

**The impact of demographics, personality and internet experience factors on
online advertising in China**

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to examine the factors such as demographics, personality and internet experience influencing attitudes toward online advertising among Chinese customers.

Design/methodology/approach – This study is based on a questionnaire survey asking participants how factors influence their attitudes toward online advertising. Data were collected from internet users of a large metropolis in China. A total of 395 questionnaires provided usable data and were analyzed using ANOVA, Correlation and Multiple Regression.

Findings – Results show that there are some differences between various demographic factors in terms of their attitudes toward online advertising. In addition, personality and internet experience have the positive influencing attitudes toward online advertising in China.

Practical implications – Marketers would benefit from understanding the factors influencing online advertising as they can apply this knowledge for targeting Chinese consumers. The business can develop an advertising campaign and marketing plan more effectively in order to expand their global marketing efforts.

Originality/value – The results of a survey of 395 internet users in China showed that the factors such as demographic, personality and internet experience can influence attitudes toward online advertising in China.

Keywords Online advertising, Attitudes toward online advertising, Demographics, Personality, Internet experience.

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Introduction

Nowadays, as the Internet is becoming more and more popular, the digital marketing is employed globally. People move from offline to make online purchases due to its speed and easiness. The prime benefit of online advertising is that it can reduce the transaction cost and contributes higher success rate in international marketing (Wolin and Korgaonkar, 2005). In China, the online advertising was begun in March, 1997. Based on the high growth of China's economic with the large population and the development of global business, online advertising has been paid attention by both advertisers and researchers. The key players in China's search engine advertising are Baidu, Soso, Sogou, Google and Yahoo! Moreover, Zhang (2012) indicates that Baidu is the country's largest search engine in recent year with the largest market share of 30.9 percent.

In 2011, total gross merchandise value of online advertising market in China achieves USD 51.29 billion, up 57.6 percent compared with 2010 (iResearch, 2012). China's online advertising market reaches year-on-year to be worth USD 2.2 billion (RMB 14 billion) in the first quarter of 2012 (Zhang, 2012). Previous research suggested that customer's attitudes toward online advertising are an important measure of advertising effectiveness (Ducoffe, 1996). For instance, the poor attitudes toward online advertising always result in the low attitude toward the website and weak online purchase. Also, people viewing the online advertising at least have the basic internet skill (Ng, 2003).

Compared to the traditional media, online advertising is the most effective mode for global business. Banner advertising is still a very popular one among other online advertising tools (Zhang, 2012). In general, as the number of internet users is increasing dramatically, it provides a big room for web advertising (Ng, 2003).

However, online advertising is becoming less effective. The one main reason is internet users always avoid looking at online advertising (Xavier and

Hussherr, 2003). Many websites report that their banner ads just have click-through rates of between 0.3 percent and 0.5 percent based on their lower attitudes toward online advertising. Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine the factors such as demographics, personality and internet experience which may have the influence on attitudes toward online advertising. The major focus of this paper is to understand which group of internet users has more positive attitudes toward online advertising.

This study will focus specifically on attitudes toward online advertising in China. The research question of this thesis is divided into three parts:

RQ1. Are there significant differences between demographics factors in terms of their attitudes toward online advertising?

RQ2. How do personality factors have an impact on attitudes toward online advertising?

RQ3. How do internet experiences have an impact on attitudes toward online advertising?

The scope of this paper might be narrow because it reports only on a subset of Chinese customers on online advertising. Yet consumers at least have to acquire some basic internet-related skills in China. Therefore, the lack of internet skills may be a barrier for some consumers who do not have a chance to see advertising online.

Literature review

Literature in this study includes the demographics factors, personality and internet experience.

Demographic Factors

Demography is one of the consumers' characteristic factors that can influence consumer's attitude and behavior (Hui and Wan, 2007). Also, Wong (2002) indicated that different group of demographic factors cause different behavior, lifestyle and attitude. That is, previous research has shown that income, education (Alwitt and Prabhaker, 1992) and gender (Shavitt, Lowrey and Haefner, 1998) have an impact on consumers' attitudes of advertising and beliefs. Similarly,

the variables of demographics including college major, age, income, gender employment status are shown to affect the attitudes towards advertising (Brackett and Carr 2001). Based on the characteristics on attitudes toward advertising, better educated, higher income consumers have more positive attitudes toward online advertising than the consumers who have less educated and lower-income (Shavitt, et al., 1998).

