

**Cultural attitude towards print media advertising of
controversial products among female consumers in Penang**

Hassan Gholipour Fereidouni

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DEDICATION

*I would like to dedicate this thesis with my greatest appreciation to my
beloved PER and MAR*

*Ali Akbar Gholipour Fereidouni
Fatima Ekhtiari Amiri*

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In the name of God, the most Gracious, the most Merciful

I thank God, for given me inspiration, patient, time and strengths to finish this work.

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti perbezaan dikalangan tiga etnik pengguna wanita di Malaysia (Melayu, Cina dan India), umur, pendidikan, dan taraf perkahwinan pengguna dengan sikap terhadap pengiklanan pakaian dalam wanita dan program menguruskan badan. Di samping itu kajian ini juga ingin mengkaji hubungan antara nilai budaya yang diperkenalkan oleh Hofstede (kolektivisme dan pengelakkan ketidakpastian) dan sikap terhadap pengiklanan barangan berkontraversi. Data dikumpul melalui soal selidik dari 165 pengguna wanita di Pulau Pinang. Dengan menggunakan analisis regresi dan ujian perbezaan, kajian ini mendapati bahawa wanita Melayu lebih terasa tersinggung bagi kedua-dua pengiklanan yang ofensif. Tambahan pula, penemuan mendapati tidak terdapat perbezaan antara umur, pendidikan, dan taraf perkahwinan dengan sikap terhadap pengiklanan produk berkontraversi. Penemuan mendapati terdapat hubungan positif antara kolektivisme dan pengelakkan ketidakpastian dengan sikap terhadap pengiklanan barangan berkontraversi. Dapatan kajian akan dapat membantu pengiklan dan pemasar untuk mereka mengiklan produk mereka di pasaran Malaysia.

ABSTRACT

The present study is trying to identify the differences among female consumers of three ethnic (Malay, Chinese, and Indian), age groups, education level, and marital status with respect to attitude towards advertising of female underwear and slimming program. In addition, another goal of the study is to find out the relationship between Hofstede's cultural values (Collectivism and Uncertainty Avoidance) and attitude towards advertising of controversial products. Data were collected through questionnaires from 165 women consumers in Penang Island, Malaysia. Using regression analysis and test of differences, the study found that Malay women were offended by both mentioned offensive advertisements. In addition, findings illustrate that there is not any significant difference among age groups, education levels, and marital status on attitude towards advertising of controversial products. The findings show that there is a positive relationship between collectivism and uncertainty avoidance and attitude towards advertising of controversial product. These results will be helpful for advertisers and marketers on how to advertise their products in Malaysian market.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with problem background section that provides an overview on the importance of issue that we are going to study. The next section is the problem statement that briefly describes the main questions which this research intends to answer. This will be followed by the objectives of the study and research questions. Then, it will be a section on the significant of this study. The next section is terminology where some of the most frequently used terminology in the present study is defined. The last section is the organization of present study which contains a brief summary of the contents of the chapters 2-5 of this thesis.

1.2 Background of the Study

In recent years there has been an increasing use of controversial advertising in order to attract audience's attention to a product or service advertisement (Waller, 1999; Lyons, 1996; Matthews, 1997). Controversial advertising may be perceived offensive by some target audience (with different demographic characteristics and cultural values). Particularly when the nature of product itself may be perceived as controversial, and any promotion of these kinds of products and services may generate negative responses. Examples of controversial products are female/male underwear, cigarettes, alcohol, contraceptives, condoms or feminine hygiene products and political advertising (Wilson & West, 1995). A distinctive advertisement may be unforgettable to a target audience, but the effect may be either positive or negative (Wong, 2000). There have been cases where

