

GENERATIONAL COHORTS AND THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARD ADVERTISING

GENERACIJSKE SKUPINE I NJIHOVI STAVOVI PREMA OGLAŠAVANJU

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SAŽETAK

Istraživanje je usmjereno na otkrivanje stavova prema oglašavanju sa stajališta generacijskih skupina u Sarawaku (Malezija). Studija je provedena u dvije faze: prva za identifikaciju generacijskih skupina u državi, a druga za istraživanje stavova svake skupine prema oglašavanju. Služeći se generacijskim teorijama, kvalitativni je pristup kroz osobne intervjuve korišten kao polazište za identificiranje vanjskih događaja koji dovode do stvaranja skupina. Sukladno tome, provedena su 48 intervjua i analiza njihova sadržaja. Rezultati su zatim uključeni u drugu fazu studije istraživanja stavova skupina prema oglašavanju koristeći teoriju razložne akcije. Korišten je kvantitativni pristup istraživanju, a za analizu je prikupljeno 1 410 anketnih upitnika. U početnim nalazi-

ABSTRACT

This research is aimed at determining the attitudes with regard to advertising from the perspective of generational cohorts in Sarawak. A two-phase of study was conducted to firstly identify generational cohorts in the state and, secondly, to investigate the attitude of each cohort to advertising. Utilizing theories of generations, a qualitative approach by means of personal interviews was used at the outset to identify external events which bring about the formation of cohorts. Accordingly, 48 interviews were conducted and data were content-analyzed. The findings were then incorporated into the second phase of study to investigate cohorts' views about advertising, using theory of reasoned action. A quantitative approach via

ma predloženo je pet različitih skupina. One su označene kao moderni-nasljednici (*Neoteric-inheritors*), prospektivni-uvjeritelji (*Prospective-pursuers*), društveni-težitelji (*Social-strivers*), idealistički-borci (*Idealistic-strugglers*) i borbeni-osuđenici (*Battling-lifers*), na temelju njihova angažmana u događajima tijekom starenja. Naknadni rezultati pokazuju kako uvjerenja o oglašavanju značajno predviđaju stavove prema oglašavanju i prema namjeri za svaku skupinu. Međutim, njihova uvjerenja i stavovi prema oglašavanju značajno su različiti, osobito kod starijih skupina. Istraživanje stoga naglašava implikacije generacijskih različitosti stavova prema oglašavanju.

questionnaire-based survey was administered, and 1,410 copies were collected for analysis. Five distinct cohorts are proposed in the initial findings. They are labeled as Neoteric Inheritors, Prospective Pursuers, Social Strivers, Idealistic Strugglers and Battling Lifers on the basis of their respective engagement with events during the coming-of-age years. The subsequent findings show that beliefs about advertising are significant predictors of the attitudes to advertising, and so are the attitudes with regard to the intention of every cohort. However, their beliefs and attitudes to advertising are found to differ significantly, especially in the older cohort. The study thus highlights the implication of generational differences on the attitudes to advertising.

1. INTRODUCTION

Given the complexity and dynamism of the society today, there is a perennial need to re-assess the manner in which advertising can be used as a successful marketing tool, and how different people perceive it progressively (Lim *et al.*, 2010; Purosothuman, 2008). Its importance in economic and societal roles notwithstanding, advertising can only be effective if it focuses on its audience (Wells *et al.*, 2003). In other words, it must be able to deliver the intended message to a targeted group of people in such a manner that will yield a desired response from them. Therefore, it is of critical importance to keep a close track of the audience at all times.

It has been well-recognized that an effective segmentation strategy holds the key to successful advertising (Frochot & Morrison, 2001; Plummer, 1974). Over the years, several segmentation strategies, such as those based on demographic and psychographic variables, have been used to profile and serve customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011). However, an innovative and highly successful segmentation approach, utilizing generational cohorts, is gaining increasing prominence (Meredith & Schewe, 2002). Notably, Generation X and Generation Y, amongst others, have been adopted in various disciplines, including marketing. Despite originating from Western sources, these labels along with their descriptions have been adopted in Malaysia (Munusamy *et al.*, 2010; Ting & de Run, 2012).