Based on different attitudes for demand of customers, age plays an important role in customer's consumption pattern of products. However, different range of age has difference attitudes on advertising. The younger internet users have more positive attitudes on advertising compare to the children and senior people (Lofosse, 2002).

The education is simply the combination of skills, knowledge, customs and values from one generation to another (Simon and Schuster, 2000). The more positive attitudes one held towards online advertising, the greater the likelihood that a person would respond favorably to web ads (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 2002). Combined all of these, this study assumes that different educational level is a significant factor that relates to attitudes toward online advertising.

Personal income is the consumption and savings opportunity gained by an entity within a specified time frame that is generally expressed in monetary terms (Barr, 2004). In deeply, If personal income is high, the result could be more money spent in the market, expecting a future business boom (Andrew et al., 2006). In addition, the market here includes internet market as well.

Personality

The personality can be defined as the personal thinking, feeling, and behaving that constitute the individual's distinguish from other people relating to the environment (Jerome and Ernest, 1976). Moreover, the factors can be used to describe a person's dimension of personality includes: Imagination, curiosity and open-mindedness (Shalley, Zhou and Choi, 2004). Specifically, through analysis of the internet users who prefer searching and providing online reviews since they are

talkative, outgoing, and curiosity. Thus, personality is a major predictor of internet behavior (Curtis et al, 1992).

Curiosity is people's eager to investigate, learn and find more with exciting attention. It is the feeling of wanting to know then finding out (Hiscox, 2006). Besides, it influences people's desire to explore new things and build positive attitudes based on their own interest and purpose (Todd and Steger, 2007). For instance, the user can view the relative pages and click to the page of his/her interest by selecting a topic with their curiosity.

Imagination is considered as "a power of the mind," a "process" of the mind used for thinking, planning, creating, imaging, and forming opinion or a development of a concept of what already exists to the gain of new thinking (Bergstra and Van, 2010). Imagination can express in other way through stories such as fairy tales. Consisted with this feature, it often becomes a source making imagining pleasurable and involving in emotional perception as attitude (Costa, et al., 2010).

Open-mindedness can be defined as someone who is willing to hear, consider and acceptance new ideas or to try new things with the positive attitudes if the information of the new ideas and new things makes sense (Antony, 1985). Openness was an important predictor of general Internet use (McElroy, Hendrickson and DeMarie, 2007).

Internet experience

Based on past research, Internet experience can be defined as the history of internet use and internet usage frequency by internet users through the internet browser (Lawton, 2012).

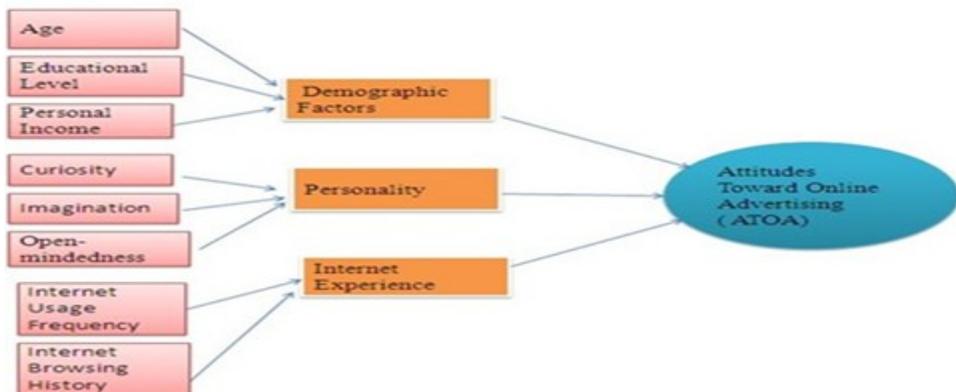
Internet usage frequency can be defined as the time spending online with the usage patterns by internet users (Chak and Louis, 2004). Higher frequency of Internet users indicates higher scores on online communication and other relative behavior (Stacy and Sukanya, 2006). The internet usage frequency plays a major role in internet user's attitude (Cho and Jialin, 2008).

