

Exploring the Effect of Shocking Advertising Used by For-Profit and Nonprofit Organizations in the US and China

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The purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of shocking advertising when applied by a nonprofit versus a for-profit organization. Particularly, this study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of shocking ads in terms of attitude toward the ad (A_{ad}), brand attitude (A_b), and intention to behave by comparing consumers' cognitive responses to shocking and non-shocking ads. A total sample of 343 was collected in China and the US. Overall, the results indicate consumers held more positive A_{ad} and A_b toward non-shocking ads than toward shocking ads. When both using shocking advertising, consumer elicited more positive A_b and intention to behave toward the nonprofit organization than the for-profit organization. Chinese and American consumers held more negative A_{ad} toward shocking than non-shocking ads. Moreover, consumers' A_b toward the shocking/for-profit organization are similarly low in both countries, suggesting both Chinese and American consumers dislike the shocking ad as well as the sponsored for-profit organization. Lastly, similarly high intention to behave was elicited toward nonprofit organizations regardless the form of ads.

Keywords: shocking advertising, attitude toward the ad (A_{ad}), brand attitude (A_b), intention to behave, US, China

INTRODUCTION

In 1980s, consumers around the world were astonished by Benetton's shocking advertising strategies because of the violation of the social and moral norms (Skorupa, 2014). According to Dahl, Frankenberger and Manchanda (2003) Shocking advertising is described as "an attempt to surprise an audience by deliberately violating norms for social values and personal ideals" (p. 269). During the 15 years of employing shocking appeal in its ads, Benetton successfully increased its brand awareness among consumers. However, the company declared in 2000 that it decided to abandon the use of shocking advertising and started to embrace traditional advertising strategies since shocking ads elicited controversies and opposition against the brand across various groups such as consumers, retailers, government, and international nonprofit organizations.

Nowadays, for-profit organization practice advertising to generate profit (Koszembar-Wiklik, 2016) while nonprofit organizations use it to draw the attention from consumers and increase the awareness of the social issue their organization addresses (Clow & Carter, 1999). It is not uncommon to see the application

of advertising in for-profit organizations to increase profit growth. On the other hand, nonprofit advertising becomes a fast-growing sector (Wheeler, 2009). Nonprofit organizations with the revenue of more than 10 million are recorded to spend an annual amount of 7.6 billion on advertising and promotions (Pallotta, 2009). Many for-profit or nonprofit organizations utilize shocking advertising to break through the cluster of messages and capture people's attention (Dahl et al., 2003). For-profit organizations expect shocking advertising strategies to increase sales and brand awareness while nonprofit organizations hope it helps to address social issues and persuade people to adopt certain behaviors (Skorupa, 2014). However, research has not reached a consensus on the effectiveness of shocking advertising. Some studies confirmed the usefulness of shocking advertising on increasing attention (Parry, Jones, Stem & Robinson, 2013), brand awareness (Waller, 2004), memory and behavioral change (Dahl et al., 2003). While other scholars found shocking advertising is not as effective as expected. Studies showed increasing immunity of the audiences (Parry et al., 2013), negative image being created about the brand in consumers lead to boycotting the brand or the loss of sales. (Andersson, Hedelin, Nilsson & Welander, 2004; Hodge, 2007; Klara, 2012).

Scholars showed various interests in consumer's cognitive responses toward shocking advertising (Parry, et al., 2013; Virvilaite & Matuleviciene, 2013; Castellon, 2006; Dahl et al., 2003; Fill 2014; Gustafson & Yssel, 1994; Javed & Zeb, 2011; Koszembar-Wiklik, 2016; Pflaumbaum 2011; Pope et al., 2004; Prendergast, Cheung & West, 2008; Sabri & Obermiller, 2012). Dahl et al. (2003) posited consumer's attention toward the message is higher when compared to other advertising forms. Memory retention and brand recall were discovered to be superior when using shocking advertising (Dahl et al., 2003). In terms of attitudes toward the ad (A_{ad}) and attitudes toward the brand (A_b), research revealed consumers hold negative A_{ad} and A_b toward shocking advertising, but the use of shocking advertisements is considered more appropriate in nonprofit organization than for-profit organization (Parry et al., 2013). After reviewing previous research on shocking advertising, Virvilaite and Matuleviciene (2013) proposed a theoretical model that presents the role of emotion, psycho-demographic and socio-cultural factors in influencing consumers' A_{ad} and A_b when responding to shocking advertisements. However, this proposed model was not verified by empirical data. A_{ad} and A_b toward shocking advertising were also found to be more negative in older consumers than in younger consumers. Despite findings in the investigation of consumers' reaction to shocking advertising, a research gap exists in the exploration of consumers' cognitive responses to shocking ads versus non-shocking ads when used by for-profit and nonprofit organizations.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of shocking advertising when applied by a nonprofit versus a for-profit organization. Particularly, this study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of shocking ads in terms of A_{ad} , A_b , and intention to behave. This investigation also compares consumers' cognitive responses to shocking and non-shocking ads in the U.S. and China.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Shocking Advertising

