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Advertising credibility across media channels: perceptions of Generation Y consumers

ABSTRACT

Generation Y consumers have become an important consumer group and, as a result, their perceptions of media credibility has become an important issue for many organisations and media planners. This study explores the credibility of traditional media advertising versus new media advertising, the credibility of broadcast-media advertising versus print-media advertising, the credibility of cellphone advertising versus Internet advertising, and the relationship between the credibility of Internet advertising and likelihood of Generation Y consumers shopping online. The target audience comprises students between the ages of 18 and 30 years at one of the largest residential universities in South Africa. Convenience sampling was used and a total of 1 345 questionnaires were completed. Some of the results indicate that Generation Y consumers rate the credibility of traditional media higher than new media and that print media has higher credibility ratings compared with broadcast media.

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INTRODUCTION

Younger people (often referred to by marketers as Generation Y) are increasingly becoming consumers in their own right. Media usage among this group has become significantly important to organisations and marketers. Although limited information is available on the media habits of Generation Y (Berndt, 2007: 3), they are expected to dominate the marketing landscape in the twenty-first century (Farris, Chang & Dunning, 2002: 97). In South Africa, Generation Y consumers comprise approximately 50 per cent of the population and are classified as people born between 1977 and 1994 (Berndt, 2007: 3; Morton, 2002: 46). In 2005, young South African consumers were believed to affect spending by between R7 and R8 billion a year (Cant & Machado, 2005: 50). It is projected that this segment of the market will, within the next ten years, become the most financially powerful generation to exist so far (Walen, 2007: 41).

It has been found that Generation Y consumers differ from other generations in terms of their media usage (Dotson & Hyatt, 2005: 36). They are more resistant to advertising, are fragmented across various media channels and it is difficult to communicate with them (Ciminillo, 2005; Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001). Authors have contradicting viewpoints on the usage of new media (i.e. Internet and cellphones) by Generation Y, and on whether new media are replacing traditional media such as radio, television and print (Anderson, Tufte, Rasmussen & Chun, 2007: 340; Calisir, 2003: 357; Dotson & Hyatt, 2005: 37).

This study is an exploration into how Generation Y consumers perceive the credibility of new media compared with traditional media and also into the perceived credibility of the different new and traditional media channels. The study also investigates the relationship between Internet-advertising credibility and the likelihood that Generation Y will shop online – a phenomenon that has received some attention in previous studies (Wang, Chen, Chang & Yang, 2007; Xu & Paulins, 2005; y Monsuwe, Dellaert & De Ruyter, 2004).

1. CONTEXTUALISATION OF STUDY

1.1 Generation Y consumers in perspective

Generation Y consumers, also known as Echo boomers or Millennials (or even the hip-hop, kwaito or Facebook generation), are the offspring of the Baby Boomers or Generation X (Berndt, 2007: 4; Dotson & Hyatt, 2005: 35). Varying age groups have been reported to classify Generation Y consumers (Berndt, 2007: 3; Morton, 2002: 46), but for the purposes of this study, those aged between 15 and 32 years will be considered to make up this generation segment. Worth noting is that most of the discussion to follow is based on opinions and/or findings from international studies, with some reference to South African Generation Y consumers.

Many believe that Generation Y consumers are a gratifying generation who appreciate communication. Generation Y consumers are very self-expressive and favour freedom of speech (Beard, 2003: 226; Nas Insights, 2006). They are comfortable with change and are considered to be trendsetters (Berndt, 2007: 5; Economist, 2000-2001; Farris et al., 2002: 94-95; Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001). They are *always-on* and *always-connected*, viewing it as a right to engage with the latest technologies and with one another (Goldenberg, 2007: 12).

Generation Y consumers are knowledgeable on a wide variety of media currently available, and were the first to truly grow up with computers, the Internet and cellphones (Fox, 2005: 2; Szeto, 2005: 2). Because they have grown up in an era of rapid technological development, they have a reliance on technology (such as computers and cellphones) to complete various tasks on a daily basis (Alch, 2000: 42; Kennedy et al., 2006: 413). They frequently use technology for socialising on Facebook, email, SMS, MXit, My Space and YouTube (Goldenberg, 2007: 12). They expect and demand up-to-date technology, whether at home or at work (Berndt, 2007: 4-5; Economist, 2000-2001; Farris et al., 2002: 91-92). Generation Y consumers rely heavily on the Internet, emails, instant messaging and cellphones to gather and communicate information (Moroz, 2008: 6). They are the first high-tech generation (Norum, 2008: 1) and they are the first generation to know only digital technology (Goldenberg, 2007: 12).