Internet browsing history can be defined as the user profiling providing the user with his/her interest-focused, require-based online search history or previously visited Web pages (Grcar et al., 2005).

Attitudes toward online advertising

Attitudes toward online advertising have cognitive and affective antecedents together (Ducoffe, 1996). While online advertising is informative and trustworthy, consumers' attitudes toward advertising becomes more important because it can be a predictor that influences consumers' exposure, attention, and reaction to ads effectiveness. Consumers' attitudes toward online advertising are a positive predictor of online ads clicking (Alwitt and Prabhakar, 1992). Ducoffe (1996) stated that entertaining and giving information are prime factors support consumers evaluations of advertising values and even attitudes toward ads. Based on these factors, the advertisers can make more effective online advertising through understanding what kinds of Chinese demographics, personality and internet experience that can influence the positive attitudes toward online advertising.

Conceptual framework



This framework exhibits the relationship between factors of demographics and attitudes towards online advertising. That is, how educational level, personal income and age have the impact on the attitudes towards online advertising. It also exhibits the impact between the personality and attitudes towards online advertising.

That is, how imagination, curiosity and open-mindedness have the impact on the attitudes towards online advertising. Also, how internet browsing history and internet usage frequency have impact on the attitudes towards online advertising.

Methodology

Population and sample

The questionnaire surveys were distributed in person by the researchers to 400 internet users in IT square, Nanning city of China. Approximately 395 questionnaires were completed (a 98.75 percent response rate). This study used convenience sampling method and the respondents was drawn from the medium-sized province such as Guangxi in China. The process of collecting the primary data starts from Sep. 15, 2012 to Oct. 15, 2012. There are 202 men and 193 women. In sum, the highest sample was the group age between 18-25 years old with 21.8 percent. The most respondents were employees with 23.5 percent. In addition, most of them acquired bachelor degree with 37.2 percent. For the monthly personal income, most of them gained below 1,700 RMB with 35.4 percent. Most respondents were married with 47.8 percent.

Research Instrumentation

The questionnaires used for this research were analyzed in terms of the impact of demographic factors, personality and internet experience on online advertising in China. Five-point Likert scale was used to measure people's opinion by the degrees of agreement with the all statements in the questionnaire. Analysis the demographic factors, personality and internet experience influence attitudes toward online advertising in China by using ANOVA, correlation and multiple regression analysis.

For the pretest, this study was used the most popular form called Cronbach's alpha for the internal consistency reliability coefficient. Alpha having at least 0.70 or higher is considered "acceptable" in most social science research situations and many researchers required a cut-off 0.80 for a "good scale" Hence, the researcher was chosen 30 samples to do the pretest before test all the samples,

then test all 395 samples as well. The result of the coefficients calculated by using Cronbach's alpha score ranked from 0.703 to 0.916. It means the scale in this thesis as an instrument for measuring perception of consumer in this study has been confirmed.

Data analysis

Hypothesis can be defined as a possible answer to the research question (Aaker, 2006). In this research, the researcher set the hypotheses to examine the factors such as demographics, personality and internet experience influencing attitudes toward online advertising among Chinese customers. The type of statistical analysis such as ANOVA and multiple regressions were used to examine the hypotheses in this study. In addition, the descriptive statistics was used to analyze demographic factors of the sample data.

Result

From Table 1, the analysis of different age group on attitudes toward online advertising shows that all the components of the measure are strongly associated. Each age group has different patterns of attitudes toward online advertising ($F = 11.301$; $p < 0.001$). Each educational level group has different patterns of attitudes toward online advertising as well ($F = 34.261$; $p < 0.001$). Moreover, each personal income group has different patterns of attitudes toward online advertising ($F = 52.194$; $p < 0.001$).

