

THE LOWER SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS (LES) ADVERTISING SCHEMATA REALITY DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT STIMULI ADVERTISING SCHEMATA (MINDSET) OF THE LOWER SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS (LES) COMMUNITY

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Abstract

Purpose of Study: This study aims to examine how the reality digital environment stimulate the advertising schemata (mindset) of the LES community in Malaysia. This study also measures the advertising literacy of the LES community based on the two literacy models; cognitive model of media literacy and advertising literacy model in relation to flyposting.

Methodology: To represent the low-income distribution, respondents from the Public Housing Program (PHP) were selected. This study used the survey method as a research design by distributing questionnaires which acts as the research instrument for data acquisition from a total of 574 respondents from five areas of Public Housing Program (PHP) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The advertising literacy instrument was used as the main tool to examine the advertising schemata and to measure the advertising literacy in relation to the flyposting phenomena amongst the low-income community.

Main findings: The LES community are comprised of highly advertising literate individuals despite having low academic qualifications and low income due to technological factors. This study also identifies the significant relationship between the digital environment and the advertising schemata of the LES community since both aspects reinforce each other in explaining the media issues available in the society today. The LES community are able to access, analyse, evaluate, analyse, and construct their own meaning towards the advertisements available today.

Applications of this study: This study is beneficial in contributing to the development of mass media and communication field specifically in the area of advertising literacy. The discussion provided in this study adds on to the debate of the current advertising research and presents consequent implications for the communication and advertising field.

Novelty/Originality: This study has successfully developed an advertising literacy instrument based on two literacy models; cognitive model of media literacy and advertising literacy model. All the indicators tested in the instrument have its own strength in determining the advertising literacy level in the context of flyposting. Hence, the findings in this study may be beneficial to and act as a framework or a limitation for other similar studies in future.

Keywords: Advertising Schemata, Digital Environment, Flyposting, Literacy, Lower Socioeconomic Status (LES), Low-Income Community, Mean Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Information can be compressed in the form of icons, audio, graphics, and text summaries to fit specific mediums accordingly. Advertising is one of the biggest industries which has become part of the culture and fabric economy of the Malaysian society. It channels numerous information and the communication elements have evolved to seize every possible platform to market products and offer services to a broad range of target audiences.

It has now become a challenge to identify a complete set of advertising media in the world today. With the arrival of technology, medium of information are subject to change and the society must be able to access the information since there is a shift of medium from print media to electronic media (Mohd Nor Shahizan et al., 2017). However, the basic types of advertising media are print advertisings (newspapers, magazines, brochures, fliers), broadcast advertisings (television, radio, and the internet), covert advertisings (advertising in movies), surrogate advertisings, public service

advertisings (advertising for social causes), celebrity advertisings, outdoor advertisings (Billboards, kiosks, tradeshow, posters, transit advertising, sky advertising, wall painting, digital displays, flyposting), and the latest advertising media would be interactive advertising (internet based advertisements) ([Medina, 1990](#); [Belch & Belch, 2014](#); [Pillai, 2010](#); [Trehan & Trehan, 2015](#)). Once a person's thoughts are channeled toward advertising, the advertising schema assists the mind in interpreting the advertisement as a persuasive attempt ([Hoch, 2002](#)) and to spontaneously respond to it.

The advertising schemata basically look at the psychological perspective, especially on the individual's responses to a clearly specified stimulus. The way an individual's cognitive, affective, and behavior is expressed could be affected by the advertising stimuli ([Fennis & Stroebe, 2010](#)). The 'schemata' or cognitive structures represent different patterns for advertising in comparison to realism and how an individual identifies advertising as it is through the exploration of the individual's advertising schemata ([Stam, & Bowes, 1990](#); [Dahlen & Edenius, 2007](#)). Based on socio-cultural theories, the meanings behind an advertisement vary depending on different individuals, different interpretations, and different situations ([Hackley, 2010](#)). Hence, every individual has a different set of schemata and congruity level in relation to the advertising messages encountered. In any case, an individual needs to have the advertising knowledge, referred to as "advertising literacy" skills ([Livingstone & Helsper, 2006](#)) as it could act as a filter during the processing of advertising messages.

According to [Potter \(2015\)](#), it is physically impossible for individuals to avoid the numerous information surrounding them today, however, the individuals could psychologically shield themselves by processing it automatically. The definition for media literacy is still under dispute amongst the scholars ([Messaris, 1998](#); [Thoman & Jolls, 2004](#); [Livingstone, 2004](#); [Plester, & Wood, 2009](#)); however, [Potter \(2004\)](#) defines media literacy as "the set of perspectives from which we expose ourselves to the media and interpret the meaning of the messages we encounter" and further provided a more focused definition which is elaborated based on the cognitive model of media literacy.