As consumers, they demonstrate a general liking towards purchasing; they have ample discretionary time for shopping; and they have a tendency to spend money freely and quickly (Ma & Niehm, 2006: 622). Findings from one US study show that Generation Y consumers have access to more credit than did previous generations, and spend an average of 8.5 hours per day digitally connected (Norum, 2008: 1). Another US study has found that a total of 90 per cent of young consumers conduct online pre-purchase research and that 50 per cent purchase online (Goldenberg, 2007: 12).

As regards South African Generation Y consumers, some believe they tend to be culturally tolerant and open-minded, certainly as far as race is concerned – they are, after all, South Africa's first generation to only know freedom (Kezi Communications, 2009: 1). In a comparative study, the South African youth displayed a typical emerging-market teen profile, though in certain respects, the South African youth think and behave more like developed market teens (Weldon, 2009: 1). For example, the cellphone penetration among South African teens – in terms of having their own cellphones, is in line with numbers in Germany, the UK, the US, Spain and Greece. Also, further similarities were found regarding common leisure-time activities, interest in sports, and favourite movie stars. Yet developed and emerging teens display distinct differences in respect of personal spending capacity, interaction with media (specifically the Internet and video-/photo-sharing websites), as well as attitudes towards various societal, political and environmental issues.

Some marketers have described Generation Y consumers as being difficult to communicate with, elusive and as being different from previous generations in their reactions to advertising and media (Berndt, 2007: 3; Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001). This is surprising in that young consumers have become more technologically savvy with media becoming part and parcel of their world (Youth Dynamix, 2009). What marketers probably need to deal with is the changes in the youth's media consumption patterns in the face of an influx of media due to the worldwide trend of globalisation.

1.2 The use of traditional media

For the purposes of this study, *traditional media* refers to the forms of communicating prior to the digital world and it comprises those media channels that have been in existence for quite a few decades and with which people and marketers of most ages are thus familiar. Traditional media can broadly be categorised as print media, broadcast media and outdoor advertising. Target audiences, and especially the younger segment of the market, are exposed to a great deal of traditional media on a daily basis, ranging from television, to paper-based flyers and mail.

Views on whether the use and/or role of traditional media are declining or not, are inconsistent. Several authors have supported the notion that the influence of traditional media is still significant, or even increasing (Anderson et al., 2007: 340; Calisir, 2003: 357; Dotson & Hyatt, 2005: 37; Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001). Findings from research by Wolburg and Pokrywczynski (2001) indicate that young adults are still interested in television, yet they acknowledge that proof of alienation does exist. Further evidence is provided by Seock and Chen-Yu (2007: 206), declaring that Generation Y spends more time online than on watching television or listening to the radio. Findings from several research studies also show that, as individuals age, they spend more time watching television – or to put it differently, that Generation Y consumers watch less prime-time television than do other age groups (Brier, 2004: 15; Economist, 2000-2001; McCarty & Shrum, 1993: 81).

A study among Turkish and New Zealand respondents indicated that Generation Y consumers rate print media as important information sources and convenient buying guides (Ashill & Yavas, 2005: 53-54). On the other hand, young consumers in a Web survey in Taiwan indicated that compared with the Internet, print media, along with television, are less reliable sources (Calisir, 2003: 361). A South African study revealed that few Generation Y respondents are exposed to print media, while more of these respondents interact with broadcast media (Berndt, 2007: 9-12).

Several studies have concluded that there is a positive correlation between an individual's age and the consumption of newspapers (Berndt, 2007: 13; Mathouse & Cadler, 2006: 16; Schoenbach, Lauf, McLeod & Scheufele, 1999: 235; Schwartz & Exter, 1991: 50). This suggests that Generation Y consumers are likely to interact with newspapers far less frequently than with broadcast media. There is evidence that young adults in Turkey represent a small portion (a mere 7%) of newspaper readers (Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001). Instead, they rely on radio, television and magazines for information. They are also less likely to read newspapers than are Baby Boomers, and believe that there are quicker and better ways to stay informed.

Generation Y consumers in Turkey and New Zealand indicated radio commercials to be the most irritating and boring of media channels, despite the fact that the majority of youth listen to a radio news show at least once a week (Ashill & Yavas, 2005: 54). Farris et al. (2002: 96) claim that radio, along with television and direct mail, are effective media types for reaching Generation Y. It should however be noted that this information was gathered in the US and might thus not be applicable to South African consumers.

Some are of the opinion that Generation Y consumers' use of traditional media has not necessarily declined (Napoli & Ewing, 1999: 1660). Rather there has been a decline in terms of Generation Y's usage of traditional media for finding information on specific brands that are important to them, and they therefore spend more time using new media than on using traditional media (Miller, 2007: 1776; Szeto, 2005: 3).