Table1 The result of different demographic factors groups on attitudes toward online advertising by using ANOVA

	Attitudes toward online advertising	
	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Age	11.301	.000
Educational level	4.261	.000
Personal Income	2.194	.000

Table 2 shows the different patterns of attitudes toward online advertising of different age, educational level and personal income groups. There are some significant differences between age groups' attitudes toward online advertising. Concerning the age factor, one-way ANOVA analysis of respondents data indicates that the group of age between 26-35 years old (Mean=3.5066, S.D. = .70491) has the most positive attitudes toward online advertising, which the respondents agreement level is agree. Compared to the group age under 18 years old (Mean=3.2694, S.D. = .40815), the group age between 18-25 years old (Mean=3.4997, S.D. = .56457) is more likely to have positive attitudes toward online advertising. In addition, the respondents' agreement level of the group age under 18 years old is neutral; while the respondents' agreement level of the group age between 18-25 years old is agree. However, the group age between 36-45 years old (Mean=3.0483, S.D. = .73810) to the group age between 46-55 years old (Mean=2.9792, S.D. = .58510) show the agreement levels are in neutral. In contrast, the group age over 55 years old has the lowest positive attitudes toward online advertising (Mean=2.9538, S.D. = .57230) with the respondents' agreement level is neutral. Therefore, the respondents' age between 26-35 years old are more likely to have higher positive attitudes toward online advertising compared with the group of age over 55 years old.

As shown in Table 2, compared to other groups, the highest different result is the postgraduate group and under high school group. In addition, the undergraduate group also different from under high school group. Therefore, there are some significant differences between educational level groups' attitudes toward online advertising. Concerning the educational level factor, one-way ANOVA analysis of respondents data indicate that, the group of educational level at post graduate or higher (Mean=3.4609, S.D.= .75949) has the highest positive attitudes toward online advertising and the agreement level of the respondent is agree. Compared to the others group, the group of educational level under high school (Mean=2.5672, S.D. = .38195) has less positive attitudes toward online advertising

and the agreement level of the respondent is disagree. Therefore, the educational level is an important predictor of attitudes toward online advertising. Hence, higher educational level is likely to have more positive attitudes toward online advertising.

As shown in Table 2, concerning the personal income factor, ANOVA analysis of respondents data indicates that the group of respondents of personal income per month more than RMB 10,000 (Mean=3.8585 ,S.D.= .46076) has the highest level of positive attitudes toward online advertising and the agreement level of the respondents is agree. The group of respondents of personal income per month RMB 5,001-10,000 (Mean=3.5866, S.D.= .48573) also produces more positive impact on attitudes toward online advertising and the agreement level of the respondents is agree, and the group of respondents of personal income per month below RMB 1,700 (Mean=3.0444, S.D.= .53704) with the agreement level of the respondents is neutral. Compared to other income groups, the group of personal income per month RMB 1,700-5,000 (Mean=2.9602, S.D. = .61561) produces the least positive attitudes toward online advertising and the agreement level of the respondents is neutral. Therefore, the personal income per month more than RMB 10,000 group is more likely to have higher positive attitudes toward online advertising. The group of respondents whose personal income per month is below RMB 1,700 is the least likely to have positive attitudes toward online advertising. Hence, the personal income is an important predictor of attitudes toward online advertising. Considered with mean of each group, it indicates that higher personal income is more likely to have more positive attitudes toward online advertising.

Table 2 The analysis of different demographic factors groups on attitudes toward online advertising by using ANOVA

Age (years old)	N	Mean	Std.
Under 18	67	3.2694	.40815
18-25	86	3.4997	.56457
26-35	58	3.5066	.70491
36-45	75	3.0483	.73810
46-55	64	2.9792	.58510
Over 55	45	2.9538	.57230
Total	395	3.2294	.64405
Educational level	N	Mean	Std.
Under high school	43	2.5672	.38195
High school diploma	124	3.0512	.49840
Undergraduate	147	3.4459	.56488
Post graduate or higher	81	3.4609	.75949
Total	395	3.2294	.64405
Personal income (RMB)	N	Mean	Std.
Below 1,700	140	3.0444	.53704
1,700-5,000	131	2.9602	.61561
5,001-10,000	62	3.5866	.48573
More than 10,000	62	3.8585	.46076
Total	395	3.2294	.64405