consumers have felt so offended by some advertisements that they have put pressure on advertisers to change their advertisements, encouraged the media to stop accepting the advertisements, or even boycotted the company and its products (Tilles, 1998). Similarly, Waller and Fam (2001) found that the effect of advertising of controversial products can be offence for Asian countries and can lead to a number of actions like negative publicity, complaints to advertising regulatory bodies and falling sales that eventually leads to decrease in market share and firm's profitability. To illustrate, Nike tried to use Arabic word on athletic shoes. The word was similar to the word "Allah" the word for God. For Muslims, "Allah" is a holy symbol and not to be represented on shoes that will be covered in dirt and walked on. The blunder was discovered by the Council on American-Islamic Relations who demanded that Nike apologize for the use of the logo (CNN, 1998). Another example, Procter & Gamble blundered in Japan when trying to sell "Camay" soap. In the advertisement, husband enters the bathroom and touches her wife favorably. The Japanese considered this behavior to be inappropriate and in poor taste for advertisement (Payne, 2005). Therefore, in order to minimize the negative impacts that advertising of offensive product bring, advertisers and marketers need to gain a deeper understanding of different culture (Waller, Fam & Erdogan, 2005) and understanding the impact of advertising of controversial products on consumers in different cultures (Chan, Li, Diehl & Terlutter, 2007). This means that knowledge about consumer's culture (Waller, 1999) and knowledge of consumer's sensitivities towards advertising can yield insights into the effectiveness of advertising (Mehta, 2000). And also, various publics' attitudes toward advertising of controversial products spread knowledge about the role of

advertising as seen by diverse groups in a society and can potentially guide for corrective actions (Wills & Ryans, 1982).

The present study will focus on Malaysian females' attitude toward advertising of controversial products. Malaysia is a multi-cultural country and has approximately 27 million people in 2008, with three main ethnic groups (Malay, Chinese, and Indian). It has a mixture of languages (Malay is the official language with various Chinese dialects such as Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien, and Mandarin and English is widely spoken) and numerous religions being practiced (Islam, Buddhist, Taoism, Hinduism, Christianity, etc). In recent years Malaysia has been facing some very large changes: politically, economically, socially, and technologically. These changes have spread western ideas, the changing role of women in society and opening up the country's economy (Frith, 1996). The opening up of the Malaysia's economy has meant that there will be some advertisements for products (for example, advertising of products such as female/male underwear, female hygiene products, sexual disease prevention) or visual/verbal images that may offend some people in Malaysia, or contravene with the traditional values (Waller & Fam, 2000). The opening up of the Malaysia's economy has meant that there will be some advertisements for products (for example, advertising of products such as female/male underwear, female hygiene products, sexual disease prevention) or visual/verbal images that may offend some people in Malaysia, or confront with the traditional values (Tai, 1997). For example, Fam & Waller (2003) showed addictive products and gender/sex related products advertisements are highly offensive to

Malaysian. They also found that advertising of health body care products are moderately offensive for Malaysians.

Therefore, it is a major concern for marketers and advertisers to consider cultural sensitiveness and limit any offence to any of various cultural groups (Shao & Waller, 1993), especially in multicultural countries like Malaysia; otherwise some embarrassing mistakes can occur (Shao & Waller, 1993).

On the other hand, according to Nielsen Company (2008), the Malaysian advertising market raised in the second half of 2007, ended the year with a 15% growth as compared to 2006 to reach RM 5.5 billion. Besides, advertising in magazine has increased 6.7 % in 2007 as compared to 2006. According to Magazine Publisher Association Malaysia (2006) some of the most popular woman and family magazines are Mastika, Remaja, Mingguan Wanita, Wanita, Mangga, and URTV. The number of readers of woman and family magazines in Malaysia is high. For example, the readers of women magazine in Malaysia are about 2,835,000 (MPAM, 2006). Therefore, due to growth in magazine advertisement expenditure and high readership of women magazine in Malaysia, it will be important for marketers and advertisers to have more knowledge and information about readers of magazines in Malaysia.

1.3 Problem statement

Based on the above discussion, this study is trying to identify how culture influences female customers' perception on advertising of controversial products. The present study also would like to identify whether age, education level, and marital status will have any

influence on perception on advertising of controversial products. The answer to these questions will help contribute to the knowledge about advertising of controversial products in Malaysia.

