

Determining perceptions, attitudes and behavior towards social network advertising in a three-country context

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ABSTRACT

Despite the growth in social media and social network advertising (SNA), scant theoretical and empirical knowledge exists on the differences between countries, and the perceptions and attitudes towards social network advertising. The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationships between users' perceptions (personal and societal), their attitudes and their behaviour towards Facebook advertising, across three countries, as well as the moderating role of privacy and general advertising attitudes. Online surveys were administered and a convenience sampling resulted in 1,166 respondents. Structural equation modelling was used to test the proposed model.

The research indicates that the social support theory shows promise for examining the perceptions and attitudes towards SNA. Furthermore, the validity of the conceptual model is confirmed in all three countries however, the strength of these relationships differs. Additionally, it is evident that consumers' culture influences the role of privacy and trust in SNA perceptions.

Summary statement of contribution:

The study contributes to the scant cross-country SNA literature by including a diverse cross-country cultural perspective, as well as identifying several commonalities but also differences among consumers' perceptions, attitudes and behaviour regarding Facebook advertising. Insight is provided into privacy and trust issues in the social media domain and especially Facebook advertising, while the applicability of the social support theory is confirmed. Furthermore, evidence of the emergence of a global consumer culture, is provided.

Keywords: *Social networking advertising (SNA), Facebook, advertising, perceptions, attitudes, trust, social support theory, and privacy concern*

1. Introduction

“Advertising works most effectively when it's in line with what people are already trying to do. And people are trying to communicate in a certain way on Facebook – they share information with their friends, they learn about what their friends are doing – so there's really a whole new opportunity for a new type of advertising model within that medium” (Mark Zuckerberg, 2007).

Social Networking Sites (SNS) have fostered communication, sharing and collaboration between people across the globe (Barefoot & Szabo, 2010; Tuten, 2018; Hajli, 2014). It is this exchange of information and social support that attracts users to these social media platforms (Ridings & Gefen, 2004). Social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter, has millions of users, many of whom have incorporated SNS into their everyday lives (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). The magnitude to which the use of SNS has penetrated the market has provided marketers with attractive opportunities to communicate and engage with their respective markets, based on users disclosed personal information, such as location, age and personal interests (Chang, Liu & Shen, 2017), very cost effectively (O'Flynn, 2017; Lee & Hong, 2016).

Prior research (Powers, Advicula, Austin, Graico & Snyder, 2012; Taylor, Lewin & Strutton, 2011) has shown that, although brand perceptions and offline, traditional advertising continue to be relevant, social media have raised the expectations of consumers in terms of what is advertised and how it is advertised. Essentially, consumers use SNS to connect and to collect information to make purchase decisions (Powers et al., 2011) and as a result, SNS are now seen as trusted sources of information and opinions (Chu, 2011). Consequently, SNSs have become powerful marketing tools (Yadav & Rahman, 2017; Change et al., 2017) for brands and an important advertising vehicle for marketers (Tuten and Soloman, 2018) globally, due to its ability to reach across borders (Tuten & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2018).

Although social networks such as Twitter and Snapchat is growing in popularity, particular among the younger generation, Facebook remains the world largest social media platform, with over 2.27 billion active users signing in monthly (Chaffey, 2019). Furthermore, Facebook has the biggest social media share by platform worldwide with 72.12%, followed by Pinterest (14.47%) and Twitter (6.07%) (Global Statcounter, 2019). Therefore SNS, such as Facebook, have become attractive advertising platform in recent years (Kirkpatrick, 2015). Additionally, Facebook is constantly introducing new features that could enhance Facebook advertising i.e. Augmented Reality Ads, advertising cross-platforms, new features to enhance the use of video advertising such as 'Facebook Stories Ads'. Especially in Australia Facebook currently has a 60.8% share of the social media market, followed by Pinterest (25.67%) and Twitter (5.99%) (GlobalStat Counter, 2019). Similarly, in Germany Facebook still has 67.51 % of the market share compared to Pinterest (17.86%), Twitter (5.37%), and YouTube (5.09%). Additionally, Facebook is the largest social media platform in South Africa with a penetration rate of 53%, followed by LinkedIn (18%), Instagram (9%) and Twitter (4%) (Businessstech, 2019). It is evident that Facebook is an appropriate platform to investigate due to its massive user base, its popularity, its integration into consumers' everyday lives and its continual growth (Internet World Stats Report, 2017, Statistica, 2018). Due to the increasing popularity of Facebook for users, as well as marketing practitioners, issues related to advertising in this platform has become a dominant theme in recent years (Alalwan, 2018). In spite of some concerns, such as those related to privacy, the trend of engaging with Facebook as an advertising channel by marketers and advertisers, is still increasing.

Although research does exist in the area of online marketing and advertising, not all of this research is automatically transferable to the social networks such as Facebook due to its unique social, interactive and user-centric context. Furthermore, online advertising often includes a very broad spectrum of contexts ranging from virtual game worlds to collaborative projects and blogs (Bond, Ferraro, Luxton & Sands, 2010). The fast growth of SNS usage merits a specific focus on consumer attitudes towards SNA (Taylor et al. (2011).

Given the importance of social media several studies have attempted to investigate general promotional activities conducted on these platforms such as the diffusion of messages on social media (Chang, Yu, & Lu, 2015); consumers attitude towards information sharing on SNS (Lee,

Kim & Ham, 2016); consumers' responses to SNA (Lee and Hong, 2016); consumers' response towards sponsored advertising on SNS using the TAM model (Lin & Kim, 2016); cognitive effectiveness of SNA (Rejón-Guardia et al., 2016) and targeting on social media sites (Schumann, von Wagnehein & Groene, 2014). Most of these studies concluded that SNA enhances the influence of marketing activities on the users' perceptions.

Yet, only a limited number focused specifically on Facebook, including motivations to use Facebook (Sashittal, Sriramachandramurthy & Hodis, 2013), identifying various Facebook segments (Wallace et al., 2014); trust in Facebook (Chang et al. 2017); social support in Facebook (Chiang & Huang, 2016) and Facebook advertising (i.e. Banister et al. 2013; Duffett, 2015; Dehghanit & Tumer, 2015; Jung, Shim, Jim & Khang, 2016). Unfortunately, the majority of studies were conducted in a single country context, mainly using student samples and often only focusing on positive influences.

Knoll (2016) confirms these gaps in a systematic review on SNA by concluding that future studies should: (a) investigate the influences (both positive and especially negative) of SNA on consumers attitudes and behaviors for example, response towards advertising, (b) the synergies between traditional and social network advertising, (c) steering away from single country contexts and (d) employing non-student samples. In a similar fashion Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi and Algharabat (2017) concluded after an extensive review of marketing on SNS, that researchers should focus their attention on advertising on specific platforms, trust perceptions, additional theories to provide a clearer picture, as well as other dimensions than hedonic features as antecedent to SNA attitudes.

It is thus evident that research on how Facebook advertising is perceived and how it influences attitudes and behavior, is yet relatively incomplete and somewhat limited in scope (Godeya et al., 2016), especially in cross continental research (Wesley et al., 2018). It seems that this argument still holds as Jung et al. (2016) urge researchers to explore the relationships between attitude and behavior towards SNA in diverse cross-cultural studies.

As engaging with SNS may result in issues related to privacy and trust (Tsay-Vogel et al, 2018; Chang et al., 2017), as evident in Facebook that was recently forced to establish an independent

privacy committee after being fined for violating consumer privacy rights (BBC News, 2019), investigating advertising on Facebook cannot be done without considering these issues as well.

Additionally, there is a gap in literature concerning the effect of social media advertising in comparison with traditional advertising (Morra, Ceruti, Chierici & Gregorio, 2018). Posing a challenge for brands to understand the level of integration and influence between SNA and advertising in general (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2015). As a result, it is important to investigate consumers' attitudes toward advertising on social media and more general media and the level of their effectiveness on business performance (Boateng & Okoe, 2015; Valos, Polonsky, Mayondo & Lipscombal, 2014). Metha (2000) for example found that the performance of printed advertising is impacted by consumers' general attitudes toward advertising, yet to date no such research exist in the field of social media, especially Facebook. Given that traditional media advertising is usually based on one-way communications versus Facebook advertising having a two-way relational communication model, not only between Facebook friends but also between brands and users, makes further investigation imperative.

Knoll (2016) found that social theories are often used in the study of social media, due to the social nature of these networks. Furthermore, as SNS are used for communication, sharing and collaboration between people across the globe (Barefoot & Szabo, 2010; Tuten, 2018) to interact with other users online (Hajli 2014), these sites provide opportune platforms for social support. Furthermore, research has shown that SNS such as Facebook has been used as a important venues for asking and receiving social support (Kim, 2014). Hence, we used the social support theory, as the theoretical lens for the study to argue that functional social support in a trustworthy network, as evident in personal perceptions or lack thereof in societal perceptions, influences users' attitudes and behavior.

In an attempt to address some of these gaps this study will employ non-students samples, underpinned by social support theory, in a diverse cross-country context, investigating both positive and negative influences as well as the role of traditional advertising and privacy issues. In doing so contributing to the growing body of knowledge of social media research with as specific focus on SNA but especially potential cultural differences evident in a Facebook context. Cross-cultural psychology research propose that culture influences attitudes as well as

responses toward advertising (de Mooij, 2014; Gudykunst, 2003). Cultural differences likewise exist in media consumption patterns (Hasebrink et al., 2015). These differences are important to consider for Facebook advertisers in designing strategies around multi-country campaigns to connect and engage successfully with consumers in a diverse cross-country context. Consequently, we followed the advice of Wang, Yua and Wei (2012), as well as that of Ducoffet (2015), Godeya et al.(2016) and Wesley et al. (2018), that more social media research, especially in the context of Facebook, is needed, and especially across-countries, since consumers' sentiments from different cultural backgrounds could differ (Petzer & Meyer, 2013).