The definition of shocking advertising varies from scholar to scholar. For example, Gustafson and Yssel (1994) defined a shocking advertising appeal is the one which intentionally offends its audiences. Others defined it as the application of intentionally offensive, controversial stimulus aiming at capturing attention and selling ideas or products (Briderrick & Pickton 2005; Castellon, 2006). Dahl and his colleagues (2003) conceptualized shocking advertising content as "Shocking advertising content is that which attempts to surprise an audience by deliberately violating norms for social values and personal ideas" (p.269).

Effects on Consumer Behavior

Waller (2005) identified positive consumer behavior encompasses making a purchase of advertised brand or spreading positive information about the brand, whereas negative consumer behavior featured neglecting, resisting, and disseminating negative information about the ads or the brand. Virvilaite and Matuleviciene (2013) claimed emotions elicited by shocking advertising stimulate consumer to choose or not to choose the advertised brand. While few studies suggested positive consumer behavior after viewing shocking ads such as increasing brand awareness and sale volumes (Andersson & Pettersson, 2004; Dahl

et al., 2003; Prendergast, Cheung & West, 2008; Ortega-S, 2011), most of the research detects a negative impact on consumer behavior (Henke, 2012; Koszembar-Wiklik, 2016; Prendergast et al., 2008; Prendergast, Ho & Phau, 2002; Sabri & Obermiller, 2012; Sandikçi, 2011; Vézina & Paul, 1997; Waller, 2005). Sandikçi (2011) claimed shocking advertising caused controversies, even more negative perception among consumers and in academic research. Sabri & Obermiller (2012) concluded that the use of sexual taboo and death taboo themes in ads elicited negative brand attitude and produced social normative pressure that reduced intention to purchase the advised product. Vézina and Paul (1997) revealed although shocking strategies were effective on attracting attention, it generated negative brand attitude. Henke (2012) explored the level of involvement with music as a moderator of the impact of disgust on music consumers and found shocking appeals (disgust) negatively affected consumer's music passing behavior. Ferestad and Thompson (2017) interviewed 20 recovering meth addicts and discovered that although the goal of shocking anti-drug ads is to prevent meth use among teenagers, it unexpectedly impacts those recovering meth addicts who are trying to reintegrate to the non-using community as the campaign negatively affect meth users' world view and create stereotypes, stigma and differential treatment of meth users. Prendergast, Ho and Phau (2002) posited controversies caused by shocking advertising negatively affect brand image and purchase intention. Prendergast et al. (2008) pointed out the negative results of shocking advertising includes damaged brand image, endangered customer loyalty, boycott the company and its products. Waller (2005) wrote shocking advertising can potentially offend people and create a negative action. Koszembar-Wiklik (2016) implied negative emotions aroused by controversial themes in ads lead to boycotting the band or escaping from the message.

Shocking Advertising in For-profit and Nonprofit Organizations

Skorupa (2014) mentioned shocking advertising is employed by both for-profit organization and nonprofit organization to help their advertising message to stand out among other forms of ads and capture consumers' attention. The goal of advertising in for-profit organization is mostly profit-oriented (Koszembar-Wiklik, 2016) while nonprofit organizations apply it to draw the attention from consumers and increase the awareness of the social issue their organization addresses (Clow & Carter, 1999). Since many studies confirmed the positive effects of shocking advertising on consumers' consequence behavior, for-profit organizations expect it to encourage consumer's buying behavior to increase sales whereas non-profit organizations hope it can make people reconsider and change their behavior patterns (Skorupa, 2014).

Parry et al. (2013) investigated attitudinal variations and emotional reactions to shocking advertising. As a result, it concluded that shocking advertising in both for-profit and nonprofit was successful in drawing subjects' attention. Moreover, the authors found the use of shocking images in nonprofit organizations are perceived as more justifiable than for-profit organizations. Religious taboos and morally offensive images are considered inappropriate in both for-profit and non-profit sectors (Parry et al, 2013). Although the use of shocking appeal may cause negative psychological effects on message recipients (Henthorne, Latour, Natarajan, 1993; Hyman & Tansey, 1990), LaTour and Zahra (1989) claimed that the use of such appeals is appropriate when applied for public good.

