

Shockvertising - Viewers' visual communication perspectives of a controversial skincare advertisement

Iklan kontroversial – Perspektif komunikasi visual penonton terhadap sebuah iklan perawatan kulit yang kontroversial

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Abstract

The rise of digital advertising has led to the creation of various innovative materials to capture the target market's attention. To stay competitive, many advertisers use "shockvertising", creating controversial advertisements with a significant impact on viewers' attitudes and sentiments. This survey research is based on Lester's Six Perspectives in Visual Communication theory which explained that viewers' personal, historical, technical, cultural, ethical and critical perspectives are the determining factor in analysing their controversial consideration perception. In this study, the use of the theory is to explore viewers' perspectives on a controversial Malaysian skincare advertisement. Using a quantitative approach, 250 respondents rated their perception of a SlimmeWhite skincare TV advertisement. The responses were analysed using SPSS to address three research questions, finding correlations and mean results. The study found that personal technical and ethical perspectives significantly influenced viewers' attitudes towards the advertisement, identifying these as the controversial aspects. In contrast, critical and cultural perspectives were the least controversial. The advertisement was deemed highly controversial, but gender did not affect viewers' perspectives. This research concludes that the resulting data are very valuable for advertising students, brand advertisers and companies in understanding viewers' perspectives on controversial elements in Malaysian skincare advertisements.

Keywords: communication perspectives; controversial advertisement; skincare advertisement; visual communication

Abstrak

Meningkatnya periklanan digital telah menghasilkan berbagai materi inovatif untuk menarik perhatian pasar sasaran. Untuk tetap kompetitif, banyak pengiklanan menggunakan "shockvertising," yaitu membuat iklan kontroversial yang berdampak signifikan pada sikap dan sentimen penonton. Penelitian survei ini didasarkan pada teori Six Perspectives in Visual Communication dari Lester yang menjelaskan bahwa perspektif pribadi, historis, teknis, budaya, etis, dan kritis penonton adalah faktor penentu dalam menganalisis persepsi kontroversial untuk mereka. Pada penelitian ini, teori tersebut digunakan untuk mengeksplorasi perspektif penonton terhadap iklan perawatan kulti Malaysia yang kontroversial. Menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif, dengan 250 responden menilai persepsi mereka terhadap iklan TV perawatan kulit SlimmeWhite. Tanggapan tersebut dianalisis menggunakan SPSS untuk menjawab tiga pertanyaan penelitian, menemukan korelasi dan hasil rata-rata. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa perspektif pribadi, teknis, dan etis secara signifikan memengaruhi sikap penonton terhadap iklan, mengidentifikasi ini sebagai aspek kontroversial. Sebaliknya, perspektif kritis dan budaya adalah yang paling tidak kontroversial. Iklan tersebut dianggap sangat kontroversial, tetapi gender tidak mempengaruhi perspektif penonton. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa data yang dihasilkan sangat berharga bagi mahasiswa periklanan, pengiklan merek, dan perusahaan dalam memahami perspektif penonton terhadap elemen kontroversial dalam iklan perawatan kulti Malaysia.

Kata kunci: perspektif komunikasi; iklan kontroversial; iklan perawatan kulit; komunikasi visual

Introduction

The advertising landscape in Malaysia has shifted from traditional methods to digital platforms (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission [MCMC] 2009). The process of advertising has evolved from simply planning and negotiating media space to meeting communication needs.

In the past, advertising companies would purchase newspaper pages or sections as media space. However, the current business environment is more complex, with products offering multiple services accessible online. To adapt to the changing marketplace, the advertising industry and its stakeholders are transforming in unique ways to meet market demands (Li 2020). Moreover, according to Chalaby & Plunkett (2021), the advertising value chain is entering a new phase that benefits consumers, advertisers and interactive players, while broadcasters may face challenges if they fail to embrace digital content distribution opportunities. To stay relevant, broadcasters should integrate cross-platform advertising programs with their existing programming assets.

