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Measuring university students' attitudes toward Facebook advertising

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Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this paper is to examine the attitude of university students toward Facebook advertising. More specifically, the conceptual framework of this study is divided into two main sections displaying attitudes toward Facebook advertising. The first section is the Facebook related variables; the second one is the user related section.
Design/methodology/approach - In order to achieve the purpose of this study a well-structured quantitative survey was conducted by distributing 525 questionnaires to the students of the College of Management and Technology in Alexandria, Egypt. Consequently, the proposed hypotheses were tested using SPSS. As matter of fact, several analytical techniques such: the reliability, descriptive analysis, sample description, correlation analysis and a linear regression analysis were run.
Findings - The results show that credibility has the highest effect on attitude toward Facebook advertising. Furthermore, the results indicate that the least significant variable is the irritation variable.
Research limitations/implications –The sample was restricted to students of only one university in Egypt.
Practical implications – Some of the findings of this research trace the important factors that any marketers have to put into consideration when advertising through Facebook or their Facebook pages. The most significant variable of the conceptual framework is the credibility of Facebook.
Originality/value – Through literature review it has been revealed that no similar research exists in Egypt. The findings of this study will aid Egyptian and multinational marketers operating in Egypt advertisers in recognizing the possibility and significance of advertising on Facebook.

Keywords: Egypt, University Students, Attitudes, Social Media, Social Networking, Facebook, Advertising

1. Introduction

Over the last ten years, there has been a noticeable change in our lives: we are now posting information about ourselves; sharing pictures and sending messages for friends about upcoming events. This change felt by us is not only due to the exponential growth of technology, but also due to the existence of social media. According to Yuanxin and Pittana (2011),the top four social media sites attracted by the majority of internet users are: Facebook, which has the largest share of approximately 44 percent, where half are visiting Facebook on a daily basis and where also a

Facebook user is connected to an average of 80 community pages, groups and events (Facebook statistics, 2013).

Nowadays in some industries such as fast moving consuming goods, fashion, travel and electronics, most of the marketers are using social media as an important channel to deliver advertising messages in order to reach groups of consumers, and there is a trend that social media would become in some fast changing-industries the primary advertising option (Yuanxian & Pittana, 2011). The reason behind that advertisers are moving away from only using television and are now investing in alternative media, such as social media, is in order to first reach their target consumers, second because the cost of delivering to a mass audience has become prohibitive (Logan, Bright& Gangadharbatla, 2012). The social media advertising expenditure by companies in 2011 was $6 billion; $4 billion out of this budget is spent on advertising on Facebook, which is the leader of all the social network sites (Facebook, 2013). Many previous researches showed that attitude is one of the important variables that measure the advertising response. Attitude can be defined as *"A person's consistently favorable or unfavorable evaluations, feelings, and tendencies toward an object or idea" (*Kotler & Armstrong, 2012).

2. Literature review

Facebook

One of the most popular and successful social network sites is undoubtedly Facebook (Koles & Nagy, 2012). In 2013, Facebook had more than 1.1 billion users, which made it the third largest country in the world and the most visited website (Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). In addition to the features that most traditional social networking websites offer, Facebook provides other multiple functions that make it popular (Cheung, Chiu& Lee, 2010). The site's popularity has developed its very own language and subculture (Tapia, 2010).

As Facebook has become the most-visited website site, it has become the first location for a company looking to modernize its communication strategy (Champoux, Durgee & McGlynn, 2012). Its active users can participate in conversations and recommend products and/or services, and also buy online (Shih, 2009). This inexpensive way of marketing has helped small-businesses and small promotional budgets to reach a large number of people (Murray & Waller, 2007). Advertising on Facebook is done through the banner ads, virtual flyers, and sponsored links (Murray & Waller, 2007).