Based on the literature of shocking advertising in for-profit and nonprofit organizations, six hypotheses are generated in regard to A_{ad} , A_b , and intention to behave:

***H_{1a}**: Consumers hold more positive A_{ad} toward non-shocking ads than shocking ads.*

***H_{1b}**: Consumers hold more positive A_{ad} toward shocking ad used by nonprofit organization than for-profit organization.*

***H_{2a}**: Consumers hold more positive A_b after viewing non-shocking ads than shocking ads.*

***H_{2b}**: Consumers hold more positive A_b toward the nonprofit organization than the for-profit organization when both using shocking advertising.*

H_{3a}: *Consumers' intention to behave is stronger after viewing non-shocking ad than shocking ad.*

H_{3b}: *Consumers' intention to behave is stronger after viewing shocking ad by nonprofit organization than the shocking ad by for-profit organization.*

Finally, a gap of empirical research exists in understanding group differences between cultures in relations to shocking advertising used by for profit and non-profit. Therefore, this study posits the following research question:

RQ₁: *Are there significant differences between Chinese and American consumers in reaction to shocking advertising sponsored by for profit and non-profit organizations?*

METHOD

Participants

This study employed a 2 (ads: shocking/non-shocking) × 2 (organization: for-profit/non-profit) between subject design. The data was collected in the US and China. Participants from China and US were selected for this study because of the difference of their core values, attitudes, and beliefs differ (Hofstede, 2011; De Mooij, 2013). 216 Chinese participants in this study were recruited via invitation emails by snowball sampling. Each participant was asked to forward the invitation email to people they know. After the data cleaning process, 33 responses were dropped from the total sample due to incomplete questionnaires. This procedure resulted in 183 valid responses. Among the 183 valid responses, female accounted for 63.9% (n = 117), male accounted for 36.1% (n = 66). One participant (0.5%) was less than 18 years old, 24.6% (n= 45) of the participants were 18-24 years old, 64.5% (n = 118) were between 25 to 34 years old, 10.4% (n = 19) were 35 or older.

U.S. participants were recruited from a large South-east public university in exchange of class credit. 260 valid responses are collected. Among the 260 valid responses, 70 percent of the sample are females (n= 182), and 30 percent are males (n = 78). 93.8 percent of the participants are between 18 to 24 years old. 4.2 percent are between 25-34 years old. 1.9 percent are 35 or older (n = 5).

Independent Variables

Types of Advertising

Shocking advertising was conceptualized as the application of intentionally offensive, controversial stimulus aiming at capturing attention and selling ideas or products (Pickton & Bridgerick, 2005; Castellon, 2006). Half of the messages contained shocking advertising, half not. Advertising that utilized conventional strategies (the display of the product with its brand logo) to promote the ideas or products.

Organization

All the ads were either sponsored by a nonprofit organization or a for-profit organization.

Dependent Variables

Attitudes Toward Brand (A_b)

Attitudes towards brands was conceptualized as how one feels about the brand (Gardner, 1985). It is rated on a seven-point, three-item semantic differential scale (Cronbach alpha = .71). Participants indicated whether they feel good/bad, dislike very much/like very much, pleasant/unpleasant on the scale (Gardner, 1985).

Attitude Toward Ads (A_{ad})

Attitude toward ads was conceptualized as a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a specific advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion (Lutz, 1985). Attitude toward the ad was measured on a four-item seven-point Likert scale (Mitchell & Olson, 1977). The

participants indicated their attitude toward the ad on four bipolar evaluative items (good-bad, dislike-like, not irritating-irritating, uninteresting-interesting). Cronbach alpha of this scale is 0.87.

Intention to Behave

Behavioral intention is conceptualized as whether a person plans to perform a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). For ads sponsored by for profit organizations, purchase intention was measured by a single-item 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from “not at all likely to buy” to “very likely to buy” (Mitchell & Olson, 1977). Participants were asked to rate how likely they are going to buy the product mentioned in the ad. For ads by nonprofit organization, behavioral intention was measured. Participants indicated the likelihood that they are going to perform the behavior embraced in the ad on a single-item 7-point scale from “not at all likely to perform” to “very like to perform”.