This study aims at, firstly, using the theories of generation to explore and identify the cohorts in Sarawak and, secondly, using the decomposed theory of reasoned action to investigate the attitude of each cohort toward advertising in general. The objectives are to ascertain the actual segregation of cohorts in the state, and determine how each of them perceives advertising. This will allow comparisons across cohorts to be made so as to provide insights into the implications of generation on advertising.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Attitudes toward advertising

Attitudes toward advertising in general are, by and large, defined as an acquired tendency of the mentality to respond to advertising in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner (Lutz, 1985; MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). Such attitudes have long been a focus of research (O'Donohoe, 1995; Pollay & Mittal, 1993). A large-scale study into public views of advertising was first started in the late 1950s (Zanot, 1984) before it became of major interest to marketers and researchers (Bauer & Greyser, 1968; Eze & Lee, 2012; Larkin, 1977; Mittal, 1994; Pollay & Mittal, 1993; Ramaprasad & Thurwanger, 1998; Shavitt *et al.*, 1998). Early studies were initially motivated by concerns that negative attitudes could hinder advertising effectiveness (Beard, 2003; Calfee & Ringold, 1988; Wright, 1986). However, the attitude toward advertising was later found to be a key determinant of different attitudes toward specific advertisements (Lutz, 1985) which affects the way in which consumers respond to them (Mehta, 2000). Moreover, it can affect their attention to advertisements (Shavitt *et al.*, 1998), and buying behavior (Bush *et al.*, 1999). Furthermore, the understanding of attitudes toward advertising can yield better social policy initiatives (Calfee & Ringold, 1988; Pollay & Mittal, 1993).

In addition to the attitudes towards advertising, beliefs about advertising are also crucial to the effectiveness of advertising (Mehta, 2000). It has been well-accepted that beliefs about advertising are antecedents of attitudes in marketing (Brackett & Carr, 2001; Ducoffe, 1996). In particular, Pollay and Mittal (1993) have described beliefs about advertising as specific statements about the attributes of objects, whereas attitude is a summative evaluation of objects. They developed a seven-factor belief model to measure beliefs and attitudes toward advertising. Beliefs

about advertising are made up of two major factors; namely, personal utility factors and socioeconomic factors. Personal utility factors are composed of product information, social image information and hedonic amusement, whereas socioeconomic factors are composed of good for the economy, materialism, falsity and value corruption. The model also includes an attitudinal variable to demonstrate its causal relationship with beliefs. As this model has been widely adopted in advertising studies (Korgaonkar et al., 2001; Munusamy & Wong, 2007; Ramaprasad & Thurwanger, 1998) and its measures have been validated empirically (Korgaonkar et al., 2000), it is taken on board in the present study.

2.2. Generational Cohort

Generational cohort is defined as a group of individuals born during the same period who experience similar major societal and historical events during their coming-of-age years, a period between late adolescence and early adulthood years (Rogler, 2002; Ryder, 1965). As such, a cohort goes beyond what age alone can divulge because it explores the life journey of individuals through their coming-of-age years (Motta & Schewe, 2008; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Therefore, it complements demographic and psychographic approaches by revealing their motivations of behaviors (Fountain & Lamb, 2011; Lin, 2002; Priem et al., 1999; Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2007). Due to their engagement with the events, individuals in the same cohort tend to think and act differently from those born in other time spans (Gursoy et al., 2008).

Generations have long been used to illustrate their effects on the American culture (Eyerman & Turner, 1998). Based on Mannheim's (1952) theory of generations, those most influenced by external events would have personally experienced such events during their late adolescence and early adulthood and, thus, could recall them easily. As these defining events take precedence, they give birth to new cohorts and define what that a cohort is (Noble & Schewe, 2003). This is

well-supported by the theory of intergenerational value change developed by Inglehart (1997), who maintains that major historical happenings bring about changes on the foundation of existing social orders and value systems of the society and, consequently, produce people of new generations. Moreover, the theory of historical generations proposed by Rogler (2002) emphasizes that cataclysmic events instill a more permanent mark on the coming-of-age group than on other age-groups who live through the same period. His propositions maintain that generations start with cataclysmic events. Reactions to these events will consolidate into stable orientations if the impacts of the events are directed toward the young adult's experiences (Holbrook & Schindler, 1989; Holbrook & Schindler, 1994). Generational studies done in Western countries, such as the Netherlands (Ester et al., 2000), England and Germany (Schuman et al., 1998; Scott & Zac, 1993), Brazil (Rubens & Motta, 2005) and the U.S (Holbrook & Schindler, 1989; Holbrook & Schindler, 1994), have yielded consistent findings.

2.3. Theoretical consideration

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) is used as the underpinning basis to investigate cohorts' views about advertising due to its applicability and validity (Choo et al., 2004; Netemeyer & Bearden, 1992). The TRA clearly spells out that an individual's behavior is determined by his or her intention to perform that behavior. As most behavioral models trace relationship through intention, this means that intention must be understood in order to predict behavior from attitudes (Huang et al., 2004; Kim & Hunter, 1993). Intention, in turn, is influenced by attitudes and subjective norm. Finally, attitudes and subjective norms are predicted by beliefs (Korgaonkar et al., 2001). As most researchers agree that the effect of attitudes on intention is more prevailing than that of subjective norms (Farley et al., 1981; Oliver & Bearden, 1985), this study will look only at the relationships between beliefs, attitudes and intention. More-

over, as the focus is on attitudes toward advertising, it makes beliefs about advertising the antecedent, and intention the outcome to enhance its explanation.