1.4 Research Objectives

The present study aims to fulfill the following objectives:

- 1- To identify the differences between Malay, Chinese, and Indian females with respect to their attitude towards advertising of female underwear and slimming program.

- 2- To identify the differences between age groups, education levels, marital status with respect to attitude towards advertising female underwear and slimming program.

- 3- To examine the relationship between collectivism culture and attitude towards advertising of controversial products.

- 4- To examine the relationship between uncertainty avoidance culture and attitude towards advertising of controversial products.

1.5 Research Questions

To achieve the above-mentioned research objectives, answers are required for the following questions.

- 1- Is there any significant difference between ethnics groups (Malay, Chinese, and Indian) with respect to the attitude towards advertising of female underwear and slimming program?

- 2- Is there any significant difference between age groups, education levels, and marital status with respect to the attitude towards advertising of female underwear and slimming program?

3- Is there any significant relationship between collectivism culture and attitude towards advertising of controversial products?

4- Is there any significant relationship between uncertainty avoidance culture and attitude toward advertising of controversial products?

1.6 Significance of the study

There are some important reasons why this study needs to be conducted:

First, understanding of women's perception and their attitudes towards advertising of controversial products in magazines is important, because females' purchasing behavior and product selection might be based on their attitude toward advertising (Bush, Smith & Martin, 1999). Furthermore, Waller (2003) discussed that the main strategy for attraction of potential customers is based on familiarity with customers' behavior, demographic characteristics and cultures, specifically when the product itself may be controversial, e.g. condoms and feminine hygiene products.

Therefore, by analyzing the attitudes towards advertising of controversial products, this study can be used to help marketers develop an understanding of cultural sensitivities and what advertisement is perceived offensive by some audience in society, like Malaysia. Therefore, the results of this study will be offered to domestic and international marketers wanting to advertise controversial products in magazines in Malaysia.

Second, in relation to advertising of controversial products numerous studies were carried out in the West, Arabian, and South East Asian countries (For example, Christy, 2006; Phau & Prendergast, 2002; Wilson & West 1981; Fahy, Smart, Pride & Ferrell, 1995;

Michell & Al-Mossawi, 1999). But according to Waller (2007) further researches should be undertaken on attitudes towards advertising of controversial products and offensive advertisements. Waller (2007) mentioned future studies could attempt to measure levels of offensiveness towards specific advertisements, comparing offensiveness with variables like gender and age, religion, education, personality, race/ethnicity, and type of mass media, etc. In addition, the literature search indicated no research have been conducted to compare the responses of the three ethnic females in Malaysia to advertising of controversial products, and the culture differences between these three groups make them ideal to study the impact of consumers' culture on the attitude towards advertising of controversial products. Hopefully the present study will provide some information for future researches.

1-7 Definition of Key Terms

This section provides definition for some of the terminologies that are frequently used in this thesis.

1.7.1 Controversial products: Wilson and West (1981) described them as: products, services, or concepts that for reasons of delicacy, decency, morality, or even fears tend to elicit reactions of distaste, disgust, offence, or outrage when mentioned or when openly presented (for example, personal hygiene, female/ male underwear, birth control, mental illness, slimming program).

1.7.2 Attitudes: Wilkie (1986) described that “attitudes are summary evaluations of objects (e.g. advertising is a good/ bad thing)”. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) defined attitude “an index of the degree to which a person likes or dislikes an object”.

1.7.3 Culture: The totality of humans' socially transmitted behavior patterns including ways of thinking and beliefs, feeling and reactions, arts, institutions, and all other products of human intellectual and artistic activities(Hoeclin, 1995).

1.7.4 Individualism vs. Collectivism: on the one side versus its opposite, collectivism, that is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. On the individualist side we find societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family. On the collectivist side, we find societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents) which continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 2001).

