Nudity execution exaggerates the controversy of the product as compared to others. Consumers in India are less likely to buy a product if the advertisement is controversial. Because the controversial advertisements of one product affect the consumers' decision-making negatively when purchasing other products of the same company, they may stop using these products whose advertisements are controversial to buy the same one from competitors without provocative ads. Some bias on the demographic variables can be seen in the research, the educational background of the respondents is from undergraduate to higher than postgraduate, and the less educated viewers are ignored in some ways. The study also limits advertisements on the TV channel, research on other communication channels is recommended.

2.2.3. Selma et al.

By applying Reidenbach & Robin, semantic differential items, the study of Selma et al. measured ethical judgment with the mediating role of religious commitment to ask respondents for their judgments on the FB Tom Ford advert page [22,49]. Some control variables such as education, income, Facebook, and brand past use experience are also involved to measure the purchase intention of customers toward the Tom Ford brand. The authors invited people to an online survey that gathered data from all over the country. All respondents are voluntary and active Internet users familiar with the studied brand during the research time. The research findings imply that the way people judge ethics and perceive controversial ads is altered by the moderation effects. The direct relationships among attitudes toward the advert, brand attitude, and purchase intention are confirmed while the authors indicated the indirect connection between controversial advert perceptions on purchase intentions via a mediator – the attitude toward the advertisement. The social network sites (SNS) context and individuals' demographic information are also highlighted in the managerial implications, these are valuable notice for marketers in their next marketing campaigns on social network platforms.

2.3. Research Model

The model from Arnaud et al. is chosen as the conceptual framework to investigate the research question due to the similarity of the content [47]. In their study, the authors proposed a model to test the relationship among variables and measured them in the United States with the target participants including students and local community members from diverse backgrounds.

The model which is proposed to evaluate the relationship of consumers' general beliefs affecting their attitudes and being mediated by emotions is summarized as follows:
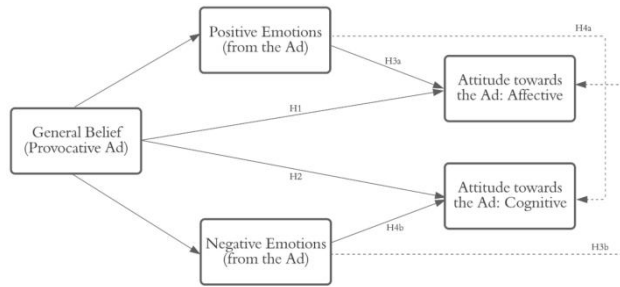

Figure 1. The proposed research model.

The hypotheses developed in the study below is also tested by empirical testing. The conceptual model is presented in Figure 1.

H1: General beliefs have a positive impact on the affective attitudes towards controversial advertising.

H2: General beliefs have a positive impact on cognitive attitudes toward controversial advertising.

H3a: Positive emotions play a mediation role between the relationship of general beliefs and affective attitude.

H3b: Negative emotions play a mediation role between the relationship of general beliefs and affective attitude.

H4a: Positive emotions play a mediation role between the relationship of general beliefs and cognitive attitude.

H4b: Negative emotions play a mediation role between the relationship of general beliefs and cognitive attitude.

3. Research Method

3.1. Research Process

The research process can be summarized in the following figure (Figure 2).
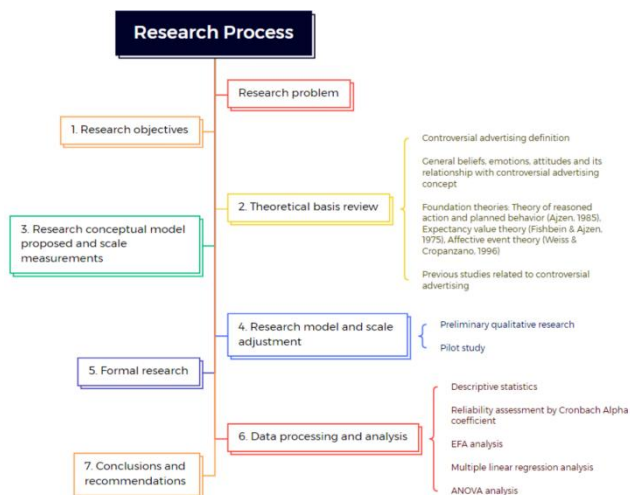

Figure 2. The research processes.

3.1. Research Process

Step 1: Defining the research objectives.

Step 2: Reviewing the literature.

Step 3: Formulating the research model, hypotheses development, and scale measurements.

Step 4: Adjusting the research model and scale measurement: The preliminary qualitative research was conducted with 10 experts in the field of FMCG to calibrate the scale and variables in the research model to align with the Vietnamese environment. Through the initial interviews with the experts, the research model and the scales will be edited to design the most appropriate questionnaire survey. The questionnaire then will be used to test a small group of target respondents in Ho Chi Minh City to eliminate errors before launching the official questionnaire for the study.