Attitude toward advertising

It is nearly impossible to talk about opinions and views of advertising in online social networks without considering users' attitudes (Kornias &Halalau, 2012). Fishbein (1967) defined attitude as "a learned predisposition of human beings". "*An individual would respond to an object (or an idea) or a number of things (or opinions)"*. Generally attitudes have three basic components, which are: affect cognition and behavior. The affect component refers to feelings about an object, cognition is related to beliefs about an object, and the behavioral component means the intention to take any action related to the object (Soloman, 2007). Ad clicking has been considered as a behavioral outcome of online advertising. After the existence of technological advances, many researchers conducted studies to measure the attitude of consumers towards online advertising. A

positive result was found by Hadija, Barnes &Hair (2012); the more the consumers like a website, the more positive the attitude they have toward its ads.

Throughout the years, there have been different models describing and explaining attitudes toward advertising construct (Kornias & Halalau, 2012). One of these models is the Ducoffe (1996) one, which also focuses on attitudes towards advertising, and includes three factors: entertainment, informativeness and irritation. The factors involved and the fact that this model has been previously tested in an online environment made this model more simplistic, straightforward and appropriate to be studied (Kornias &Halalau, 2012).The credibility factor was integrated to the Ducoffe (1996) model by Bracket & Carr (2001) as a complement, as it offered further explanation of the attitude toward advertising construct. In the present study, attitudes towards advertising are measured by three different dimensions. The first one is the Facebook related variables which include the advertising characteristics of the Ducoffe model, and include credibility and interactivity, as well as one other characteristic, which is customization. The second dimension is the user related variables which include the frequency of exposure, as well as two demographic factors, which are gender and education.

Facebook Related Variables

Entertainment

According to Yuanxin & Pittana (2011), the entertainment of advertising refers to the concept that the message of advertising should be humorous and sexy, thus it would immediately draw consumers' attention. . Based on an assumption, an entertaining advertising message would be perceived more positively by the users of social media, and would eventually affect their attitudes towards it (Yuanxin & Pittana 2011).

Advertisers believe that positive brand attitudes are generated by entertaining ads that is why they seek to provide entertaining advertising messages (Shavit, Lowrey & Haefner, 1998). The majority of internet users considers it as an entertaining vehicle, and accordingly prefers the advertising to be entertaining as well (Hadija, Barnes&Hair, 2012).

Ducoffe (1996) mentioned that the degree of entertainment provided by advertising is not only important on traditional media, but also essential on the Internet as well as on social media. It is found that the internet users who perceive a banner ad on a web site as entertaining, leads to more brand loyalty to the advertised product, and a higher chance of the purchase of this brand (Stern ,Barbara & Zaichowsky,1991). It has been found that the entertainment variable creates an important positive attitude towards the ad and can even create further curiosity for the ad (Ling, Piew & Chai, 2010).

H1: Entertainment of the advertising message is positively associated with the university students' attitude towards advertising on Facebook.

Informativeness

One of the main roles of advertising that has a large impact on affecting and shaping consumers' attitude towards advertising is the information delivered (Petrovici & Marinov, 2007). The goals of advertising relate to creating awareness, informing customers, and creating desired perception

for the product or brand. Furthermore, it has to persuade the customers to buy the product or the brand (Bendixen, 1993). Through the study conducted by Ducoffe (1996), it was found that there are positive and strong relationships between the informativeness level and the attitude of consumers towards advertising. Indeed, informativeness was positively related to the attitude of consumers toward SNSs advertising (Taylor, Lewin & Strutton, 2011).

It was found from a study of the consumers' attitudes towards web advertising that the quality and accurateness of the information put on a company's website had a direct impact on the consumers' perception towards the company and the company's products and services. Therefore, it is estimated that the perceived accuracy, timeliness and usefulness of the information delivered on Facebook has an effect on the attitude of the consumer towards Facebook advertising (Bauer, Barnes, Reichardt &Neumann, 2005).

Facebook, which is a part of the internet, is full of information. However, the quality of the information placed on Facebook might have an influence on the perceptions of companies and their products or services in the advertisements of the Facebook users. Therefore, information would be positively correlated with Facebook users' attitude (Yuanxin & Pittana, 2011).

H2: Informativeness of the advertising message is positively associated with the university students' attitude towards advertising on Facebook.