1.3 The use of new media

For the purposes of this study, *new media* refers to the forms of communicating in the digital world, which implies both the use of desktop and portable computers and of wireless, handheld devices. New media come with the information age where everyone is able to be connected to the world at the touch of a button, such as via the Internet and cellphones.

New media offer a variety of online channels through which Generation Y consumers socialise and communicate, such as email newsletters, blogging, twitter, social networks (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, YouTube and LinkedIn), crowd sourcing and/or video (Scholtz, 2009: 1). These media channels spawned in a wider array of lifestyle choices, requiring marketers to use a different approach when targeting Generation Y consumers (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003: 95). Napoli and Ewing (1999: 1660) note that marketers are encountering problems when advertising to Generation Y consumers as the threat of new media overtaking traditional media becomes ever more apparent. Prensky (2001: 1) labels young consumers as *digital natives*, i.e. so-called 'native speakers' of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet. As a result of an ubiquitous environment consisting of computers, video games, digital music players, cellphones and all other tools of the digital age, young consumers think and process information fundamentally differently than did preceding generations. Generation Y consumers have an inclination towards multitasking and the cellphone simplifies this action as it can be held in one hand while moving around. It can also be used to access the Internet and television (Crosman, 2008: 16).

Because Generation Y consumers are more technologically knowledgeable than other generations, this specific generation is being targeted more aggressively through mediums such as the Internet and cellphones (Alch, 2000: 42). Findings from one particular study conducted among the Generation Y segment revealed that using the Internet to obtain information was the most popular form of media used (Pasek, Kenski, Romer, & Jamieson, 2006: 124). Although they are targeted more through mediums such as the Internet and cellphones, this does not necessarily mean that they have a positive attitude towards advertising in these mediums. A study conducted amongst South African university students uncovered negative attitudes towards SMS advertising (Van der Waldt, Rebello & Brown, 2009: 450). Their attitudes towards the entertainment value of SMS advertisements were fairly negative and they also regarded SMS advertising as irritating.

New media has opened up opportunities in respect of information accumulation via the Internet, although this at present remains the domain of a privileged minority in South Africa (Youth Dynamix, 2009). However, the Internet has become a medium of choice for Generation Y and it has become intertwined with their culture (Dotson & Hyatt, 2005: 40; Economist, 2000-2001; Farris et al., 2002: 92). South Africa reports around 5.5 million Internet users with approximately 10-12 million WAP-enabled cellphone users (Robinson, 2009: 1). It is noteworthy that, while some have deemed the Internet a preferred information source (Farris et al., 2002: 93; Seock & Chen-Yu, 2007: 204), others claim that the Internet fails to rank in the top ten of Generation Y's preferred information sources (Morton, 2002: 47).

The mobile platform offers huge potential as South Africa rates sixth in the world in terms of accessing the Web by using cellphones (Duarte, 2009: 1), thus providing potential to access the Internet for those who do not have computers (Seery, 2008: 12). The number of cellphone subscribers in Africa increased from 36 million to 280 million between 2002 and 2007, while it was projected that there would be 450 million subscribers by the end of 2009 (Newton, 2009: 1). The South African cellular market reached 50 million connections at the end of 2008, with not only a growth in the number of cellular connections, but also the applications for which subscribers are using their smartphones (Anon, 2009a: 1). South Africa's youth have been found to be amongst the fastest-growing users of cellphones (Botha, 2004: 4) with an increase in demand for cellphone applications such as MXit, MP3, games and Internet (Youth Dynamix, 2009).

It is reported that young consumers in South African cities spend more time interacting with friends via social networking sites, than watching television (Newton, 2009: 1). The development of mobile social networking has led to 14 million registered international MXit users (Heunis, 2009b: 1), which is popular among the under 25-year-olds, who like being able to chat free of charge for hours on end (Heunis, 2009a: 24). In July 2009, Facebook announced that it had more than 250 million users with most of its growth (over 70%) being outside the US (Popimedia, 2009: 1). It is estimated that more than 750 000 users belong to the South African network on Facebook (Fitzpatrick, 2009: 14). Apparently, Facebook users between the ages of 25 and 34 years double every six months (Fitzpatrick, 2009: 18). In its simplest form, Facebook allows one to create a digital profile online, upload photos, chat, send gifts and build a network of trusted friends and acquaintances (Stopforth, 2009: 13). Another new online media is Twitter, a micro-blogging service that allows users to circulate text messages about themselves, currently reporting approximately six million users (Derbyshire, 2009: 13).

1.4 Media credibility

Media credibility is a multidimensional construct encompassing believability, truthfulness of information provided, trust, expertise and the motives of the advertiser (Bucy, 2003: 248; Huh, DeLorme & Reid, 2004; Moore & Rodgers, 2005: 5). For the purposes of this research, *credibility* will be defined as the perception held by individuals regarding whether or not the advertiser can deliver on the information provided in an advertisement placed in a specific media vehicle (Herbig & Mileswicz, 1995).