[Potter \(2004\)](#) introduced the cognitive model of media literacy (CMML) which focuses on four skills, namely, knowledge structures (KS), personal locus (PL), competencies and skills (CS), and flow of information task (IP). [Potter \(2004\)](#) stated that an individual with low level of media literacy only acquires basic information as the only thing that was obtained addresses the "what" questions. An individual is considered literate when he or she has the ability to interrogate the information in the form of "how" and "why" questions. However, the "how" and "why" questions are derived from clear understanding of the "what" question. However, this model represents media in general. Therefore, another model was adopted in the study. [Malmelin \(2010\)](#) proposed a model which is specific for advertising, the model of advertising literacy (MAL) which is comprised of four dimensions; information, visual, rhetorical, and promotional literacy. All the four dimensions in the model reinforce one another and are interrelated in defining advertising literacy which helps to provide a comprehensive understanding from the consumers' perspective as it provides a clear picture of how the LES community comprehend the advertising messages. According to [Malmelin \(2010\)](#), advertising literacy can be defined as the "consumer's ability to understand advertising and to recognize various types of commercial phenomena in the media".

This study attempts to investigate the advertising schemata, and to measure the advertising literacy of the LES community in today's digital environment. This is a critical issue since technology has already made significant changes in the advertising industry and play a big role in influencing the literacy level of an individual ([Potter, 2015](#)). This study focuses on one particular advertising medium called flyposting, since flyposting is still being used by individuals, businesses, and entrepreneurs despite the technological advancement. In Malaysia, the media landscape has evolved generating a challenging and competitive media environment ([Azma & Samsudin, 2013](#)). However, according to [Nor Rashidah Zainal et.al. \(2012\)](#), flyposting are targeted mostly at high-density population areas, especially urban poor areas located in the city of Kuala Lumpur since it provides a high level of visibility to the community.

It is of utmost importance to determine whether the LES community are advertising literate individuals. Reason being, a person living in the 21st century should have the abilities and skills to assess, analyze, evaluate and be critical analysts of the numerous media available today ([Jones-Kavalier, & Flannigan, 2006](#); [Jenkins et al., 2009](#); [Trilling & Fadel, 2009](#); [Stibbe, 2009](#); [Potter, 2015](#)). In fact, the ability of an individual or a community to make an interpretation or construct meaning on any media text requires skills and the situation must benefit them as the media text offers various meanings ([Condit, 1989](#); [Rivera-Perez, 1996](#); [Kress & Leeuwen, 2002](#); [Pool et al., 2003](#); [Schmitt et al., 2003](#); [Austin et al., 2005](#)) since different people have different advertising schemata and how the LES community responds towards this flyposting medium needs to be answered ([Stafford & Stafford, 2002](#); [Hoch, 2002](#)).

Previous studies ([Pierce et al., 2003](#); [Hobbs & Frost, 2003](#); [Primack et al., 2006](#); [Rozendaal et al., 2011](#); [Lee & Montague, 2015](#)) have successfully developed an instrument in the field of media and literacy. However, the inconsistencies that lie in literature based on the methods and respondents' variation do not fit and could not be adapted into the Malaysian context. Furthermore, there is a paucity of research on flyposting ([Black & Nevill, 2009](#)) and the relationship between the literacy and flyposting as an advertising media has not been empirically tested.

“Empirical research shows that the higher the knowledge of an individual, the larger the advertising skepticism” ([Moore & Rodgers, 2005](#)). From 2006 to 2008, the low-income community still contributed to the gap between print media and TV news (Jerit et al., 2006). In response to this matter, this study determines the relationship between the LES community and flyposting as an advertising medium. The demographic of the LES community such as education level, income and media targets are used as a base to indicate whether this particular socioeconomic segment of the society has any relation to flyposting.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 574 participants from five locations of the Public Housing Program (PHP) were selected to represent the LES population. The locations selected were PHP Hilaran Ampang, PHP Seri Cempaka, PHP Wangsa Sari, PHP Taman Mulia, and PPR Radya Permai which are located in the Klang Valley, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. According to the statistics by the Ministry of Urban Wellbeing, Housing, and Local Government (2015), the total population of PHP residents in Malaysia is 60,291, of which 30,276 of them are in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. An instrument was developed in the form of a questionnaire and was employed in this study to measure the advertising literacy level which was developed based on the cognitive model of media literacy ([Potter, 2004](#)) and the advertising literacy model ([Malmelin, 2010](#)). The items constructed for each indicator and dimension were adjusted based on prior literature which were related to the study and its objective.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 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 as near to 1.00 as possible and it is accepted if the value is above .60 (marginally accepted) ([Lee et al., 2015](#); [Bann, 2012](#); [Primack et al., 2006](#); [Radhakrishna, 2007](#); [Reinard, 2001](#)).