Stimuli

To ensure the selection of attributes of the messages, a pretest was performed by asking 10 students to rate the presence and absence of the shocking content and the depicted organizations. Two shocking ads were selected initially, after the pretest, one ad was discarded due to unclear depiction of the product.

Stimuli were created by using an existing shocking advertisement but was never shown in China and US. However, the name of the organization and product in the ad were replaced by a fictitious company name and a nonprofit organization name to rule out the existing attitude toward both organizations. As a result, four advertisements were created for four conditions. In the shocking/for profit condition (first condition), a little girl was playing with a meat grinder. In the meat grinder, there was an alive chicken. The flesh ground chicken came out from the meat grinder. In the Chinese version, the for-profit company is called “Beishi”, the nonprofit organization is called “Chinese Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals”. In the American version, the for-profit company is called “Btech”, the nonprofit organization is called “American Animal Protective Association”. In specific, the ad was sponsored by a Chinese brand called “Beishi” (means baby watch). A slogan of the company was in the lower right of the ad, presenting “Beishi – the best children wireless video monitor.” In the shocking/nonprofit condition (second condition), only the slogan was replaced by “Chinese Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals”. The rest of the content of the ad remained the same. In the non- shocking/for-profit condition (third condition), the meat grinder was replaced by a basket of fuzzy chicken. The slogan of Beishi company was presented in the lower right corner of the ad. In non-shocking/nonprofit condition (fourth condition), everything was as same as the third condition except the slogan of Beishi company was replaced by “Chinese Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals”. Same procedures were performed in manipulating the American version of ads.

Procedure

An online experiment was conducted by sending invitation emails to Chinese participants and each participant was asked to send the invitation email to people they know. American participants are recruited from several communication classes in exchange of extra credit. By clicking on survey link, participants were reading the consent form and indicated if they were willing to participate the experiment. By clicking on “continue” button, they were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. In each condition, participants answered questions designated to the specific organization. At the end of the survey, they indicated their demographic information. The experiment took approximately 6-8 mins to complete.

RESULTS

H_{1a} posited a higher observed A_{ad} toward non-shocking ads than shocking ads. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare A_{ad} in shocking and non-shocking conditions. There was a significant difference in A_{ad} for shocking ads (M= 2.54, SD= 1.001) and non-shocking ads (M= 3.49, SD= .94); t (441) = -10.22, p = .00. These results indicated there was an attitudinal difference in consumers toward shocking

and non-shocking ads. Specifically, consumers held more positive A_{ad} toward non-shocking ads than toward shocking ads. Therefore, H_{1a} is supported.

H_{1b} aimed at exploring if consumers hold more favorable attitude toward the shocking ad when used by a nonprofit organization than when used by a for-profit organization. The multivariate analysis variance (MANOVA) was conducted to assess differences in A_{ad} in four different advertising/organization conditions. A significant Box's M test ($p = .00$) suggested a violation of homogeneity of covariance matrices.

The multivariate effect was significant by ad categories, $F(47, 1317) = 46.84, P < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .24$. Univariate tests indicated that there were significant differences across four ad categories on A_{ad} , $F(3, 419) = 35.74, p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .20$. Tukey HSD post hoc tests showed no significant difference was found when comparing shocking/for-profit and shocking/nonprofit conditions. However, consumers held significantly negative attitudes toward shocking/for-profit ad ($M = 2.60, SD = 1.06$) than toward non-shocking/for-profit ad ($M = 3.40, SD = .94$), and non-shocking/nonprofit ad ($M = 3.58, SD = .935$). In addition, consumer held significantly negative attitudes toward shocking/nonprofit ad ($M = 2.49, SD = .96$) than toward non-shocking/for-profit ad ($M = 3.40, SD = .94$), and non-shocking/nonprofit ad ($M = 3.58, SD = .935$). These results indicated consumers held more favorable attitudes toward non-shocking ads used by both for-profit and nonprofit organizations. Most interestingly, no significant difference was found in A_{ad} between for-profit and nonprofit organization when using shocking ads. Therefore, H_{1b} is rejected.

H_{2a} presented consumers held more positive A_b toward non-shocking ads than shocking ads. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to assess differences in A_b in shocking and non-shocking conditions. There was a significant difference in A_b for shocking ads ($M = 3.66, SD = 1.63$) and non-shocking ads ($M = 4.75, SD = 1.41$); $t(441) = -7.44, p = .00$. These results implied there was a difference in A_b in shocking and non-shocking ad conditions. Specifically, consumers held more positive A_b toward non-shocking ads than toward shocking ads. Therefore, H_{2a} is supported.