1.7.5 Uncertainty Avoidance: deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity; it ultimately refers to man's search for Truth. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are novel, unknown, surprising, and different from usual. Uncertainty avoiding cultures try to minimize the possibility of such situations by strict laws and rules, safety and security measures, and on the philosophical and religious level by a belief in absolute Truth; "there can only be one Truth and we have it" (Hofstede, 2001).

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

Following the first chapter, the rest of the thesis is structured as follow: The second chapter covers literature review on factors relating to this research. Theoretical issues and hypotheses which were developed based on the literature review are also presented in this study. Chapter 3 is analytical framework and research procedures. This chapter describes the methodology used to collect the data in order to solve the research question. Chapter 4 is finding and interpretation. This chapter presents some tables with the entire data obtained showing finding on each question. Lastly, chapter 5 presents the discussion of the results. The findings of the research are discussed in context of its implication, limitation of the study, suggestion for future research and conclusion.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with advertising section in which advertising, offensive advertising, and advertising of controversial products are described. The next section discusses the previous research studies on offensive advertising. The following section involves magazine advertising and magazine advertising in Malaysia. Then, the concept of culture; Hofstede's cultural dimensions; and the affect of cultural dimensions on attitudes toward advertising and offensive advertising are discussed. The next section focuses on demographic characteristics and attitudes towards advertising. In following section theory used in this study, theory of individual's morality and ethical judgment is explained. The final section discusses the hypotheses that are formulated to be evaluated in this research.

2.2 Advertising

The main tool for communicating marketing message to customer audiences is advertising. Kotler and Keller (2006) defined advertising as; "is any paid form of nonpersonal presentation and promotion of ideas, good, or services by an identified sponsor". Advertisements can be a cost-effective way to spread messages, whether to build a brand preference or to educate people. Advertisement offers an enhanced ability to interact with a desired target and help stronger link between marketers and consumers (Nicovich, Boller & Cornwell, 2005).

According to Kotler and Keller (2006), some aims of advertising are to create brand awareness and knowledge of new products or new features of existing products; create preference and conviction, and purchase of a product; stimulate repeat purchase of products; convince current purchase that they made the right choice. Similarly, advertisements objectives maybe, for instance, to convince consumers that they like the products, to increase sales by building consumer loyalty, to let people act, or to educate the consumers (Usunier & Lee, 2005).

One of the most culture-bound factors of the marketing mix is advertising, because advertising is based on language and communication. Moreover, advertising is based on words or images, is the strongest link between marketers and their potential audiences in marketing communication (Usunier & Lee, 2005). Therefore, marketers and advertisers must consider culture as the most important issue to create advertising strategy and execution. For marketers and advertisers, it is important to create a well message strategy (what the advertising attempt to impart the brand) and message execution (how the advertising expresses the brand) and also advertisers must be sure advertising does not exceed social and legal norms (Kotler & Keller, 2006). To be socially responsible, advertisers must be careful not to offend the general public as well as any ethnic groups, racial minorities, or special- interest groups (Kotler & Keller, 2006). For example, a study showed that there is a relationship between the 'Ideal Woman' depicted in advertising and body image dissatisfaction and self-report of eating disorders in Hong Kong. The result showed that exposure to advertising was linked to eating disorders and body image dissatisfaction (Prendergast, Leung & Douglas, 2002).

Therefore, when advertisers want to advertise products, particularly potentially offensive products, must be aware of the reaction (positive or negative) of their target audience, because they could be interpreted differently based on their background (beliefs, norms, values, mores, demographic characteristics) and sometimes may contravene their background. Generally, target audiences prefer advertisements which are tailored to their norms, values (Usunier & Lee, 2005).

Hence, the above issue needs particular attention, when advertisers are promoting their products, services, or concepts in a multicultural country like Malaysia, because may be their advertisements offend some segments, ethnics, or groups in society. In following section the offensive advertising will be defined and explained.

2.2.1 Offensive Advertising

One of the issues related to the advertisement is the offensive advertising. Discussions of offensive advertising was founded 27 years ago, dispersed among topics such as “unmentionables” (Wilson & West, 1981), offensive/irritating/intrusive advertising (Waller, 1999; Aaker & Bruzzone, 1985), shocking appeals (Dahl, Frankenberger & Manchandra, 2003), sex and decency issues (Boddewyn & Kunz, 1991), and feminist criticism (White, 1990).

