

ATTITUDES OF CONSUMERS TOWARD BRAND OBSCURATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the effects on the “Non-Brand Obscuring TV Viewing Desires of TV Viewers” and “Positive Emotions Towards Obscured Brands of Viewers” of attitudes of consumers toward brand obscuration applications. A total of 874 questionnaires measured viewers’ brand obstruction attitudes. The questionnaire consisted of three parts was conducted on people living in Eskisehir which is a province of middle region of Turkey. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and regression analysis were applied. The results of analyses reveal five valid factors (TV watching pleasure, negative effect toward sponsorship, distract attention, ethics and commercial approach and brand acquaintance) and indicate significant effects between attitudes of consumers toward brand obscuration applications and non-brand obscuring TV viewing desires of TV viewers and positive emotions towards obscured brands of viewers.

Keywords: Brand, Brand Obscuring, Brand perception, TV Viewers, TV watching.

1. Introduction

Brand obscuration can be defined as covering, closing, masking a brand by TV broadcasters. In Turkey, brand obscuration is a general application by Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK) (<http://www.rtuk.org.tr/sayfalar/English.aspx>). This council has arranged television and radio broadcastings and sometimes bans some brands or products (e.g. alcoholic products and smoke). For this reason television channels prevent brands and some products appear according to the council directive. While this practices in general, there is extremely limited information about consumer reaction towards brand obscuration.

High moral virtue of protecting individuals and most vulnerable groups of society, namely children, teenagers against the “evil of unwanted images and messages” has always been an argumentative issue in various circles. Should they be protected or not, this discussion can be left to the philosopher, but the reality is as clear as a sun. People get expose to many images of which to some these messages may have fallen under” must be banned” category.

Commercials alone, though differs from country to country, carry messages in wide span from alcoholic beverages or tobacco products, even to guns. Television channels can be zapped, even TV sets can be switched of, the “most vulnerable” groups of society can be protected and somehow distanced from being directly exposed to “unwanted commercial” messages. What if individuals face with such product in a TV series? Even worse, what if people go to the movie and in one scene they see a person smoking a cigarette? Eureka! We have found a magic formula to prevent all of this happening: We should obscure such “unwanted” products by simply placing an animated flavour, for instance, on it. Imagine a “bad man” smoking a cigarette in a TV series, just as his character portrayed to in a way its scripted, he should be setting a bad moral and behavioural example. He may stay as is, so long as we put an animated flavour onto that smoking “object”. Brands sponsor TV programs by million Dollar budgets, yet their promotional efforts get blackout by obscuration. This study aims to unveil

Turkish consumers' perceptions and attitudes toward such practice of obscuring unwanted objects and sponsoring brands in TV series.

Based on the above-mentioned discussions and focusing on the product placement in marketing literatures, this paper aims to understand the how to understand and define the attitudes of consumers toward brand obscuration applications successfully in terms of TV viewers.

2. Method

The purpose of this paper is to explore the effects on the “Non-Brand Obscuring TV Viewing Desires of TV Viewers” and “Positive Emotions Towards Obscured Brands of Viewers” of attitudes of consumers toward brand obscuration applications. Firstly, we describe the attitudes based on perception of consumers toward brand obscuration applications. We identify the effects between the attitudes of TV viewers toward brand obscuration and the non-brand obscuring TV viewing desire and positive emotions towards obscured brands of viewers.

This study employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods. We discovered that there is no theoretical and empirical field study in literature about brand obscuration and attitudes of consumers toward brand obscuration applications. To generate statements that consisted of the domain of opinions about attitudes of consumers toward brand obscuration applications, in-depth interviews with 28 consumers in Eskisehir, Turkey were conducted by the authors themselves. These interviews were employed in finalizing the structured questionnaire, which was used in the field survey. After these in-depth interviews, there have been generated a total of 26 items. Three specialists and the interviewer agreed that 6 of the 20 items either overlapped in content or were not directly related with the target constructs of the study. Hence, 20 items were determined to be utilized for the study. A total of 20

statements were thus presented, and respondents were asked to indicate their preference on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “1 = strongly agree” to “5 = strongly disagree”.

A questionnaire form developed for the study consists of three sections. The first section of the form consist statements reflects consumers’ attitudes towards brand obscuration applications. The second section of the questionnaire contains two single statement related to “Non-Brand Obscuring TV Viewing Desires of TV Viewers” and “Positive Emotions Towards Obscured Brands of Viewers”. The last section of questionnaire is designed to collect demographic data on respondents.