Conflicting research results have been recorded regarding the media credibility of broadcast and print media. Ashill and Yavas (2005: 53-54) reported that Generation Y consumers rate print media as important information sources and convenient buying guides. Their study conducted amongst young respondents from Turkey and New Zealand (predominantly between 18 and 34 years old), showed that they regarded newspapers and magazines to be highly credible as advertising mediums (Ashill & Yavas, 2005: 54). They also indicated that their respondents considered television advertisements to be the most overstated and misleading of all traditional media types. On the other hand, findings from a study by Calisir (2003: 356) ranked television as the most valuable advertising source. Based on information from the discussion, which showed that there was more support for the credibility of print media, Hypothesis 1 was formulated to address the relationship between broadcast and print media.

> H_1: Generation Y consumers consider print-media advertising to be significantly more credible than broadcast-media advertising.

The credibility of new versus traditional media advertisements differs in terms of trustworthiness and informativeness (Tsang, Ho & Liang, 2004: 67). Findings from previous media-credibility studies have yielded incompatible results because some authors believe that traditional media advertising is considered to be more credible than new media advertising, while others suggest the opposite to be true. Some evidence indicates that Generation Y consumers are mistrusting and aware of the intrusiveness of traditional mass-media advertising (Morton, 2002: 8; Parkin, 2009: 1). Tsang et al. (2004: 66) hold that the attitudes of consumers towards traditional media (especially television and magazine advertisements) are negative in comparison with attitudes towards new media, such as cellphones and the Internet. There is also evidence that Generation Y consumers spend more time online than on watching television or listening to the radio (Seock & Chen-Yu, 2007: 206). However, several authors have supported the idea that the influence of traditional media is still significant, or even increasing (Anderson et al., 2007: 340; Calisir, 2003: 357; Dotson & Hyatt, 2005: 37; Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001). From this discussion, it was postulated that there would be a specific relationship between the credibility of the traditional media and that of the new media as expressed in Hypothesis 2.

> H_2: Generation Y consumers consider the credibility of traditional media advertising to be higher than the credibility of new media advertising.

There has also been some debate as to whether Generation Y consumers have really accepted new media as credible information sources (Economist, 2000-2001; Farris et al., 2002: 92; Morton, 2002: 47; Seock & Chen-Yu, 2007: 204). In a study by Moore and Rodgers (2005: 15), respondents viewed the Internet as the least credible media type and therefore they were most sceptical about Internet advertisements. What is apparent is that Generation Y consumers use new media (such as Internet and cellphones) to a greater extent than do other generations because they are members of a technologically advanced generation (Berndt, 2007: 5; Kennedy et al., 2006: 413-414; Moore & Rodgers, 2005: 15). Generation Y consumers, because they are more technologically knowledgeable than other generations are increasingly being targeted through mediums such as the Internet and cellphones (Alch, 2000: 42). Findings from one study conducted among the Generation Y segment found that using the Internet to obtain information was the most popular form of media used (Pasek et al., 2006: 124). This is in line with several other studies that indicated a positive perception of the Internet in terms of a reliable information source (Calisir, 2003: 361) and that the Internet is the medium of choice for Generation Y (Dotson & Hyatt, 2005: 40). One study among undergraduate students in the US on Internet advertising credibility reported that familiar advertising sources were regarded to be more credible than the unfamiliar ones and that primary sources were seen as more credible than secondary sources. Respondents also perceived information to be more credible when endorsed, recommended or upheld by knowledgeable and trusted individuals (Hillgoss & Rieh, 2007: 1467).

Since cellphone advertising is a relatively new form of advertising for the industry, no South African research on cellphone advertising credibility could be found apart from the study conducted by Van der Waldt, Rebello and Brown (2009). Because South Africa’s youth show an increase in demand for cellphone applications, and given that South Africa is one of the top ten countries in terms of the number of paid advertising banners for cellphones (BuzzCity, 2009: 1), it was considered appropriate to include cellphone-advertising credibility in the research, and the following hypothesis was thus formulated:

> H_3: Generation Y consumers consider cellphone-media advertising to be significantly more credible than Internet advertising.

1.5 Likelihood of purchasing online

Online retailing is growing in popularity as more consumers worldwide are starting to use the Internet for purchasing products and services. The younger segment (<31 years old) forms a large portion of Internet users and are considered likely to constitute the dominant users of online shopping in future (Kim & Stoel, 2005: 284). Several factors might cause scepticism about online shopping. Xu and Paulins (2005: 422) argue that clothing products are difficult to purchase online since consumers cannot touch, see or fit the garments. Security is another concern as people are hesitant to submit credit-card details online (Van Rooyen, 2009: 6; Xu & Paulins, 2005: 421). Lack of social interaction is also a disadvantage to those ‘leisure shoppers’ who shop for fun and socialisation (Seock & Chen-Yu, 2007: 205; Xu & Paulins, 2005: 427).