2.4. Contextual consideration

Despite being a state in Malaysia, Sarawak is as large in size and as diverse in its ethnic composition as Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah (Department of Statistics, 2012). It has had a long and diverse historical background, and is of late emerging as a profitable investment hub. As such, the people in Sarawak and its counterparts cannot be regarded the same. There are three reasons for such an assertion. Firstly, since major external events bring about the formation of generational cohorts, they cannot be wholly identical. For example, Sarawak was not involved in the independence of Malaya in 1957, nor did its inhabitants experience racial riots in May 1969. Secondly, the demographical composition is different. For example, the Iban is the most populous ethnic group in Sarawak, rather than the Malay or Kadazan-Dusun as in Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah, respectively. While the Chinese is the second largest ethnic group in Sarawak, they are considered a minority in Sabah. Thirdly, the governance is also dissimilar. Unlike other states, Sarawak is composed of divisions rather than districts, and retains a relatively higher degree of autonomy, such as regards the legislative power over land and local government (Faruqi, 2008). Due to the exploratory nature of this part of the study, it was mandatory to investigate how the Sarawakian cohorts perceive advertising independently.

3. PROBLEMS, PROPOSITIONS AND HYPOTHESES

In order to investigate cohorts' views about advertising, it is imperative to determine generational cohorts at the outset. One of the most

adopted frameworks of cohorts is that of Strauss and Howe (1991). They claim that four cohorts made up the population of the U.S. in the last century; these cohorts are the Veteran or Silent Generation, born between 1925 and 1942, the Baby Boomer generation, born between 1943 and 1960, the Thirteenth generation (also known as Generation X), born between 1961 and 1981, and the Millennial generation (also known as Generational Y), born between 1982 and 2004. Given the clarity of theories about generational cohort outlined earlier, it is posited that the segregation of generational cohorts in the West cannot be construed to that of Sarawak. Generational differences among younger and older communities in Sarawak are a well-known phenomenon (De Run et al., 2006). The limitations to segregating the Malaysian cohorts based on Western sources have also been acknowledged in recent studies (Munusamy et al., 2010; Ting & de Run, 2012). In fact, it has long been highlighted that a deficiency in cross-cultural studies is unavoidable when common age-groups or median years of birth, rather than major external events are used as proxies for generation (Inglehart, 1997). Regrettably, cohort labels, such as Generation X and Generation Y, with their respective characteristics are continually being adopted in various arenas within the state. Consequently, what the actual cohorts in Sarawak are has been largely overlooked. In light of the theories of generations, the following propositions have been formulated for the first phase of the study:

Proposition 1: *Sarawakians will recall particular and different major societal and historical events they believe to have been influential for them.*

Proposition 2: *The collective engagement of Sarawakians with major societal and historical events will show that these events predominantly took place during the late adolescent and early adulthood years, thus forming generational cohorts.*

Findings pertaining to attitudes, as well as their antecedents and consequences, are predominantly based on the research conducted in the

North American-European axis (Ashill & Yavas, 2005). Thus, investigating the attitudes toward advertising in other regions has been called for continuously (O'Donohoe, 1995). However, recent studies have suggested inconsistent results on advertising effectiveness (Tan & Chia, 2007). In the Malaysian context, past studies on the subject matter were mainly conducted on the campus of higher learning due to accessibility of students to researchers and their homogeneity as a group (de Run & Ting, 2013; Munusamy & Wong, 2007; Rashid & Sidin, 1987). Hence, obviously, little is known about the attitudes of the public of all ages toward advertising, let alone about the antecedents of such attitudes. Therefore, a seven-factor belief model is utilized and incorporated into the TRA to provide a theoretical explanation of attitudes toward advertising, and to elucidate on how they can differ by cohorts. Using the TRA as the basis, hypotheses for the second phase of the study have been formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1: *Beliefs about advertising of each cohort will positively affect their respective attitudes toward advertising.*

Hypothesis 2: *The attitude of each cohort toward advertising will positively affect their behavioral intention with regard to advertising.*

As it is proposed that generational cohorts are different due to their attachment to major external events during coming-of-age years, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

Hypothesis 3: *Beliefs, attitudes and behavioral intentions with regard to advertising will differ significantly across cohorts.*

4. METHODOLOGY

This study used a pluralistic approach, with a qualitative research method used first to gain insights into the formation of generation cohorts before using a quantitative research method

to investigate cohorts' views about advertising (Burns & Bush, 2005). A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to sample Sarawakian respondents from different age and racial groups so as to ensure a fitting representation of the population in the state, thus fulfilling the objectives of the study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Age was used as a proxy variable to develop different cases of respondents for the qualitative phase.