Offensive advertising is explained as: “advertising that, either by kind of product or execution can draw out reactions of embarrassment, distaste, disgust, offense from one or more segments of the population” (Katsanis, 1994). According to Boddewyn (1991),

“offensive advertisements involve products, services, concepts, claims and/or imageries that elicit reaction of distaste, repulsion or outrage”. Dahl, Frankenberger, and Manchandra (2003) proposed that offensive advertising is an act and/or a process that violates the norm. Offensive advertising includes messages that violate laws and customs, moral or social code.

According to Prendergast, Ho & Phau (2002) place, time, demographic characteristics, and culture are factors affecting consumers’ levels of perceived offensiveness of an advertisement. For instance, female consumers had a lower tolerance level toward advertisements demonstrating bareness than male consumers (Prendergast *et al*, 2002). And also education plays a role in the perception of offensive advertising but not in the same way for different cultures (Chan *et al*, 2007). The female hygiene napkin was bad to show in public in some countries. Now, advertising of this product is slowly gaining acceptance and is advertised more commonly (Chan *et al*, 2007).

Showing controversial images and controversial products in advertisements have been increased in recent years dramatically. According to Waller *et al*, (2005), reasons for increasing of these kind of advertisements are: “the use of global promotional strategies; creative thinking of less offensive ways of communicating the message; the desensitizing of the community; the growth of new media; people becoming more aware of some products; and agencies try to “cut through the clutter” to gain awareness”.

According to Crosier and Erdogan (2001) a number of famous companies, such as Wonderbra, French Connection UK, Love Kylie, Benetton, have undertaken

controversial advertising campaigns that have been a successful strategy. They have gained a large amount of public notice with surprisingly economical in spite of the fact that employed controversial campaigns. But, some campaigns have received bad results from their controversial advertisements and have been damaging to the company and its brand image (Pope, Voges & Brown, 2004). For example, Calvin Klein experienced a problem which had been criticized for its advertisement with sexual images and had to publicly apologize after the offence caused by a campaign that was believed to have used images of child pornography (Irvine, 2000). Another example, a famous brand of tea alienated the Saudi Arabia host using his left hand to serve tea to one of his guest. Moreover, the guest was wearing shoes, which is considered in Saudi Arabia to be rudeness (Usunier & Lee, 2005). Ford and LaTour (1993) have shown that if women perceive they are being portrayed inappropriately, their perception may reduce purchase intention and/or damage sponsor image.

For marketers controversial advertising can be successful or damaging, depending on what happens in the market. The result of a controversial advertising can be offensive to some part of the viewing audience (Crosier & Erdogan, 2001). This offensiveness can lead to a number of bad actions from consumers, such as negative word-of-mouth, complaints to advertising regulatory bodies, reductions in purchasing levels of the products advertised, and even company boycotts (Crosier & Erdogan 2001; Waller, 2005). Therefore, advertising agencies and marketers must try to consider carefully cost and benefit of undertaking a controversial campaign (Waller, 2002).

Further, Phau and Prendergast (2001) investigated that consumers perceive an advertisement offensive because the product is not suitable for open discussion or public display, the advertising execution is considered to be irritating or the type of advertisement is not appropriate for a particular medium.

In present study, the focus is on advertising of potentially offensive product which is discussed below.

2.2.2 Advertising of Controversial Products

Some advertisements, by the nature of the product, may be perceived as controversial and any promotion of their product may generate negative responses, for instance condoms, female/male underwear, cigarettes, alcohol or feminine hygiene products (Wilson & West 1995; Schuster & Powell, 1987). Earlier studies about advertising of controversial products have mainly looked at these products in terms of the products being “unmentionables”, “decent products”, “socially sensitive products” and “controversial products” (Wilson & West 1981; Rehman & Brooks, 1987; Shao, 1993; Shao & Hill, 1994; Fahy *et al*, 1995). According to Wilson and West (1981) defined “unmentionables” as: “... products, services, or concepts that for reasons of delicacy, decency, morality, or even fear tend to elicit reactions of distaste, disgust, offence, or outrage when mentioned or when openly presented”. Katsanis (1994) also added that “unmentionables” were “offensive, embarrassing, harmful, socially unacceptable or controversial to some significant segment of the population”.

