



## The Mediating Role of Consumer's Attitude toward Advertising on the Relationship between Advertisement Content Credibility and Attitude toward Brand: The Case of Beauty Soap in Indonesia

Ratih Hasanah; Nabsiah Abdul Wahid

Universitas Telkom, Bandung, Indonesia

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### **Abstract**

Beauty soap producers in Indonesia have been observed to use advertising to aggressively communicate and promote their product brands to consumers at large. With sales soaring for various brands like Lux, GIV, Dove and Citra, dependency on this advertising as a marketing strategy proved to be successful for the beauty soap retailers. This study hypothesizes that advertising content credibility (AC), consumer's attitude toward advertising (AAD) and attitude toward brand (AB) to be linked with one another. Thus, the study proposes that consumers' attitude toward beauty soap advertising (AAD) acts as a mediator on the relationship between advertisement content credibility (AC) and attitude towards brand (AB). Based on the SmartPLS-SEM analysis results from a survey participated by 405 beauty soap customers in Indonesia, AC shows a direct influence on AAD and AB, AAD shows direct positive path with AB, and importantly, AAD plays the mediating role on the AC and AB relationship. The findings imply the importance of the three variables, particularly AAD for its mediating role on the other two variables. For practitioners applying advertising strategy, the results imply the importance for them to ensure consumers as audience must have positive attitude toward the beauty soap ad as such attitude would affect their attitude toward the brand portrayed in the advertisement. In addition, the ad itself must be able to be perceived as credible ad as this would influence their attitude on both advertising and brand.

**Keywords:** Source Credibility; Advertisement; Advertisement Content Credibility; Attitude Towards Advertisement; Attitude towards Brand

### **Introduction**

Bath soap is one type of consumer products that promises individuals with cleanliness and freshness to both body and skin so that they feel more comfortable in carrying out their daily activities. To date, needs for personal care and intimacy are observed to extend the bath soap to now include beauty soap product in the market. Through beauty soap, consumers' need to have personalised and intimacy benefits are offered with specific beauty attributes. Bleach, moisturizers, and vitamin C are amongst examples of beauty attributes that can be found in popular beauty soap brands in Indonesia as consumers believe that bleach can help to whiten their skin, moisturizers to soften their body and vitamin C helps to add important nutrients to their body and skin respectively. In short, beauty soap is now important not

only as physical product but as emotional product as well. In Indonesia, popular and top beauty soap product brands today are Lux, GIV, Dove and Citra ([www.topbrand-award.com](http://www.topbrand-award.com)).

Indonesia's beauty soap manufacturers push the product to mass consumers through advertising to increase consumers' awareness, interest and desire to purchase the product or brand. Advertising is believed to be very powerful and effective when it comes to increase of product sales and brand loyalty as can be seen from this quotation:

“We believe in the power of advertising, and we continue to invest in improving quality and reach. From our market research and customer insights, we know that consistent affirmative messages are the most powerful content because it is a great fit for consumers”

(Hemant Bakshi, Unilever's president director, Unilever Annual Report, 2014; p.69).

As such, the content of an advertisement must be made very credible and believable to the extent that it would influence their attitude towards both the advertisement and brands portrayed. Advertising content (AC) is recently considered as one type of source credibility alongside the usual accepted dual source credibility, namely, corporate and endorser credibility. For this study, the investigation is focused on finding the relationship amongst advertising content credibility (AC), attitude toward advertising (AAD) and attitude toward brand (AB). In specific, the study attempts to find out whether consumers' attitude toward beauty soap advertising (AAD) play a role of a mediator in the relationship between advertisement content credibility (AC) and attitude towards brand (AB). The outcomes of the study would provide an insight on the importance of both advertising content and attitude that the literature on both the subjects can be advanced and for practitioners, appropriate strategy can be planned.

## ***Literature Review***

### *Source credibility*

The literature reports various definitions of source credibility. For instance, “the extent to which the source is perceived as possessing expertise relevant to the communication topic and can be trusted to give an objective opinion on the subject” is a definition by Goldsmith et al. (2000) while Nan (2004) defines it as the attributes from the source of a message that can impact attitude change (Nan & Faber, 2004). In general, credibility is used to refer to level of belief audiences have on sources and information they are exposed to in an advertisement; these can be in terms of company (through logo, symbol, etc.), endorsers or spokesperson (layman, celebrities, cartoon characters, etc.), activities (slice of life, aspiration, etc.) or other messages (tagline, etc.) which can affect them rationally, emotionally and behaviorally.