The purpose of the study is thus three-fold. Firstly, to determine the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors towards Facebook advertising as well as the influence of trust in the Facebook and secondly, to determine whether general advertising attitudes and privacy concerns have a moderating effect on the various attitudes towards Facebook ads. Thirdly, to determine if cross-country difference exist in the context of Facebook advertising.

To achieve the research objectives, a restrained approached was used, by including aspects reflective of the two main types of perceptions – personal (positive) and societal (negative) – and their influence on Facebook advertising attitudes and users reported behavior towards the advertised brand. This is because the purpose of the study is not to determine the already well-established perceptive dimensions of attitude towards advertising, but rather to determine the structural relationship between these perceptions and the general advertising attitudes, trust and privacy, as well as the specific attitudes towards Facebook advertising as well as the behavior towards a brand in a cross-country context.

This study's main contribution lies in its diverse multi-country context advancing international marketing practises by identifying differences in the proposed model across cultures. In addition, it extends the theoretical lens for research on social network sites such as Facebook by using social support theory. Lastly, it address some of the gaps identified in SNA research by shedding light on the perceptions, attitudes and behavior towards Facebook advertising as well as the inclusion of the moderating role of general advertising attitudes and privacy. Adding insight into how marketers can use technology such as social media to get the best marketing

results, but also taking cognisance of the challenges posed by trust and privacy concerns due to these technologies. The cross-continental context revealed several similarities, but also some cross-country differences, adding to the sparse SNA research available in a multi-country setting.

The next section addresses the literature and conceptual framework followed by the research methodology employed, results and implications of the study. The paper concludes with the limitations and suggestions for future research.

2. Literature review

2.1 *Social network advertising*

Mulero and Adeyeye (2013) contend that the tremendous growth of SNS can be attributed to SNS support for both the maintenance and the solidification of existing offline relationships, as well as the facilitation of the creation of new ones. SNS make massive global online communications accessible to anyone with an internet connection. They also add a participatory element to online communications (Barefoot & Szabo, 2010), by enabling consumers to create manageable information environments that are customisable and relevant to their preferences (Bright & Daugherty, 2012). Consequently, organisations are able to increasingly use SNS for marketing purposes, such as brand awareness, attracting new customers (Zafar & Khan, 2011), managing customer relationships (Mulero & Adeyeye, 2013), increase purchase intention (Koivulehto, 2017) as well as advertising (Yang et al., 2016; Lee & Hong, 2016). These various applications of SNS for brands leads to an increase of online marketing efforts via social network sites. These marketing efforts, include actions that encourage consumers to buy products and brands with targeted marketing messages as well as encouraging users to share these messages with other consumers (Bilgin, 2018). Online advertising is defined as: “Any form of commercial content available on the internet, delivered by any channel, in any form, designed to inform customers about a product or a service, at any degree of depth” (Harker, 2008:296). Applying this definition to Facebook advertising, these ads can come directly from companies (e.g. homepage ads), or via the postings of friends (e.g. social and organic impressions) and they usually appear in users’ Facebook newsfeed or sidebars (Taylor et al., 2011). Brands can also advertise their products or brands through the Facebook brand page (fan page) – not in the scope of this study (Seller & Laurindo, 2018).

Companies are also attempting to exploit indirect marketing strategies on SNS, such as creating polls, competitions, encouraging product reviews or the use of ‘check-in’ buttons (Curran, Graham & Temple., 2011). SNA thus differs from traditional online advertising that is often distributed through banners or sponsored links and is often difficult to distinguish from user content. As a result, consumers have difficulty in distinguishing advertising from user-generated content on SNS (Jung et al., 2016). Therefore a variety of ad formats such as video, image, collection, carousals, slideshows, ‘playables’ (Interactive ad before downloading app), instant experiences, offers, event response and page ‘like’s are available when advertising on Facebook (Facebook, 2019). Because of this difficulty to distinguish between homepage advertising, social impressions and organic impressions for consumers and continued blurring lines, for the purpose of this study, no distinction was made between direct and organic Facebook advertising.

2.2 Facebook advertising

Facebook advertising for the purpose of this study refers to any type of advertising about a company, brand, cause, product or service on users Facebook page/wall/timeline. These ads may be directly from companies/brands or indirect via postings/likes of friends and appears in users Facebook newsfeed or sidebar. Thus, excluding other Facebook ad placements options such as Facebook marketplace, messages or Fan pages. The main advantage of Facebook advertising is its ability to reach an specific segment or group (targeting), additionally the majority of people world-wide spend most of their time on Facebook (80% of all internet users use Facebook), and Facebook ads build engagement through interaction such as ‘likes’ and ‘comments’ between users and brands’ advertisements (Standberry, 2019; Chou, 2018). Brands also receive assistance as Facebook provides useful analytics and new additions such as “creative compass” that help advertisers to pre-test ads, for example (Lincoln, 2019). As more and more brands advertise on SNS such as Facebook and with Facebook’s algorithm changes in 2017, it is difficult for brands to ensure that their communications show-up in user newsfeeds. Thus, brands need to ensure that their advertisements are effective when they do show up. By paying for Facebook ads brands ensure that, they do not only appear in more feeds, but they can also target their ads to the right consumers (Chou, 2018; Parmelee, 2018). Targeting benefits advertisers but also users as it allows advertising to be less intrusive and more successful in delivering the appropriate content to the right users. With Facebook

increasing its reach to advertise on the cross-platform messaging service for mobile devices (WhatsApp) and the several call to action buttons (contact us, shop now, watch video, download, use app, play game etc.) makes this a preferred social media platform (Keates, 2019). New trends for Facebook in 2019 include a move away from traditional keyword targeting to focusing on building audience segments and more automation such as 'Dynamic ads'. With 'Dynamic ads' brands will be able to upload an entire product catalogue and set campaign time and let Facebook do the rest. Additional features that will ensure that Facebook ads utilize video better such as 'unskippable' 'Facebook Storie' ads as well as Augmented Reality (AR) advertisements that will allow users to virtually interact with brands (Lincoln, 2019).

However, the technology is not without its drawbacks for users and increase privacy and control issues are at the forefront of FB advertising (BBC News, 2019). Facebook was recently forced to establish an independent privacy committee after receiving a fine for violating consumer privacy rights. Facebook agreed to adopt new protections for the data users share on Facebook. In addition Facebook provides users with various privacy setting options such as a two-factor authentication process and adjustable privacy settings. These settings provide users with options to decide who will be able to see their future posts, limit the audience for old post and decide how people will be able to find and contact them, to name but a few (Schmidt, 2018). Concerning advertising preference users can adjust the setting 'your ads preference' in the 'ads' sidebar in their Facebook settings (Schmidt, 2018). Although these ad-blocking options provide more control for users, it could negatively affect brands as it reduces ad exposure and results in fewer opportunities to generated income (Shiler, Waldfoegel & Ryan, 2018). However, interesting ad-blocking growth has stagnated on desktop (21%) and remains low on smartphones (7%) (Newman et al., 2017).

2.3 Social support and social networks

Social network sites offers various benefits to firms, such as improved brand reputation (de Vries, Gensler & Leeflang 2012), word-of-mouth recommendations (Chen et al., 2011b), sales (Agnihotri et al., 2016), information exchange (Lu & Hsiao, 2010) as well as providing social support for users (Ballantine & Stephenson, 2011; Verduyn et al., 2017). As more consumers join SNSs, the importance of these sites, as an outlet for social support, increases as social

media users are becoming more dependent on these networks to interact and engage (Chiang & Huang, 2016; Meng et al., 2017). Facebook use is for example positively connected with social support, such as the providing of information, advice and friendship (Sessions, 2012).

Consumers use a variety of social media tools to interact with other users, as well as online brands (Hajli, 2014). It is this exchange of information that includes communication (advertising) from brands or friends posts, comments, shares or 'likes' that provides social support that attracts users to these social media platforms (Ridings & Gefen 2004). SNSs thus offer an environment for users (consumers) and brands, to exchange various types of social support (Wong and Ma, 2016). Social support can be viewed as "the perception or reception of coping assistance, or as attributes of one's social circle" (Uchino, 2004). House (1981:39) describes social support as "an interpersonal transaction involving one or more of the following: emotional concern, instrumental aid, information, or appraisal (information relevant to self-evaluation)". The information elements and the appraisal are especially relevant to Facebook advertising due to the direct linkage to information, self-image, entertainment, and falsity perceptions. Social support could be received from a range of sources, such as family or friends, but also from brands, or firms, or a brand community (Taylor, 2011).

Due to the popularity of SNS and its integration into consumers' everyday lives, coupled with the blurred lines between advertisements and social interaction on these platforms, the social support theory is an applicable lens, through which to investigate the perceptions and the attitudes towards advertising. Both brands and Facebook friends via their communication messages, comments, blogs and posts provide social support (Wong & Ma, 2016). Social support includes both structural and functional aspects (Thoits, 2011). The structural aspect refers more to the nature of individuals' social networks, such as the size and structure of a user's network; consequently, the functional definition of social support is more applicable to our study.

Functional social support focuses on both the perceived support availability and it is reflective of the extent to which an individual believes that support is available from the network, if needed. The functional aspects of social support include informational, esteem as well as emotional support (Meng et al., 2017). Research shows that SNSs generate both informational

and emotional support (Ballantine & Stephenson, 2011) and that such support increases the level of trust and reduces the perceived risk of using social networks (Hajli, 2014). In fact, majority of consumers who have access to the internet are also active users of social media due to the enjoyment of generating, distributing and collecting of information, as well as sharing and engaging - known as social support - on these channels (Kemp, 2016). Social media, therefore, has developed new touchpoints such as communication messages (advertising) between consumers and brands on a global scale to provide social support.