The rise of digital advertising has transformed the relationship between advertisers and customers, shifting from traditional one-way broadcast to interactive media formats. Traditional advertising agencies are expected to benefit from their creativity, while online search companies have the advantage of reaching individuals worldwide. Digital media services, such as online and mobile platforms, allow advertisers to target specific consumer segments based on preferences, interests and usage habits (Ahmadi et al. 2024). Advertisers, whether in traditional or new media, must adapt to the technological revolution to remain competitive. Barland & Olsen (2024) also projected that, in the next five years, digital media is projected to become the primary advertising medium, leading to a decline in traditional media's audience reach and revenue opportunities. Advertisers will redirect their spending towards interactive marketing opportunities on online and mobile platforms.

In Malaysia, consumers, especially the younger generation, are drawn to cosmetic brands such as Adidas, Avon, Oriflame, Garnier, L'Oreal and Nivea because they embody comfort and a laid-back way of life (Mohamad et al. 2024). Manufacturers like Avon, Garnier and Nivea are growing their businesses in Asia in order to take advantage of the projected large sales volume in the region. For many cosmetic companies, cultivating brand loyalty is important since it encourages repeated business transactions. Advertisers can effectively reach consumers through appealing advertisements when there is a strong bond between consumers and skincare products (Abd Rahman et al. 2020). Malaysian advertisers need to be aware of cultural nuances such as race, religion and demographics in order to prevent making advertisements that could elicit unfavourable comments from viewers. In order to guarantee that their advertising is well-received, advertisers must have a thorough understanding of sensitive problems within the cultures of each race.

However, when creating TV advertisements, advertisers should be cautious about representation, symbolism and the language used. It is important to avoid experimenting with sensitive issues to prevent controversy (Mohamad et al. 2024). Advertisers sometimes overlook the potential controversy in their ads, despite their efforts to attract consumers. Effective TV advertisements are often simple, humorous and considerate of race and gender sensitivities. Examples of successful advertisements can be seen during events like the Super Bowl, where funny and relatable ads are appreciated by consumers (Sebastian et al. 2021).

In embracing Industrial Revolution 5.0 (IR5.0), modern-day businesses have incorporated advertisements in various digital channels to promote their products and services. Through this approach, advertisers may reach their target market and elicit responses from their potential customers (Licsandru & Cui 2019). With the fierce competition and concentrated market, advertisers are forced to make their ads visually appealing to ensure they are more memorable. However, it does not give them leniency to jeopardise the advertisement quality, taking into consideration cultural aspects, language, symbols, and other factors. Singh & Chahal (2020) further emphasised that advertisers must adhere to guidelines to prevent controversial advertisements that may evoke negative emotional reactions from the audience. Nevertheless, in their pursuit of uniqueness, it is inevitable for some advertisers to unintentionally or knowingly create controversial advertisements.

Globally, companies and consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about controversial advertisements (Austin et al. 2019). Customers react to these advertisements, which frequently transgress the moral guidelines set out by national advertising organisations in individual nations (Agarwal & Malhotra 2019, Wagner et al. 2023). In addition to negative depictions of body shaming, racism,

sexism and abuse, provocative appeals like sex and fear can be used in controversial advertisements. In Malaysia, the Advertising Standards Malaysia (ASA) enforces guidelines outlined in the Malaysian Code of Advertising Practice to prevent controversial advertisements (Advertising Standards Malaysia 2021). However, despite these regulations, some TV commercials have breached the code, attracting international media attention. Thus, in order to explore the perceptions of viewers on a controversial skincare TV advertisement which was produced in Malaysia, this research examines the advertisement through Lester's Six Perspectives of Visual Communication and investigates the extent to which viewers consider it controversial.

In today's competitive market, advertisers strive to create unique and respectful TV advertisements that capture consumers' attention. Nevertheless, a list of literature has demonstrated that impactful but controversial advertising can unintentionally cause consumers to react negatively (Moraes et al. 2020). According to Feenstra & Esteban (2019), advertisements that are deemed ethically acceptable typically have lower controversy rates, whereas the opposite is true for advertisements that raise ethical doubts. The power of social media amplifies controversy as consumers share their opinions and attract unnecessary international attention. Despite the recommendation to avoid controversy, some advertisers intentionally or unintentionally create controversial advertisements as an effort to pull off cheap publicity, attracting tendentious public attention and resulting in an increase in their brand awareness (Xu 2020). As a result, a great deal of research has gone into comprehending the significance and consequences of controversial advertising for companies and customers, with just a small number of studies looking at particular instances like the skincare TV advertisements produced in Malaysia with the influence of the Six Views of Visual Communication (Lester 2013) and the controversy around it as seen by viewers.

