



## Antecedents of youth's ads avoidance in Facebook

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effects of disruptions, complexity, negative experience and relevance on advertising avoidance by the youth in Facebook. The relationships are mediated by attitude toward ads in Facebook. The data were collected from 154 undergraduate students in Kupang - Indonesia. The data gathered underwent structural equation model analysis, revealing a noteworthy mediation index. This suggests that the connection between the independent variables and advertising avoidance is influenced by one's attitude toward advertising. However, the results show that negative experience was not a predictor for advertising avoidance. The present study offers new insight regarding antecedents of ads avoidance in social media, in particular Facebook among the youth, one of the biggest age group users of Facebook in Indonesia.

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## INTRODUCTION

Internet users in Indonesia in 2021 reached 202.6 million users or around 74% of the total population of Indonesia, according to a statement from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo, 2021). This data also shows that the internet has been evenly distributed in Java, Sumatra, Bali-Nusa Tenggara, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Eastern Indonesia. In addition, it was also found that internet users in Indonesia are increasing every year. In 2020, internet users reached 175.4 million people, while in 2021 there were 202.6 million users or an increase of 11% (Kominfo, 2021). The large number of internet users is followed by the number of social media users, one of which is Facebook. In June 2021, Facebook users in Indonesia were recorded at 140 million people (Nurhadi, 2021). It can be said that as a percentage, about 80% of internet users also access Facebook, or 4 out of 5 people who use the internet open a Facebook page. Thus, Indonesia is the country with the 3rd largest Facebook user in the world after India and the United States (Nurhadi, 2021).

The specialty of Facebook lies in its varied facilities and tends to be easy to learn. More than just finding friends and putting them on your friend list, this site can offer much more than that (Stangl et al., 2023). Sharing for media such as audio, video, photos, and notes, is a form of freedom that allows anyone to upload anything with all the risks that also exist. As for the security

guarantee, it can be set for photos and profiles in personal settings. This pattern of internet communication through Facebook friend sites, at some stage can cause a sense of dependence that may affect real life (Juditha, 2011; Nyhan et al., 2023).

In terms of demographics, Facebook users globally are most widely used by people aged 18-34 years for women and 25-34 years for men. Reports from Indonesia show that most Facebook users are young or often called generation Z or millennial generation. It was found that in the April 2021 period, there were 33.6% of Facebook users in Indonesia in the age group of 25-34 years, while 30.2% were in the age range of 18-24 years (Aditiya, 2021).

Along with the increase in Facebook users around the world, including young people in Indonesia, this market share should be a very potential advertising target to be developed by Facebook. However, as previous studies have found, various ways are used by consumers to avoid advertising, including replacing television channels during commercials, limiting internet advertising, filtering incoming emails, and various other techniques (Chinchanachokchai & de Gregorio, 2020; Wilbur, 2016). Ads that are aired via the internet also suffer the same fate. According to Cho and Cheon (2004) there are 3 (three) variables that are the cause of why people avoid advertisements on the internet, including: the perception that advertising is a barrier in achieving the purpose of using the internet, the assumption that internet advertising is very complicated and previous bad experiences regarding advertisements on the internet. More specifically, Kelly et al. (2010) revealed 4 (four) factors that cause teenage internet users to avoid ads on social media, including Facebook. Teens perceive that: 1) internet advertising is intrusive; 2) Internet advertising is complicated; 3) have a negative experience with internet advertising; and 4) internet advertising is irrelevant.

Prior research has extensively studied factors influencing ad avoidance among internet users, particularly on Facebook. This study aims to address gaps by quantitatively analyzing the four key predictors of ad avoidance identified in qualitative research by Kelly et al. (2010) on youth's behaviors on Facebook. By empirically testing distraction, complexity, bad experience, and relevance, this research seeks to deepen our understanding of ad avoidance dynamics on social media platforms, especially among younger users. Through quantitative analysis, this study intends to validate previous findings, offer new insights, and contribute data-driven perspectives on consumer attitudes towards advertising in the digital realm.