Additionally, although social support is a universal resource, cultural differences have been reported (Gurung, 2006). In some cultures, an individual is perceived as more of a collective unit of society, whereas in the more individualistic cultures, social support is seen as a transaction, whereby one person seeks help from another. According to Kim et al. (2006), different cultural ideas about social groups could be the reason for these differences in the extent of social support. Collective cultures social support systems are often better developed while individualist cultures often have smaller and less satisfying social support networks (Scott, Ciarrochi, & Dean, 2004). A collectivistic nature also suggest that consumers are more likely to be motivated to engage in socializing activities online (Muralidharan et al., 2015). In comparing individualism-collectivism and social support from different members of a social network, it was evident that depending on their collectivist or individualist nature, individuals will seek out different members of their social networks for social support (Triandis et al., 1988). Furthermore, collective cultures get more and a better quality of social support than people in an individualistic cultural setting (Triandis et al., 1988). In individualistic cultures, the individual has more rights and fewer obligations, but as a result also receives less social support from the group. Goodwin, Hernandez and Plaza (2000) concluded that cultural background impact the type of social support sought and benefits derived from the support.

2.4 Perceptions, attitudes and behavior towards social network advertising

All consumers appear to hold a judgement or belief about a variety of aspects, regarding advertising (Pollay and Mittal, 1993). An important sign of the efficiency of advertising is the perceptions and attitudes that consumers have towards advertising (Wang & Sun, 2010). Consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards advertising are seen as indicators of the success of advertising in general (Wang et al., 2009, Yaakop et al., 2012).

Krugman, Bauer and Greyser (1969) were some of the first to study consumer attitudes towards advertising in general and they found two main antecedents: the economic attitude and the social attitude. Pollay and Mittal (1993) used this as a base from which they developed, and empirically supported, seven perceptions or belief antecedents that were applied to various other contexts, such as the traditional, as well as online advertising. These seven factors can be classified into two categories. The first category, labelled as *personal use*, consists of factors that include product information, social role and image, as well as the hedonic or pleasurable aspects. These aspects relate to the functional aspects of social support (emotional, informational and esteem support) (Meng et al., 2017). The second category reflects a more generalised or macro-dimension, which includes aspects, such as value corruption, falsity or non-sense and materialism (Pollay & Mittal, 1993; O'Donoghue, 1995; Tan & Chia, 2007). The latter are labelled as *social effects*.

Consumers derive utility from the hedonic value that entertaining messages could deliver, but also from advertising's role as a source of information (Wang & Sun, 2010). Wolin et al. (2002) established that product information was positively related to the attitudes towards online advertising. Similarly, Wang et al. (2009) found that the perceptions of online advertising, as being informative and entertaining, were the strongest positive predictors of the attitudes towards online advertising, while Taylor et al. (2011) also reported that information and entertainment were the strongest positive predictors of attitudes towards SNA. Online advertising endorses social and lifestyle messages through related status, the portrayal of the ideal consumer, as well as the social reaction to purchase or brand (Pollay & Mittal, 1993; Korgaonkar, Silverblatt & O'Leary, 2001). Wolin et al. (2002) confirmed that the social role and the image related positively to consumers' attitudes towards online advertising. Furthermore, Ducoffe (1996) and Zeng et al. (2009) found that the perceptions of advertising relevance and value, as well the social identity and group norms, is an important antecedent of consumers' attitudes. Zeng et al. (2017) confirmed this in online communities. These positive personal perceptions of Facebook ads that is almost imbedded (often difficult for users to distinguish between UGC and brand communication) into users private yet social network(s), bears a striking resemblance to the functional aspects of social support that refers to emotional, informational and esteem support (Meng et al., 2017). Based on the above arguments and the

social support theory, the same is expected to be true for Facebook advertising. Based on the forgoing discussion we hypothesise that:

H1: The personal perception of SNA is positively related to attitudes towards SNA.

In contrast to the above, Wang and Sun (2010) suggest that advertising is often condemned for a number of reasons. These include the promotion of materialism, altering values in a corruptive manner, and the misleading of consumers. It is, therefore, necessary to focus, not only on the *positive personal perceptions*, but also on the *potential negative societal perceptions (social consequences)* of Facebook advertising. Many consumers may enjoy advertisements but a great proportion of consumers view advertising as more misleading than informative (Metha, 2000). One can clearly see these two perspective from previous research conducted by Metha (2000) and Wang and Sun (2010). Metha (2000) suggest that if consumers perceive advertisements as manipulative or false, they are likely to hold negative attitudes towards the ad and brand and are less likely to engage in positive behavior.

Consumers' negative attitudes toward advertising is often a result of its social effects, such as false or misleading advertising, materialism, and its influence on community values (Laroche, Kalamas & Cleveland, 2005). For more established and individualist markets issues such as information overload, clutter, and intrusiveness (privacy concerns), causes more irritation and result in a negative impact on advertising attitudes (Laroche et al., 2005). In terms of Pollay and Mittal (1993), materialism, value corruption and falsity, or nonsense, are expected to result in a negative attitude towards advertising. Wang *et al.* (2009) found that value corruption played a dominant role among the negative belief factors. Furthermore, the results of Azeem and Haq (2012) showed that value-corruption perceptions were amongst the antecedents that were significant negative predictors of attitudes towards online advertising, which was consistent with the prior research (e.g., Ducoffe, 1996; Wolin et al., 2002). Similarly, if advertising is viewed as promoting materialism, or being misleading (falsity), it is also expected to result in negative attitudes. The results of Azeem and Haq (2012) were found to be consistent with those of Wolin et al. (2002). These researchers found that falsity/nonsense can also negatively predict attitudes towards online advertising. One can thus argue that if SNA is perceived as not providing social support users would expect from a social network, one could expect a negative attitude from social media users, who believe that SNA undermines their

values and fails to provide social support the need. Based on the foregoing discussion, we hypothesise that:

H2: The societal perception of SNA is negatively related to attitudes towards SNA.

Exchanges between brands and customers revolve around relationships (Morgan & Hunt 1994). Mosteller and Poddar, (2017) argue that trust is fundamental in these relationships, implying that one party is expected to perform actions that would result in positive outcomes, and not take actions that would result in negative outcomes (For example, misusing personal information). Using social network sites such as Facebook, may result in trust issues for users (Chang et al., 2017), and as such marketers should consider trust in the platform (Jang, Chang & Chen, 2015). Prior research also suggests that privacy needs of users in developing regions are different from those in developed countries (Vashisiha, Anderson & Mare, 2018), and as a result, trust in the internet differs significantly between countries. For example, in many large developing economies, internet users trust ‘the internet’, while this is not necessarily the case in developed countries. According to Hampson, (2018) it could be that “newcomers to the internet might be unaware of the potential abuses and risks”. Investigating the differences in various online behaviors across countries is thus highly applicable (Punj, 2013). Advertising received from a trusted source is considered more acceptable than marketing messages from an unknown brand (Leppaniemi & Karjaluoto, 2005). Since social network environments are social, yet private spaces, and as a result users prefer trusted brands in this environment (Vatanparast, 2007). Schosser, Shavitt and Kanfer (1999) reported that trust is one of the factors that influences attitude towards online advertising. Previous research (Ellison et al., 2007; Ingham et al., 2015) found that users’ trust significantly influences consumers’ behavioral intention to engage in potential business activities on SNS. Developing trust should help consumers to overcome their perceptions of risk and insecurity (Hong & Cha, 2013). Interactions among users that aid in social support also increase trust (Swamynathan et al. 2008) and trust plays an important role in attitudes and behavioral intentions (Shin, 2010). Based on the mentioned findings, we argue that users trust in Facebook as a reliable and trustworthy source would affect their attitudes towards advertisements on the site, consequently it is hypothesised that:

H3: Social media users’ trust in the SNS is positively related to the attitudes towards SNA.

Previous research (Aaker & Stayman, 1990; Kim, Kim & Park, 2010) indicated that the attitude towards an advertisement is one of the most significant indicators of advertising effectiveness and outcomes. In a similar fashion, Boateng and Okoe (2015) found that there is a relationship between users' attitude toward SNA and their behavioral responses. In situations where consumers have a positive disposition towards online advertising, they are more likely to click on advertisements and to purchase online. Users' behavior towards SNA can be privacy-related, advertising-related (e.g. ad-clicking) and brand or firm-related (e.g. visiting the website, or purchasing).

The effectiveness of Facebook advertising should be measure by taking into consideration consumer evaluations of the interest and actions produced by such advertising (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015). The behavioral action towards advertising within an online context is often measured by the 'clicking' on an advertisement (Wolin, Korgaonkar & Lund, 2002; Wang and Sun, 2010) or shopping. 'Actual purchases made' or 'shopping' are popular behaviors measured in traditional advertising research, as a measure of the effectiveness of the advertisement, and this is also applicable to the online world. For the focus of this study, the reported behavior will be investigated in terms of behavior towards the brand.

The converse to this is that if customers exhibit a negative attitude towards online advertising, they are less likely to click on online advertisements and they are therefore more likely to purchase less, or not at all (Wang & Sun, 2010). It is evident that a positive relationship should exist between the overall attitude towards online advertising and the resulting behavior. Furthermore, supported by the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991:179), which argues that attitudes are perceived as a predictor of behavioral intentions of individuals, which ultimately results in actual behavior, we hypothesise that:

H4: Attitude towards SNA positively influences Facebook users' behavior towards the brand/firm.

2.5 The moderating effects of general consumer characteristics

Driven by the need to better understand consumers' perceptions of SNA, we will explore the moderating effects of privacy and general advertising attitudes on SNA perceptions and attitudes.

2.5.1 Attitudes towards advertising in general

Attitudes toward advertising influence consumers' evaluation of individual advertisements (Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Methaq, & Fahad, 2016). For the most part, a more favourable attitude toward advertising in general is connected to a more positive advertising evaluation, such as the advertisement being informative or entertaining. Beneke, Cumming, Stevens and Versfeld (2010) found that the more positive a consumer's attitude towards advertising in general, the more positive his/her attitude would be towards mobile advertising. Yang's (2003) findings suggest that internet users' beliefs about online advertising were comparable to their beliefs about traditional advertising. Similarly, Tan and Chia (2007) found that attitudes towards advertising in general have a mutually reinforcing and causal effect on the attitudes towards advertising on television. While Bauer et al. (2005) also reported that general advertising attitudes impact on mobile advertising attitudes. These findings relate to the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Festinger, 1978). The theory describes an individual's need to keep his cognitive system in balance by "integrating a single attitude into his overall 'attitudinal system'" (Bauer et al., 2005).