H_{2b} wondered if consumers held more positive A_b when shocking ads was used by a nonprofit organization in comparison to a for-profit organization. The multivariate analysis variance (MANOVA) was conducted to assess differences in A_b in four ad categories. A significant Box's M test ($p = .00$) suggested a violation of homogeneity of covariance matrices.

The multivariate effect was significant by ad categories, $F(47, 1317) = 46.84, P < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .24$. Univariate tests indicated that there were significant differences across four ad categories on A_b , $F(3, 419) = 41.78, p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .22$. A significant difference was detected using Tukey HSD post hoc tests when comparing shocking/for-profit ($M = 3.08, SD = 1.53$) and shocking/nonprofit conditions ($M = 4.22, SD = 1.54$). That is, when both using shocking ads, consumers held more positive A_b toward the nonprofit organization than the for-profit organization. Furthermore, consumers held significantly negative attitudes toward shocking/for-profit ad ($M = 3.08, SD = 1.53$) than toward non-shocking/for-profit ad ($M = 4.22, SD = 1.25$), and non-shocking/nonprofit ad ($M = 5.24, SD = 1.38$). In addition, consumer held significantly negative attitudes toward shocking/nonprofit ad ($M = 4.22, SD = 1.54$) than toward non-shocking/nonprofit ad ($M = 5.24, SD = 1.38$). It is worth noting that no significant attitudinal variation toward the brand was found between shocking/nonprofit ad and non-shocking/for-profit ad. These results showed when both using shocking ads, consumers developed more positive attitude toward the nonprofit organization than the for-profit organization. More interestingly, consumers had the least favorable attitude toward the for-profit organization with a shocking ad while holding similar A_b toward the nonprofit organization with the shocking ad and the for-profit organization with non-shocking ad. Lastly, the most favorable A_b was gained toward the nonprofit organization that used non-shocking ad. Based on the data analysis, H_{2b} is supported. H_{3a} investigated whether stronger behavioral intention was elicited after viewing non-shocking ads than shocking ads. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to assess differences in intention to behave after viewing shocking and non-shocking ads. No significant difference was detected in intention to behave between shocking and non-shocking ads.

Specifically, intention to behave after viewing shocking ads ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 2.31$) was slightly lower than after viewing the non-shocking ads ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 2.17$). Based on the data analysis, H3a is rejected. H3b analyzed if the shocking ad used by a nonprofit organization will elicit stronger intention to behave than when the shocking ad was used by a for-profit organization. The multivariate analysis variance (MANOVA) was conducted to assess differences in intention to behave in four ad categories. A significant Box's M test ($p = .00$) suggested a violation of homogeneity of covariance matrices.

The multivariate effect was significant by ad categories, $F(47, 1317) = 46.84$, $P < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .24$. Univariate tests indicated that there were significant differences across four ad categories on intention to behave, $F(3, 419) = 151.15$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .51$. A significant difference was detected using Tukey HSD post hoc tests when comparing shocking/for-profit ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 1.65$) and shocking/nonprofit conditions ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.48$). That is, when both using shocking ads, consumers had stronger intention to behave toward the nonprofit organization than the for-profit organization. What's more, consumers had significantly lower intention to behave toward shocking/for-profit ad ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 1.65$) than toward non-shocking/nonprofit ad ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.47$). In addition, lower intention to behave was found after viewing non-shocking/for-profit ad ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.73$) than shocking/nonprofit ad ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.47$). Also, when both use non-shocking ads, consumers had stronger intention to behave after viewing nonprofit organization ad ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.47$) than after viewing for-profit organization ad ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.73$). These results showed when both using shocking ads, consumers developed stronger intention to behave toward the nonprofit organization than the for-profit organization. However, stronger intention to behave was elicited by the ad of a nonprofit organization, regardless its forms. Consumers had the least intention to behave toward the for-profit organization with a shocking ad while similar level of IB toward the for-profit organization with a non-shocking ad. Based on the results of MANOVA, H3b is supported. Finally, a MANOVA with a Post Hoc Univariate test was conducted to explore group difference between American and Chinese consumers' responses to for profit and for non-profit shocking ads. A significant Box's M test ($p = .00$) suggested a violation of homogeneity of covariance matrices.