As a source, credible advertising message was found to influence audiences/consumers in perceiving a resemblance between their daily life and the product/brand endorser, in addition to considering the advertisement they were exposed to, meaningful (Sheehan, 2014; Maddock & Hill, 2016). Promoted brand within an advertisement was also found to influence audience/consumers to think positively about the company that produces it (Goldsmith, 2000), while credibility of the firm can be a major factor affecting consumer's purchase intentions (Kim and Choi, 2012; Sallam & Sefnedi, 2016; Goldsmith et al., 2000; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999; Newell & Goldsmith, 2001, 2004).

### *Advertisement content credibility*

According to MacKenzie & Lutz (1989), advertising credibility is “consumer’s perceptions of the truthfulness and believability of advertising in general.” This is definitely different concept from advertisement/ad content credibility since the latter is defined as “the extent to which the consumer perceives claims made about the brand in the ad to be truthful and believable”. The separate definitions of advertising content credibility and ad content credibility show that the two are actually different concepts altogether. The difference can be distinguished through each concept measure. For instance, measurement for advertising content credibility suggests that the construct focused on consumer’s generalized beliefs in the integrity of advertising claims, while for ad content credibility, the measurement specifically referred to the particular product brand shown in the ad itself. Thus, ad content credibility is positioned as one aspect of the Ad Perceptions, which is considered as a separate determinant of Aad. In this instance, to determine if the claims made in the advertisements are true, it is the audience who will interpret the ad itself rather than depending only the source (Cotte *et al.*, 2005). As Choi and Rifon (2002) explain, ad credibility refers to “the extent to which consumers perceive the message in the ad to be believable”. Greer (2003) adds that audience assesses the credibility of information they find online, the truth and trustworthiness of ad content (visual, verbal components). So, this is why ad content credibility focuses on specific advertisement and on audiences’ evaluation of the ad content.

### *Attitude toward advertising*

Attitude toward the ad (AAD) is defined as “a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion” (Lutz, 1985). At times, one’s attitude towards an object can affect to consumer’s attitude towards another object with which it is associated (Hoyer *et al.*, 1997). According to Mackenzie & Lutz (1989), the definition of attitude in the sense of attitude toward advertising (AAD) is comprised solely an evaluative or effective response to the commercial stimulus and does not refer to cognitive or behavioral responses. In this study, AAD is investigated as the mediating variable between ad content credibility and attitude toward brand.

### *Attitude toward brand*

In general, attitude towards brand (AB) refers to the individuals’ response to the brand exposure to the advertising stimulus happen. As Shimp (2010) describes, AB mainly depends on consumer’s own perceptions regarding a brand, and is argued to be a reliable predictor of consumer’s behaviour towards brands.

### *Linking AC, AAD and AB*

A study by Mackenzie & Lutz (1998) found that advertisement credibility (or content credibility) to show significant influence over consumer’s attitude toward advertising. This finding was later shared by other studies, namely, Cotte *et al.* (2005) and Muda *et al.* (2014). Muda *et al.*’s (2014) study also found that AC has significant influence over AB; as well as the significant influence of AAD to AB, which is in line with the findings by Mackenzie & Lutz (1998).

Based on these literature support, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: Advertisement content credibility (AC) is likely to have a positive influence on attitude toward advertising (AAD)

H2: Advertisement content Credibility (AC) is likely to have a positive influence on attitude toward Brand (AB)

H3: Attitude towards Advertising (AAD) is likely to have a positive influence on attitude toward Brand (AB)