According to Lester (2013), perspective is the representation of how something appears, with parallel lines coming together to form a point on the horizon line through psychological closure. He presents a technique called "The Six Perspectives" for deciphering visual messages. Meanwhile, according to Sebastian et al. (2021), understanding the depth of meaning in images is a subjective process that necessitates investigation. The six perspectives are personal perspective, historical perspective, technical perspective, ethical perspective, cultural perspective, and critical perspective.

The first perspective is the personal perspective, which is based on the viewer's opinions and past experiences. It is subjective and can be influenced by the viewer's point of view, experiences and beliefs. Changing this perspective can be challenging, and the image may be seen differently by others. Second, the historical perspective considers the image's view in relation to the history of media usage and the viewer's past experiences. Different media can change the way images are perceived. For example, computer editing software like Photoshop can significantly alter images compared to traditional craftsmanship.

Third, the technical viewpoint comes next, which is impacted by the image's presentation, lighting and position. When these components are used properly, the image can appear more beautiful than it actually is. Fourth, from an ethical perspective, all parties involved in the creation, viewing and existence of an image have a moral and ethical responsibility towards it. This perspective can be further categorised into six categories: ignorance, hedonism, golden mean, categorical imperative, golden rule, veil of ignorance and utilitarianism.

Fifth, the cultural perspective emphasises the importance of symbolisation in understanding images. It involves the identification and interpretation of symbols within the image, including the use of words and the portrayal of heroes. This perspective can also be viewed as the semiotic perspective, as it focuses on the study of signs and symbols. Sixth lastly, the critical perspective involves the evaluation and critique of images, but with the intention of benefiting society rather than serving individual interests. This perspective differs from a personal perspective, as it takes into account the broader societal implications and context of the image.

In summary, perspective in visual communication involves representing things as they appear, and analysing images requires considering personal, historical, and technical perspectives (Lester 2013, Sebastian et al. 2021, Abd Rashid & Md Johar 2022). It can also be represented by other perspectives which provide different lenses through which images can be analysed and understood from the ethical, cultural and critical purviews.

This research sought to explore the importance of different perspectives for consideration in visual communication and the effects of gender on the viewers' perception in these perspectives towards a TV advertisement. Therefore, the study addresses three main research questions. First, it explores whether there are any correlations between any of the five perspectives in visual communication as shown by viewers towards the TV advertisement. Second, it investigates whether gender influences the viewers' five perspectives in visual communication towards the TV advertisement. Lastly, the study examines whether gender reveals any differences in viewers' attitudes towards controversial considerations in visual communication towards the TV advertisement.

The research is able to pinpoint specific interconnections or potentially lack of connections of the visual perspectives shown by viewers towards a TV advertisement. The research is useful for the TV advertisers to understand the visual communication attitude and perspectives of the TV viewers for them to craft better advertisement contents which can cater to the needs and demands of the prospective consumers. In addition, the viewers of any TV advertisements are able to see and understand that their personal preference for any TV advertisements may be concretised based on more than just their personal perspective, but on other visual communication perspectives which are determined by various elements in the advertisement, as supported by Kamalu & Ojatula (2019). Subsequently, these visual communication perspectives reflect their perceptions, selections, and, potentially, their decision as avid supporters or consumers of any products or services.

Research Method

This section of the paper presents the research plan in terms of research design, and instrumentation which are the crucial parts in driving the research endeavour. The details on these two aspects are also laid out to indicate the intricacies of the plan, followed by sub-sections on data collection and analysis which further help define the data characteristics and forms of data analysis.

This study employed a quantitative approach by applying a survey research design. Being the main instrument of the research, an adapted questionnaire was chosen as the mode of collecting the responses. According to Mohamad et al. (2023), perception survey research is useful in understanding respondents' perceptions by quantifying their judgements in terms of their personal, critical, and other related aspects towards the presented stimuli. Therefore, a quantitative approach was a good fit for this research enterprise, as substantiated by Rahmania et al. (2021) who attributed this approach to a structured and objective way to examine participants' responses on a Likert-scale of measurement. Apart from aiding the researchers in addressing the specific research questions effectively, an inferential statistics element in the quantitative approach enables the researchers to eventually report and generalise the data in a relatively conclusive manner (Mohamad et al. 2023).