As the emphasis of the qualitative study is to secure data replication, past studies were looked into to determine a consensus on the sample size needed to achieve the saturation point (Charmaz, 2006). A total of 30 interviews (5 respondents for each age-group) was pre-determined as the minimum number (Ritchie et al., 2003). However, 48 respondents were later interviewed to confirm that no new or important phenomenon had been omitted in performing 40 interviews. Interviews were administered by the researchers themselves and one additional enumerator (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). They were given an interview protocol, whereby respondents were firstly asked about the major events in the last 80 years that they could remember in an open-ended manner (Hagelin, 1999). Auxiliary words, such as political, economic, social, technological and environmental aspects to the events, were used in probing questions (Noble & Schewe, 2003). Then, they were asked to clarify when these events happened and why they were influential for them. All interviews were recorded and transcribed to enable content analysis. Multiple coders were asked to code all transcripts independently. All of the foregoing ensures the reliability of data, thus allowing findings on generational cohorts to be used in the quantitative phase.

A structured questionnaire, including statements pertaining to beliefs, attitudes and behavioral intentions toward advertising, was designed. A seven-point Likert scale, commonly used in marketing, was adopted to indicate agreement with the statements and has shown its validity and discriminative power among responses (Hair et al., 1998; Sousa & Bradley, 2005). Questionnaires

were distributed purposively by five enumerators throughout Sarawak. Subsequently, 1,410 usable copies were collected and data keyed in for subsequent analyses.

5. FINDINGS

5.1. First phase of the study

Inter-coder reliability was used to gauge the coders' marking behavior on categorical data (Bernard, 1995; Kurasaki, 2000). A coefficient of agreement (Neumark-Sztainer & Story, 1997; Wang et al., 1997) instead of Cohen's (Cohen, 1960) kappa coefficient was used because checking whether coders were agreeing more often than those who were just guessing is a minor issue in this study (Uebersax, 1987). As a result, the reported overall agreement from the three coders was 85 percent, which satisfied the recommended reliability threshold of 80 percent (Kassarjian, 1977). Despite minor discrepancies, corresponding modifications of the themes were finalized by the coders jointly.

Table 1 shows a summation of demographic information for 48 respondents in the first phase of study. Age was used as a proxy variable to establish groups, and ensure that Sarawakians of different ages were adequately sampled for analysis. Racial groups were also taken into account because Sarawak is a multi-racial state, in which Ibans, Chinese and Malays make up 80 percent of the total population.

Even though a total of sixty-two events were found through annotating exercise, the explicit reasons given as to why these events are influential are more pertinent (Rogler, 2002). Hence, all the transcripts were content-analyzed by multiple coders to determine what the defining events were and when they occurred. Such analysis elucidated the association between the occurrences of the events and the respondents' coming-of-age years. As a result, five generational cohorts with their respective attachments to particular events based on their experience during the coming-of-age years were identified and proposed. Table 2 gives a summary of major societal and historical events recalled by the respondents in their respective cohorts.

Table 1: Demographic Information in the First Phase

Variable	Item	Frequency	Percent
Age-groups	From 15 to 24	10	20.8
	From 25 to 34	9	18.7
	From 35 to 44	9	18.7
	From 45 to 54	7	14.6
	From 55 to 64	7	14.6
	From 65 to above	7	14.6
Race	Iban	15	31.2
	Chinese	14	29.2
	Malay	12	25.0
	Others	7	14.6
Gender	Male	24	50.0
	Female	24	50.0
Current residence in Sarawak	Kuching City	15	31.2
	Miri City	8	16.7
	Bintulu	6	12.5
	Sibu	6	12.5
	Others	13	27.1

Table 2: Summary of Events by Cohorts

Summary of Events	Cohort Label	Age (as of 2013)
Any event remembered, mostly disjointed	Neoteric Inheritors	Aged 21 and below
Political matters, economic recovery, technological advancement	Prospective Pursuers	Aged 22 to 35
Stability in economics and social welfare, development of infrastructure	Social Strivers	Aged 36 to 51
Communism (curfew) and the formation of Malaysia	Idealistic strugglers	Aged 52 to 70
Japanese occupation and British colonization	Battling lifers	Aged 71 & above

The first cohort, consisting of those aged 21 and below in year 2013, is labeled as 'Neoteric Inheritors' because they are still susceptibly young and tend to accept whatever there is around them without concrete experience. They are still in their coming-of-age years. They seem to know about many major events without evident impression or conviction. When asked about the events that had affected her, a typical youngster gave her response disjointedly, and even mistakenly:

"(On 911) I just read the newspaper yesterday... in America right? The building was knocked down by helicopters... three thousand died." (Malay, aged 16, from Miri)

The second cohort, consisting of those who are in their 20s and early 30s, is labeled as 'Prospective Pursuers' because they have experienced a rapid technological advancement and embraced the recovery from the economic crisis in

late 90s. They realize the frailty of mankind due to natural disasters and the spread of deadly diseases, but continue to live in hope. Their interest in political matters expresses beliefs in change to secure a better future. One of the responses was stated as follows:

"(On the earthquakes and tsunamis in Aceh and Japan) Although everyone says Malaysia is a very safe place, there is no tsunami, no earthquake, and there is no volcano, we never know these natural disasters, even one tsunami... though the earthquake happened in Indonesia, the tsunami might still reach Malaysia. We do not know when these things will happen in Sarawak too." (Chinese, aged 23, from Kuching)

The third cohort, whose age ranges from mid 30s to late 40s, is labeled as 'Social Strivers' since they care mostly about the economic stability and social welfare. Understandably, peace and security came after the final and total capitulation of the Communists. Various developments have taken place since then, and the standard of living has risen drastically. Many seem to be content with their lives as they were until the late 90s, when the economic breakdown and political unrest caught them by surprise. One respondent gave the following statements:

"(On the sacking of Anwar Ibrahim and lawsuit) I think in 1998 we had the worst political crisis in Malaysia because Anwar Ibrahim was sacked as the Deputy Prime Minister... Of course it affects our lives because... normally our political situation is very stable, but suddenly because of this one we see people becoming willing to protest... we still can't understand the situation." (Iban, aged 37, from Seratok).

The fourth cohort, who are in their 50s and 60s, is labeled as 'Idealistic strugglers' as they lived in fear and doubt during the Communist era. Their views about the British colonization and the formation of Malaysia are inconsistent, but more have shown their displeasure with the latter. Nevertheless, beliefs and opinions as to what could

have been done, what should be done and how it is to be done are evident among them. They believe success can be achieved with their own hands. A middle-aged person recalled that:

“(On Communism) I still remember when we were young, all the villages along the road to Serian were fenced up in the curfew time... sometimes when we travelled on a bus, there would be gunfire in front and then we had to stop because the guerillas were attacking... but after the surrender there was no more gunfire, everything was peaceful... For those of us who were younger the impact was not as great, but the implication was deep because after that the country enjoyed real peace... and development...” (Chinese, aged 53, from Kuching)

The fifth cohort, consisting of those who are in their 70s and beyond, is labeled as ‘Battling lifers’ due to the fact that they had to find ways to survive and live during the Japanese occupation. They also lived through the times of the British colonization, Communism and the formation of Malaysia. They believed in hard work while accepting what might befall them. They were protective of their families. Despite being of advanced age, an elderly woman could vividly recall the following:

“(On Japanese occupation) During that time... the Japanese came... Japanese planes and soldiers... we ate cassava only... all the shops were ruined... I could not forget because my elder brother was taken away and there has been no news of him ever since...” (Malay, aged 82, from Bintangor).

5.2. Second phase of the study

Table 3 gives a summary of demographic information on the 1,410 respondents in the second phase of the study. While there are more than two hundred respondents for the first four cohorts, there are only 39 respondents for the fifth

cohort because most questionnaires were either not returned or found to be incomplete. Therefore, Battling Lifers are not included in the subsequent analysis. The race and current residence of the respondents are also shown in the table.

Table 3: Demographic Information in the Second Phase

Variable	Item	Frequency	Percent
Cohort (Age, as in 2013)	Neoteric	297	21.1
	Inheritors (15-21)	450	31.9
	Prospective Pursuers (22-35)	355	25.2
	Social Strivers (36-51)	269	19.1
	Idealistic strugglers (52-70)	39	2.8
	Battling Lifers (71 and above)		
	Race	Iban	461
	Chinese	408	28.9
	Malay	374	26.5
	Others	169	11.9
Gender	Male	659	46.7
	Female	751	53.3
Current residence in Sarawak	Kuching	408	28.9
	City	229	16.2
	Miri City	218	15.5
	Bintulu	209	14.8
	Sibu	346	24.6
	Others		

Table 4, in turn, shows the mean values for beliefs, attitudes and intentions with regard to advertising by cohorts. The reliability scores of all variables using the Cronbach’s alpha are also included in the table: they were found to be all above 0.70, meaning that the data are consistent (Nunnally, 1978). As mentioned earlier, albeit distinct, Battling Lifers are excluded from the descriptive and inferential analyses due to a small number of respondents.