The multivariate effect was significant by ad/country categories, $F(21, 1305) = 22.78$, $P < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .27$. Univariate tests indicated that there were significant differences across eight ad/country categories on A_{ad} , $F(7, 435) = 16.17$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .21$, Brand attitude (A_b), $F(7, 435) = 20.20$, $p < .0$, partial $\eta^2 = .25$ and intention to behave, $F(7, 435) = 79.55$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .56$. A significant difference was detected using Tukey HSD post hoc tests when comparing shocking/for-profit/CHN ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.16$) to non-shocking/for-profit/CHN ($M = 3.64$, $SD = .98$), non-shocking/nonprofit/CHN ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.04$) and non-shocking/nonprofit/US ($M = 3.55$, $SD = .85$). Shocking/nonprofit/CHN ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 1.12$) was significantly different from non-shocking/for-profit/CHN ($M = 3.64$, $SD = .97$), non-shocking/nonprofit/CHN ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.04$), non-shocking/for-profit/US ($M = 3.20$, $SD = .98$), and .98) was significantly different from shocking/for-profit/US ($M = 2.55$, $SD = .98$) and shocking/nonprofit/US ($M = 2.48$, $SD = .87$). It is also found the score of A_{ad} of non-shocking/nonprofit/CHN ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.04$) was significantly higher than shocking/for-profit/US ($M = 2.55$, $SD = .98$) and shocking/nonprofit/US ($M = 2.48$, $SD = .87$). In US advertising groups, both shocking/for-profit/US ($M = 2.55$, $SD = .98$) and shocking/nonprofit/US ($M = 2.48$, $SD = .87$) are significantly different from non-shocking/for-profit/US ($M = 3.20$, $SD = .86$), and non-shocking/nonprofit/US ($M = 3.55$, $SD = .85$). See Table 1.

Moreover, univariate tests indicated that there were significant differences across eight ad/country categories on A_b , $F(7, 435) = 20.20$, $p < .0$, partial $\eta^2 = .25$. The results indicated significant differences were found in A_b between shocking/for-profit/CHN ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.64$) and shocking/nonprofit/CHN ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.58$), non-shocking/for-profit/CHN ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.10$), non-shocking/nonprofit/CHN ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 1.40$), and non-shocking/nonprofit/US ($M = 5.46$, $SD = 1.32$). The shocking/nonprofit/CHN ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.58$) is significantly different from shocking/for-profit/US ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 1.42$), and non-shocking/nonprofit/US ($M = 5.46$, $SD = 1.32$). Additionally, non-shocking/for-profit/CHN ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.10$) was significantly different from shocking/for-profit/US ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 1.42$).

= 1.42), and non-shocking/nonprofit/US (M = 5.46, SD = 1.32). In terms of non-shocking/nonprofit/CHN (M = 4.94, SD = 1.40), it had significantly higher score than shocking/for-profit/US (M = 2.86, SD = 1.42), and non-shocking/for-profit/US (M = 3.92, SD = 1.30). In the US advertising group, shocking/for-profit/US (M = 2.86, SD = 1.42) had significantly lower score on A_b than shocking/nonprofit/US (M = 4.14, SD = 1.51) and non-shocking/nonprofit/US (M = 5.46, SD = 1.32). A_b toward the shocking/nonprofit/US (M = 4.14, SD = 1.51) was significantly lower than non-shocking/nonprofit/US (M = 5.46, SD = 1.32). In non-shocking ads in US, a significant difference was detected between non-shocking/for-profit/US (M = 3.92, SD = 1.30) and non-shocking/nonprofit/US (M = 5.46, SD = 1.32). See Table 2.