To accomplish the above research plan, the researchers investigated the different perspectives of participants' responses to gain insights about the relevant elements of visual communication adapted from Lester's (2013) theoretical model of Six Perspectives in Visual Communication. The six-perspective typology refers to Personal, Historical, Technical, Ethical, Cultural, and Critical Perspectives. However, only five perspectives - Personal (PER), Technical (TECH), Ethical (ETH), Cultural (CUL) and Critical (CRIT) were examined in this research. Since the questions in the survey based on Lester's model (2013) covered each perspective, it is coded to PER, TECH, ETH, CUL, and CRIT to make it easier for the reference of the labelling and subsequent analysis. The historical perspective was, however, excluded from the analysis because the scope of the study did not cover the historical aspect, which is associated

with the viewers' impression of previous advertisements they have seen before. Instead, the concern was merely focused on the respondents' views of the presented advertisement as a standalone advertisement stimulus chosen for this study. This newly adapted perspective model serves as a conceptual framework for interpreting different viewpoints towards five various aspects of the given visual stimulus - a specifically selected TV advertisement.

Lester's (2013) survey questionnaire on Five Perspectives of Visual Communication was integrated into Google Forms and attached to the TV advertisement and then distributed to 250 respondents through a convenient random method of sampling. These respondents were selected based on several predetermined criteria which included their age between 20 to 60 years old with a minimum of three years' experience in the marketing or advertising industry. These respondents were also randomly sampled from the general public of Malaysian citizens working in the marketing and advertising sectors represented by three main races in Malaysia which entailed Malays forming the biggest number of respondents, followed by Chinese and Indian respondents.

In terms of the organisational structure and layout, Section A of the questionnaire consists of demographic questions and Section B contains specific survey questions based on the adapted version of the theoretical model of Five Perspectives of Visual Communication (Lester 2013) which was used to explore the attitude of viewers towards the advertisement in terms of all the five perspectives. Meanwhile, Section C contains survey questions related to viewers' attitudes towards the controversial considerations of the advertisement.

Through a purposive sampling method, a Malaysian skincare TV advertisement from a company, SlimmeWhite, was chosen as an advertisement stimulus to be attached to the survey questionnaire form. The TV advertisement title is "Hargailah Pasangan Anda Sebelum Terlambat", which was released on the 4th of December, 2017. The TV advertisement was downloaded from YouTube. The respondents were instructed to watch the video and gave their ratings of the questionnaire items for all five perspectives about this TV advertisement.

Lester's (2013) survey which was integrated with Google Forms was distributed through WhatsApp, a digital social media messaging platform, to make it easier for the respondents to view the TV advertisement video and rate their perceptions about the advertisement. Their completed responses were automatically recorded in the Google Forms system database and exported into the Excel form for further tabulation purposes. The data collection of the research was a continuous process in which access to the Google Forms survey was restricted once the target number of responses had been collected.

The data analysis involved the initial stage of cleaning the data sets in the tabulated Excel format by removing any respondents with incomplete or missing responses. Only completed responses were taken for further analysis by entering the data points into SPSS and running the relevant statistical tests to answer the three research questions. The following details show the potential statistical test formula using Pearson correlations by generating six possible relationships between every two perspectives as follows (see Table 1).

These coefficients indicate the strength and direction of the linear relationships between the pairs of items ranging between coefficient values of -1 to +1 (Baak et al. 2020). Positive correlation coefficient values indicate that the two items have a positive relationship in a similar direction. This would mean that when one perspective is perceived positively, the other correlated perspective would also be perceived positively by the respondents. Meanwhile, Baak et al. (2020) further elaborated that negative correlation coefficient values indicate that the two items have a relationship in an opposite direction. This would mean that when one perspective is perceived negatively, the other correlated perspective is, however, perceived positively by the respondents, or it can also be the opposite. These analyses are important in determining the direction of one perspective over the other perspectives in the specific context of the present research - perceptions of TV advertisements in Malaysia, as some perspectives may work against the other perspectives for their unique individual reasons.