Irritation

While the two previous variables are positive predictors of the consumer's attitude toward advertising, the irritation variable is a negative indicator (Ducoffe, 1996). The irritation is based on measuring the extent of the advertisement to be troubling, invasive, disturbing, inferring, distracting, intrusive, forced, or obstructive.

When users see advertising as interfering with their goal oriented tasks for which they are present on Facebook, the ads are perceived as being annoying (Kornias&Halalau, 2012).The main reasons that make people criticize advertising are related to the annoyance or irritation it causes, an outcome thought to lead to a general reduction in the success of advertising (Ducoffe, 1996).

The model of Ducoffe (1995, 1996), posits a negative relationship between the level of the advertising irritation and the level of the advertising's success. In regard to Facebook, irritation associated with advertising may be attributed to goal interruption as well as concerns of consumers regarding the loss of privacy (Taylor, Lewin & Strutton, 2011). Advertisements that annoy, offend and manipulate are perceived by recipient consumers as irritating and unwanted material; that is why all companies have to think in a way to make their advertisements neither irritating nor annoying (Gaber,2012).

H3: Irritation of the advertising message is negatively associated with the university students' attitude towards advertising on Facebook.

Credibility

Because of the prevalence of credibility as a construct within other models, it was added as a fourth perceptual antecedent (Eighmey, 1998;MacKenzie & Lultz,1989; Shavitt ,Lowrey & Haefner,1998;Brackett &Carr,2001). It has been proven that advertising credibility is a

significant factor that affects advertising on the internet (Brackett & Carr, 2001). One of the several ways that can make credibility achieved is to list key attributes and communicate trustworthiness to the consumer (Ekstrom & Gustafsson, 2012).

A credible source of information can influence ideas, attitudes, and behavior through a process called internalization (Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000). According to Johnson & Kaye (1998) consumers consider certain types of information sources as more trustworthy or credible than others. Research proposes that Facebook can be considered as a credible source for brand message (Logan, Bright& Gangadharbatla, 2012).

Yuanxin & Pittana (2011) assume the trustworthiness of a Facebook message has a positive influence on the attitude of Facebook users toward Facebook advertising. Moreover, several previous studies indicated that there is a positive relationship between the credibility of an advertisement and the overall attitude of the advertisement (Tsang, Ho& Liang, 2004; Faraz & Hosseini, 2011).

H4: Credibility of the advertising message is positively associated with the university students' attitudes towards advertising on Facebook.

Interactivity

The internet based media has facilitated the interaction between company and consumers, and between consumers themselves (Winer, 2009). Interactivity is fundamental as it allows the exchange of information between consumers and advertisers. The aim of the interactivity of advertising is to change the consumers' perception or behavior through this action and reaction response. According to Yuanxin & Pittana (2011), interactivity influences attitudes towards Facebook advertising in a positive way.

Kapferer (2008) argues that nowadays, everything is provided on demand, and the audience has lived the experience of interactivity. Moreover, consumers have become proactive. They don't want to participate passively, they want to give their opinion on everything and read the opinions of others (Kapferer, 2008). In order to enhance customer communication, companies are utilizing interactivity, which is one of the facebook characteristics (Yu & Kwok, 2011).

Logan, Bright & Gngadharbatla (2012) mentioned that in order to increase consumers' engagement with the message, there must be interaction with the brand message. Facebook users contribute to the brand when they engage in brand-related activities, and are consequently more engaged than consumers who simply read, listen or watch videos about a certain brand (Muntinga, Moorman&Smit, 2011). According to Wang, Zhang, Choi& Eredita (2002), interactivity is also a factor that contributes to consumer attitude towards advertising.

H5: Interactivity of the advertising message is positively associated with the university students' attitudes towards advertising on Facebook.
Customization

Another contributory variable to the Ducoffe (1996) model is Customization. Customization is also another core and unique element of the social network sites and accordingly of Facebook

(Tapia, 2010). According to Xu (2006) customization is different than informativeness as customization tailors and personalizes the offer to a specific customer. Internet advertising is not accepted by internet users, unless it is clearly identified, well targeted and tailored specifically to them (Gordon &De Lima-Turner, 1997).