Step 5: Formal quantitative research: The survey will be distributed widely in Ho Chi Minh City to collect data from the residents through online and offline channels.

Step 6: Data processing and analysis: Raw data is cleaned and processed by Excel then moving on to analysis by applying some evaluation techniques like Cronbach Alpha analysis, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modelling (SEM) with AMOS.

Step 7: Conclusions and recommendations.

3.2. Measurement Scales

According to the researched industry and Vietnamese context, the question items are revised from Arnaud et al. [4]. Measurement scales for each factor include General belief (6 items) derived from de Run & Ting; Positive emotions (4 items) derived from Pyun, de Run & Ting; Negative emotions (3 items) derived from Pyun, Edell & Burke; Affective attitude (4 items) derived from Pyun, Vézina & Paul; Cognitive attitude (3 items) derived from Pyun [1,49–51].

4. Analysis Results

The area of the study is Ho Chi Minh City, which is the biggest socioeconomic centre in Vietnam. The form was spread from February 25th, 2023, to March 31st, 2023. For the online channel, the questionnaire was designed on a Google Form distributed on my personal Facebook, and sent widely to study groups. Offline channels, on the other side, the printed papers were sent to public places such as schools, supermarkets, etc.

The survey process recorded up to 313 respondents for both channels with a valid sample of 286 samples, accounting for about 91,4% of the total sample. Thus, 27 answer papers were rejected due to their "No" selection for the first question regarding "Have you ever seen/watched/read any controversial advertisement?" because they were not the targeted respondents for the study. The total number of valid samples obtained exceeded the minimum sample requirement, which is 200 samples (10 times the measurement items), so it is eligible to conduct data analysis [52]. The raw data collected is processed initially in the Excel software platform before being run in the SPSS and AMOS.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were collected from the general and personal information of the survey. One question concerning brand awareness is the opening part of the survey, asking the brand or the product to find out the observation and assessment they believe in the controversial elements in the advertisement. Furthermore, in the last two parts, there are other nine questions concerning consumer behaviour affected by the advertising and demographic characteristics of these respondents.

The descriptive statistics of data samples can be summarized in the following table (Table 1).

4.2. Reliability Analysis

Based on the results of the analysis, the author can make judgments for notable indicators, such as standard values of reliability or observed variables that have much influence on the reliability of the scale in a factor. The overview results of Cronbach's Alpha are presented in the following table (Table 2). According to the analysis results, after eliminating the GB1 variable (due to its correlation coefficient being less than 0.3), all requirements of Cronbach's Alpha analysis are satisfied. Thus, the scale of the 19 observations is qualified to continue with the next analytical steps in the exploratory factor analysis EFA.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of samples.

Category	Value	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	155	54.2
	Female	131	45.8
Age	Under 18	3	1.0
	18-24	92	32.2
	25-34	51	17.8
	35-44	66	23.1
	45-54	51	17.8
	Over 55	23	8.0
Marriage	Unmarried	115	40.2
	Married	167	58.4
	Unknown	4	1.4
Occupation	Student	82	28.7
	Office staff	105	36.7
	Worker	19	6.6
	Freelancer	25	8.7
	Self-employed	13	4.5
	Housewife	7	2.4
	Retired	16	5.6
	Others	19	6.6
Income	< 5 million	93	32.5
	5-10 million	91	31.8
	10-15 million	39	13.6
	> 15 million	63	22.0
Brand	Aba detergent	107	37.4
	Anlene milk	41	14.3
	Coca cola	38	13.3
	Knorr	8	2.8
	Nam Ngu	47	16.4
	Rejoice	16	5.6
	TH True milk	16	5.6
	Others	13	4.5
How-long	A few hours	153	53.5
	1 day	22	7.7
	1 week	53	18.5
	1 month	10	3.5
	> a month	48	16.8
How-often	Rarely	108	37.8
	1-3 times	127	44.4
	4-6 times	28	9.8
	7-9 times	10	3.5
	>=10 times	13	4.5
How-much	< 100.000 đ	99	34.6
	< 300.000 đ	101	35.3
	< 500.000 đ	63	22.0
	> 500.000 đ	23	8.0
Location	Market	114	18.4
	Supermarket	178	28.7
	Grocery store	130	20.9
	Convenience store	101	16.3
	E-commerce	65	10.5
	Social media	18	2.9
	Others	15	2.4

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha analysis results.