Prior studies have delved into factors influencing ad avoidance behavior on digital platforms like Facebook. Three notable studies that addressed similar topics include Kelly et al. (2010), Cho and Cheon (2004) and Dix and Phau (2010). Kelly et al. (2010) identified intrusive ads, complexity, negative experiences, and irrelevance as predictors of ad avoidance among youth on Facebook. Cho and Cheon (2004) explored reasons why people avoid internet advertisements, highlighting concerns about advertising hindering internet use, perceived complexity, and past negative experiences with online ads. Dix & Phau (2010) Investigated ad avoidance patterns in media consumption habits, emphasizing how consumers actively choose content and develop avoidance behaviors towards ads. These studies revealed gaps in the understanding of how specific factors influence ad avoidance behaviors, particularly among young users on social media platforms like Facebook. The need for quantitative validation of qualitative findings, exploration of additional variables impacting ad avoidance, and a deeper understanding of consumer attitudes towards social media advertising motivated this research to provide empirical insights and address existing gaps in the literature.

Based on the above background, the author is interested in analyzing the causes of ad avoidance among youth on Facebook pages. Research conducted Kelly et al. (2010) using qualitative methods by conducting Focus Discussion Group (FDG). Quantitatively, the four factors above have never been tested, so it is hoped that this research can provide new perspectives for the academic world and practitioners.

This study aimed to investigate whether factors of distraction, complexity, bad experience and relevance indirectly influence the avoidance of Facebook ads by youth. To achieve the intended research objectives, a review of previous theories and research is carried out in the same research focus area, where predictions are formed. After that, the data collected will be analyzed with a quantitative approach to answer the research objectives.

Ad avoidance includes all actions by media users that intentionally minimize access to advertising content (Speck & Elliott, 1997). People avoid advertising cognitively, behaviorally, and mechanically. Consumers continually evaluate their choices as they actively engage in media. Preferences for certain content that you want and don't want to consume form habits that eventually become a pattern of general attitudes towards advertising as well as a pattern of ad avoidance. Thus, ad avoidance has become part of a person's consumption pattern in a medium (Dix & Phau, 2010; Speck & Elliott, 1997).

Understanding the reasons why consumers avoid advertising is an area that has long been investigated by both researchers and practitioners in the field of marketing and advertising. Ad avoidance is considered the biggest obstacle to ad effectiveness (Beak & Morimoto, 2012; Rojas-Méndez & Davies, 2005). This avoidance of advertising also happens in the internet world, albeit in a different way. For example, many people still believe that the Internet is a tool or medium of task execution rather than a medium of entertainment, which can make people avoid Internet advertising more intensely, especially when they have limited time to perform certain tasks. Secondly, internet users are very concerned with the speed of data access and retrieval (download time), which is less applicable to other traditional media. Therefore, internet users may have a negative attitude towards internet advertising when they feel that internet advertising slows down the speed of data access. In addition, the Internet involves more two-way interactive or voluntary actions of consumers (e.g., clicking on banners, hyperlinks, etc.), and thus avoidance of Internet advertising can be the act of deliberately refraining from further action (e.g., ignoring an advertisement by deliberately not clicking on any hyperlinks). This is indicated by a low click-through rate, usually less than 1% (Cho & Cheon, 2004).

Attitude towards advertising is generally defined as the tendency to respond to advertising consistently both positively and negatively (Lutz, 1985). Thus, consumers who have a positive attitude towards advertising tend to find it easier to do what the advertisement suggests. To study advertising as a form of persuasive communication, an understanding of the factors that influence one's attitude towards advertising is crucial. Previous research has studied several factors that influence consumer attitudes towards advertising. These factors include economic benefits, product information and reflection of hedonic values (Ariffin et al., 2016). It is generally accepted that advertising can be useful to consumers as a means of obtaining product information. These factors have a positive impact on advertising attitudes that can ultimately shape purchasing decisions. However, this remains a debate because more accurate product information can be obtained by consumers from fellow consumers than provided by advertisers (Petrovici & Marinov, 2007). Thus, it is considered necessary to explore further the factors that influence advertising attitudes, especially advertisements on Facebook social media that are often seen by youth.