Table 1.
Potential statistical test formula (Pearson correlations)

Statistical test formula using Pearson correlations	
Perspectives	Formula
PER and TECH (Personal and Technical Perspectives)	$r\{PER, TECH\} = r \text{ value}$
PER and ETH (Personal and Ethical Perspectives)	$r\{PER, ETH\} = r \text{ value}$
PER and CUL (Personal and Cultural Perspectives)	$r\{PER, CUL\} = r \text{ value}$
TECH and ETH (Technical and Ethical Perspectives)	$r\{TECH, ETH\} = r \text{ value}$
TECH and CUL (Technical and Cultural Perspectives)	$r\{TECH, CUL\} = r \text{ value}$
ETH and CUL (Ethical and Cultural Perspectives)	$r\{ETH, CUL\} = r \text{ value}$

Source: Author's generated statistical test formula for data analysis

Therefore, the Pearson correlation coefficients above would be an appropriate statistical fit to be used to address the first research question on the correlations among all five perspectives. The findings later helped the researcher discover if any possible two of the five perspectives were significantly or non-significantly correlated with each other, which allows the researcher to conclude about the significant perspectives' interconnection in determining the viewers' attitude towards the advertisement in the context of the present research. An independent sample t-test was applied to the second research question which sought to see if male or female viewers demonstrate different attitudes in all five perspectives towards the TV advertisement. The finding later helped the researcher to conclude about the significant and insignificant role of gender in the viewers' discretion and judgement. The final statistical test to address research question three was also an independent sample t-test which sought to discover if gender can be an important determining factor for viewers' different attitudes towards controversial considerations for advertisements (Abitbol & Sternadori 2020). The findings clarify further if controversial elements were viewed differently by different viewers of different genders.

Results and Discussion

The section presents the statistical findings shown in table forms for all three research questions. Each finding is described and interpreted based on the aim of the research questions, which is explained through three sub-chapters including; correlations of viewers' five different perspectives, the effects of gender on viewers' five different perspectives, and the effects of gender on viewers' perceptions of controversial considerations.

Correlations of viewers' five different perspectives

The following table shows the data tabulation of the Pearson correlation coefficients involving all five perspectives (PER, TECH, ETH, CUL, CRIT) in visual communication. It sought to answer the first research question on the potential relationships between two or more perspectives.

Table 2 shows the correlations of all five perspectives and whether there are any significant correlations between any two perspectives of all the perspectives towards the TV advertisement. It was found that there was a strongly significant positive correlation between personal perspective and ethical perspective, $r(60) = .852, p < 0.05$. This finding represented the highest relationship coefficient value compared to the other perspectives, signifying its crucial role in the viewers' perceptions. This shows that the viewers' personal perspective was highly significant in terms of demonstrating its connections with their ethical perspective towards the TV skincare advertisement. In addition, there was a moderately significant

positive correlation between personal perspective and technical perspective, $r(60) = .426, p < 0.05$. This finding represented the lowest relationship coefficient value compared to the other perspectives. Although being ranked the lowest, the viewers' personal perspective was still significant in terms of demonstrating its interconnections with their technical perspective towards the TV advertisement. Furthermore, there was a moderately significant positive correlation between the viewers' technical and ethical perspectives, $r(60) = .550, p < 0.05$. This finding shows that the technical element is moderately important to be associated with the ethical elements in determining the viewers' judgement and perspectives about the TV advertisement.

Table 2.
Pearson correlation coefficient findings on relationships of viewers' Personal (PER), Technical (TECH), Ethical (ETH), Cultural (CUL), and Critical (CRIT) perspectives towards a skin care TV advertisement

		Correlations of Five Different Perspectives in Visual Communication				
		PER	TECH	ETH	CUL	CRIT
PER	Pearson Correlation	1	.426**	.852**	.090	.217
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.000	.493	.096
	N	60	60	60	60	60
TECH	Pearson Correlation	.426**	1	.550**	.223	.155
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.000	.087	.238
	N	60	60	60	60	60
ETH	Pearson Correlation	.852**	.550**	1	.058	.233
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.659	.073
	N	60	60	60	60	60
CUL	Pearson Correlation	.090	.223	.058	1	-.108
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.493	.087	.659		.412
	N	60	60	60	60	60
CRIT	Pearson Correlation	.217	.155	.233	-.108	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.096	.238	.073	.412	
	N	60	60	60	60	60