Lastly, univariate tests indicated that there were significant differences across eight ad/country categories on intention to behave, $F(7, 435) = 79.55$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .56$. Significant differences were detected using Tamhane post hoc tests when comparing shocking/for-profit/CHN (M = 3.02, SD = 1.85) to shocking/nonprofit/CHN (M = 5.93, SD = 1.28), non-shocking/nonprofit/CHN (M = 5.67, SD = 1.57), shocking/for-profit/US (M = 1.61, SD = 1.19), shocking/nonprofit/US (M = 5.41, SD = 1.56), non-shocking/for-profit/US (M = 1.98, SD = 1.26), and non-shocking/nonprofit/US (M = 5.54, SD = 1.40). Significant differences were also detected when comparing shocking/nonprofit/CHN (M = 5.93, SD = 1.28) to non-shocking/for-profit/CHN (M = 3.48, SD = 1.86), shocking/for-profit/US (M = 1.61, SD = 1.19), and non-shocking/for-profit/US (M = 1.98, SD = 1.26). Similarly, significant differences were found between non-shocking/for-profit/CHN (M = 3.48, SD = 1.86) and non-shocking/nonprofit/CHN (M = 5.67, SD = 1.57), shocking/for-profit/US (M = 1.61, SD = 1.19), shocking/nonprofit/US (M = 5.41, SD = 1.56), non-shocking/for-profit/US (M = 1.98, SD = 1.26), and non-shocking/nonprofit/US (M = 5.54, SD = 1.40). In US advertising group, shocking/for-profit/US (M = 1.61, SD = 1.19) was found to have a significantly lower intention to behave than non-shocking/nonprofit/CHN (M = 5.67, SD = 1.57), shocking/nonprofit/US (M = 5.41, SD = 1.56), and non-shocking/nonprofit/US (M = 5.54, SD = 1.40). Finally, non-shocking/for-profit/US (M = 1.98, SD = 1.26) was found to have significantly lower score on intention to behave than non-shocking/nonprofit/CHN (M = 5.67, SD = 1.57), shocking/nonprofit/US (M = 5.41, SD = 1.56), and non-shocking/nonprofit/US (M = 5.54, SD = 1.40). See Table 3.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the effectiveness of shocking advertising and compared it to non-shocking advertising when used in for-profit and nonprofit organizations in terms of A_{ad} , A_b , and intention to behave. H_{1a} , H_{2a} , and H_{3a} explored if there were differences in consumers' A_{ad} , A_b , and intention to behave toward shocking and non-shocking advertising. H_{1b} , H_{2b} , and H_{3b} assessed attitudinal variation and behavioral intention when shocking advertising was used by for-profit and nonprofit organizations. As a result, consumers held more positive A_{ad} and A_b toward non-shocking ads than toward shocking ads. No significant difference was detected in consumers' intention to behave between shocking and non-shocking ads. When both using shocking advertising, consumer elicited more positive A_b and intention to behave toward the nonprofit organization than the for-profit organization. However, no difference was found in A_{ad} when shocking advertising was used by nonprofit and for-profit organizations. Consumers held negative A_{ad} toward both shocking ads by nonprofit and for-profit organizations. Investigations were also conducted to explore whether cultural differences in the US and China affect consumers' evaluation of shocking advertising. The results suggested Chinese and American consumers held more negative A_{ad} toward shocking than non-shocking ads. Moreover, consumers' A_b toward the shocking/for-profit organization are similarly low in both countries, suggesting both Chinese and American consumers dislike the shocking ad as well as the sponsored for-profit organization. Lastly, this study found similarly high intention to behave toward nonprofit organizations regardless the form of ads.

Specifically, H_{1a} proposed consumers held more positive A_{ad} toward non-shocking ads than toward shocking ads. The results of data analysis indicated more favorable A_{ad} was elicited by non-shocking ads in comparison to shocking ads. The finding is consistent with the study concluded that consumers held

negative A_{ad} and A_b toward shocking advertising (Parry et al., 2013) and partially supported the finding by Liu et al. (2009) who found older consumers had negative A_{ad} toward shocking ads.

H_{1b} posited consumers' A_{ad} was more positive toward the shocking ad used by a nonprofit organization than a for-profit organization. As a result, there was no significant difference in A_{ad} between shocking/nonprofit and shocking/for-profit ads. This finding is inconsistent with the result found in Parry et al.'s study (2013) which claimed consumers had more positive A_{ad} toward nonprofit organization with shocking ads than for-profit organization with shocking ads. However, detailed data analysis suggested consumers held more negative A_{ad} toward shocking ads regardless when used by nonprofit or for-profit organizations. This conclusion also confirmed the finding of H_{1a} that consumers had more positive A_{ad} toward non-shocking ads in comparison to shocking ads.

H_{2a} assessed whether higher A_b was elicited toward non-shocking ads than shocking ads. The results implied more positive A_b was elicited after viewing non-shocking ads than after viewing shocking ads. This conclusion is in line with Vezina and Paul's study (1997) which revealed shocking advertising generated negative A_b and Madni et al.'s (2016) claim that shocking ads affect brands negatively.