The theory is grounded on the supposition that an individual will at all times aim to keep his/her cognitive system in stable. Therefore, a discrepancy between related opinions, perceptions or attitudes causes discomfort and this results in the consumer trying to reduce the inconsistencies between his cognitions. The implication is that, consumer's attitude towards advertising in general may affect the attitude towards a specific advertisement, or advertising in a specific context, such as Facebook.

Therefore, the attitude towards Facebook (newer and specific advertising content) would be dependent on the attitude towards advertising in general as one can expect consumers to hold a more stable and consistent attitude towards advertising in general. Based on the premises that attitudes towards advertising in general comprise the organising attitude (Tan and Chia, 2007:360) towards advertising in a specific channel, as well as the set of antecedents that influence these attitudes, we hypothesised that:

H5: Facebook users' general advertising attitudes positively moderates the relationship between perceptions and attitudes towards SNA.

2.5.2 Privacy concerns

Social media marketing holds an incredible potential for companies and consumers, but it may also cause privacy violations (Chang et al., 2017). Brands advertising on SNS, such as Facebook, could be perceived as an invasion of users' privacy. Consequently, the growth of SNS as an advertising platform has important repercussions for consumers, as well as for advertisers (Lin & Kim, 2016). Privacy issues are especially applicable as Facebook for example allows advertisers to personalise and customize their marketing-communication messages for individuals, by using their personal information. Although targeting and personalising increase the advertising effectiveness of brands, they also have the ability to increase the privacy concerns for users (Jung, 2017). Concerns about privacy in using SNS also have a negative impact on the attitude towards SNA (Taylor, Lewin & Strutton, 2011). Even though on a global level it seems as if users are cultivating more relaxed privacy attitudes as Facebook matures, privacy still affects users attitudes and behavior (Tsay-Vogel, Shanahan & Signorielli, 2018). We argue that, as a result, consumers that are more concerned about their privacy in general, may be more cautious than consumers that are not concerned about their privacy and this will impact their perceptions of SNA and their resulting attitudes. We hypothesise that:

H6: Facebook users' general privacy concerns negatively moderates their relationship between their advertising perceptions and their attitudes towards SNA.

2.6 Culture and consumer insights across countries

Facebook is a global phenomenon and as such users feelings and sequence of thoughts are influenced by the social environment where they grew up. As a result consumers' preferences and attitudes are influenced by culture (among other factors) and as a result "people and nations think, act and feel differently around the globe" (De Mooij, 2013). Therefore, an culture understanding is important to facilitate advertising on global advertising platforms such as Facebook. The three country study (South Africa, Australia and Germany) is thus aimed to gain insight into Facebook advertising across cultures since it is evident that marketers in all three countries are utilising SNA. The current (2019) social network advertising segment amounts to US\$1,621m in Australia, with an expected annual growth rate of 10.2% by 2023; US\$2,181m in Germany, with an expected growth rate of 30.8%; and for South Africa it amounts to US\$508 with an expected growth of 26.8% (Statista, 2019).

As research of this nature is not evident in the literature at the cross-national level, the study is deemed to be merely descriptive and therefore, no hypotheses are put forward regarding possible country differences. The diverse three-country context provides a ideal chance for understanding the attitudes and behaviors towards Facebook advertising in diverse markets, with different cultural-orientations, levels of economic development (from a large, emerging, sub-Saharan country e.g. South Africa, to a smaller, advanced Western European country e.g. Germany) as well as different level of social network readiness. In order to better contextualize the study, some country, cultural and consumer insights are provided.

Differences are not only apparent in the economic development of each country but they are also related to the networked readiness of each country, given that social media form part of ICT technology. The Networked Readiness Index (NRI) measures the capacity of countries to leverage Information Communication Technology (ICT) for increased competitiveness and well-being (Global Information Technology Report, 2016). The NRI includes 139 countries and the development and/or the readiness are measured with a seven-point index (1- not developed at all, and 7-well developed). The three countries differ in terms of their network readiness (Germany 15th, Australia 18th and South Africa 65th – out of 139 countries). This could have implications for how consumers use and view social networks in various countries. Two factors of the NRI are especially relevant to our study: (a) How widespread is the use of social media in a country? And (b) How developed are the laws related to ICT, such as consumer protection and e-commerce. The popularity and use of social networks are evident in all countries, with South Africa being the lowest (ranked 73th, score 5.5), Germany (ranked 54th, scored 5.8) and Australia (ranked 32nd, scored 6) the highest. It is interesting to note that the countries also differ, according to how developed their laws are. Not surprisingly, the developed countries' laws were more advanced (Germany ranked 26th; Australia 29th) than those of South African (ranked 43rd). This could hold implications for privacy and trust issues on social media.

Advertising is a social-cultural phenomenon (Wang & Sun, 2010) and as a result, consumers' beliefs and attitudes toward SNA are unavoidably influenced by their cultural predisposition. For example, Haytko et al. (2018) examined global attitudes toward advertising and found

Chinese consumers having more negative attitudes towards advertising than consumers from the United States. Muralidharan, La Ferle and Sung (2015) reported that in the context of mobile phone advertising for example, entertainment influences collective cultures' attitudes towards such advertising while 'informativeness' is stronger for individualistic cultures. Furthermore, the authors found that collectivism is the driving force behind socializing activities on social networking sites. Kim et al. (2006) also argue that the difference in social support across countries may also be rooted in different cultural ideas about the social groups. Using cultural and consumer insights as possible tools (Kim et al., 2006; Wang & Sun, 2010) to assist in understanding and expanding our outlook on this novel and growing form of advertising, therefore seems appropriate.

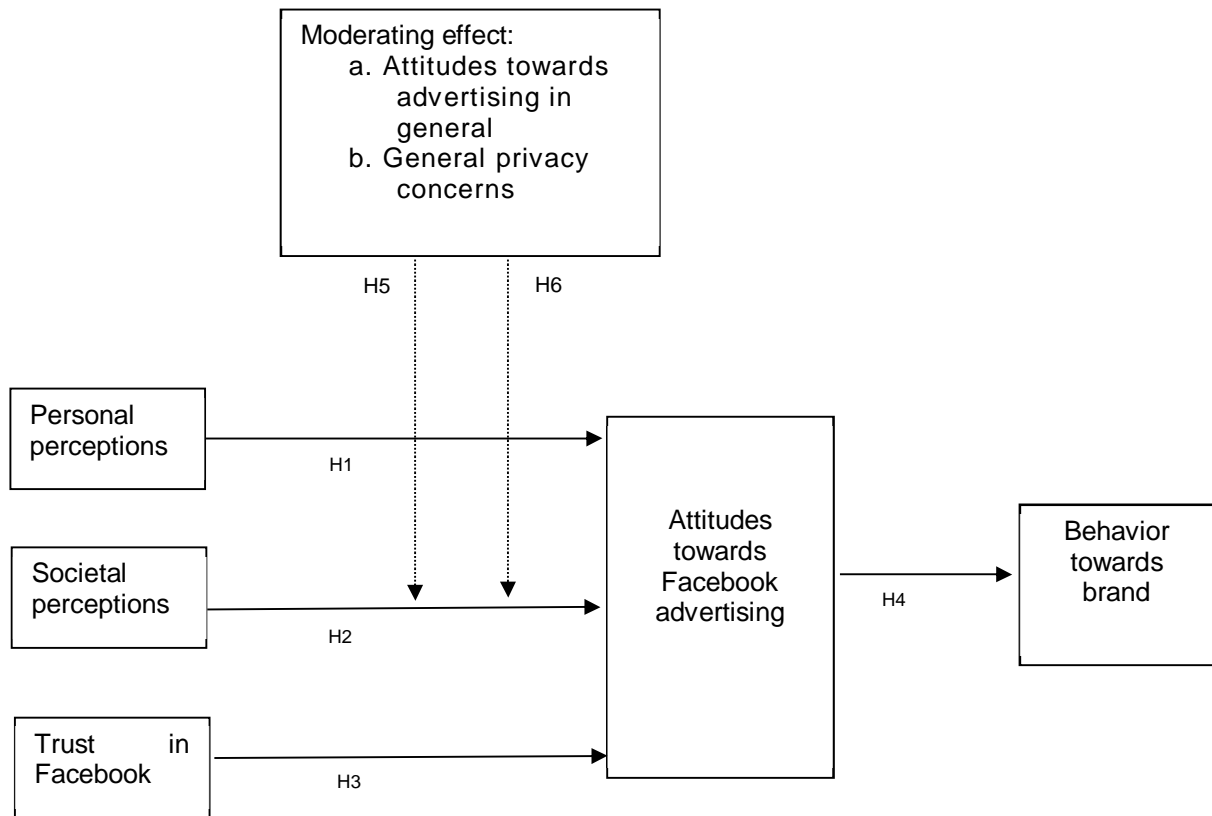
Consumers' general approach to life can be grouped into various cultural dimensions, using Hofstede's (2001) framework. According to Goodrich and De Mooij (2013), these dimensions can be used to understand consumers' attitudes and behavior and they could provide a background in a cross-country context. Although numerous models have been suggested in the past, Hofstede's model is still used widely in marketing studies (Magnusson et al., 2008; Soares, Farhangmehr & Shoham 2007). Although there are various criticisms against Hofstede's classifications, and rightly so, it was deemed sufficient to provide a cultural-value perspective of the countries included in the study. The results of Goodrich and de Mooij (2013) also indicate that Hofstede's cultural dimensions are also applicable to explain the cross-cultural differences in both online and offline environments. A further important finding from Goodrich and Mooij (2013) is the strong explanatory capabilities of some of the dimensions for the usage of social media across different cultures. It is evident that, compared to Australia, Germany and South Africa are less individualistic (with South Africa the lowest) and indulgent; while Germany has a long-term orientation that is not evident in the other two countries. The countries also differ in terms of uncertainty avoidance (Germany scoring the highest with South Africa the lowest) and power distance (South Africa the highest and Germany the lowest) (Hofstede-insights.com). These difference and similarities in the cultural dimension could impact on consumers' perceptions, attitudes and behavior towards SNS advertising. For example, South Africans higher power distance (degree of hierarchy and power distribution in a society) might indicate that consumers are easier to (Littrell & Valentin, 2005) persuade through advertising messages. As uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree that consumers

can tolerate uncertainties, it could be related to one's caution about purchases (Petrovici & Marinov, 2001), especially on-line or advertising messages and this could also be related to trust and privacy concerns.