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	# of items
General beliefs (GB)	0.846	5
Positive emotions (PE)	0.832	4
Negative emotions (NEE)	0.786	3
Affective attitudes (AA)	0.807	4
Cognitive attitudes (CA)	0.799	3

4.3. Uni-Dimensional Analysis

After testing the reliability of the scale for each factor, 19 observed variables are kept and are eligible to run EFA. The Extraction method used is the Principal Components Analysis (PCA) extraction method combined with Promax rotation to test for uni-dimensionality for each factor. After removing NEE3 due to its low loading factor, there are 5 factors extracted with Eigenvalue = 1.001, coefficient KMO = 0.903 with significance level Sig = 0.00 < 0.05. The extracted variance is 68.240% > 50% so this EFA analysis is suitable. At the same time, the load factor of the variables on each factor is higher than 0.5, so the scales have convergent values, and all observed variables contribute significantly to the model.

The next step is the CFA test [21]. The results can be summarized in the following figure (Figure 3).
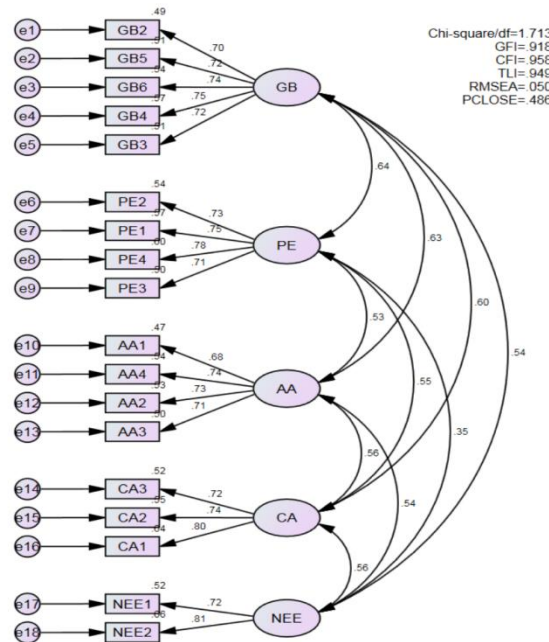

Figure 3. The CFA analysis results.

Some main results could be summarized as follows: CMIN/df = 1.713 < 3; GFI = 0.918 ≤ 1; CFI = 0.958 > 0.95; TLI = 0.949 > 0.9 (within a range); RMSEA = 0.050 ≤ 0.051. These indicators showed that the model fits with the sample data and is suitable for further analysis.

Based on this result, CR values are > 0.7, and the average variant extracted (AVE) is > 0.5, so the first-order scales are all convergent. The square root of AVE is larger than the correlations between the first-order latent variables, and the maximum shared variance (MSV) value is smaller than AVE. Therefore, discrimination between first-order variables is guaranteed.

4.4. Structural Equation Model Analysis

After the CFA test, SEM analysis is used to test the research hypotheses. The SEM results can be summarized in the following figure (Figure 4).
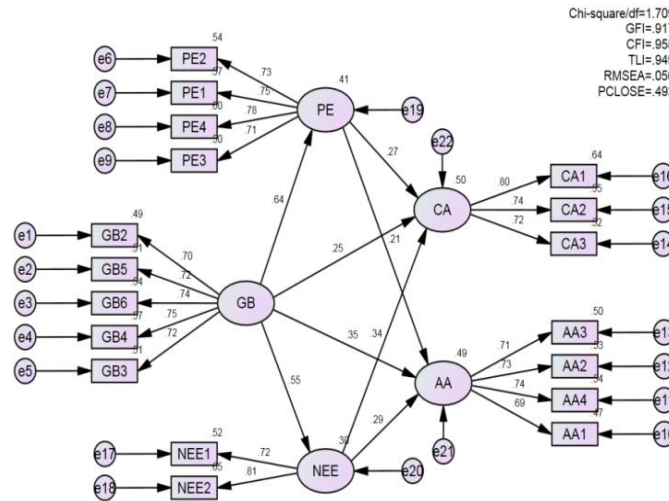

Figure 4. The SEM analysis results.

In regression weights, the P index (sig) and estimate value are assessed, by using a 95% confidence standard, the sig value of all variables is smaller than 0.05 which describes the significant effect of the variable on that factor (Table 3). Hence, all 6 hypotheses are accepted.

Table 3. Regression analysis results.

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
PE<---GB	0.638	0.080	8.012	***	-
NEE<---GB	0.606	0.094	6.456	***	-
CA<---GB	0.247	0.101	2.446	0.014	-
AA<---GB	0.334	0.099	3.393	***	-
CA<---PE	0.276	0.087	3.177	0.001	-
AA<---PE	0.200	0.082	2.446	0.014	-
CA<---NEE	0.311	0.077	4.008	***	-
AA<---NEE	0.254	0.072	3.505	***	-

Note: ***: <0.001

For the standardized regression weights, only General belief (GB) influences the mediating variable Positive emotion (PE) and Negative emotion (NEE) with estimated values of 0.637 and 0.546 respectively. Three variables NEE, PE, and GB influence Cognitive attitude (CA) in descending order with 0.342, 0.275, and 0.246 respectively; while Affective attitude (AA) is affected in descending order by GB (0.347), NEE (0.292), and PE (0.208). Besides, the mediating variable NEE, PE is explained by 29,8% and 40,6% of variation of the independent variable GB. The independent variables affecting CA explain 49.6% of the variation of this variable. The independent variables affecting AA explain 49.3% of the variation of this variable.