Table 4: Means of Beliefs, attitudes and intentions with regard to Advertising by Cohorts

Variable	Item	Neoteric Inheritors		Prospective Pursuers		Social Strivers		Idealistic strugglers		Cronb. Alpha
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Information	3	5.49	1.08	5.56	1.04	5.49	1.18	5.12	1.15	0.86
Social role	3	4.75	1.24	4.90	1.22	4.62	1.31	4.30	1.24	0.81
Hedonism	3	4.86	1.25	5.00	1.09	4.83	1.19	4.50	1.08	0.78
Economy	3	4.98	1.18	5.05	1.04	5.10	1.11	4.72	1.16	0.80
Materialism ^R	4	3.38	1.43	3.44	1.38	3.32	1.36	2.97	1.39	0.86
Falsity ^R	3	3.61	1.44	3.67	1.33	3.64	1.39	3.49	1.26	0.85
Corruption ^R	2	3.77	1.38	3.74	1.27	3.61	1.26	3.55	1.23	0.77
Attitude	3	4.94	1.02	4.94	0.96	4.80	1.03	4.61	1.10	0.81
Intention	3	4.65	1.30	4.68	1.34	4.54	1.42	4.31	1.27	0.93

^R indicates reverse-coding used; therefore, Materialism should read as Not Materialistic, Falsity as Truthfulness and Corruption as Not Corrupted to Youth

The findings show all four cohorts agreeing strongly that advertising is a source of information. As for Neoteric Inheritors, they also tend to believe that advertising is good for the nation's economy and is hedonic. Prospective Pursuers share similar beliefs with Neoteric Inheritors, but they have generally shown stronger responses than the younger generation. Among all cohorts, Social Strivers have demonstrated the

strongest agreement with advertising being good for the economy. Notably, Idealistic strugglers have the lowest mean values in every aspect, although their beliefs about advertising are generally favorable. Finally, the mean values for attitudes and intentions of all cohorts show that Sarawakians, in spite of generational differences, are anything but favorably inclined to advertising in general.

Table 5: Effect of Beliefs about Advertising on Attitudes toward Advertising by Cohorts

Variable	Attitude			
	Neoteric Inheritors (Beta)	Prospective Pursuers (Beta)	Social Strivers (Beta)	Idealistic Strugglers (Beta)
Information	0.271**	0.213**	0.323**	0.245**
Social Role	0.059	0.079*	0.092*	0.183**
Hedonism	0.185**	0.183**	0.057	0.106*
Economy	0.234**	0.290**	0.279**	0.269**
Materialism ^R	0.053	0.123*	0.071	0.006
Falsity ^R	0.212**	0.186**	0.156**	0.078
Corruption ^R	-0.078	-0.052	0.037	-0.007
F value	30.242	49.371	45.382	22.420
R ²	0.423	0.439	0.478	0.376
Adjusted R ²	0.409	0.430	0.467	0.359

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01 (One-tailed)

^R indicates reverse-coding used; therefore, Materialism should read as Not Materialistic, Falsity as Truthfulness and Corruption as Not Corrupted to Youth

Table 5 and Table 6 show results of the regression analysis between independent and dependent variables to indicate the effect of the former on the latter. Specifically, Table 5 indicates a causal relationship between beliefs about advertising and attitudes toward advertising, using a multiple regression analysis. Using a simple regression analysis on the other hand, Table 6 illustrates a causal relationship between attitudes toward advertising and behavioral intentions with regard to advertising.

Prospective Pursuers share the same beliefs about hedonism except falsity while the latter also attribute a social role and materialism to advertising. Social Strivers do not see advertising as something hedonic, but acknowledge its social role and falsity. Finally, the attitude toward advertising of Idealistic Strugglers is basically driven by all positive aspects of advertising. They do not attribute materialism, falsity or value corruption to advertising.

Table 6: Effect of Attitudes toward Advertising on Intentions with regard to Advertising by Cohorts

Variable	Intention			
	Neoteric Inheritors (Beta)	Prospective Pursuers (Beta)	Social Strivers (Beta)	Idealistic Strugglers (Beta)
Attitude	0.441**	0.466**	0.636**	0.456**
F value	71.050	124.510	239.835	70.025
R ²	0.194	0.217	0.405	0.208
Adjusted R ²	0.191	0.216	0.403	0.205

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01 (One-tailed)

The findings above show a dissimilar effect of beliefs about advertising on the attitudes across cohorts. All cohorts believe that advertising is a source of information, and that it is good for economy; both beliefs have a significant effect on their attitudes. Both Neoteric Inheritors and

The findings above show that intentions with regard to advertising of all cohorts are significantly affected by their attitudes. R² values of 0.194 and above are acceptable in explaining the variance of dependent variable (Cohen, 1988; Lohmoller, 1989).