An alternative approach to that of Hofstede is the Global Leadership and Organisational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) study, which built on both Hofstede's work to cluster nations in ten groups (Chhokar et al. 2007). Schlagwein and Prasarnphanich (2014) reported that two of the GLOBE dimensions showed a significant impact on social media and its use, with 'collectivism' having a positive effect on social media use, and 'uncertainty avoidance' having a negative impact.

However, it is important to note that the aim of this paper is not to compare the cultural values or dimensions between the countries but rather the inclusion of Hofstede's framework and the GLOBE classification merely serves the purpose of providing some cultural insights into the selected countries' national culture and aiding in the explanation of possible cross-country similarities or differences.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



H1: Personal perceptions of SNA is positively related to the attitudes towards SNA.

H2: Social perceptions of SNA is negatively related to the attitudes towards SNA.

H3: Trust in Facebook is positively related to attitudes towards SNA.

H4: Attitudes towards SNA is positively related to behavior towards the brands.

H5: Facebook users' general advertising attitudes positively moderate the relationship between perceptions (personal and societal) of SNA and the attitudes towards SNA.

H6: Facebook users' privacy concerns negatively moderate the relationship between perceptions (personal and societal) of SNA and the attitudes towards SNA.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Sampling and data collection

Facebook is as one of the world's largest SNSs, with an estimated daily average of 829 million users (Facebook, 2014). Facebook was selected as the social media platform of interest as it continues to have a high penetration rate, both globally and in all three countries. As a result,

the study population comprised adult Facebook users. The survey was developed in English for the South African and Australian participants, and translated into German for the German participants (reversed translation was used to ensure the equivalence with the English version) and it was delivered online via a market research firm's consumer panel. The participants were incentivised by the market research firm, in accordance with their normal practices. Consent was provided from the participants and ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant authorities.

3.2 Country selection

The cross-country selection (Australia, Germany & South Africa) was motivated by several reasons. Firstly, the extensive composition of Facebook users and popularity of the platform in all three countries provides an extremely valuable opportunity to examine the trends, both within and across countries. However, a review by Wilson, Gosling and Lindsay (2012) revealed that, although many articles have explored social media and the Facebook trends within a single country context, even basic comparisons of samples across different countries, were rare. Secondly, the growth in the social networking environment is not only evident in developed countries, such as Australia, with a 67% growth in Facebook subscribers during the period from 2010-2017 but this trend is even more evident in emerging countries, such as South Africa, with a growth of 809% during the same period (Internet World Stats Report, 2017). Additionally, Facebook usage and behavioural data are ideal to compare the trends across groups (Wilson et al., 2012). Wilson et al. (2012) argue that as Facebook continues to grow internationally, exploring differences and similarities in how users behave will become increasingly important due to the increased competition to engage with users, both locally and internationally (Demangeot et al., 2015).

As such, our approach of an exploratory cross-country study to test the applicability of our proposed model, not only by including diverse countries in terms of development and network readiness but specifically from a diverse cultural perspective (refer Section 2.6), would generate deeper insights in our understanding of SNA internationally.

3.3 Measurement

Two screening questions were used to confirm that the respondents were active Facebook users, aged 18 years or older and that they were indeed exposed to FB ads. To ensure that respondents had a clear idea of what the study intended to measure, a short description of Facebook ads for the purpose of the study was also included: “Facebook advertising for the purpose of this study refer to any type of advertising about a company, brand, cause, product or service on your Facebook page/wall/timeline. These ads may be directly from companies/brands or indirect via postings/likes of friends and appears in your Facebook newsfeed or sidebar”. Therefore the focus was only on ads placed in users feed either in newsfeed/timeline or Facebook right column (sidebar) and excluded other Facebook ad placements options such as Facebook marketplace, messages or brand fan pages. In addition a question measuring the frequency that respondents were exposed to some of the main formats of Facebook ads, (sponsored links or posts, photos, videos, competitions, voting polls, free or paid application (Apps), invitations, special offers, games) were also included. This was an additional measure to check that respondents were indeed expose to Facebook ads. Subsequently, each question in the questionnaire was framed with “Please read each statement about advertising on your Facebook page/wall/timeline, and then indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements”. The general section also included questions on Facebook usage and demographics.

Attitudes towards advertising in general, and Facebook advertising in particular, were based on the scales of Pollay and Mittal (1993) and Mahmoud (2013) and they each consisted of six items each (for example, “In general, I like advertising”). Trust in Facebook (for example, “Facebook is a trustworthy social network”) was measured with six items from Fogel and Neham (2009) and Wu et al. (2012). The six-item Global-Item Privacy concern of Malhotra et al. (2004) was used to measure general privacy concern (For example, “I am concerned about the threat to my privacy); while perceptions were measured, based on the scale of Pollay and Mittal (1993). The personal-perceptions dimension included asking, whether the respondents considered the advertising to be informative, enhancing their social image and hedonic or entertainment value while the societal perception referred to the possible falsity of advertising.

Facebook users self-reported behavior towards the brand was measured in terms of the frequency (Never (0) to Always (10)) that users displayed the following behavior as a result of seeing a Facebook ad: visiting the advertised firm's website, become a fan of the firm or brand page as a result of the ad or purchasing the advertised product or service. Access to accurate behavioral data is limited due to data privacy concerns, technical difficulties and high costs. As a result self-reported measures are central especially in online media use research and marketing research (Jiang, Yang, & Jun, 2013). We do however acknowledge that self-report bias is a concern (Lee et al., 2007). All the constructs were measured with an 11-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 – 'Strongly Disagree' to 10 – 'Strongly Agree'. The scales were adapted to reflect the Facebook context and the questionnaire was pretested.

4. Results

4.1 Sample characteristics

A total of 1, 203 responses were initially collected from South Africa, Germany and Australia. We kept 1, 166 responses after discarding the invalid responses (389 from South Africa; 385 from Germany; and 392 from Australia) for the final analysis. The sample characteristics are presented in Table 1.

The descriptive analysis of the respondents' demography indicates that the samples were slightly skewed towards males in both South Africa (62.5%) and Germany (58.4%), whereas 54.3% of the Australian sample were females. The majority of the respondents across all three countries came from the age group of 25-34 (50.9% from South Africa 36.6% from Germany, and 42.3% from Australia). Respondents with a high school degree and undergraduate degree were very similar across all three countries, however, the percentage of undergraduate degree-holding respondents were marginally higher than high-school degree holding respondents in South Africa and Germany whereas it is the opposite in Australia. Noticeably, there is a difference in Facebook-usage length in South Africa, and in the rest of the two countries. South African respondents are longer users of Facebook compared to German and Australian respondents. However, the Facebook usage frequency per week is very similar across the respondents of the three countries. Most of the demographic characteristics of the three countries are very close to each other, although there were some differences observed.

Therefore, the responses provided by the respondent in these three countries were taken to be statistically comparable.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of sample, full data, and according to the country

Characteristics	Total sample (N=1166)		South Africa (N=389)		Germany (N=385)		Australia (N=392)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender								
Female	519	44.5	146	37.5	160	41.6	213	54.3
Male	647	55.5	243	62.5	225	58.4	179	45.7
Age								
24 or below	260	22.3	56	14.4	94	24.4	110	28.1
25 – 34	505	43.3	198	50.9	141	36.6	166	42.3
35 – 44	275	23.6	95	24.4	112	29.1	68	17.3
45 or above	126	10.8	40	10.3	38	9.9	48	12.2
Education								
High school/Secondary school	487	41.8	154	39.6	166	43.1	167	42.6
Undergraduate degree	507	43.5	167	42.9	191	49.6	149	38.0
Postgraduate degree	97	8.3	52	13.4	2	.5	43	11.0
Other	75	6.4	16	4.1	26	6.8	33	8.4
Facebook usage length								
Less than a year	41	3.5	5	1.3	19	4.9	17	4.3
Between 1 and 2 years	127	10.9	22	5.7	56	14.5	49	12.5
Between 3 and 4 years	380	32.6	83	21.3	187	48.6	110	28.1
Between 5 and 6 years	317	27.2	125	32.1	91	23.6	101	25.8
More than 6 years	301	25.8	154	39.6	32	8.3	115	29.3
Facebook usage frequency per week								
2 hours	232	19.9	84	21.6	84	21.8	64	16.3
3 - 5 hours	397	34.0	142	36.5	131	34.0	124	31.6
6 hours	537	46.1	163	41.9	170	44.2	204	52.0

4.2 Validity of the measurements

Following Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), to ensure that reliability and validity were achieved. The results of the CFA are presented in Table 2. Although the Chi-square result was significant $\chi^2 = 1760.764$, (df= 681, p=0.00), the model is sensitive to the sample size and to the model complexity. Therefore, we checked the other model fitness measures (GFI=0.924, AGFI=0.913, TLI=0.967, CFI=0.970, IFI=0.970, RSMEA=0.037, CMIN/DF=2.586, SRMR=0.039), according to the guidelines of Bagozzi and Yi (1988) and Bearden, Sharma and Teel (1982). All of the model fitness indices indicated a good model fit.