Research by Ma and Niehm (2006: 627) revealed that online shopping is ranked higher than is television shopping. Even though the online-shopping trend is growing in South Africa, the country still lags behind its American and European counterparts (Packree, 2007: 2). A recent South African study indicated that of those who do have access to the Internet, only 18 per cent actually make purchases online. In 2009, Internet-usage figures stood at 4.6 million (9.5% of South Africans) and were set to grow by 13 per cent to 5.2 million within the year (Goldstuck, 2009: 1). The relatively small number of online shoppers in South Africa may, in part, result from a fear of credit-card fraud, but this phenomenon most probably results from the fact that many South Africans – particularly the youth – do not have access to either credit or/and credit cards. Interestingly enough, the 14–24 age group, despite not having credit cards, are the most active online user group in South Africa (Goldstuck, 2009: 1).

It has also been suggested that the more credible a medium, the more likely a person becomes to adopt a positive attitude towards using that particular medium (Moore & Rodgers, 2005:4). Several authors have moreover found that attitude towards shopping online impacts on one's likelihood to shop online (Wang et al., 2007: 297; Xu & Paulins, 2005: 424; y Monsuwe´ et al., 2004: 104-105;). Based on these findings it was postulated that there would be a relationship between how credible a person perceives Internet advertising to be, and the person's likelihood to shop online.

H_4: There is a relationship between Internet-advertising credibility and the likelihood that Generation Y consumers will shop online.

2. AIM OF THE RESEARCH

Within South Africa, little research has delved into Generation Y consumers' perceptions (in terms of the advertising credibility) regarding specific media vehicles. One South African study by Berndt (2007: 9-12) determined that few respondents exposed themselves to print media, while a majority of respondents opened themselves up to broadcast-media products. Her study did not, however, investigate whether Generation Y consumers, who had been more exposed to a particular media type, actually assigned a higher credibility to that specific media type. Information regarding Generation Y consumers' evaluation of the credibility of broadcast-media advertising versus that of print-media advertising, and of the credibility of cellphone-media advertising versus that of Internet advertising was also lacking. Furthermore, there was limited information with regard to the association between Generation Y consumers' Internet-advertising credibility and the likelihood that they would shop online. There is no evidence of previous South African studies that could confirm the findings of previous international studies (even if, admittedly, international findings are most often contradictory) as discussed in the literature review. It is also unclear how South African Generation Y consumers perceive different media types, given that they live in a developing and culturally diverse country.

The purpose of this study is fourfold: to investigate whether print-media advertising is more credible than broadcast-media advertising; to determine the perceived credibility of new media versus traditional media; to establish whether cellphone-media advertising enjoys a higher credibility than does Internet advertising; and to determine the relationship between Internet advertising and the likelihood of online shopping.

As mentioned in the literature discussion, the following alternative research hypotheses were formulated for application in a South African context:

H_1: Generation Y consumers consider print-media advertising to be significantly more credible than broadcast-media advertising.

H_2: Generation Y consumers consider the credibility of traditional media advertising to be higher than the credibility of new media advertising.

H_3: Generation Y consumers consider cellphone-media advertising to be significantly more credible than Internet advertising.

H_4: There is a relationship between Internet-advertising credibility and the likelihood that Generation Y consumers will shop online.

3. METHOD

3.1 Sampling and data collection

The population consisted of both undergraduate and postgraduate students in any year, registered at the largest residential university in South Africa. Convenience sampling was used because it is cost-effective and relatively easy to conduct. Other researchers on this topic conducted their research among students as representatives of Generation Y consumers (Berndt, 2007: 5; Mangleburg & Bristol, 1998: 14; Moore & Rodgers, 2005: 10).

A survey questionnaire was used to collect the data and no incentives were offered to respondents for participating in the study. The data-collection instrument was pre-tested and adapted before the main survey. Respondents were intercepted on campus and the researcher explained the purpose of the survey and when a respondent indicated willingness to participate, the questionnaire was handed over for completion. A total of 1 345 questionnaires were completed and used for the data analysis.