Facebook uses a hypertargeting technique which allows advertisers to target audiences with accurate demographics, psychographics and behavioral data. This technique helps businesses to engage with their target and appropriate public, making marketing a more precise, personal and social task (Shih, 2009).

One of the advantages of customization is that it makes the marketers able to reach their consumers in an individual and personalized way which can improve the customer relationship management (Varshney & Vetter, 2002). According to the findings of Kornias & Halalau (2012) some respondents found that the Facebook display advertisements are related to their specific interest and some other respondents found display advertisements irrelevant, as they believe that they are addressed to them from a demographical perspective not based on their own interests. Xu (2006) states that consumers tend to show a generally positive attitude toward tailor-made advertising.

H6: Customization of the advertising message is positively associated with the university students' attitudes towards advertising on Facebook.

Users related variables

Frequency of exposure

When referring to attitudes toward advertising, we refer to the predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to a certain advertisement during the occurrence of an exposure (Soloman, 2007). In other words, attitude toward advertising is whether the consumer thinks in a good or bad manner of an advertisement.

There is deterioration in the attitudes toward general advertising as consumers are becoming highly exposed to the ads. It is expected that attitudes to internet advertising also deteriorate as the web users become more used to the medium (Rettie, Robinson & Jenner, 2001). But on the other hand, Wang, Shih & Peracchio (2013) state that involuntary exposure to banner ads with no click-through makes an increase in brand and advertising awareness in much the same way as ad exposure does in traditional media.

A study that examined the impact of the frequency of exposure on the attitude toward advertising, found that the value of advertising is decreased when there is a high frequency of exposure (Gaber, 2012). Based on Megdadi & Nusair (2011) assumption, consumers who are confronted repeatedly with advertising are less informed since they have already learned the content.

H7: the university students' Frequency of exposure has a positive influence on their attitude towards advertising on Facebook.

The demographic factors

The attitude of facebook users towards advertising might be influenced by the demographic factors, which are considered to be important factors when measuring the attitude towards advertising (Yuanxin & Pittana, 2011).

Gender

Gender is a main variable for marketing analysis along several dimensions, including attitude toward advertising (Wolin & Korgaonkar, 2003).   Previous researches show that males and females exhibit different beliefs and attitudes toward advertising along with different advertising stimulated consumer behaviors (Wolin & Korgaonkar , 2003).

There is a significant difference between males and females on several dimensions, as males exhibit more positive attitudes toward online advertising than females. In addition, males are more likely than females to surf the web for functional and entertainment reasons, whereas females are more likely to surf the web for shopping reasons (Wolin & Korgaonkar , 2003).

Duggan & Brenner (2013) mentioned that 67% of the internet users who surf Facebook are women in the age group from 18 to 29. These numbers indicate that is important for practitioners and academics to understand how women assess Facebook advertising. On the other hand, men are not interested in Facebook activities, which explain the inverse relationship between female and male usage of this SNS. Males are more interested in the internet advertising, not the Facebook advertising (Abdul Azeem &Zia ul Haq ,2012)

H 8: Users' attitudes towards advertising on Facebook would vary according to the gender

Educational background

The researcher in this study wants to find if there is a relationship between the respondent's area of study and his attitude toward advertising. The majority of past studies on attitude toward advertising have utilized a sample of undergraduate students (Brackett & Carr, 2001; Rettie,Robinson & Jenner,2001 ; Palanisamy,2004 ; Luo,2002; Yuanxin & Pittana,2011; Logan,Bright & Gangadharbatla, 2012 ; Hadija, Barnes & Hair,2012; Kornias & Halalau, 2012) .These researchers affirm that students may represent an ideal target market for Facebook and social media advertising as they use Facebook more than any other sample group. This is why the target population chosen for this research is the undergraduate   students of the Arab Academy for Science and Technology (AAST).

H 9: Users' attitudes towards advertising on Facebook would vary according to the users' educational background (major).