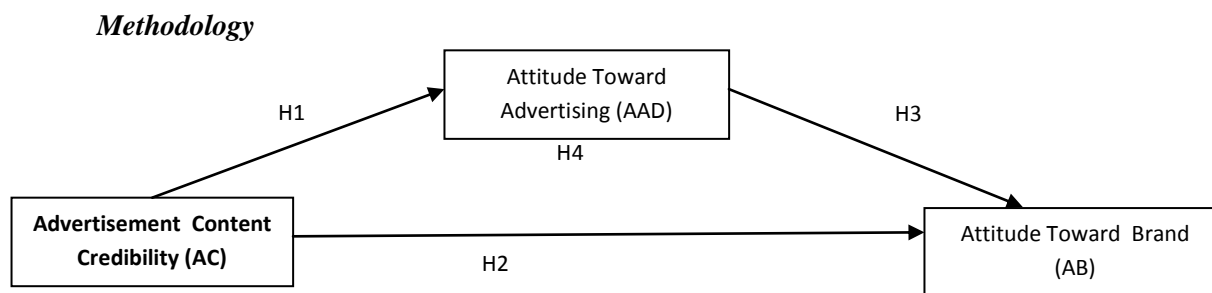
In consideration that past literature found the significant influence of AC on AAD, and that AAD was also found to show significant influence on AB, in this study, AAD is then proposed as a mediator between the two variables. Thus, another hypothesis (H4) was then developed.

H4: Attitude toward Advertising (AAD) mediates the relationship between advertisement content credibility and towards advertising Brand (AB)

*Study framework*

Following the literature and hypotheses, the theoretical framework for the study is then modelled as is shown in Figure 01.

Figure 01. Frame of study



This study was carried out using a quantitative approach whereby a survey was carried out on 405 beauty soap user respondents in Java Island, Indonesia. The requirement is for the respondents to report that they have seen any beauty soap advertisement (ads with endorser and company’s logo) before. This requirement is needed to ensure participating respondents could relate their experience to help them answer the questions posed in the google form survey in regards to AC, AAD and AB.

To measure AC, five items, namely, believable, trustworthy, convincing, credible, reasonable, and honest were used; these ad content credibility characteristics were adapted from Muda (2014).

For AAD, seven measurement items were taken from Dianoux & Linhart (2010) whose bipolar anchors consist of (i) like, (ii) is good, (iii) convincing, (iv) objective, (v) satisfying, (vi) attentive, and (vii) unusual.

As for attitude toward brand (AB), five measurement items, namely, (i) “It is a brand that I like, (ii) It is a brand that is easily associated with the product it refers to, (iii) I have a favorable opinion to the brand, (iv) My opinion of the brand is positive”, and (v) It is a brand that is easily associated with the product it refers to. These items were adapted from Santana & Palacio (2013).

All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, with “1” representing “strongly disagree” and “5” representing “strongly agree”.

Data were analysed using Smart PLS.

**Results**

*Demographic profile*

Profiling of respondents show that female, those between the age of 21-30 years old and those possessing bachelor degree to dominate the samples. The details are shown in Table 01.

Demographic profile of respondents

Criteria	Category	Number	N	Percentage
Gender	Male	27	16	32.8
	Female	78	44	67.1
Age Group	Under 20 years	9	5	10.9
	21- 30 years	69	6	42.8
	31- 40 years	13	7	28.5
	Above 40 years	4	2	17.6
	Junior high school	1	0.48	
Education Level	Senior high school	9	24.7	
	Bachelor degree	21	5	59.0
	Master degree	6	13.8	
	Doctorate degree	8	1	
		4	1.90	

## Results

### Construct Validity

Overall, the results of testing for validity and reliability in this study demonstrated that all measures have adequate and sufficient reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity.

The study found that the constructs were all valid and reliable. As shown in Table 02, all loadings for the 17 standardised indicators exceeded the recommended value of 0.6 (Nunnally, 1978); the item loadings were in the ranges of 0.723 to 0.917. All items were maintained for further analysis since they met the minimum requirement of AVE (0.5). Since the minimum requirement of AVE and CR is met, it shows that the construct is able to explain more than half of the variants. Cronbach Alpha values for all variables were found to be reliable (between 0.898 and 0.928).

Table 02. Results of measurement model

Variable	Var	Measurement item	Convergent Validity		Composite Reliability (CR)	Cronbach's Alpha (CA)
			Loading	AVE		
			> 0.50	> 0.50	> 0.70	0.70-0.90
D	AA	AAD1	.828	.623	0.920	0.898
		AAD2	.791			
		AAD3	.829			
		AAD4	.768			
		AAD5	.848			
		AAD6	.723			
		AAD7	.726			
	AB	AB1	.883	.766	0.942	0.923
		AB2	.808			
		AB3	.917			
		AB4	.898			
		AB5	.865			
	AC	AC1	.896	.776	0.945	0.928
		AC2	.843			
		AC3	.889			
		AC4	.866			
		AC5	.908			

To evaluate the discriminant validity (the extent to which the items measure the intended or other related constructs), adequate discriminant validity is achieved only when the square root of the average variance extracted for each construct is greater than the correlations between constructs (Chin, 1998; Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Table 03 The result indicates that there is discriminant validity between all the constructs. The squared roots of AVE on the diagonal are higher than the values of the inter-construct on the same columns and row (Rahmaya et al., 2017).