Kelly et al. (2010) In a qualitative study, found 6 (six) factors that are predictors of ad avoidance carried out by youth on Facebook. The six factors are intrusive ads, ads on Facebook are complicated and tangled, negative experiences with internet ads, and irrelevant ads. Each of these factors will be discussed in more depth below.

Claims from consumers that advertising is disruptive to their activities are not new. Various studies have been conducted previously on the nature of this advertising on several media such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines and outdoor media. However, similar research on internet media is still very limited (Cho & Cheon, 2004). Avoidance of internet advertising can be caused by the perception that internet advertising interferes with the main activities of internet users. In fact, according to Li and Meeds (2005), compared to other media, it is internet advertising

that most distracts users in achieving their main goals. If internet advertising interferes with the achievement of the user's main goals, negative things can happen such as lowering the quality of advertising attitudes and avoidance of internet advertising, including Facebook (Cho & Cheon, 2004). *H1* : The stronger the perception that Facebook ads are intrusive, the lower the attitude towards ads and ultimately increases the tendency of internet users to avoid Facebook ads.

The complexity and tangles of advertising in question are perceptions among consumers that the number of advertisements in a medium is too much and overlaps (Speck & Elliott, 1997). In the context of Facebook advertising, the complexity and tangle of advertising in question is the number of banners and ads, both on the wall and the special ad space that is usually on the right of the Facebook page. Thus, it can be concluded temporarily that the complexity and tangles of ads on Facebook pages can cause internet users' reluctance to avoid Facebook ads (Cho & Cheon, 2004) Where previously lowered the value of consumer attitudes towards advertising. *H2* : The stronger the perception that Facebook ads are complicated and tangled, the lower the advertising attitude and further increase the tendency of internet users to avoid advertising on Facebook.

The experience gained by previous consumers largely determines consumer attitudes towards advertising because consumers tend to hold on to personal experiences rather than other knowledge that is external (Hoch & Deighton, 1989). In the internet realm, negative experiences can be associated with a sense of dissatisfaction and reluctance to access advertising because consumers have felt disappointed before. Therefore, the more often consumers feel disappointed with ads, the more reluctant these consumers are to access ads on Facebook as a result of low attitudes towards advertising. *H3* : The stronger the negative experience of internet advertising, the lower the attitude towards advertising which further increases the tendency of internet users to avoid advertising on Facebook.

The degree of relevance of the advertised product to the tastes, interests and needs of consumers is an important issue. Often, witnessing certain irrelevant ads makes consumers feel that the ad as a whole does not represent them. Youth consider that the information they provide to social networking sites (age, gender, hobbies etc.) does not help the sites in question (including Facebook) to display advertisements relevant to them (Kelly et al., 2010). *H4* : The stronger the assumption that Facebook ads are irrelevant, the lower the attitude towards ads so that the tendency of internet users to avoid Facebook ads is higher.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a cross-sectional survey for data collection. Next, the data is used to test the relationship between variables. The quantitative approach is used by conducting statistical analyses with the help of SmartPLS software using structural equation model technique.

The population of this study is youth in Kupang City aged 18-24 years. The sampling frame used was students at several universities in Kupang City totaling 154 people. The invitation to participate contains a questionnaire link sent to students via instant messaging services and email, followed by a confirmation notification that they have accepted the invitation. This data retrieval technique is considered one of the best ways with low cost and relatively high speed (Dillman et al., 2014). Respondents were informed that this survey was anonymous, so they were asked to provide honest answers for the achievement of research objectives.