3. **Method**

Design

This research aim is to examine Facebook advertising related variables (independent variables) and the user related variables (independent variables) leading to examine the attitude of consumers towards Facebook advertising (dependant variables). The data collection method used in this study is a quantitative research technique, which has the form of a cross-sectional,

structured, close ended, self-administered questionnaire for the gathering of data, in order to solve the study's research questions.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
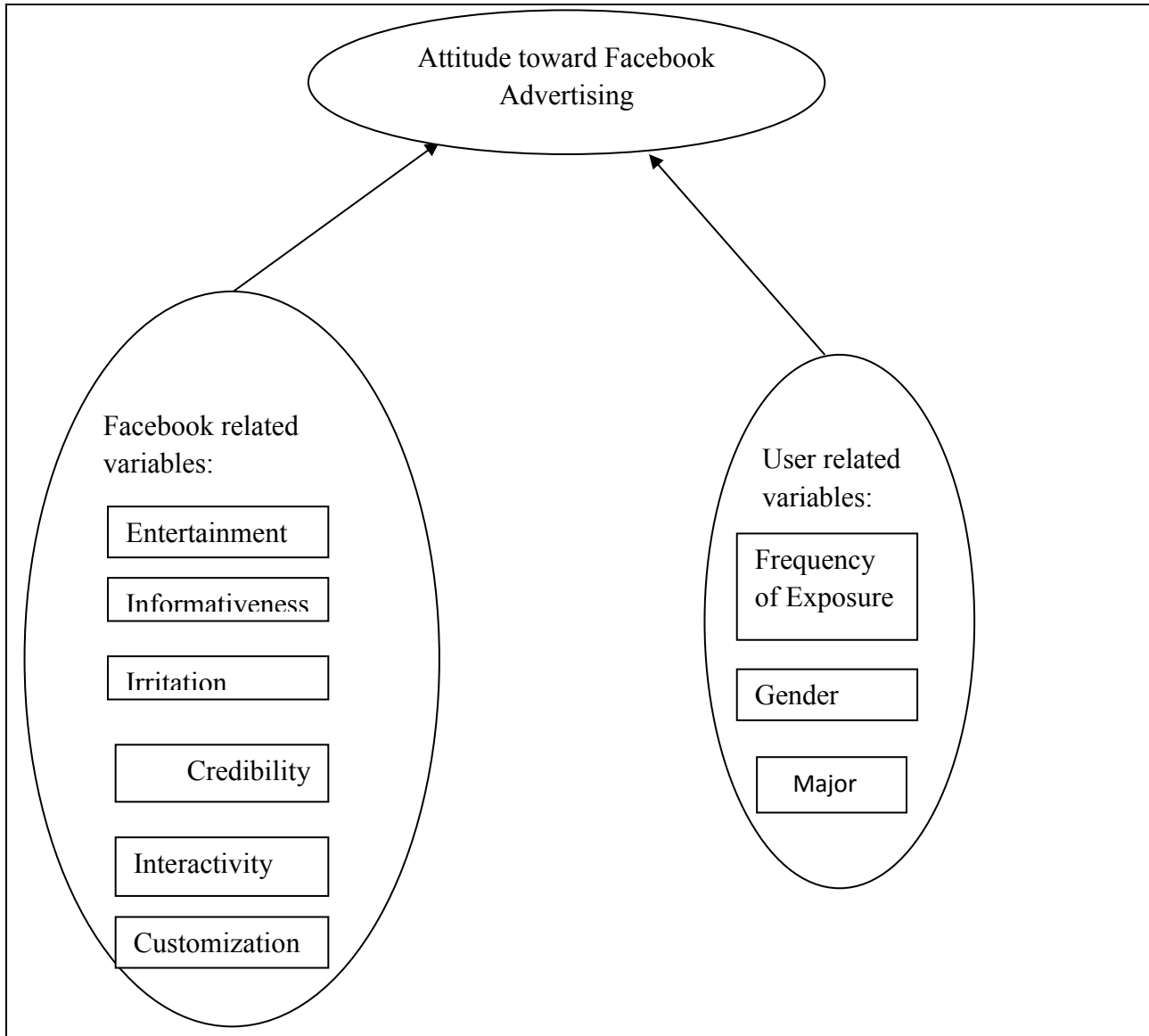
Source: Ducoffe,1995; Ducoffe,1996; Brackett & Carr,2001 ; Luo,2002 ; Yuanxin & Pittana, 2011; Kornias&Halalau,2012 ;Gaber,2012; Ekstrom & Gustafsson, 2012; Logan, Bright & Gangadharbatla,2012.