Table 7: Differences in Beliefs, Attitudes and Intentions with regard to Advertising by Cohorts

Variable	Neoteric Inheritors (Mean)	Prospective Pursuers (Mean)	Social Strivers (Mean)	Idealistic Strugglers (Mean)	F value
Information	5.49 ^a	5.56 ^a	5.49 ^a	5.12 ^b	7.567**
Social Role	4.75 ^a	4.90 ^a	4.62 ^a	4.30 ^b	10.776**
Hedonism	4.87 ^a	5.00 ^a	4.83 ^a	4.50 ^b	8.088**
Economy	4.98	5.05 ^a	5.10 ^a	4.72 ^b	5.173**
Materialism ^R	3.38 ^a	3.44 ^a	3.32	2.97 ^b	5.447**
Falsity ^R	3.61	3.67	3.64	3.49	1.168
Corruption ^R	3.77	3.74	3.61	3.55	1.697
Attitude	4.94 ^a	4.94 ^a	4.80	4.61 ^b	5.528**
Intention	4.65	4.68 ^a	4.54	4.31 ^b	3.517**

Means with the same superscripts are not significantly different while Means with different superscripts are significantly different at p < 0.05. Means without superscripts are not significantly different from the Means with superscripts.

^R indicates reverse-coding used; therefore, Materialism should read as Not Materialistic, Falsity as Truthfulness and Corruption as Not Corrupted to Youth

In order to test whether the variables of interest differ significantly across the four cohorts, one-way ANOVA was used. Table 7 shows the differences in beliefs, attitudes and intentions with regard to advertising by generational cohorts

Apart from falsity and value corruption, there are statistical differences in all variables for the four generational cohorts. A post-hoc comparison using Duncan's range test indicates that Idealistic Strugglers, the oldest group among the respondents, are statistically different from all other cohorts in virtually every aspect. The findings also indicate that Neoteric Inheritors, Prospective Pursuers and Social Strivers are not really different from one another.

6. DISCUSSIONS

6.1. Generational cohort

It is evident that the major societal and historical events recalled and experienced by Sarawakians are different from those used by Western sources. Understandably, the cohorts in the West, particularly in the U.S., do not share similar social or historical backgrounds. For example, Sarawakians in their 60s did not mention the Cold War or the assassination of President JFK, nor did anyone in their 30s mention anything related to the New Feminist Movement. Similarly, Baby Boomers in the U.S. certainly did not experience the formation of Malaysia, nor did Generation X and Generation Y suffer from haze or SARS. Suffice it to say that generational labels and descriptions in the U.S. context cannot be generalized to those of Sarawak. Despite the pervasive impact of some global events, it is evident that cohorts mainly reflect the values emphasized during a country's particular historical period (Egri & Ralston, 2004). Hence, the first proposition of the first-phase study holds true.

As shown in the findings earlier, five generational cohorts were identified, and they are labeled as

Neoteric Inheritors, Prospective Pursuers, Social Strivers, Idealistic Strugglers and Battling Lifers, based on their respective connection to events during the coming-of-age years. It was found that respondents can easily recall major external events which they consider influential, and those events took place predominantly during their late adolescence and early adulthood. For example, younger groups cannot give a strong account of the Communism or Japanese occupation although they have read about them. The respondents in their 50s, in turn, do not seem to remember the advent of computers and the Internet although they are also beneficiaries of technologies. This validates past studies asserting that young adults are at the cusp of their coming-of-age years, and are more prone to the impinging historical events (Edmunds & Turner, 2005; Rogler, 2002). Studies have also shown that the impact of events will become a value orientation to them throughout their lifetime (Inglehart, 1997; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). Therefore, the second proposition of the study also holds true.

6.2. Attitude toward advertising

The findings clearly demonstrate the effect of beliefs about advertising on the cohorts' attitudes toward advertising. For Neoteric Inheritors, product information, hedonism, good for the economy and falsity are the predictors of their attitude. While the same beliefs are also shared by Prospective Pursuers, social role and materialism are also found to be predictors of the attitude toward advertising for this cohort. As far as Social Strivers are concerned, product information, social role, economy and falsity are significantly affecting their attitude. Finally, all positive attributes about advertising, namely product information, social role, hedonism and good for the economy, are the determinants of the attitude of Idealistic Strugglers toward advertising. Therefore, the postulation that beliefs about advertising will positively affect attitudes toward advertising is largely true. Accordingly, the first hypothesis is supported.

The findings also reveal that the attitude toward advertising is the predictor of the intention with regard to advertising across all cohorts. This supports the causal relationship shown in the TRA, as well as in previous studies about the effect of attitudes toward advertising on the respective intention (Stevenson, *et al.*, 2000; Tsang, *et al.*, 2004). Given such apparent results, the second hypothesis, claiming that attitudes toward advertising will positively affect intentions with regard to advertising, is also supported.