3.2 Measurement instrument

Moore and Rodger's Advertising Credibility Scale (2005: 11) was used across six media channels, namely Internet, television, radio, cellphone, newspapers and magazines. Each subscale included three items consisting of 5-point Likert-scale statements ranging from "strongly agree" (1) to "strongly disagree" (5). A lower mean score thus indicated a higher level of credibility. To measure the likelihood that a respondent would purchase, the following question was included: "How likely is it that you would purchase a product or service from the Internet in the next 12 months?" The single question used a 5-point rating scale with categories representing "very unlikely" (1) to "very likely" (5) as originally used by Kim and Stoel (2005: 289). The questionnaire also included questions to measure the socio-demographical status of respondents, such as age and gender.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive analysis

The sample of 1 345 was marginally dominated by females (55.8%). Age groups were distributed as follows: 18 to 19-year-olds (24.3%); 20 to 21-year-olds (35%); 22 to 23-year-olds (24.4%) and 24 to 30-year-olds (16.3%). The Cronbach alpha values for the perceptions of each media-credibility scale were: newspaper (0.82); television (0.80); radio (0.84); magazine (0.82); Internet (0.87); and cellphone (0.89). Table 1 provides an indication of the respondents' media-credibility perceptions.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for the credibility perceptions of different media types

Media credibility	Mean	Standard deviation
Credibility of newspapers	2.6234	0.77441
Credibility of radio	2.7126	0.78069
Credibility of magazines	2.9627	0.80242
Credibility of television	3.0064	0.86162
Credibility of cellular phones	3.3927	0.91358
Credibility of the Internet	3.4922	0.86874

4.2 Hypothesis testing

Hypotheses were tested at a 5 per cent level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$). For Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used. This test is designed for use with repeated measures and is the non-parametric alternative to the repeated measures t-test. As the data did not show a normal distribution, the Wilcoxon test was appropriate and relevant when respondents were matched on specific criteria. For Hypothesis 4, the Spearman's rank-order correlation was used as the non-parametric alternative to Pearson's product moment correlation because the data were not normally distributed.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 postulated that print-media advertising is significantly more credible than broadcast-media advertising to Generation Y consumers. In Table 2 the results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test are depicted.

Table 2: Results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test for Hypothesis 1

Media credibility	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Wilcoxon signed-rank test
Credibility of print media < Credibility of broadcast media	633	603.35	381921	
Credibility of print media > Credibility of broadcast media	540	567.83	306629	
Credibility of print media = Credibility of broadcast media	172			
Z-value (based on positive ranks)				-3.254
p-value				**0.001**

The p-value in Table 2 indicates that the credibility between the print-media advertisements and broadcast-media advertisements differed. The mean ranking values indicate that print media were considered to be more credible than broadcast media. This is in line with the direction of the proposed hypothesis and therefore there is support for Hypothesis 1, resulting in a rejection of the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 investigated whether the credibility associated with traditional media was different from the credibility of new media types. The results of this test are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test for Hypothesis 2

Media credibility	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Wilcoxon signed-rank test
Credibility of new media < Credibility of traditional media	213	371.80	79193	
Credibility of new media > Credibility of traditional media	1059	689.74	730435	
Credibility of new media = Credibility of traditional media	73			
Z-value (based on positive ranks)				-24.859
p-value				**0.000**

From Table 3 it is clear that the p-value indicated that the null hypothesis should be rejected and it can thus be concluded that the credibility of traditional media is higher than that of new media. From the mean rankings, reflected in Table 1, it is evident that traditional media were considered to be more credible than new media (a lower mean score indicated a higher level of credibility). The results imply that, in cases where messages need to be credible and persuasive, traditional media might still be more effective than the new media channels.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 investigates whether Generation Y consumers experience cellphone advertising as being significantly more credible than Internet advertising. Table 4 presents the results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

Table 4: Results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test for Hypothesis 3

Media credibility	**N**	**Mean rank**	**Sum of ranks**	**Wilcoxon signed-rank test**
Credibility of cellphone media advertisements < Credibility of Internet advertisements	479	488.05	233 774	
Credibility of cellphone media advertisements > Credibility of Internet advertisements	424	411.28	174 382	
Credibility of cellphone media advertisements = Credibility of Internet advertisements	442			
Z-value (based on positive ranks)				-3.811
p-value				**0.000**

The p-value in Table 4 indicates that the null hypothesis should be rejected. It can thus be concluded that the credibility of cellphone-media advertisements is higher than the credibility of Internet advertisements. From the mean rankings in Table 4 it is evident that cellphone-media advertisements were considered to be more credible than were Internet advertisements (lower values represented higher credibility). This is also confirmed if one views the original mean values as depicted in Table 1. This may be explained by the fact that, in South Africa, it can be costly to use the Internet and requires one to have access to a computer – something to which Generation Y consumers may have limited access. Cellphone usage is much more common among Generation Y consumers in South Africa, and this familiarity and usability may lead to perceived credibility.