The convenience sampling was employed in this study. The study was employed of 874 people in Turkey. Before the fieldwork started, the authors trained the interviewers about the objectives of the research and procedures of the fieldwork. Then the interviewers gather data from the selected sample of respondent via face-to-face interview technique. The time to explain the study and complete the questionnaire was approximately 15 minutes. A total of 1000 questionnaires were distributed, and 874 were completed, resulting in a return rate of 87 percent.

3. Findings and Results

3.1.Characteristics of Sample

Table 1 indicates the demographic profile of the sample. The sample consisted of 874 Turkish people, of whom 47 percent were male and 53 percent were female. Regarding the age distribution of the respondents; 23.6% of the sample is in 15-19 age range, 25.4% in 20-25 age range, 19.7% in 26-30 age range, 18.2% in 31-40 age range, 11.2% in 41-50 age range and 1.9% in 51 ages and over range. The demographics on monthly income identify two dominant categories: less than 334 USD (56.9%) and 335-667 USD (28.1%). Approximately 9 % of the respondents have monthly income over 668 USD-1000 USD and 2% of the

respondents have a monthly income over than 1.335 USD. Lastly, education status of the respondents consisted of university degree (33.5%), secondary school (49.3%), primary school (13.4%), literacy (2.7%) and postgraduate (1.1%).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

	Frequency	%		Frequency	%
Gender			Income		
Male	413	47.3	334 USD and <	497	56.9
Female	461	52.7	335 - 667 USD	246	28.1
			668 - 1000 USD	80	9.2
			1001 -1334 USD	30	3.4
			1335 USD and >	21	2.4
Age			Education		
15-19	206	23.6	Literacy	24	2.7
20-25	222	25.4	Primary school	117	13.4
26-30	172	19.7	Secondary school	430	49.3
31-40	159	18.2	University	293	33.5
41-50	98	11.2	Postgraduate	10	1.1
51 and >	17	1.9			

n=874

3.2.Brand Obscuration Attitudes

Estimation procedures of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) assume normal distributions of the responses. Prior to exploratory factor analysis (EFA), both univariate and multivariate non-normality were examined. Univariate non-normality was tested using skewness and kurtosis. The extreme among all the variables was -1.18 for kurtosis and .97 for skewness for one variable, which was within the acceptable limits (Kline, 1998). After the normal distribution testing, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was employed in order to ascertain the factor structure. Orthogonal rotation (varimax) was chosen for exploratory factor analysis. Orthogonal extraction, using varimax rotation suits the research purposes and the need to reduce a large number of variables to a small set of uncorrelated variables (Hair et al., 1995). Varimax rotation attempts to minimize the number of variables that have high loadings on a factor, enhancing the interpretability of the factors (Hopkinson and Pujari, 1999). Three items

that did not load strongly (< 0.40) on the intended factors were dropped for subsequent analysis.

Table 2. Respondents' Attitudes towards Brand Obscuration

Factors	Factor Loadings (β)	Means	S.D.	Eigenvalues (% of variances)
<i>Factor 1: Brand Acquaintance</i>				
Although the brand is obscured I know the brand because of its color.	0.76	2.46	1.10	4.44 (26.16)
Although the brand is obscured I know the brand because of its logo.	0.74	2.41	1.09	
Although the brand is obscured I know the brand because of its shape or image.	0.73	2.28	1.07	
I know the familiar brand even if it is obscured.	0.70	2.24	1.06	
<i>Factor 2: Ethics and Commercial Approach</i>				
Brand obscure is an injustice application towards TV viewers.	0.72	2.55	1.18	1.87 (11.03)
I think brand obscure is not ethical application.	0.62	2.76	1.15	
I prefer to watch a TV program without brand obscure.	0.61	2.16	1.18	
<i>Factor 3: Distract Attention</i>				
If I like the TV programs I pay more attention to brands.	0.74	2.97	1.27	1.56 (9.18)
If brand completely obscure, I endeavor to know the brand in other scenes.	0.74	3.13	1.30	
If obscured brand is big on the TV screen I easily recognize it.	0.58	2.50	1.14	
My recognition is difficult if I don't know brand before.	0.45	2.41	1.13	
<i>Factor 4: Negative Effect Toward Sponsorship</i>				
Brand obscure harms sponsorship application.	0.86	2.70	1.17	1.23 (7.24)
Brand obscure reduces sponsorship application on TV.	0.83	2.68	1.15	
Brand obscure is unfair to companies requiring advertise their brands.	0.51	2.54	1.19	
<i>Factor 5: TV Watching Pleasure</i>				
Brand obscure negatively affect TV viewing pleasure.	0.74	2.28	1.18	1.00 (5.93)
Brand obscure application attracts my attention more than regular times.	0.70	2.19	1.17	
Brand obscure distracts my attention.	0.67	2.36	1.17	