All measurement scales in this study were adapted from previous studies. The use of scale from previous studies was chosen because building a new scale is very complex and risky (Fowler Jr, 2013). For the sake of uniformity, all scales in this study were measured with the 5-point Likert Scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

*Degree of interference.* This scale is adapted from previous research by Kelly et al. (2010) consisting of 4 (four) statement items. An example item is, "Ads are making it difficult for me to access my Facebook page." *Level of complexity.* This scale is adapted from previous research by

Kelly et al. (2010) consisting of 3 (three) statement items. An example item is, "The number of ads on Facebook makes visitors feel uncomfortable."

*Bad experience level.* This scale is adapted from previous research by Kelly et al. (2010) consisting of 3 (three) statement items. An example item is, "Opening a Facebook ad is not personally beneficial to me."

*Level of relevance.* This scale is adapted from previous research by Kelly et al. (2010) consisting of 3 (three) statement items. An example of an item is, "Facebook advertises products that suit the general youth."

*Attitude to advertising.* This scale is adapted from previous research by Kelly et al. (2010) consisting of 3 (three) statement items. An example of an item is, "Facebook advertises products that suit the general youth."

*Ad avoidance.* This scale is adapted from previous research by Cho and Cheon (2004) consisting of 3 (three) statement items. An example item is, "I intentionally avoid Facebook ads."

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

One hundred and fifty-four respondents participated in the survey. Analysis of respondents' demographic data shows that the majority are women (52%) although the difference is not too far. Respondents are in the age group of 18-22 years, or are one of the largest groups of Facebook users in Indonesia (Aditiya, 2021).

The instruments utilized in this study underwent preliminary testing to assess their convergent validity, internal consistency reliability, and discriminant validity. Firstly, convergent validity was evaluated by examining loading factors and average variance extracted (AVE), with recommended thresholds set at 0.70 for loading factors and 0.50 for AVE (Hair Jr et al., 2016). The results, detailed in Table 1, indicate that convergent validity and AVE meet the criteria for good validity.

Secondly, internal consistency reliability of the measurement model was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 1 demonstrates that both Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and Composite Reliability (CR) values surpass the minimum thresholds recommended by Hair Jr et al. (2016), suggesting that the variables in this study are reliable.

Thirdly, discriminant validity was tested by examining the square root values of AVE and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT). To meet the minimum requirement for discriminant validity, the square root of AVE for each variable should exceed the correlation between that variable and others in the research model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Additionally, the HTMT ratio should be lower than 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015). As depicted in Table 2, the specified criteria are satisfied.

Table 1. Measurement Model

Variable	Loading	$\alpha$	CR	AVE
Interference (X1)		0.87	0.91	0.71
X11	0.87			
X12	0.89			
X13	0.76			
X14	0.85			
Complexity (X2)		0.90	0.94	0.83
X21	0.90			
X22	0.93			
X23	0.90			
Experience (X3)		0.87	0.89	0.67
X31	0.76			
X32	0.91			
X33	0.79			

X34	0.80			
Relevance (X4)		0.88	0.93	0.81
X41	0.89			
X42	0.89			
X43	0.90			
Ad Attitude (M)		0.87	0.92	0.80
M1	0.91			
M2	0.89			
M3	0.87			
Avoidance (Y)		0.89	0.93	0.82
Y1	0.89			
Y2	0.91			
Y3	0.92			

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

Variab-les	X1	X2	X3	X4	M	Y
X1	(.85)	.09	.31	.29	.51	.49
X2	.01	(.91)	.52	.18	.39	.45
X3	-.22**	.46**	(.82)	.09	.16	.18
X4	-.25**	-.17**	-.05	(.90)	.77	.27
M	-.45**	-.36**	-.09	.67**	(.90)	.55
Y	.44**	.39**	.15	-.24**	-.49**	(.91)

Note : The diagonal value (in parentheses) is the square root of the AVE, while the value below the diagonal is the correlation between variables, the value above the diagonal is the HTMT ratio

The purpose of this study was to examine the indirect influence of all four independent variables (distraction, complexity, bad experience and relevance) on ad avoidance through attitudes towards advertising. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, research hypotheses will be discussed one by one in order to obtain a detailed picture of the research results.