H_{2b} found more positive A_b was generated toward a nonprofit organization than a for-profit organization when both using shocking ads. The result is in consistence with Parry et al.'s finding that people think it is more justifiable for nonprofit organizations to use shocking ads (2013). More interestingly, no significant attitudinal difference toward the brand was found between shocking/nonprofit and non-shocking/for-profit groups. Consumers has the least favorable A_b toward shocking/for-profit combination while holding a non-statistically significant A_b toward shocking/nonprofit and non-shocking/for-profit groups. The most favorable A_b was gained toward the non-shocking/nonprofit combination. These results suggested although consumers had negative attitude toward the shocking ad used by a nonprofit organization, their A_b was not as negative as A_{ad} . That is, consumers consider the use of shocking ads by a nonprofit organization as more justifiable because of the property of an organization, which in turn, counteract the negative effects of A_{ad} elicited by the shocking/nonprofit ad.

H_{3a} revealed no difference was found in intention to behave after viewing non-shocking ads and shocking ads. This finding is inconsistent with the previous literature claiming shocking ads led to negative consumer behavior (Koszembar-Wiklik, 2016; Prendergast et al., 2002; Waller, 2005). The property of the organizations may cause the inconsistency with the previous literature since A_b toward the nonprofit organization with shocking ads were counteracted by the property of the organization, thus lead to a stronger intention to behave. The post hoc analysis suggested shocking/for-profit ad elicited the least behavioral intention while shocking/nonprofit ad generated the strongest intention to behave among consumers.

H_{3b} confirmed shocking/nonprofit ad elicited more behavioral intention than shocking/for-profit ad. However, similar level of behavioral intention was also found after viewing non-shocking/nonprofit ad. These results suggest consumers' behavioral intention is stronger after viewing ads by nonprofit organizations regardless ad forms. Shocking/for-profit ad generated the lowest behavioral intention among all the ads. Non-shocking/for-profit ad produced a slightly higher behavioral intention than shocking/for-profit ad but not statistically significant. Future research is encouraged to explore the role of organization as a potential moderator in assessing intention to behave after viewing shocking and non-shocking ads.

RQ_1 wondered if there were significant differences between Chinese and American consumers in reaction to shocking advertising sponsored by for profit and non-profit organizations. The results indicated Chinese and American consumers hold more negative A_{ad} toward shocking than non-shocking ads. Moreover, consumers' A_b toward the shocking/for-profit organization are similarly low in both countries, suggesting both Chinese and American consumers' dislike the shocking ad as well as the sponsored for-profit organization. Lastly, this study found similarly high intention to behave toward nonprofit organizations regardless the form of ads. This may because the use of shocking appeals is considered as appropriate when applied for public good (LaTour & Zahra, 1989). Interestingly, though not statistically significant, Chinese consumers showed the strongest intention to behave toward the shocking/nonprofit ad. This may suggest a possibility of effective application of shocking ads used by nonprofit organizations in China. It is also worth noting that Chinese consumers hold significantly higher intention to behave toward

ads sponsored by for-profit organizations than their American counterparts. Future research is encouraged to explore how cultural core values impact consumers' evaluation of advertising.

LIMITATIONS

This study used one single message design to evaluate the effectiveness of shocking advertising. This means the effects found in this experiment are constraint within the messages created for this study. This design helps to improve internal validity by controlling potential confound while imposing limitations on generalizability. Future researchers are encouraged to use multiple-message design to broaden the application of ad stimuli. In addition, the results of this study are drawn used on samples from the United States and China. It is likely that cultural values play a role in assessing the effectiveness of shocking ads. Future research is encouraged to investigate whether culture values affect consumers' evaluation toward shocking ads. Moreover, Vézina and Paul (1997) identified distinctiveness, ambiguity, and transgression of norms and taboos as three key components of shocking advertising. Ambiguity might be a possible factor that influences consumers' assessment of shocking advertising since it elicits more interpretation of the ad (Vézina & Paul, 1997). Some of them might not be able to fully comprehend the presented ideas in shocking ads, others may have different interpretations toward the ad.

Therefore, it is crucial for scholars who are interested in shocking advertising to investigate whether ambiguity plays a part in consumers' assessment of shocking advertising. If so, to what degree it impacts the effectiveness of shocking advertising. Lastly, the result of this study suggested consumers showed negative A_{ad} and A_b toward the shocking ads. However, no significant results were found in intention to behave between shocking and non-shocking ads. These results indicate A_{ad} and A_b may not be effective predictors of intention to behave in shocking advertising setting. More research attention is needed to evaluate the applicability of such advertising model in shocking advertising context. Finally, this study suggests that shocking advertising might be more effective in China when used by nonprofit organizations. Future research is needed to investigate how the cultural core values impact the effectiveness of shocking advertising.

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