Sample

For the present study a non-probability sampling technique is used in order to select the sample which is convenience sampling. Based on the population size of each department, the final sample size was 525. This sample size was determined according to the sampling table of Krejcie & Morgan (1970), who indicate that the appropriate minimum number of respondents in a sample of 10,000 should be not less than 384.

In order to gain a more adequate representation of the population of the undergraduate students of the College of Management and Technology (CMT) in Alexandria, the sample was divided with respect to the proportion of the number of students enrolled in each major to the total number of students enrolled in the CMT students in the different branches of Management in the AAST in Alexandria.

Questionnaire Development

A five-page questionnaire was designed and distributed to the students studying in the English section. Questionnaires are divided into three sections. The first one asks about the usage of Facebook and the respondents' awareness about Facebook advertising, the questions in this section are multiple choice questions. The aim of the questions of this part is to identify qualified respondents in order to avoid ambiguity or misunderstanding of the subject of the research. The second section's questions are designed to collect data on the characteristics of facebook advertising such as informativeness, entertainment, credibility, interactivity and customization, as well as the characteristics of the facebook users such as frequency of exposure, gender and educational background (major). All the questions in this section are posed with a 5-point Likert scale. Respondents are asked to rate their answers from 1 "Strongly Disagree" to 5 "Strongly Agree" with the statements about different perspectives of the characteristics of Facebook advertising and of the Facebook users. The last section was about the demographic of the respondents.

Data Analysis Techniques

SPSS 20® (Statistical Package for Social Science) was used in order to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaires. Each questionnaire was coded and entered into the SPSS data file. In order to obtain the results and findings of the research, many analysis techniques were used.

4. Results

Reliability of scales

In this study, the reliability of all the variables under investigation was projected using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the internal consistency of the scale. The following table (Table 4.1) illustrates the reliability of the independent and dependent variables
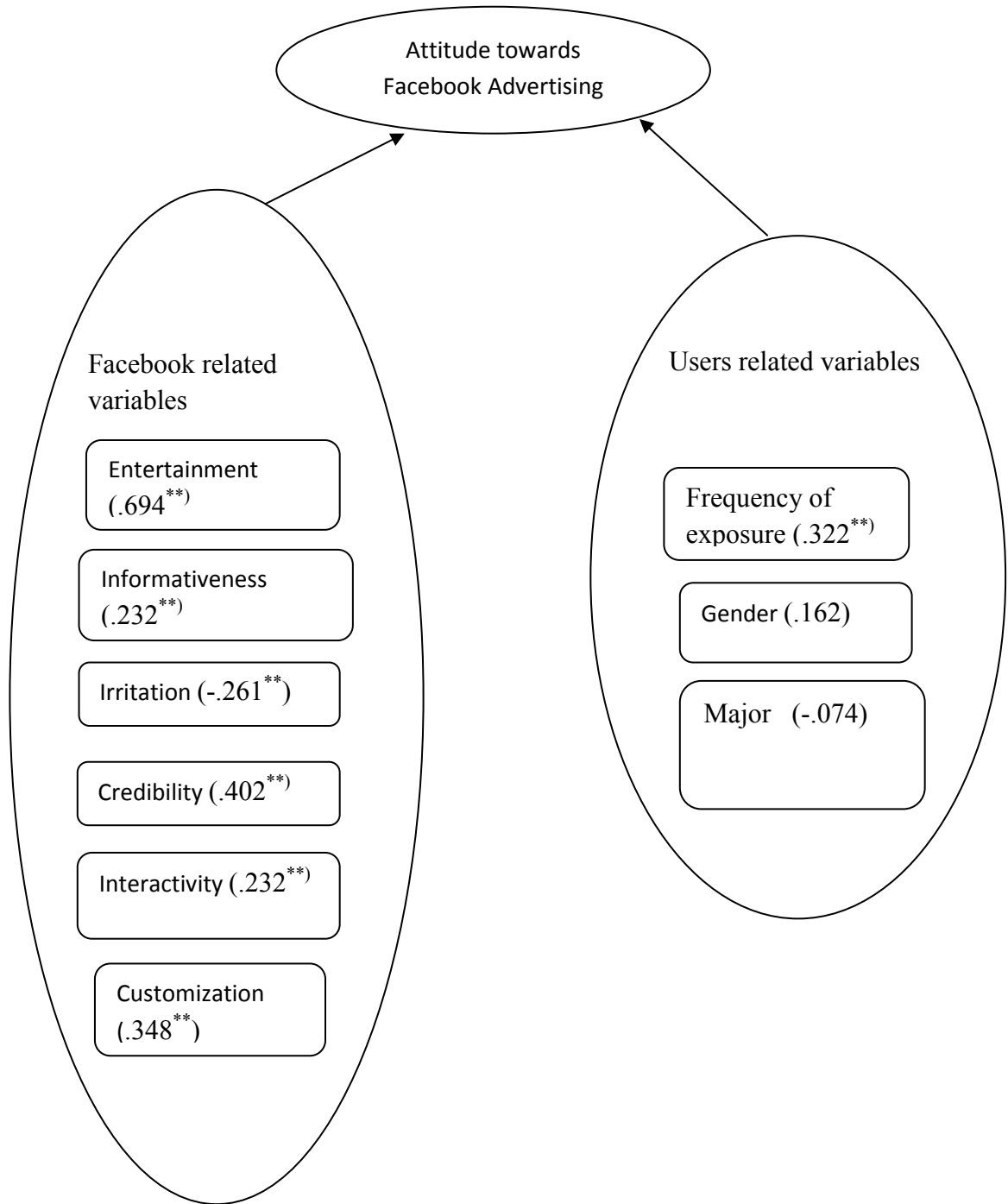
Table 1: Reliability of Scales