Factor analysis was done with 20 statements and 3 of the statements were dropped after the reliability analysis. There was a total of 17 scale items that could influence or determine factors related to the consumers' attitudes towards brand obscuration applications; thus principal component factor analysis was used to sort out and classify these variables as well as to convert them into main factors. In parallel to Kaiser's (1974) criteria, only factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were retained; and only items with factor loadings and communalities of greater than 0.40 were included in the final factor structure. Cronbach's alpha values for each dimension were computed to confirm the factor's internal consistency.

To apply factor analysis on items underlying the consumers' attitudes towards brand obscuration applications, it is necessary to test the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (Zhang et al., 2003). For the attitude variables, Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) was 0,81, indicating that the sample was adequate for factor analysis (Kaiser 1974). The Bartlett Test for Sphericity (BTS) was 3598.49 ($p < 0.01$), indicating that the hypothesis variance and covariance matrix of variables as an identity matrix were rejected; therefore, factor analysis was appropriate.

According to principal axis analysis, five factors had an eigenvalue equal to or greater than 1.0 (Kaiser, 1974), explaining a total of 59.56 percent of the variance. These factors were termed "Brand Acquaintance", "Ethics and Commercial Approach", "Distract Attention", "Negative Effect toward Sponsorship", and "TV Watching Pleasure" respectively.

In the factor analysis, the percentage of the variance explained by each factor indicates the relative significance of the factors. Accordingly, the first factor, labelled Brand Acquaintance, explained a large part (26.16%) of the total variance, having a greater significance than the other four factors. The second factor, labelled Ethics and Commercial Approach, explained

11.03 percent of the variance. This factor contained three items about brand obscuring to point of ethics and commercial of TV viewers’.

The third factor, labelled Distract Attention, explained 9.18 percent of the variance. It consisted of four items, related to viewer’s attention towards observed brands when they watching TV. The fourth factor, labelled Negative Effect toward Sponsorship, explained 7.24 percent of the variance. This factor consisted of three items. This factor related to the effects on sponsorship of observed brands. Lastly, the fifth factor, labelled Watching TV Watching Pleasure, explained 5.93 percent of the total variance. This factor contained three items about TV watching pleasure of the observing brand. All five constructs met the criterion that a factor loading should be equal to or greater than 0.40. The Cronbach’s alphas were greater than 0.57 and the total of scale reliability was 0.76. Typically, reliability coefficients of 0.70 or higher are considered adequate (Kim et al., 2003; Nunnally 1978). For all 17 items, the alpha was 0.76 and it can be evaluate as adequate level. However, one factor has 0.57 alpha value. Nunnally (1978) and Child (1970) further states that permissible alpha values can be slightly lower given that it is above 0.60 for newer scales.

The Pearson correlation coefficients among the variables are presented in Table 3. The bivariate relationships indicated that all of the variables significantly correlated (a range of 0.20–0.62). Aspects-based scales were generated by summing the relevant items. By running descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation were found for each factor. According to descriptive statistics, the factor of Distract Attention had a higher score (mean 2.75) than other factors.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix and Descriptive (Mean, Std. Deviation)

	1	2	3	4	5
Brand Acquaintance	1.00				
Ethics and Commercial Approach	0.30**	1.00			
Distract Attention	0.41**	0.31**	1.00		
Negative Effect Toward Sponsorship	0.22**	0.62**	0.22**	1.00	
TV Watching Pleasure	0.32**	0.36**	0.34**	0.20**	1.00
Means	2.35	2.49	2.75	2.64	2.27
(S.D.)	(0.82)	(0.84)	(0.85)	(0.92)	(0.91)

*p < 0,05; **p < 0,01; (S.D.): Standard Deviation

To identify the effects between the attitudes of TV viewers toward brand obscuration and the non-brand obscuring TV viewing desire and positive emotions towards obscured brands of viewers, a multiple regression analysis was utilized.