Hypothesis 4

This hypothesis focused on whether a relationship existed between Internet-advertising credibility and the likelihood that Generation Y consumers would shop online. The overall scores of Internet credibility and the likelihood that consumers would shop online were measured at an interval level of measurement. Since the association was made between two measures (variables), the appropriate parametric test was Pearson's product moment correlation. This test assumes that both of the variables being tested have normal distributions. The normality assumption was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the results indicated that both variables have a non-normal distribution. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, the non-parametric Spearman's rank-order correlation was used. The test results indicated a correlation coefficient of -0.63 and a p-value of 0.021. These results thus showed a significant association between Internet credibility and online-shopping likelihood ($p = 0.021$). The correlation coefficient ($r = -0.063$), however, suggested that there is a relatively weak negative relationship between Internet credibility and online-shopping likelihood. This suggests that the levels of perceived Internet credibility, may affect consumer's likelihood of shopping online, but that the association is so weak that it is not relevant for decision making.

5. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results shown in the previous section have several implications for marketers and media planners. In one of the first reported findings, the mean ranking values indicate that print media are considered to be more credible than broadcast media. If an organisation contemplates using broadcast media, such as television or radio (versus print media) as a means of advertising, they should take into account whether or not the perceived credibility by the target audience is a factor in the advertising campaign. The results suggest that the old-fashioned printed word (newspapers and magazines) seems to be more credible when it comes to advertising. However, if few young consumers read print media, they may not be exposed to the marketer's 'credible' advertising message at all. Marketers may want to consider youth magazines for their advertising messages in the hope that such magazines will enjoy higher readership. New technology, called 'mobizine' has recently been introduced to the South African market. It offers magazine content direct to cellphones, thereby combining traditional and new media. As the youth are always first to utilise new technology, mobizine technology may put pressure on youth magazines to consider cellphones as part of their media mix (Moodley, 2006: 15). The reported higher print-media credibility is in line with the direction of the first proposed hypothesis. The results should be interpreted against the backdrop of the difference between media usage and media credibility. An average of 38 per cent of the respondents used broadcast media on a daily basis, while only four per cent daily used print media. (Please note that usage data for media types were not included in the article in that this fell beyond the scope of the article.) However, despite respondents' high usage of broadcast media, they did not necessarily perceive it as being more credible.

The results also indicated that a significantly higher level of credibility was associated with traditional media than with new media. This concurs with previous findings by other researchers (Anderson et al., 2007: 340; Dotson & Hyatt, 2005: 37; Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001). However, several authors have reported contradictory research findings, especially among some of the younger consumers of Generation Y (Calisir, 2003: 361; Seock & Chen-Yu, 2007: 204; Tsang et al., 2004: 66). Instead of focusing on a specific group of media channels, marketers will probably have to focus on using the channels that Generation Y consumers use if, that is, they want to reach and engage them (Parkin, 2009: 1). Even if new media such as the Internet and cellphones are not perceived as very credible in terms of advertising, young consumers are nevertheless highly accessible through these mediums. Message content is an important factor to consider, and Morton (2002: 47) speculates that it is not so much the media vehicle that matters, but rather the nature of the message. It could be that persuasive messages are communicated more effectively through credible traditional media channels, while new media types might work better for reminders, newsflashes or information about events. New media tools, especially social media tools, are changing the way marketers engage with consumers – and how consumers engage with brands. Part of the problem is that many marketers are unsure how to integrate new media tools with traditional media and how to design and implement a successful campaign using different platforms (Newmarch, 2008: 6). Also, the digital generation, because of their fast processing of information, might rely heavily on cues as an indication of credibility. Marketers need to take note of this and conduct further research to determine what cues will trigger particular credibility heuristics. These credibility cues could then be included as ‘markers’ when advertising in new media channels.

This study also found the credibility of cellphone-media advertisements to be higher than that of Internet advertisements. Many marketers have turned to mobile proximity marketing because it targets the lifestyle of the audience and focuses on the activities that will add value to the customer’s experience (Parkin, 2009: 1). This is mainly because young people have accepted cellphones as personal accessories because of the mobility, usefulness and changeability of the latter (Botha, 2004: 4). Cellphone-marketing campaigns should create content that offers an opportunity to engage with customers in a different, interactive manner, but only after marketers have obtained permission from consumers so as to allow marketers to advertise via this channel (Robinson, 2009: 1). It should be emphasised that cellphone advertising does not exist in isolation, but should be part of a set of cooperative platforms (thus multiple media touch-points) that hold the marketing mix together. As cellphones have become the most easily accessible and convenient means of offering services (even to remote areas), an understanding of cellphone usage and trends is necessary to leverage the technology effectively (Anon, 2009a: 1). Cellphone functionality has already extended to cellphone banking and Internet access, thus making an understanding of consumer perceptions critically important (Anon, 2009a: 1). Many opportunities exist in South Africa (and Africa) for marketers to get more value out of social networking through cellphones. Some even believe that there is potential for MXit to become a major driver in assisting governments in their education regarding, for example, HIV and Aids and health in such campaigns (Heunis, 2009b: 1). This suggests a need for thorough research into the credibility of new media channels for Generation Y consumers as this consumer segment is particularly attached to new media types.