Table 2 summarizes the demographic of the LES respondents. In terms of academic qualification, most of the respondents had completed 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 earn between RM1001 and RM 2000, 29.1 percent claimed they had no income, 19 percent had an income below RM1000, 15.7 percent earned from RM2001 to RM3000, and only 6.4 percent earned more than RM3001. The findings also revealed the types of media advertising preferred by the LES community.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

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)		
Informational Literacy	.770	8
Visual Literacy	.730	8
Rhetorical Literacy	.782	7
Promotional Literacy	.755	8

Table 2: Demographic Profile

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Education		
Secondary	401	69.8
Post-secondary	173	30.2
Income		
No Income	167	29.1
Below RM1 000	109	19
RM1001-RM2000	171	29.8
RM2001-RM3000	90	15.7
More than RM3001	37	6.4
Preferrred Advertising Media		
Television	449	78
Radio	216	38
Newspaper Ad	254	44
Internet	323	56
Smartphone Application Apps	149	26
Magazine Ad	161	28
Fly Posting	28	5

Table 3: shows the mean analysis of each variable

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
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)		
Informational Literacy	3.128	.799
Visual Literacy	3.143	.500
Rhetorical Literacy	3.705	.726
Promotional Literacy	3.899	.607

Living in a media driven world, television stays relevant and dominates with 78 percent of the people subscribing to television channels. The Internet ranks 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 television is a territorial medium (Castells, & Cardoso, 2005). Only 5 percent preferred flyposting as a medium of communication. This could be the reason behind why flyposting is still being used by the minority group for seeking information. This justifies that fly posting is an informative medium yet a public nuisance (Neesa Ameerah et al., 2016).

Table 3 shows the mean analysis of each variable used to measure the LES advertising literacy. The mean score basically represents the literacy level; 1.00-2.00 (low); 2.00-3.00 (average); 3.00-4.00 (high); and 4.00-5.00 (very high) (Mohd Hasril et al., 2016).

This study has revealed that based on the cognitive model of media literacy and the advertising literacy model, the LES literacy level is high. The LES's knowledge structure, personal locus, competencies and skills and information tasks specify that the LES community in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia are advertising literate individuals. Even though the lives of the LES community are saturated with numerous advertising messages, it proves that they have the skills and the ability to evaluate, understand, and construct meaning of the advertisements they are exposed to.

The LES community is proved to be literate in searching for information, evaluating visuals in advertisements, criticizing the rhetorical, and analyzing promotional elements in advertisements.

CONCLUSION

The findings provide empirical evidence that the LES community is an advertising literate community despite the numerous amounts of advertising media and technology advancements surrounding them. As information enters the society, it is debated that the knowledge gap between the HES and LES is due to differences in education and income (Tichenor et al., 1970). However, this study has proved that these factors are no longer relevant in determining an individual's literacy level.

As most of the respondents claimed to only have completed high school and a majority is earning an income ranging between RM1001-RM2000, it is revealed that education and income are not strong factors in determining the literacy level of an individual. The media universe has changed radically, not just in terms of the media content but also in the ways the LES community discover, consume, and interrelate with it. In fact, the question on how the LES community process the selected information, attend to it, and process these advertising messages are answered by this study which has proved that the LES community is comprised of highly advertising literate individuals.

LIMITATIONS AND STUDY FORWARD

This study is confined to only one particular advertising medium, flyposting. Yet another limitation is the sampling selected adopted. The sampling method chosen for this study only focuses on the LES community from the PHP locations stated earlier. All the statements related to the limitations of this study indirectly exclude all other advertising media. Only the population from the LES community was measured and this study did not include other socio-economic status segments such as the middle or higher socio-economic status (HES).

Results and findings from academic literature justify that there exists a lack of prior research and past studies in this context. There are inconsistencies in the literature and it does not seem to be in any relation to advertising and the community, specifically among the LES community. Furthermore, there have been minimal research done on flyposting and scholars tend to explore more on other mediums such as the television or recently, the online media.

This study has also adapted existing theories and model; Cognitive model of media literacy and Model of Advertising Literacy as a framework to answer the objectives of the study. The theories and models used in this study have set the indicators which have been tested in the relevant context in line with the objective of defining advertising literacy in terms of flyposting. The indicators in this study might prove to be beneficial for different scopes and contexts such as determining advertising literacy in relation to online media (e.g. social media). However, the indicators used in this study need to be identified, evaluated and valued to adapt to the objectives of the study.

This study has provided an overview of the phenomena of flyposting and the advertising literacy among the LES community in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The research procedures in terms of research design, research methodology, sampling selection and data analysis have limited the findings of this study as it focuses only on advertising literacy, flyposting and the LES community. Since studies on flyposting is still found to be minimal in academic literatures, this study highly encourages future research to expand literatures on this particular advertising medium and expand the knowledge by identifying, evaluating, and analyzing the indicators revealed in this study. In fact, by integrating with other methodology, theories and models, further studies would enhance and contribute to the body of knowledge in the future specifically in the field of advertising research.

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