Considering the demographic characteristics correlate with attitudes toward online advertising, age, educational level and personal income are all correlated with attitudes toward online advertising. Attitudes toward online advertising have more positive correlation with both education level and personal

income which means that when the educational level increases the attitudes toward online advertising may increase, or the attitudes toward online advertising will increase when personal income of the respondents increases. In contrast, age of the respondents has merely negative correlation with attitudes toward online advertising. In addition, age has the negative correlation with educational level. This means that older people has lower educational level. Besides, age also has positive correlation with personal income. It means that older respondent has higher personal income. Additionally, the educational level has the positive correlation with personal income. This means that the respondents whose educational levels are higher are more likely to gain more personal income.

Personality and internet experience were analyzed using multiple regressions. The results show in Table 3 that the multiple coefficients (R) for personality is 0.833 and for internet experience is 0.812 suggesting reasonably good correlation between all the influencing factors taken together and the attitudes toward online advertising. Moreover, for personality, the adjusted R square figure of 0.692 suggests that they can explain 69.2 percent of the variance, leaving just 30.8 percent unexplained. It can predict the impact of personality characters on attitudes toward online advertising. For internet experience, the adjusted R square figure of 0.657 suggests that they can explain 65.7 percent of the variance, leaving just 34.3 percent unexplained. It can predict the deep impact of internet experience on attitudes toward online advertising. Both personality and internet experience, regarding the analysis of variance, the statistical significance are 0.000 which are below the significant level or alpha level ($\alpha=0.05$). It means that personality and internet experience has the impact on attitudes toward online advertising.

Table 3 The result of multiple regression between personality, internet experience and attitudes toward online advertising

	R	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig
1	.833 ^a	.692	.35760	295.674	.000 ^a
2	.812 ^a	.657	.37699	378.965	.000 ^a

*1 a. Predictors: (Constant), curiosity, imagination, open-minded.

2 a. Predictors: (Constant), internet browsing history, internet usage frequency.

Table 4 also suggests that a person's attitudes toward online advertising can be influenced by personality characters such as curiosity, imagination and open-minded. For curiosity, imagination and open-minded $p < 0.005$, showing that all these factors can influence significantly the attitudes toward online advertising. Open-minded influence the attitudes toward online advertising (0.431 or 43.1 percent), followed by imagination, the second most influential effect (0.265 or 26.5 percent) and curiosity is the least influential effect (0.232 or 23.2 percent). Therefore, the reasonable linear regression equation for respondents as:

$$ATOA = 0.779 + 0.179(\text{curiosity}) + 0.241(\text{imagination}) + 0.329(\text{open-minded})$$

(ATOA in here is Attitudes toward online advertising) The t -value of personality or constant at 9.069, curiosity character = 5.151, imagination character = 5.737 and open-minded character = 10.587. Considered the open-minded character = 10.587 with the highest beta of 0.431, it therefore appears that for many internet users, personality has the impact on attitudes toward online advertising. Open-minded is the most important characters of personality which impacts on attitudes toward online advertising. Thus, when considered with the sig. value, all of the variance are below the level of significant or the alpha level ($\alpha = 0.05$) for the hypothesis test. It means the curiosity, imagination or open-minded internet users are more likely to have a positive impact on attitudes toward online advertising. Also, Table 4 suggests that a person's attitudes toward online advertising can be influenced by internet experience (internet usage frequency and internet browsing

history). For internet usage frequency and internet browsing history, $p < 0.005$, show that both two factors can influence significantly the attitudes toward online advertising. In general, internet browsing history influences the attitudes toward online advertising (0.669 or 66.9 percent), followed by internet usage frequency, the second most influential effect (0.182 or 18.2 percent). Therefore, the reasonable linear regression equation for respondents as:

$$\text{ATOA} = 0.812 + 0.126(\text{IUF}) + 0.628(\text{IBH})$$

(ATOA here is Attitudes toward online advertising; IUF here is internet usage frequency; IBH here is internet browsing history. The t-value of internet experience or constant at 9.012, internet usage frequency factor = 4.186 and internet browsing history = 15.391. Considered the internet browsing history = 15.391 with the highest beta of 0.664, it therefore appears that for many internet users, internet experience has the impact on attitudes toward online advertising. Internet browsing history is the most important factor of internet experience impacting on attitudes toward online advertising. Thus, when considered with the sig. value, all of the variance are below the level of significant or the alpha level ($\alpha = 0.05$) for the hypothesis test. It means the internet users are more likely to have a positive impact on attitudes toward online advertising with higher internet usage frequency and internet browsing history.

Table 4 The result of multiple regression between internet experience and attitudes toward online advertising

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients		
Regression	B	Beta	<i>T</i>	Sig.
Personality				
(Constant)	.779		9.069	.000
Curiosity	.179	.232	5.151	.000
Imagination	.241	.265	5.737	.000
Open-minded	.329	.431	10.587	.000
Internet experience				
(Constant)	.812		9.012	.000
IUF	.126	.182	4.186	.000
IBH	.628	.669	15.391	.000

* IUF: Internet usage frequency IBH: Internet browsing history

Discussion and Implementation

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors such as demographics, personality and internet experience influencing attitudes toward online advertising among Chinese customers. In sum, the result of this study indicates that different age, educational level and personal income have different impact on attitudes toward online advertising. Ducoffe (1996) also found the higher educational level internet users are more likely to have more positive attitudes toward online advertising. This finding shows that the educational level and personal income are the positive predictors for attitudes toward online advertising while age is a significant negative predictor for attitudes toward online advertising. In addition, curious, imaginative or open-minded internet users are more likely to have a positive impact on attitude towards online advertising. Moreover, internet users with various internet browsing history and more internet usage frequency will have a more positive impact on attitude towards online advertising.

Depending on the high growth of China's economic with the large population and the development of global business; online advertising has been paid more and more attention by both advertisers and researchers. Therefore, consumers' attitudes toward advertising become more and more important because it influences consumers' exposure, attention, and reaction to ads effectiveness (Alwitt and Prabhakar, 1992). This study explored that the different age, educational level or different personal income result in different attitudes toward online advertising. Also, the personality characters and internet experience impact on attitudes toward online advertising. Finding may deepen people's understanding of attitudes toward online advertising in the Chinese environment and contribute useful implications for global business man.

Moreover, according to the finding of this research, the researcher has some recommendation to the advertiser to pay attention to customers' attitudes toward online advertising. Based on this study, advertisers may well understand that personality and demographic group has more positive attitudes toward online advertising. In addition, the result of this study also shows the internet usage frequency and internet browsing history of the internet users, the advertisers can put the online advertising fit for the right internet users and will result in higher advertising effectiveness.

Conclusion

There are several limitations associated with this study. Firstly, the sampling group used in this study may limit the generalizability of research findings, because most respondents were from Guangxi, China. Secondly, some respondents require more explanations. Thus, they may make some errors when filled in the questionnaire. The accurate rate of the given questionnaire answers was influenced. Thirdly, the questionnaire is quite substantial. Therefore, the respondents had to take around 20 minutes to fill out the questionnaires. Thus, the answers may not correspond to the respondents' real feelings, especially when they were in a hurry.

Based on several limitations associated with this study, future research could examine a broader profile of internet users, and compare with online advertising, not just in Guangxi. Secondly, this study lies in addressing the impact of demographic factors, personality characters and internet experience on attitudes toward online advertising. Past research indicated that the entertainment, economy, value, credibility and information are the predictors of attitudes toward online advertising (Wang et al., 2009). Further research can focus on how these factors conspire to influence positive attitudes toward online advertising and result in higher advertising effectiveness. Thirdly, this research just examined the demographic characters, personality and internet experience which impact on attitudes toward online advertising. Further research could compare the different culture impacting on attitudes toward online advertising for enhancing our understanding of culture influence on internet users' attitudes toward online advertising. Lastly, further research could focus on examining which type of online advertising and what web-site the internet users always click.

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