The findings of the ANOVA test show that beliefs, attitudes and intentions with regard to advertising differ significantly across cohorts. However, Duncan's range test specifically indicates that Idealistic Strugglers are generally different from other cohorts. Understandably, this cohort of people, who are in their 50s and 60s, has had very dissimilar life experiences. They experienced Communism and hardship during their coming-of-age years, and are not as technologically savvy as the younger cohorts (Ting, *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, their views about advertising will not be the same either. This explains why they have nothing against advertising, and are different from other cohorts.

As the findings of Duncan's range test do not seem to suggest there is a significant difference between Neoteric Inheritors, Prospective Pursuers and Social Strivers, it is therefore concluded that the third hypothesis, claiming that beliefs, attitudes and intentions with regard to advertising will be different across cohorts, is only partially supported. Given such results, the findings through Regression analysis and content analysis in the earlier phase are taken into consideration to provide better explanations of the phenomenon. First and foremost, it is evident that all cohorts believe that advertising provides information and contributes something positive to the nation's economy. The former is believed to be the primary function of advertising, and the latter is seen as a spontaneous outcome when advertising increases. While Idealistic Strugglers do not seem to find any fault in advertising, Neoteric Inheritors, Prospective Pursuers and Social

Strivers believe advertising can falsify impressions and is, thus, misleading. It is highly possible that the education level and development of media are the main drivers of such discernment. As Neoteric Inheritors are still in their coming-of-age years, it explains why all their beliefs are also shared by Prospective Pursuers, who may be still in their coming-of-age years. However, this cohort of people, who are in their 20s and early 30s, also believe that advertising is a medium to portraying a social image and causing materialism. These two beliefs are in fact interrelated; also, it is apparent that they are the views of young adults, who experienced meteoric development of technology and social media during their coming-of-age years. On the one hand, they have learnt a lot about fashions and lifestyles through advertising, but they realize that it may also have prompted them to buy more things than they really need on the other hand. Social Strivers, in turn, do not find advertising amusing, and believe that advertising does not necessary present a true picture of the product advertised. As they experienced some of the major shifts in political, economic and social arenas in the Sarawakian history during their young adulthood, they tend to be more favorably inclined to such things that are stable and truthful. Their upbringing may well infer that they tend to be more skeptical of the things that they see or hear. Unlike Prospective Pursuers, they do not hold materialism as a belief about advertising because they are not as gullible, and are more pragmatic in their behavior.

7. CONCLUSION

The need to target homogenous groups of a heterogeneous market, rather than the market as a whole, is a well-known fact (Pennington-Gray, *et al.*, 2003). However, people are becoming more sophisticated, knowledgeable and socially-aware nowadays than ever before, so they demand personal attention and the products that match their value orientation and go well with their lifestyle. Given such diversity and complexity, an effective segmentation

approach becomes increasingly pivotal to marketing practices, including advertising. Schewe and Meredith (2004) assert that generational cohort characteristics divulge much about what people in various age-groups desire and prefer, and what the motivations within such groups are. It is with this intent that the present study attempted to identify the generational cohorts in Sarawak, according to their attachment to major external events. By incorporating the findings on cohorts into the quantitative phase, the study then proceeded to empirically determine beliefs and attitudes toward advertising of each identified cohort. The results were found to support theories of generation and past cohort studies that individuals do tend to recall major events which transpired during their coming-of-age years. Therefore, the propositions made regarding the formation of generational cohorts were validated, and extrapolated to the people in the state. Subsequently, five cohorts were proposed in the first phase. When assessing how each cohort perceives advertising, the connections between their attachment to events and their beliefs about advertising could be identified. While all cohorts were found to share similar beliefs about advertising in certain aspects, such as providing product information and being good for the economy, they have distinct combinations of beliefs which affect their respective attitudes and intentions when it come advertising.

In view of the foregoing, generational labels such as Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y, and their respective characteristics

could not be generalized in another context without close scrutiny. On the contrary, the proposed names of Neoteric Inheritors, Prospective Pursuers, Social Strivers, Idealistic Strugglers and Battling Lifers should be adopted in cohort studies in Sarawak, and further investigated so as to gain more insights into their respective characteristics. As the study is limited to the Sarawakian context only, a prospective nationwide study is necessary to allow a more comprehensive view of the implication of generational cohorts on advertising. This will complement the knowledge of cohort segmentation, and the application of such an approach to the marketplace. Furthermore, as advertising in general has become a familiar phenomenon, future studies dedicated to understanding the implication of generational cohorts on specific types of advertising, such as brand advertising, political and social advertising, are also imperative. It is believed that these studies may underscore the importance of understanding generational cohorts, and heighten their proper use both in academia and business practices.

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