The effects between the attitudes of TV viewers toward brand obscuration and the non-brand obscuring TV viewing desire seen in Table 4. The results of the regression model indicated that the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 154.50$; $p < 0.01$), and 48 percent of the overall non-brand obscuring TV viewing desire was explained by the attitudes of TV viewers toward brand obscuration. The regression coefficients indicated that ethics and commercial approach ($\beta = 0.61$; $p < 0.01$) has the strongest effects among the other factors. As seen from table 4, distract attention ($\beta = 0.13$; $p < 0.01$), brand acquaintance ($\beta = 0.13$; $p < 0.01$) and negative effect toward sponsorship ($\beta = 0.04$; $p < 0.01$) indicated a statistically significant effect with the non-brand obscuring TV viewing desire respectively. The results of regression analysis indicated that the TV watching pleasure ($\beta = 0.25$; $p < 0.01$) indicated no significant relationship ($p > 0.05$) with the non-brand obscuring TV viewing desire.

Table 4. Regression Results on Non-Brand Obscuring TV Viewing Desire

Factors	Dependent Variable					
	Non-Brand Obscuring TV Viewing Desire					
	Std. β	t	p	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F
Brand Acquaintance	0.13	5.43	0.01**			
Ethics and Commercial Approach	0.61	24.68	0.01**			
Distract Attention	0.13	5.27	0.01**	0.48	0.48	154.59**
Negative Effect Toward Sponsorship	0.04	1.61	0.01**			
TV Watching Pleasure	0.25	10.18	0.10			

*p < 0,05; **p < 0,01

The second multiple regression model was concerned with the effect between the attitudes of TV viewers toward brand obscuration and positive emotions towards obscured brands of viewers. The results of multiple regressions seen in Table. 5. The results of the regression model indicated that the regression model was statistically significant (F = 21. 56; p < 0. 01), and 11 percent of the overall positive emotions towards obscured brands of viewers was explained by the attitudes of TV viewers toward brand obscuration applications. The regression coefficients indicated that the attitudes of brand effect ($\beta = 0. 21$; p < 0. 01), distract attention ($\beta = 0. 20$; p < 0. 01), ethics and commercial approach ($\beta = 0. 11$; p < 0. 01), and brand acquaintance ($\beta = 0.11$; p < 0.01) indicated statistically significant effects with positive emotions towards obscured brands of viewers respectively. The results of analysis indicated that the TV watching pleasure ($\beta = 0.02$; p < 0.01) indicated no significant effect (p > 0.05) with the positive emotions towards obscured brands.

Table 5. Regression Results on Positive Emotions Towards Obscured Brands of Viewers

Factors	Dependent Variable					
	Positive Emotions Towards Obscured Brands					
	Std. β	t	p	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F
Brand Acquaintance	0.11	3.59	0.01**			
Ethics and Commercial Approach	0.11	3.51	0.01**			
Distract Attention	0.20	6.27	0.01**	0.11	0.11	21.56**
Negative Effect Toward Sponsorship	0.21	6.52	0.01**			
TV Watching Pleasure	-0.02	-0.78	0.43			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has presented the findings about attitudes of consumers toward brand obscuration applications. The main finding and contribution of this study was to develop a new scale concerning attitudes of consumers toward brand obscuration. Literature of brand obscuration wasn't found, and not many scholars have been previously touched in this area. Thus, this study will be a significant contribution for the future researchers and will also ease their work in their quest for investigating other dimensions of the subject.

Factor analysis was revealed five latent factors that titled as brand acquaintance, TV watching pleasure, distract attention, negative effect toward sponsorship, ethics and commercial approach. These factors are deemed to be the main denominators for the brand obscuration concept. The findings also underlies that consumers were not viewing the brand obscuration as a whole, but they rather evaluates the concept under different pillars.

Using a regression analysis, the derived beta coefficients could be used to explain the relative importance of the five factors in terms of their contributions to the variance in the non-brand

obscuring tv viewing desires of viewers and positive emotions towards obscured brands of viewers. The empirical results have indicated that ethics and commercial approach factor carried the most weight in explaining non-brand obscuring tv viewing desires of viewers. The results of this study also indicate a significant effect of brand obscuration dimensions on dependent variables.

The findings of this study provide insight on attitudes of consumers toward brand obscuration applications and factors with respect to attitudes of consumers toward brand obscuration. However, the interpretation of findings related with attitudes of consumers toward brand obscuration need to be considered within the context of the limitation in this research. Hence, there are a number of limitations and suggestions for future research related to this current study. In terms of research methodology, one limitation of this study comes from the fact that this research was conducted only in one province (Eskisehir) in Turkey. The second limitation is related to the sampling methodology. Although descriptive research calls for probability sampling, non-probability sampling was used for this study. Therefore, no assessment of sampling error was possible. Consequently, the results may not adequately represent the total population in Turkey. Another limitation is related to comparison scope of the research. The research finding cannot compare with results of other countries. As a result, the results of this research should be interpreted in this manner.

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