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Author's data analysis of the correlation of the different perspectives from SPSS

Finally, the findings showed that all three perspectives – personal, technical, and ethical, were demonstrated by the viewers to be significantly interrelated in terms of their crucial interplay functions in determining the viewers' attitude towards the TV advertisement. Thus, it can be suggested that, when viewers see an advertisement to be emotionally appealing, they would most likely associate it with the ethical and technical elements presented in the TV advertisement. The other reverse relationship patterns of ethical and technical perspectives with personal perspectives were potentially possible, hence making these three perspectives important elements in the viewers' considerations of any visual communication.

As for the cultural perspective, it was found that this perspective was not correlated with the other four perspectives, which were personal, $r(60) = .090, p > 0.05$, technical, $r(60) = .223, p > 0.05$, ethical, $r(60) = .058, p > 0.05$, and critical, $r(60) = .018, p > 0.05$. The critical perspective was also not correlated with the other three perspectives - personal, $r(60) = .217, p > 0.05$, technical, $r(60) = .155, p > 0.05$,

and ethical, $r(60) = .233, p > 0.05$. These findings showed that the two cultural and critical perspectives were not related to the rest of the perspectives in affecting the attitude of viewers towards the TV advertisement, hence making these two unimportant elements in the viewers' considerations of any visual communication.

Investigating the connections among the five views held by viewers is the main goal of the first research question. The results show that both technical and ethical opinions are influenced by personal viewpoints. Furthermore, ethical viewpoints are influenced by technological ideas as well. The way that viewers are presented with visual communication might affect how the Six Perspectives of Visual Communication—which Paul Martin Lester developed in 2013—influence one another. However, it is also possible that there may be no influences among the six perspectives at all (Zimmerman 2020). Only the technical, cultural, and personal viewpoints, however, were found to have an effect on the perspectives of viewers in the setting of this study. Conversely, no apparent contributing elements for critical and cultural perspectives were found.

According to Lester et al. (2022), personal perspective refers to an individual's point of view, past experiences and beliefs. It influences viewers' first impressions when looking at visual communications. Additionally, first impressions can also impact how viewers perceive the technical aspects of an advertisement, such as the plot, setting, lighting, and other technical elements. Lester (2013) agrees that personal perspective can influence viewers' technical perspective, and there is a 75% probability that these two perspectives can also influence the ethical perspective. Sebastian et al. (2021) support the idea that personal perspective plays a crucial role in influencing the technical and ethical perspectives, but it also depends on viewers' backgrounds and how they perceive the technical aspects and ethical nature of the advertisements. In the case of the SlimmeWhite TV advertisement, viewers' personal perspective influenced their perception of the technical aspects and whether the advertisement was deemed ethical. The survey results indicated that viewers had a negative first impression of the TV advertisement. Despite the realistic approach in the technical aspects, the advertisement was considered ethically wrong, and it is suggested that the company should not have created such an advertisement (Lester 2013, Sebastian et al. 2021, Lester et al. 2022).

Lester (2013) asserts that, because viewers have a tendency to scrutinise advertisements in great detail, critical and cultural viewpoints in advertising are frequently hard to persuade or be influenced by other perspectives. This analysis focuses on several factors including the concerns addressed in the commercial and whether the corporation is honestly pushing the product, going beyond first impressions, technological aspects and ethical considerations. The cultural perspective allows viewers to interpret TV advertisements based on their own cultural and religious beliefs, as well as consider the impact on other races with different cultural and religious beliefs. This idea is further supported by Mohamad et al. (2024), who assert that personal, technical, and ethical viewpoints are not the same as critical and cultural perspectives. The research findings show that while viewer viewpoints can impact one another, a viewer's initial perception of the SlimmeWhite TV advertisement largely influences their personal, technical and ethical perspectives. On the other hand, viewers who adopt critical and cultural perspectives must take into account the complex topics raised by the advertiser(s) as well as the cultural and religious beliefs of other people.