Table 2: Confirmatory factor analysis results

Constructs & Items	Estimate	CR	AVE
<i>Societal perceptions</i>		0.748	0.501
In general, advertising on Facebook...			
insults the intelligence of the average consumer (RS)	0.684		
is misleading/exaggerated (RS)	0.819		
does not provide a true picture of the product advertised (RS)	0.603		
<i>Personal perceptions</i>		0.949	0.676
In general, advertising on Facebook...			
tells me what people like myself are buying/ using	0.821		
helps me to know which product(s) will reflect the sort of person I am	0.841		
teaches me what to buy to keep a good image	0.751		
is a valuable source of information	0.884		
helps me keep up to date with available products/services	0.849		
tells me which brands have the features I am looking for	0.876		
is more enjoyable than ads in other media	0.829		
is often entertaining	0.799		
sometimes causes me to take pleasure in thinking about what I saw or heard	0.735		
<i>AFB</i>		0.953	0.770
I consider ads on my Facebook page a good thing	0.887		
I like ads on my Facebook page	0.879		
I consider ads on my Facebook page essential	0.847		
Having ads on my Facebook page are important to me	0.886		
Ads on my Facebook page are interesting to me	0.879		
I would describe my overall attitude towards ads on my Facebook page as favorable	0.886		
<i>AG</i>		0.938	0.715
I would describe my overall attitude towards advertising as favorable	0.880		
Advertisements in general are interesting to me	0.872		

Having advertisements are important to me	0.871		
I consider advertising essential	0.796		
I general, I like advertising	0.839		
I consider advertising a good thing	0.812		
Trust in Facebook		0.926	0.677
Facebook is a trustworthy social network	0.833		
Facebook can be relied on to keep its promises	0.851		
Even if not mentioned, I would trust Facebook to do the job right	0.742		
I believe that Facebook would use my data only for purposes that I have approved	0.808		
I can count on Facebook to protect my privacy	0.848		
I can count on Facebook to protect my personal information from unauthorized use	0.848		
Privacy		0.902	0.607
All things considered, the Internet causes serious privacy problems	0.765		
Compared to others, I am more sensitive about the way online companies handle my personal information	0.750		
To me, it is very important to keep my privacy intact/unharmed from online companies	0.811		
I believe other people are not concerned enough with online privacy issues	0.745		
Compared to other subjects on my mind, personal privacy is very important	0.792		
I am concerned about the threat to my personal privacy today	0.808		
Behavior		0.841	0.639
When I see an advertisement on my Facebook page, I generally ...			
become a fan of the company/brand	0.784		
visit the company/brand's website	0.833		
purchase the advertised product/service	0.780		

Note: AVE = average variance extracted; CR = Construct Reliability; AFB = Attitudes towards Facebook advertising; AG = Attitudes towards advertising in general; All the estimates are standardized; All parameter estimates are significant at the 0.001 level.

Next, we checked the construct reliability ($CR > 0.70$) and average variance extracted ($AVE > 0.50$), according to Bagozzi and Yi (1988). The CR and AVE of each construct met the standard. Moreover, item loadings are substantial (Estimate > 0.60) and highly significant. Therefore, the model achieved convergent validity. Moreover, we conducted a discriminant validity test following the method presented by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The correlation matrix is presented in Table 3. The AVE of each construct is greater than the shared variance with other constructs, which indicates that discriminant validity has been achieved.

Table 3: Correlation matrix

	AVE	MSV	ASV	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Privacy (1)	0.607	0.221	0.039	<i>0.779</i>						
SP (2)	0.501	0.221	0.041	-0.470	<i>0.708</i>					
AFB (3)	0.770	0.590	0.319	-0.065	0.093	<i>0.877</i>				
AG (4)	0.715	0.473	0.241	0.065	0.028	0.688	<i>0.846</i>			
PP (5)	0.676	0.618	0.314	0.033	-0.005	0.768	0.644	<i>0.822</i>		
Trust (6)	0.677	0.274	0.159	-0.004	0.112	0.523	0.485	0.512	<i>0.823</i>	
Behavior(7)	0.639	0.618	0.279	-0.077	0.023	0.752	0.564	0.786	0.410	<i>0.799</i>

Note: The square root of the AVE is shown on the diagonal for the constructs.

In addition, we conducted a common method bias test. Firstly, the Harman's one-factor test showed that a single factor solution explained only 39.16% of variance, which is clearly below the cut-off threshold of 50%, which implies no common method bias (Harman, 1976). Further, we added a common latent factor to check whether there is a model fit changed. It remained similar after the inclusion of that common latent factor (model without common latent factor: $\chi^2/df. = 1.705$, model with common latent factor: $\chi^2/df. = 1.553$), which again means that there is no common method bias in our model (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). As all of the latent constructs of our model were self-reported by the respondents. Therefore, we used a marker variable to test the existence of a common method bias following the suggestion of Lindell and Whitney (2001). Three items from a theoretically unrelated construct named 'social desirability' was introduced as the marker variable in the model (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). The relationships among all the independent and dependent constructs remained statistically significant after the inclusion of the marker variable. This further indicates that there was no common method bias in the dataset (Baggozi, 2011).

4.3 Invariance analysis

A two-stage invariance analysis was conducted to check whether the respondents of the three different countries responded similarly for construct measurement, when following the guideline suggested by Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1998). Firstly, we tested the configural invariance, in order to check the item equivalence. The results of the configural invariance test are presented in Table 4. They show that χ^2 and the model fit indices were satisfactory.

Table 4: Results of configural invariance analysis

	χ^2	DF	CMIN/DF	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMSEA	SRMR
South Africa	1161.056	681	1.705	0.958	0.955	0.959	0.043	0.0518
Germany	1129.029	681	1.658	0.961	0.958	0.961	0.041	0.0429
Australia	1209.377	681	1.776	0.953	0.949	0.953	0.045	0.0452
Stacked Model	3499.460	2043	1.713	0.958	0.954	0.958	0.025	0.0518

Secondly, we ran a metric invariance test (see Table 5). As the χ^2 difference 144.654 (df=39, $p < 0.05$) is significant, the full metric invariance was not supported. A full measurement metric invariance is rarely found in practice and thus, a partial metric invariance test is required (Milfont & Fischer, 2010; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). We relaxed 5 out of 39 constraints, based on the modification indices, in order to get a partial metric invariance. The non-restricted and partial invariance model was compared; and the resulting χ^2 difference 67.138 (df=34, $p > 0.05$) was found to be significant. Therefore, the metric invariance was achieved.

Table 5: Results of metric invariance analysis

	χ^2	DF	RMSEA	AIC	TLI	CFI
Non-restricted model	3499.460	2043	0.025	4093.46	0.954	0.958
Full-metric invariance ^a	3644.114	2121	0.025	4082.114	0.954	0.956
Partial-metric invariance ^b	3566.598	2097	0.025	4052.598	0.955	0.957

Notes: ^a Full metric invariance is not supported (χ^2 d (39)=144.654, $p < 0.01$); ^b Partial metric invariance is supported (χ^2 d (34)=67.138, $p > 0.05$) (with 5 items of 39 invariance constraints relaxed).

4.4. Hypotheses' test

To test the hypotheses, we conducted a structural model test. Although the chi-square difference remain significant $\Delta\chi^2/df = 1.722$ ($p < 0.01$), other fit indices indicated that the fit of structural model is acceptable (CFI=0.951, IFI=0.951, TLI=0.946, RSMEA=0.025, SRMR=.057). The results are shown in Table 6 and Figure 2.