Based on the literature discussion, it was expected that respondents with higher levels of perceived Internet credibility would exhibit higher levels of online-shopping likelihood. Yet, no strong relationship was found to exist between Internet credibility and the likelihood that these consumers would shop online. It must be noted that the study was conducted among full-time students and many of them may have a relatively low ratio of credit-card ownership, which is a prerequisite when shopping online. It may also be that security concerns are likely to be an influencing factor in online shopping – an issue that was not addressed in this study. It is evident that, although there is a general growth in South African commerce (Packree, 2007: 2), the numbers of online users are still relatively small, with even fewer actually making purchases online. The lack of credit cards in the 14 to 24 age group (and the population at large) calls for a virtual cash environment that will give credit-cardless individuals the ability to make purchases online. One recent initiative promoting a virtual cash environment is MiMoney, a real electronic currency that can be utilised to purchase from selected retailers (Anon, 2009b: 1). MiMoney works as currency by forwarding the serial number of a voucher and the cellphone number of the user to the merchant.

Overall, the results imply that marketers and media planners should be extremely wary of the move from the traditional means of advertising products and services, to the online advertising of products and services (especially in respect of Generation Y consumers). An organisation wanting to sell products online would have to educate its consumers in terms of online purchasing and ensure absolute transparency in this regard. The many conflicting results from previous research studies suggest that it may be better to communicate product and service information across the media platforms focusing on a message relevant to a particular customer's lifestyle. Value-based marketing is thus less about one-dimensional messaging and more about participation and reward. Furthermore, some believe that Generation Y consumers are not as interested in being reached by marketers, but more about doing the reaching itself, and making themselves feel empowered, knowledgeable and exclusive. This is why the Internet has become so mainstream to this generation's psyche and also why traditional above-the-line advertising does not have the impact it once had (Kezi Communications, 2009: 1).

6. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Since use was made of non-probability sampling, results from this study cannot be generalised to the broader population. The study also focused solely on students, who may have significantly different media habits and perceptions of online shopping than do other young adult consumers who are working. It is recommended that this study be replicated among a broader spectrum of Generation Y consumers (working and non-working) across South Africa in order to obtain a more representative sample that can be generalised to South African Generation Y consumers. It is unlikely that the current sample would be an accurate representation of the target population, especially since younger age groups within Generation Y were not included in the study. Future studies should therefore incorporate the younger segment.

Possible reasons for the low online shopping intentions should be investigated in future studies, while the implications of the Internet as a shopping channel within the South African context should simultaneously be investigated. This may assist online vendors to determine the feasibility of advertising online to younger segments in South Africa. The relationship between credit-card ownership and online-shopping purchases or intent could also be investigated.

In a country that is diversely populated with many different ethnic groups, one could expand this study to also determine whether different ethnic groups or even different cultural groups differ in terms both of their media-credibility perceptions and the likelihood of purchasing online. Further research is also proposed to identify the various factors or attributes that drive credibility across the media types in the South African context. In this study, no distinction was drawn between the different gender groups and it is suggested that follow-up research be conducted to establish whether men and women differ in terms of the likelihood that they will purchase online. Follow-up research is also suggested to determine the perceived credibility of different media types.

An area of great interest is the effect of Generation Y consumers' reference groups on their credibility perceptions of various media, and also on their future online-shopping intentions. Generation Y consumers have been proven to be highly social individuals and it is thus logical that reference groups may have a major impact on their perceptions and behaviour. Research into this area could produce valuable insights.

The information-overload situation facing Generation Y as a result of the availability of digital media will most likely create a reliance on cues to help with information processing. Some researchers have suggested the use of credibility markers on websites (to indicate the expertise and trustworthiness of an online source) to serve as cues to consumers regarding the relative merits and demerits of the information retrieved (Sundar, 2008: 78). Future studies are, however, needed to develop models that explicate the specific heuristics triggered by specific cues that will help decision makers understand how Generation Y consumers make snap decisions about credibility in die midst of using digital media.

7. CONCLUSION

Generation Y consumers are a force to be reckoned with and both their media usage and their perceptions of the credibility of the different media are significant in their importance to organisations and media planners. In-depth knowledge of this generation will enable communicators to be more effective in successfully reaching this group with its advertising messages. This study has contributed by providing a better understanding of the media-credibility perceptions of Generation Y consumers and the relationship between Internet-advertising credibility and online-shopping likelihood.

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