Fam, Waller and Erdogan (2002) used factor analysis to generate four groups for controversial products:

(1) Gender/Sex Related Products: These include female and male underwear, condoms, female contraceptives and female hygiene products. Taylor and Raymond (2000) stated that religion and social values regarding modesty and the offensive nature of the products make it difficult to promote socially sensitive products. For example, Fam *et al*, (2002) found devout Muslims perceived the advertising of gender/sex-related products very offensive.

(2) Social/Political Groups: These apply to advertisements relating to racially extreme groups, religious denominations, guns and armaments, funeral services, and political parties. Generally, the reasons for the offence could be linked to racist images, anti-social behavior and to some extent, reacting to the promotion of other religious denominations and funeral services, which can be culturally offensive (Fam *et al*, 2002). For example, death is a bad sign in Malaysia. A death in a family, especially among Malays and Chinese, is perceived as “bad luck” to the whole family between one and three years after death. Advertising a funeral service will be perceived bad and is reflected by a high offensive in Malaysia (Fam & Waller, 2003).

(3) Addictive Products: These contain cigarettes, alcohol and gambling. These types of products are mentioned as controversial because of society dominant religion and country’s regulation. For example, in societies where Islam is the main religion, (like

Malaysia) advertising of alcoholic products is totally banned or heavily restricted (Rice & Al-Mossawi, 2002).

(4) Health and Care Products: These consist of weight-loss programs (slimming program), charities and sexual diseases drugs. Social values, religion beliefs and the distasteful nature of the products and services make it hard to advertise in public. For example, advertising of these products will be seen as challenging the obvious for Muslim consumers. Muslims believe that one deserves to be punished (infected with sexual disease) if a believer adopts a sexual lifestyle contrary to the shari'ah (Fam *et al*, 2002).

The products to be used in the analysis for present study are chosen from category 1 and 4: female underwear and slimming program. These were chosen as they were used in previous studies as example of controversial products and also may generate a response of offensiveness with respondents. To evidence, Rehman and Brooks (1987) mentioned female underwear as a controversial product. And also according to Fam *et al* (2002) slimming program is a controversial product because one who suffers of being overweight is a subject too personal to discuss in public. Advertising of these products will be seen as challenging the obvious.

2.2.3 Previous Researches about Offensive Advertising (Controversial Products)

There are numerous studies that focus on the offensive advertising. For example, Fahy, *et al* (1995) asked respondents about their attitudes towards the advertising of alcoholic

beverages, products directed at children and health/sex-related products on television. Comparing the attitudes according to sex, age, income, region, education and race, they found that women particularly aged 50 and over, had much higher negative opinion for such television advertisements. Waller (1999) compared gender in Australia and found females were significantly more offended than males, and were offended by the execution rather than the so-called controversial products. Rehman and Brooks (1987) focused feminine hygiene products, undergarments, alcohol, pregnancy tests, contraceptives, medications, and venereal disease services as examples of controversial products. When respondents were asked about the acceptability of several products being advertised on television, only two products were perceived as undesirable by a sample of students: contraceptives for women and contraceptives for men.

According to Alter (1982) feminine hygiene products has been mentioned in industry articles as having advertisements that are in “poor taste”, “irritating” and “most hated”. Shao (1993) took on a large global study of advertising agency attitudes regarding various issues, including the legal limitations of advertising of “sensitive” products, which can be controversial for the agency which deals with these kinds of products. They found that, cigarettes, alcohol, condoms, female hygiene products, female undergarments, male undergarments, sexual diseases have been seen offensive by respondents. Aaker and Bruzzone (1985) found that the three most disgusting commercials in the United State were those encouraging consumers to purchase the following products: feminine hygiene products, women’s undergarments, and hemorrhoid treatment.