Table 6: Hypotheses test results

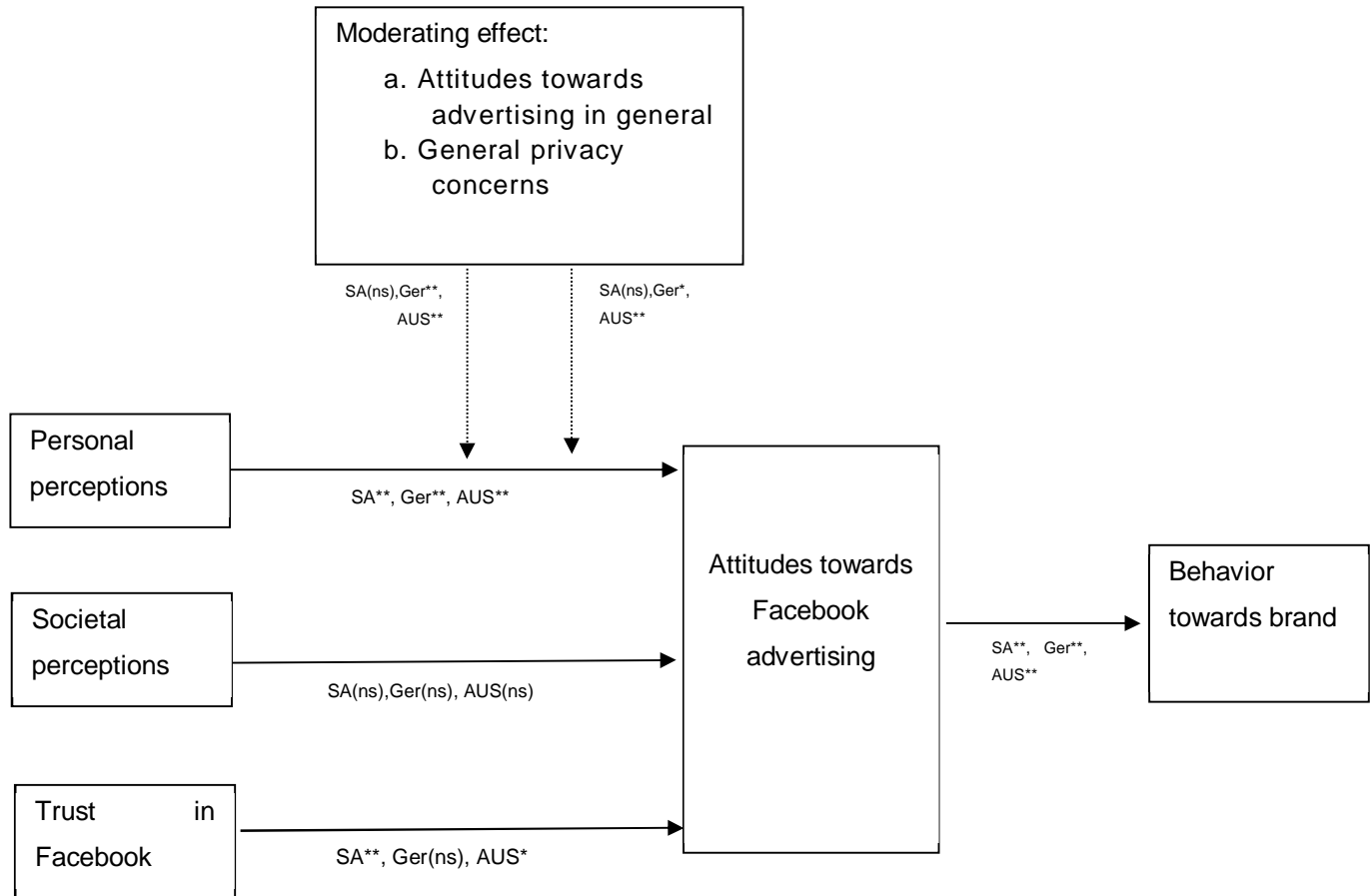
				SA	GER	AUS
H1	AFB	<---	Personal perceptions (PP)	0.535**	0.505**	0.592**
H2	AFB	<---	Societal perceptions (SP)	0.130(ns)	-0.063(ns)	-0.021(ns)
H3	AFB	<---	Facebook Trust	0.130**	0.071(ns)	0.087*
H4	Behavior	<---	AFB	0.746**	0.802**	0.734**
H5	AFB	<---	AG	0.239**	0.405**	0.302**
	AFB	<---	AGxPP	0.035(ns)	0.155**	0.126**
	AFB	<---	AGxSP	0.039(ns)	-0.085(ns)	-0.031(ns)
H6	AFB	<---	Privacy	0.000(ns)	-0.174**	-0.190**
	AFB	<---	PRIVACYxPP	-0.044(ns)	-0.105*	-0.115**
	AFB	<---	PRIVACYxSP	-0.044(ns)	0.027(ns)	-0.054(ns)
<i>Variance explained by AFB</i>				<i>0.659</i>	<i>0.728</i>	<i>0.719</i>
<i>Variance explained by Behavior</i>				<i>0.557</i>	<i>0.643</i>	<i>0.539</i>

Note: ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, (ns) $p > .05$; AFB = Attitudes towards Facebook advertising; AG = Attitudes towards advertising in general.

Results of hypotheses testing show that personal perception significantly influences attitude toward Facebook advertisement across all three countries [$\beta(\text{SA})=0.527$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta(\text{GER})=0.490$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta(\text{AUS})=0.574$, $p < 0.01$], which support H1. Thus supporting Wolin et al (2002) and Wang et al. (2009) findings. This relationship is stronger in Australian and South African respondents compared to German respondents. On the contrary, social perception does not have any significant effect on attitude toward Facebook advertisement in any of the countries, which contradicts with H2 and the results of Polly and Mittal (1993)'s work and more recently, Azeem and Hq (2012). In addition to personal perception, trust in Facebook has significant influence on attitude toward Facebook advertisements in both South Africa [$\beta=0.130$, $p < 0.01$] and Australia [$\beta=0.087$, $p < 0.05$]. These findings support the findings of Shin (2010) and Schosser et al. (1999) supporting hypotheses H3 of this study. However, no significant relationship was found between trust and attitude toward Facebook advertising in the German sample [$\beta=0.071$, $p = \text{ns}$]. Supporting H4, attitude toward Facebook advertisement has a significantly positive influence on Facebook users' behavior towards the brand/firm in all three countries [$\beta(\text{SA})=0.746$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta(\text{GER})=0.802$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta(\text{AUS})=0.735$, $p < 0.01$].

This relationship is stronger for the German respondents compared to South African and Australian respondents.

Figure 2: Country specific graphical presentation of the results



Note: SA=South Africa, Ger=Germany, AUS=Australia, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, (ns) $p > .05$

In addition, we adopted an interactionist perspective (moderation effects) regarding attitude toward advertising in general, and privacy to see if the relationships between consumer perception and attitude toward Facebook advertisement are moderated by these two variables. Attitudes towards advertising in general were found to have significant influence on attitude toward Facebook advertisement across all three countries [$\beta(\text{SA})=0.239$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta(\text{GER})=0.405$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta(\text{AUS})=0.302$, $p < 0.01$]. Significant negative influence of privacy on attitude toward Facebook advertisements was found in both German and Australian sample [$\beta(\text{GER})=-0.174$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta(\text{AUS})=-0.190$, $p < 0.01$], whereas no significant influence was found in South African sample. The result shows that attitudes towards advertising in general

significantly moderates the relationship between personal perception and attitude toward Facebook advertisement in Germany and Australia ($\beta(\text{GER})=0.155$, $p<0.01$; $\beta(\text{AUS})=0.126$, $p<0.01$). However, such a relationship was not found in South Africa. Thus, attitude toward advertising in general strengthens the relationship between personal perception and attitude toward Facebook advertisement in both Germany and Australia. Privacy has a *negative moderation effect* on the relationship between personal perception and attitude toward Facebook advertisement in both Germany ($\beta=-0.105$, $p<0.05$) and Australia ($\beta=-0.115$, $p<0.01$). Such moderation effect was not found in South Africa. Therefore, it seems as if privacy dampens the relationships between personal perception and attitude toward Facebook advertisement in developed countries with high uncertainty-avoidance cultures (Germany and Australia) compared to a developing country rating low on uncertainty avoidance (South Africa). Thus the notion of Tsay-Vogel et al., (2018) that privacy boundaries among Facebook users may progressively become more relaxed as Facebook are now well-established, does not seem to be that evident in these countries. The relationship between societal perception and attitude toward Facebook advertisement was not moderated by either attitude towards advertising in general or privacy in any of the three countries.

5. Implications

Our results support the ‘social support theory’ that examines attitude toward Facebook advertising. The validity of the conceptual model is confirmed in all three countries reflective of three continents (Africa, Australia and Europe) and diverse cultural contexts. Several similarities – as well as some differences in the moderating effect of privacy and general advertising attitudes among the countries are evident. The lack of empirical evidence of behavioral data concerning Facebook advertising makes this study beneficial for a wide academic (and industry/practitioner) audience. The value of the research also lies in its three-country approach, thereby testing the conceptual framework in diverse cultural contexts. Given that Facebook is a global phenomenon (Kirkpatrick, 2011), the research also adds to the body of knowledge pertaining to international marketing. As we continue to embrace (and comprehend) the apparently endless array of social media platforms, brands are not only figuring out how best to engage with their local communities, but also how to make the most of the global audience (Nitu, 2014). As such, our studies furnish theoretical and practical contributions to advertising on SNS, such as Facebook, in the global context.

The effects of advertising on society and culture have been extensively examined (Wang & Sun, 2010). Bolton et al. (2013) propose that globalization may lead to increasing homogeneity but owing to the large disparity between wealth, infrastructure and technology among emerging and developed countries, this may not be an accurate viewpoint (Petzer & Meyer, 2013). However, our results confirm that perceptions, attitudes and behavior towards SNA, i.e. Facebook, are indeed a phenomenon that is reflective of a global-market place, suggesting that consumers around the world are becoming more homogeneous in their attitude, thereby displaying similar attitudes and behavior towards advertising messages on these platforms. Our research thus confirms that in general standardization (based on personal perceptions, attitudes and behavior towards the brand) of advertising campaigns could be effective, contributing to the longstanding debate of standardization vs. specialization in promotional campaigns across countries (Frith & Sengupta, 1997; Duffett, 2015). For international marketers, this suggests that a standard SNA strategy could be effective. It may, however, be necessary for social media networks and marketers to take note of the differences in terms of trust and privacy in certain cultures.

It is evident that personal Facebook advertising perceptions have an impact on the attitudes of Facebook users across continents. Thus, supporting the growth of expenditure of brands on social media. The perceptions of Facebook advertisements, as having utilitarian (source of information) and hedonic (enjoyment) value positively impact on attitudes (Wang et al., 2009; Zeng et al., 2017) signaling for advertisers the need to ensure a balance between pushing the content, while ensuring an enjoyable experience for users, when engaging with the content. Advertising that is introduced with subtlety into consumers' 'social, yet private space', as part of the 'conversation' using relevant images, videos, games or even competitions, can be useful to create this balance.

However, as consumers' believe that Facebook advertising also helps to make informed choices in projecting the desired social images, the important role of the 'social aspect' of 'social' media is evident (Wolin et al., 2002; Powers et al., 2011). Advertisers could use this to their advantage, by encouraging: 'liking', 'sharing', 'tagging' and 'commenting' on advertisements that would not only increase engagement with the brand, increase organic

advertising, but also using the social aspect to influence user attitudes. It is valuable that positive attitudes towards FB advertising indeed lead to positive behavior (Kim et al., 2010), such as visiting the brands' website, becoming a Facebook fan of the brand or purchasing the brand, as the ultimate goal of advertising, is frequently to encourage action. By ensuring that users do visit the website or brand Facebook page, provides marketers with a multitude of additional opportunities to further engage with their customers and potential customers.