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Entertainment	4	.867
Informativeness	4	.842
Irritation	4	.800
Credibility	4	.700
Interactivity	4	.820
Customization	4	.886
Frequency of exposure	2	.848
Attitude toward Facebook advertising	2	.774

Based on the results presented in this table, it is concluded that all the scales used in the study were reliable, thus they can be used to measure the variables under study.

Testing the research hypothesis

The following part indicates an analysis of the proposed model tested by the researcher using the correlation analysis on the SPSS version 20 software. A summary of the results of the analysis is provided in Figure 2, followed by an explanation for each hypothesis.

Figure 2: Correlation coefficient between the research variables:

Attitude towards
Facebook Advertising

Facebook related variables

Entertainment (.694$^{**)}$)

Informativeness (.232$^{**)}$)

Irritation (-.261**)

Credibility (.402$^{**)}$)

Interactivity (.232$^{**)}$)

Customization (.348**)

Users related variables

Frequency of exposure (.322$^{**)}$)

Gender (.162)

Major   (-.074)

Entertainment of an ad has a significant positive relationship with attitude towards Facebook advertising at a variance of r (512) =0.69 and p= 0.01. This relationship is considered to be strong. Therefore, H1 is supported.

Informativeness of the ad has a significant positive relationship with attitudes towards Facebook at a variance of r (512) =0.23 and p= 0.01. This relationship is considered to be of moderate strength. Therefore, H2 is supported.

Irritation of the ad has a significant negative relationship with attitudes towards Facebook advertising at a variance of r (512) = -0.26** and p= 0.01. This relationship is considered to be a weak negative relationship. Therefore, H3 is supported.

Credibility of the ad has a significant positive relationship with attitudes towards Facebook advertising at a variance of r (512) =0.40** and p= 0.01. This relationship is considered to be of moderate strength. Therefore, H4 is supported.

Interactivity of the ad has a significant positive relationship with attitudes towards Facebook advertising at a variance of r (512) =0.23** and p=0.01. This relationship is considered to be of moderate strength. Therefore, H5 is supported.