Barnes and Dotson (1990) discussed offensive television advertising and identified two different dimensions: offensive products and offensive execution. The products in their list included condoms, female hygiene products, female undergarments, and male undergarments. Waller (1999) revealed that the three most offensive products/services in Australia were those related to racially extremist groups, religious denominations and feminine hygiene products. Schlossberg (1991) indicated that generally people do not want to hear and have negative attitudes about the dangers of sex because of the anxiety caused by the dramatic spread and terminal effects of AIDS. Phau and Prendergast (2001) did a research in Singapore and found that the three most offensive products were chat-line services, sexual diseases treatments/prevention and dating services. Phau and Prendergast (2001) also found that these attitudes vary according to demographics, particularly in terms of gender and education.

Prendergast and Huang (2003) indicated that the most offensive product/service to be advertised is gambling, followed by chat-line service, condoms and feminine hygiene products in Hong Kong. Also they found that the least offensive item is alcoholic drinks. Irvine (2000) indicated the strategic use of controversial images has been successful in gaining attention and increasing profits for a number of organizations. Fam *et al*, (2002) and Michell and Al-Mossawi (1999) showed the influence of religious beliefs on attitudes towards advertising of controversial products. Taylor and Raymond (2000) stated that religion and social values concerning modesty and the offensive nature of the products make it difficult to promote socially sensitive products. Park, Weigold & Treise (1995) in a cross-cultural study found that American respondents were more liberal in their

attitude regarding the use of offensive sexual images than South Korean respondents. In another cross-culture study, Chan *et al.*, (2007) examined how Chinese and German consumers react to print advertisements that are potentially offensive. They found that Chinese respondents were less accepting of offensive advertising.

2. 3 Magazine advertising

Marketers and advertisers use different mediums to advertise their products and services, for example television, direct email, radio, outdoor, yellow pages, newsletters, brochures, telephone, internet, newspaper, magazines. Magazines, periodical or serials are publications, generally published on a regular schedule, containing a variety of articles generally financed by advertising, by a purchase price, or both (Kotler & Keller, 2006). In magazine advertisements the picture, headline, and copy are important respectively. The picture must be strong enough to draw attention. Then the headline must reinforce the picture and lead the person to read the copy. The copy itself must be engaging and the advertised brand's name must be sufficiently prominent (Kotler & Keller, 2006).

Magazines offer a stark contrast to broadcast media. Because of its self-paced nature, magazines can provide much detailed products information and can also effectively communicate user and usage imagery (Kotler & Keller, 2006). In spite of advantages of magazine, it has some disadvantages: the static nature of visual images in magazine makes it difficult to provide dynamic presentation; magazine images can be fairly passive (Kotler & Keller, 2006).

This study is looking at the advertising of controversial products in print Magazines. This issue is considered, because the use of advertising of controversial products in magazine has increased considerably in advertising practice (LaTour, 1990). Today, it is common for a reader of any age to pick up a general-interest consumer magazine and find an advertisement featuring provocatively posed and attired models for many controversial products.

2.3.1 Magazine Advertising in Malaysia

According to the Nielsen Company (2008), advertising expenditure of Malaysian’s magazine has increased 6.7% in 2007 compared to 2006. It shows the importance of magazine for advertisers who want to target Malaysian female consumers. Table 2.1 below outlines the newly released report by The Nielsen Company (2008).

Table 2.1 *Magazine Advertising Expenditure in Malaysia*

Ad spending	2006		2007		Growth vs. 2006 (%)
	(RM'000)	Share (%)	(RM'000)	Share (%)	
Magazines	155,674	3.3	166,164	3.0%	6.7

Source: www.nielsen.com

To determine the readers of the magazine in Malaysia, a survey had been done by Magazine Publisher Association Malaysia in year 2006. The magazines were categorized into five main categories. There were Business, Education, Women/Home, and General Internet/Lifestyle. From the survey, Women/Home magazine and General

Internet/Lifestyle magazine were the most popular. As the result in Table 2.2 shows, generally, readers would prefer General Internet/ Lifestyle and Women/Home magazines.