The moderating effect of general attitudes on attitudes towards Facebook advertising is a sure sign that investigating advertising effectiveness on 'new' platforms can never been done in insolation and taking cognizance of consumers' general attitude towards advertising is important to gauge the effectiveness of an Facebook advertisement, especially evident in the personal perceptions of the German and Australian sample. Interestingly, general advertising attitudes do not impact the relationship between societal perceptions and attitude towards Facebook advertising in any of the countries.

Yet the small, significant nuances in how cultures differ with regard to SNA suggests that marketers need to consider a degree of specialization, when advertising on SNS across cultures; and they need to incorporate some tailoring of their advertising strategies and messages to the local market, especially to address trust and privacy issues.

The strong positive effect of trust on attitudes towards Facebook advertising in South Africa could be ascribed to the fact that 'collectivism' often helps to develop trust (Doney, Cannon & Mullen, 1998) or it may be due to the fact that they had the longest relationship with Facebook, of the three countries. The high uncertainty avoidance culture in Germany could be why trust in Facebook did not influence attitudes towards Facebook advertising for the German sample, which supports the negative relationship between uncertainty avoidance and trust (Qu & Yang, 2015). However, these possible explanations needs further investigation and empirical testing. Thus although Germans could trust a SNS it does not necessary implies that the trust in the SNS would be transposed to the marketing communication messages on that SNS. This is in-line with Kelly, Kerr and Drennan (2017) reports that social media users in general may trust the SNS but that users are reluctant to trust advertising on these sites. Putting the burden of

ensuring that advertising messages are viewed as credible and trustworthy to ensure a positive attitude towards such a messages on the shoulders of the advertiser. Thus as suggested by Dehghani and Tumer (2015) advertisers need to move towards trust-based advertising instead of merely push advertising on SNS such as Facebook. Furthermore, risk-taking cultures (low in uncertainty avoidance), such as the South African, privacy do not influence their attitudes in the same way as less risk-taking and more developed cultures. Another possible explanation could be that in developing countries, such as South Africa, users of Facebook often trust the internet where privacy concerns play a lesser role as these users might not be aware of all the abuses and risks (Hampson, 2018).

It is evident that consumers' perceptions play important role to form or shape consumers' attitude toward advertisements backed by the assumption that advertisements are source of information and provides utilitarian value (Wang et al., 2009). This notion is supported by this study, however, societal perception of social media advertisement did not influence such attitude. Under this circumstance, managers should establish and maintain communication with consumers focusing on their personal perceptions with customized methods rather than mass advertising messages. Collectively (societal perception), consumers may think that advertising messages lie and attempt to manipulate them to accomplish advertisers' goal, such as increases sales volume but this is not currently influencing their attitudes towards these advertisements. However, managers can focusing on establishing an industry practice such as social currency and paid reviews, which although not currently helpful for creating a positive attitude toward SNA, could in future when these methods will become common as industry practice, be useful tools for incentivized eWOM.

We found that general attitude toward advertising moderates the relationship between personal perceptions and attitude. It indicates that general attitude toward advertising strengthens the relationships between personal perception and attitude towards Facebook advertising. Thus, managers of brands should create positive awareness toward advertisements in general to reinforce Facebook promotions. This can be accomplished by providing authentic information regarding the brand in real time (Vukasovic, 2013) such as showing the features and benefits of the brand comparing with other brands can be effective. Brand comparisons that are done

by independent online-based service providers who are not directly affiliated with the brands they are comparing, could be the answer. Such comparisons help the consumers to take rational decisions by providing important information. This type of initiative by the brands not only creates positive attitude toward advertising, but also develop a sense of trust and credibility (Hajli, 2014; So, Xiong & King, 2017).

Lastly, privacy is found to weaken the relationship between personal perception and attitude toward Facebook advertisement (Australia and Germany). In the recent years, the privacy concern becomes a major issue (Tsay-Vogel et al., 2018). Even though findings at the global level support the socializing role of Facebook in cultivating more relaxed privacy attitudes, it still impacts on users' attitudes and behavior (Tsay-Vogel, Shanahan & Signorielli, 2018). Thus, brand managers need to carefully manage consumers' information. One possible way to handle privacy issue in social media is making the personal information management system secure and explain the security system to the consumers to ensure that they feel a sense of confidence.

From a theoretical perspective, our results add insight into the limited SNA literature that is currently available (Jung et al., 2016:259). Unlike previous studies, which focused on SNA in a single-country context, using mainly student samples and only focusing on positive influences, we have expanded the focus to include positive (personal) as well as negative (societal) influences, utilizing non-student samples, in a diverse multiple country context, as to identify any commonalties and/or differences. Thus, this study's multi-country context provides a unique opportunity for understanding consumers' perceptions, attitudes and behavior towards Facebook advertisings in different markets. The cross-country nature of the study does not only add value, because of the increased generalisation (Maheswaran & Shavitt, 2000); but it also provides evidence confirming the speculation of Okazaki and Taylor (2013) of the emergence of a global consumer culture, as a result of the global social networks. This is confirmed in our results as it is evident that consumers on a global social-media site, such as Facebook, in general display similar perceptions, attitudes and behavior towards SNA in the presence of some culture differences. Consequently, being able to compare findings across three different countries, provides additional insights into SNA that should benefit both future

researchers and marketing practitioners. This study, therefore, not only contributes to advertising and consumer behavior theory, but through the conceptual model tested and insights into diverse market environments it also advances international marketing practices in social media and social network advertising.

The majority of the main paths of the model found to be significant across three different countries, whereas the moderation effects and trust are different based on the cultural differences. These similarities and differences have noteworthy managerial implications that contributes to the social media and advertising industry at large. Social media managers of brands should try to improve personal perceptions of consumers to improve attitude toward Facebook advertisements, and improved Facebook advertisement attitude will lead to expected brand related behavior. Such relationships work across three different countries regardless their cultural differences. Therefore, managers do not need any customization in perception-attitude-behavior relationship. However, customizations are required in developing and managing general attitude formation toward advertisements and privacy. Unlike South Africans, Australian and Germans social media promotion effectiveness depends on overall promotional improvement of general advertisements used in other media (such as TV and newspaper advertisements). As German culture is the highest of all three countries in uncertainty avoidance it suggest their need for laws and regulations to reduce uncertainty and risks when going on-line. Additionally the fact that Germany has the most developed ICT laws of all three countries, further support this notion. This is echoed in the projection that social media self-regulation will be replaced by more formal regulations not only in terms of privacy but also misleading advertising (Rogers, 2018). Brand managers can utilize integrated marketing communication where all the promotional/communicational tools should be integrated and reinforce each other (Kotler & Keller, 2014). This belief is supported by the relationship between trust and attitude toward Facebook advertisements. Unlike South Africans and Australians, trust of Germans does not lead to positive attitude toward Facebook advertisements. Lastly, privacy concern weakens perception-attitude relationship in Germany and Australia. Therefore, brand managers working in these countries should ensure that personal information are safe in Facebook. On the other hand, managers working in South Africa should create more awareness among their consumers' about data privacy and how to utilize privacy settings. In this way, consumers will become more conscious about their

personal information security and by providing such data security options, social media sites (i.e. Facebook) can gain users trust.

Social media managers who intend to promote their products or services could utilize the findings of this study to convert consumers' perception to positive attitude toward Facebook advertisements and positive brand behavior. Managerial contributions of this study is threefold. First, managers could apply common strategies for all the countries (reflected by the main model – personal perceptions, attitudes and behavior), however, they need to customize few aspects (trust and privacy) depending on the country and/or culture. Second, it shows how general attitude toward advertisements and privacy moderates the relationship between consumers' perception and attitude toward Facebook advertisements. Managers can develop and use marketing tools to improve consumers' general attitude toward advertisements, and reduce the trust and privacy concern regarding consumers' personal information use. Third, the strongest contribution of this study is the cultural parallels and differences among three different socio-cultural perspectives. It shows that some of the features of social media advertisements are common across different cultural contexts. However, there is a need for customization in term of general attitude toward advertisements, trust and privacy issues depending on the socio-cultural perspectives.

6. Conclusion and recommendations for future research

Despite the promising advertising opportunities provided by social media (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015), there is still much work to be done on how to theorise research in this area and on how to develop stronger conceptualisations and hypothetical relationships for consumer behavior towards SNA. In response to this call for further research on social network advertising we propose and test a conceptual model that enhance the understanding of social support theory. By doing so, this research determines the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors towards Facebook advertising as well as the influence of trust in Facebook. It determines whether general advertising attitudes and privacy concerns have a moderating effect on the various attitudes towards Facebook advertisements. It also determines if cross-country difference exist in the context of Facebook advertising. The application of the social support theory to SNA, such as Facebook, remains scarce. It is evident that the information and appraisal aspect of the social support theory are especially relevant to SNA that is perceived as informative,

entertaining, and assisting with self-image. We demonstrated that social media managers should understand the scope of standardization and customization for their Facebook advertising campaigns especially when they operate in multicultural settings. They should particularly consider the extent to which their target audience are interested to show tolerance toward privacy issue and attitude toward advertising in general.

This study has its own limitations. Firstly, the study has used a restrained approach regarding the perceptions of Facebook advertising and although the model has explained between 54-73% of variance in attitudes and behavior, a host of other perceptions could account for the remaining variance. Due to the dynamic nature of SNS, additional perceptions may also emerge in the future. The second limitation is that the research was limited to Facebook users. Therefore, the conclusions cannot be generalised across all types of SNS, because the sites work differently; and they have different target markets. Future research could include comparisons among the users of different SNSs, given the growth in other SNSs such as Instagram, Pinterest and LinkedIn. It would be interesting to see whether SNS users' perceptions and attitudes differ, depending on the type of SNS in question. Additionally, the conclusions of this study cannot be generalised, because of its convenience sampling and the three-country context. Therefore, the context of future research could be expanded, to include other countries with different national cultures, such as Asian countries, for example. Lastly, we measure self-reported behavior due to the design of our study, that could lead to bias, future studies could use an experiential approach focusing on a specific brand to investigate possible causal relationships.

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