Shows whereby it is found that all of the diagonal values were larger than their relationship with other constructs, presenting that the values of diagonal elements exceed the off-diagonal elements. These demonstrate good discriminant validity for all measurement items.

Table 03. Discriminant validity of construct: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	<b>AAD</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>AC</b>
<b>AAD</b>	<b>0.789</b>		
<b>AB</b>	0.674	<b>0.875</b>	
<b>AC</b>	0.792	0.649	<b>0.881</b>

*Hypotheses testing*

From PLS-SEM analysis, overall, the results confirmed the linkages AC has on AAD, AC on AB and AAD on AB.

As results in Table 04 show, advertisement content credibility had a significant and positive effect on attitude toward advertising, with the path coefficient (B = 0.580) and t-value = 8.580 at p < 0.01 significance level. Thus, hypothesis 1 is supported.

For Hypothesis 2, a statistical positive relationship between advertisement content credibility and attitude toward brand was found with the variables having a path coefficient (B = 0.224) and t-value = 2.991 at p < 0.01 significance level, which leads to the conclusion that advertisement content credibility positively influence consumer/audience attitude toward brand.

The research results confirmed that attitude toward advertisement had a significant and positive effect on the attitude toward brand, with the path coefficient (B = 0.310) and t-value = 4.518 at p < 0.01 significance level as hypothesized in H3.

As for mediating role of AAD, the research results confirmed that it acted as a mediator when results show it had a significant and positive effect on the advertisement content credibility and attitude toward brand, with the path coefficient (B = 0.184) and t-value = 4.101 at p < 0.01 significance level. The result thus supported hypothesis 4.

Table 04. Results of Direct and Indirect Effects, Beta value, SE, t-Value, and p Value - Model 2 (n=405)

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta value	Std Deviation (SE)	t-value	p-value	Supported
H1	AC -> AAD	0.580	0.068	8.580	.000	YES
H2	AC -> AB	0.224	0.075	2.991	.003	YES
H3	AAD -> AB	0.310	0.070	4.518	.000	YES
H4	AC -> AAD -> AB	0.184	0.045	4.101	.000	YES

R-Square

	R-Square
Attitude towards advertising (AAD)	0.683
Attitude towards Brand (AB)	0.541

The R<sup>2</sup> value of AAD 0.683 and AB 0.541 is above the 0.26 value as suggested by (Cohen, 1988; Ramaya et al., 2017). Mean attitude toward brand can be explained by corporate credibility (corporate expertise and corporate trustworthiness), endorcer credibility (endorcer credibility expertise, endorcer credibility trustworthiness, endorcer credibility attractiveness, and endorcer credibility similarity), advertisement content credibility and attitude toward advertising for 38.3% and attitude toward advertising can be explained by corporate credibility (corporate expertise and corporate trustworthiness), endorcer credibility (endorcer credibility expertise, endorcer credibility trustworthiness, endorcer credibility attractiveness, and endorcer credibility similarity), advertisement content credibility for 53.1%.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the support for all hypotheses tested show that all three variables, namely, AC, AAD and AB are inter-related whereby they are important when they were directly tested as well as when AAD is tested as a mediator. In short, advertisement content credibility is a significant predictor of consumer's/audience's attitude toward advertising as well as for attitude toward brand. Consumer's attitude toward advertising is also a predictor for attitude toward brand. The findings show that AC is perceived as a source by consumers, thereby it must be credible in order for it to be influential enough that consumers would show positive attitude toward advertising and the product brand. Attitude toward advertising is shown to be crucial as a mediator. The findings have contributed to add new knowledge on source credibility investigations. For practitioners applying advertising strategy, the results imply the importance for them to ensure consumers as audience must have positive attitude toward the beauty soap ad as such attitude would affect their attitude toward the brand portrayed in the advertisement. In addition, the ad itself must be able to be perceived as credible ad as this would influence their attitude on both advertising and brand.

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