Table 2.2 *Most Popular Magazine in Malaysia in 2006*

No	Magazine	Category	Number of Readers
1	Mastika	General Internet/Lifestyle	1,407,000
2	Remaja	Women/Home Magazine	1,015,000
3	Mingguan Wanita	Women/Home Magazine	687,000
4	Wanita	Women/Home Magazine	664,000
5	Mangga	General Internet/Lifestyle	593,000
6	URTV	General Internet/Lifestyle	506,000

Source: Magazine Publisher Association Malaysia (MPA)

2.4 Culture

2.4.1 Definition of Culture

Hofstede (2001) defined culture as the sum of humans' socially transmitted behavior patterns including ways of thinking and beliefs, feeling and reacting, arts, institutions, and all other products of human intellectual and artistic activities. Culture is what people learned, gathered and experienced from their own environment and not something they have inherited in their genes. The essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values. According to Lewis (1996) culture is a shared system of meanings for common feelings, beliefs, and values among a group of people. It provides guidelines on how to perceive the world. Although individuals may have their own views of various things, culture keeps these individuals together and provides

harmonized views. The essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values (Parker, 2000). Culture can be thought of as a social system that possesses identifiable and interdependent structures which are associated with a common set of shared beliefs, attitudes, and values among its members. These shared beliefs/attitudes/values are derived from many inter-related influences including religion, language, ecology, social organization, political, education and technological systems (Hofstede, 1980).

Hofstede (2001) believes that there are four different cultural levels. These levels are symbols, heroes and distinguished people, rituals, and values. Symbols level consists of words (language), gestures, pictures, cultural objects, clothing, flags which have special meanings for people from each culture while rituals refer to collective activities essential to a society, like the way greetings should be exchanged. Heroes are persons (dead, alive, real or imaginary) who possess characteristics that are highly prized in a society. Collectively these layers are termed an expression of culture – visible only to the outside observer. In contrast, values refer to the governing ideas and guiding principles of people's thoughts and actions, and they are "often endorsed, glamorized and reinforced in advertising". These levels are symbols, heroes and distinguished people, rituals, and values as shown in Figure 2.1 below.

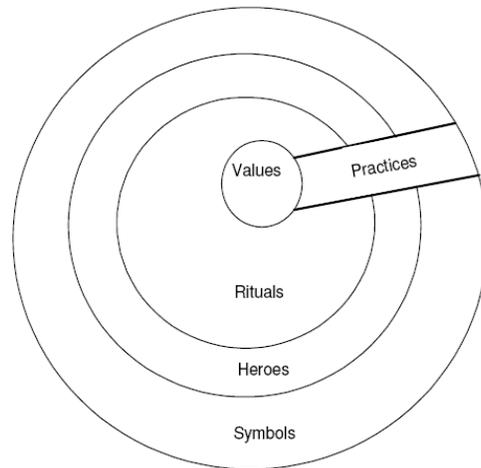


Figure 2.1: *Levels of culture from Hofstede's point of view (Hofstede 2001, p11)*

2.4.2 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede (2001) developed the major frameworks for understanding culture. Hofstede's typology of cultural dimensions which include: individualism/collectivism (the relationship between the individual and the group); power distance (social inequality); uncertainty avoidance (handling of uncertainty inherent in economic and social processes); masculinity/femininity (social implications of gender); and long term/ short term orientation (Confucian dynamism- long term orientation indicates people in this society have perseverance, ordering relationships by status and observing this order and thrift).

However, only two dimensions namely individualism/collectivism and uncertainty avoidance will be discussed in this study. Individualism/collectivism and uncertainty avoidance dimensions would be relevant for the study of offensive advertising in a culture setting, because some researchers used these dimensions in their cross-cultural