4.5. Discussion

During the data analysis, 2 observed variables which are GB1, and NEE3 were removed. By considering the theoretical framework of attitude formation and change, the information supplied in the preceding response can be further examined from an academic standpoint. Positive, negative, or neutral assessments or feelings about an object are referred to as attitudes. Attitudes can be shaped by a variety of factors, such as individual experiences, socialization, and exposure to various media, including advertising. Persuasive communication, which is the practice of employing messages to change attitudes, can also alter attitudes.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) is a theoretical framework that is frequently used to describe attitude formation and modification. According to the ELM, there are two methods of persuasion: the central method and the peripheral method. The key step entails a careful examination of the message.

Some respondents have good affective and cognitive attitudes toward controversial advertising by applying the ELM to the insights given in the previous response. However, some respondents have negative attitudes. The fact that these people are highly involved with the goods or are more analytical in their appraisal of the advertisement may be the cause of their positive sentiments. These people may have negative opinions because they are less invested in the product or are more susceptible to outside stimuli.

Additionally, the observations imply that people's feelings when they see controversial ads affect how their general beliefs relate to their emotional and rational attitudes toward such ads. This is in line with the ELM, which holds that attitudes can form and alter due to emotions via the peripheral route. While negative emotions might take away from the message or the source, happy emotions can increase the attractiveness of the message or the source, resulting in more favourable attitudes.

Overall, the findings indicate that views regarding contentious advertising are complicated and can be influenced by a range of elements, such as individual beliefs, emotional reactions, and degree of participation in the product. It is critical for marketers and advertisers to comprehend these variables to create powerful and persuasive advertising campaigns that can influence consumers' attitudes in the right direction.

In comparison with Arnaud et al., this study supports all the hypotheses, while in the previous study, General beliefs do not affect positively on the affective attitude (H1) which means that the emotional responses are subjective when receiving any provocative messages [47]. Positive and negative emotions in the mediating role between general beliefs and cognitive attitude are only supported in a partial way (H4a, H4b). Besides, this study also shows a regional difference (compared to previous studies), Vietnamese people do not like to be bothered by ads. They can change their attitude towards the brand when being bothered by ads too much.

5. Conclusions

In summary, based on the previous study of Arnaud et al., a research model has been proposed including five variables which are general beliefs, positive emotions, negative emotions, affective attitudes, and cognitive attitudes [47]. In detail, there are one independent (belief), two mediating (emotions), and two dependent variables (attitudes) with 6 corresponding hypotheses.

The scale measurement is adapted from related previous research and revised via expert interviews to match well with the Vietnamese background and context. Based on expert opinions, some items are adjusted to make sure that Vietnamese people can clearly understand the meaning of these items. A sample of 286 valid questionnaires are included in the study. The testing results show that the factors in the model all affect users' attitudes (both cognitively and emotionally) toward controversial ads.

Based on the analysis results, some of the managerial implications could be made as follows:

- The results of this study imply that creating unfavourable feelings may have a considerable negative impact on consumer sentiments toward the brand and product. Controversial and provocative communications appear to have an impact based on the emotional reactions they elicit. When creating appealing communications, advertisers and strategists need to exercise caution and evaluate its impact on various platforms. Shocking is not always a wise move and can backfire.
- Companies employ different kinds of ads, some of which are controversial and provocative. However, all messages should align with the company's vision, strategy, and brand identity. People might choose to pay attention to or disregard advertisements. Those messages have the power to elicit a range of

emotions. Marketers must therefore be mindful of how consumers' emotional responses affect their perception of the product and brand.

- Controversial ads in a negative degree when appearing many times will cause feelings of inhibition for consumers. They will feel uncomfortable, which in turn affects their attitude towards the brand negatively. Advertisers should carefully consider the frequency of advertising messages to avoid side effects.
- Some main recommendations are referred to suggest further research as follows:
- examine user opinions qualitatively on controversial advertising.
- subdivide opinions and arrange these opinions based on the demographics of the respondents.
- consider some other factors that may influence consumers' attitudes towards controversial advertising, such as: creativity, reputation...

Author Contributions

Q.T. Pham contributes to the research rational, literature review, discussion, managerial implications, and final review; T.D. Do contributes to literature review, data collection, data analysis, discussion, implications, and manuscript revision.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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