First, the interference variable negatively affects attitudes towards advertising ( $\beta = -.30, p < .001$ ) which ultimately negatively affects ad avoidance ( $\beta = -.28, p < .01$ ). Indirectly, interference variables affect ad avoidance through attitudes towards advertising ( $\beta = .08, p < .05$ ). This proves Hypothesis 1 in this study.

Second, the complexity variable negatively affects attitudes towards advertising ( $\beta = -.24, p < .001$ ) which ultimately negatively affects ad avoidance ( $\beta = -.28, p < .01$ ). Indirectly, the complexity variable affects ad avoidance through attitudes towards advertising ( $\beta = .07, p < .05$ ). This proves Hypothesis 2 in this study.

Third, the variable of bad experience had an effect on attitudes towards advertising but was not statistically significant ( $\beta = .10, p = .74$ ) which ultimately negatively affected ad avoidance ( $\beta = -.28, p < .01$ ). Indirectly, the bad experience variable did not affect ad avoidance through attitudes towards ads ( $\beta = .01, p = .77$ ). This does not prove Hypothesis 3 in this study.

Fourth, the relevance variable has a positive effect on attitudes towards advertising ( $\beta = .57, p < .001$ ) which ultimately negatively affects ad avoidance ( $\beta = -.28, p < .01$ ). Indirectly, the relevance variable affects ad avoidance through attitudes towards advertising ( $\beta = -.16, p < .05$ ). This proves Hypothesis 4 in this study.

## CONCLUSION

As previously predicted, the variables of disruption, complexity and relevance of advertising on Facebook affect ad avoidance by young people. The relationship between the above variables is mediated by youth attitudes towards advertising on social media, especially Facebook. Thus this study makes a theoretical contribution to the literature in the field of advertising on social media by proposing attitudes towards advertising as mediators. Qualitative research has previously been conducted on the role of variables of disruption, complexity, bad experience and relevance in influencing ad avoidance by youth on Facebook (Kelly et al., 2010). However, the results of the

above study have not been quantitatively confirmed. The study successfully supported the argument Kelly et al. (2010) by providing empirical evidence.

However, it should be noted that the variable of bad experience has no direct or indirect effect on the avoidance of Facebook ads by youth. One possible cause is the nature of youth who are more courageous to try new things. Previous research has proven that youth are highly prepared to face new technologies (Mishra et al., 2018; Rolfe & Gilbert, 2006), so there is a possibility that bad experiences in the past will actually challenge them to do better in order to adopt technology.

The practical benefits of this research can be conveyed to advertisers including business actors, who advertise on social media, especially Facebook as the social media with the most access in Indonesia. The results of this study recommend that negative reactions are obtained by consumers if ads displayed on Facebook are considered intrusive, too complicated (complex) and irrelevant to the use of social media. Therefore, advertisers should be able to avoid ads that are too aggressive, displaying ads that are relatively simple and relevant to the needs of social media use by youth.

There are several limitations in this study that can be minimized by future research. First, this study is cross-sectional in nature where data collection is only done once at a certain time so that the description of the situation can only represent that point in time (Levin, 2006). Future research can minimize this risk by conducting longitudinal studies where data are taken at several points in time so as to better describe some variations in situations. Second, the population in this study is youth (18-22 years) as the second largest group of Facebook users in Indonesia (Aditiya, 2021). The study was deliberately designed without involving the age group of the majority of Facebook users in Indonesia (25-34 years) due to limited time and funds. Future research can take data on the age group of the majority of Facebook users in the hope of providing higher reliability to the results of this study.

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