Customization of the ad has a significant positive relationship with attitudes towards Facebook advertising at a variance of r (512) =0.348** and p=0.01. This relationship is considered to be of moderate strength. Therefore, H6 is supported.

Frequency of exposure of the user has a significant positive relationship with attitudes towards Facebook advertising at a variance of r (512) =0.32** and p=0.01. This relationship is considered to be of moderate strength. Therefore, H7 is supported.

Gender of the user has a significant positive relationship with attitude towards Facebook advertising at a variance of r (512) =0.16** and p=0.00. This relationship is considered of weak strength. Therefore, H8 is not supported.

The educational background of the users has a significant negative relationship with attitudes towards Facebook advertising at a variance of r (512) =-0.074** and p=0.93. This relationship is considered to be of weak strength. Therefore, H9 is not supported.

Regression Analysis
 A simple linear regression was carried out in order to discover the nature and degree of association between the variables as well as the relative importance of the facebook related attributes and the user related ones.

The results obtained from the regression analysis are presented in the following table. This table indicates whether the proposed model for attitudes toward facebook advertising is suitable or not. The tables include and summarize: the significance of the model and the relative contribution of each variable individually.

Table 2: Regression analysis for the supported variables of the research

Variables	R Square	Df	F	Sig.	Beta	T	Classification
Entertainment	0.105	1	52.920	.000	0.324	7.741	Significant influence
Informativeness	0.195	1	123.239	.000	0.441	11.101	Significant influence
Irritation	0.152	1	11.987	.000	-.0152	-3.462	Significant influence
Credibility	.748	1	1516.568	.000	.865	38.943	Significant influence
Interactivity	.121	1	70.311	.000	.348	8.385	Significant influence
Customization	.121	1	108.171	.000	.418	10.401	Significant influence
Frequency of Exposure	.125	1	72.924	.000	.354	8.540	Significant influence

These results convey that the most remarkable variable impacting attitude toward Facebook advertising is credibility, then informativeness, customization, and frequency of exposure, which is followed closely by interactivity. Then entertainment and irritation which has the least impact on attitudes towards Facebook advertising.

5. Conclusion and implications

As a limited number of researches have been conducted to measure attitude toward Facebook advertising, this study is supposed to provide an empirical research to measure the attitude toward Facebook advertising. Additionally, the same variables of previous studies such as entertainment, informativeness, irritation and credibility are tested, discussed, supported and have significant influences on attitude toward Facebook advertising. Furthermore, this research tests and discusses new variables that affect attitude toward Facebook advertising such as interactivity, customization, frequency of exposure and demographics. All of these variables were supported and have a significant influence on attitude toward Facebook advertising.

Facebook advertising can offer several advantages for advertisers as it is an easy and relatively cheap way of advertising. This new way of advertising is not commonly used by many Egyptian companies, as they think that it is not as important as the traditional ways of advertising. However, all marketers have to seriously know that Facebook advertising is considered as a double-edged weapon. If the company does not have a strategy to handle the ads and the Facebook page, it may lose lots of its existing and potential customers. Some of the findings of this research trace the important factors that any marketers have to put into consideration when advertising their website through Facebook or their Facebook pages. Moreover, some other findings are important for Facebook as a channel for advertising.

6. Research limitations and future research

A key limitation is using a non-probability convenience sampling technique with an undergraduate student sample of only one university, and in only one city, Alexandria. Therefore, The same research can be carried out in the future by random sampling method instead of the convenience sampling, by selecting a bigger sample from different Egyptian cities, ages, educational backgrounds, jobs and social classes, and comparing the attitude of demographic variables toward Facebook advertising. Second, depending on only quantitative methods of collecting data, like using a questionnaire, has their drawback, i.e. people may read differently into each question and thus reply based on their own understanding of the question. For that reason, future research has to be qualitative in order to determine the different ways of making Facebook advertising more entertaining and interactive. As well as developing new variables that can affect the consumers attitudes toward Facebook advertising, these variables may be a third subcategory that discusses the product and /or the brand related variables and their impact on the consumers attitudes toward Facebook advertising.

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