The effects of gender on viewers' five different perspectives

The following table shows the data tabulation of the independent sample t-test of gender on all five perspectives (PER, TEC, EMO, CUL, CRIT) in visual communication. It sought to answer the second research question on the predictive factor of gender in determining their five perspectives in visual communication.

Table 3.

Independent sample t-test findings on the effect of gender on Personal (PER), Technical (TECH), Ethical (ETH), Cultural (CUL), and Critical (CRIT) perspectives towards a skin care TV advertisement

Independent Samples t-test Findings of Five Different Perspectives					
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
PER	.479	.492	-.180	58	.858
TECH	.008	.927	-.732	58	.467
ETH	.001	.981	-.106	58	.916
CUL	.016	.899	.607	58	.546
CRIT	.078	.780	-.274	58	.785

Source: Author's data analysis of the independent t-test of the different perspectives from SPSS

Table 3 shows independent sample t-test findings on the effect of gender differences on personal (PER), technical (TECH), ethical (ETH), cultural (CUL), and critical (CRIT) perspectives towards SkinCare TV advertisement. It shows that male viewers (M = 2.214, SD = 1.188) and female viewers (M = 2.282, SD = 1.258) did not show significant differences in their personal perspective, $t(58) = .180, p > 0.05$. The male viewers (M = 3.371, SD = 1.007) and female viewers (M = 3.587, SD = .982) also did not show significant differences in their technical perspectives, $t(58) = .732, p > 0.05$.

Further analysis revealed that male viewers (M = 2.500, SD = 1.330) and female viewers (M = 2.543, SD = 1.345) did now show significant differences in their ethical perspectives, $t(58) = -.106, p > 0.05$. Similar finding was shown for the next perspective in which male viewers (M = 4.000, SD = 1.037) and female viewers (M = 3.782, SD = 1.209) did not show significant differences in their cultural perspective, $t(58) = .607, p > 0.05$ and the same male viewers (M = 3.400, SD = .697) and female viewers (M = 3.452, SD = .601) did not show significant differences in their critical perspectives, $t(58) = -.274, p > 0.05$.

Based on the above findings, it can be concluded that male or female viewers did not demonstrate any differences in their viewers' personal, technical, ethical, cultural, as well as critical perspectives of visual communication towards the TV advertisement. This further suggests that gender was not an important predictive factor in determining the differences in the viewers' five perspectives.

The second research question aimed to investigate the impact of gender on viewers' perspectives of a Malaysian skincare TV advertisement. The results showed that there were no significant differences in the mean viewpoints of the advertisement between both genders. Sebastian et al. (2021) assert that people's perceptions of TV commercials are thought to be influenced by their gender. Gender will not matter, though, if men and women have similar viewpoints; this suggests a healthy compromise between the two genders. This suggests that the SlimmeWhite TV advertisement garnered equal perspectives from both genders. In their research, Shabbir et al. (2019) stated that males and females perceive advertisements similarly when they view them in the same context, particularly when the advertisements are deemed unacceptable and negatively impact individuals' perspectives. Thus, the results of this study showed that opinions about a Malaysian skincare TV advertisement were perceived similarly by men and women.

The effects of gender on viewers' perceptions of controversial considerations

The following table shows the data tabulation of the independent sample t-test of viewers' gender on controversial considerations in visual communication. Specifically, it sought to answer the second research question on the predictive factor of gender in determining the viewers' different attitudes towards the advertisement in terms of potential controversial elements presented in an advertisement.

Table 4.

Independent sample t-test findings on the effect of gender on controversial considerations for a skin care TV advertisement

	Independent Samples Test					
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Controversial Considerations	.153	.698	-.423	58	.674	-.09524

Source: Author's data analysis of the independent t-test of gender perceptions from SPSS

Table 4 shows independent sample t-test findings on the predictive factor of viewers' gender on their perceptions of controversial considerations for skin care TV advertisement. The results showed that male ($M = 3.405$, $SD = .643$) and female ($M = 3.500$, $SD = .766$) viewers did not show their significant differences in their controversial consideration for the advertisement, $t(58) = .423$, $p > 0.05$. Similar to the previous findings of RQ2, it can also be concluded for RQ3 that gender did not predict viewers' different perceptions towards controversial consideration, hence making the sensitive elements to be unimportant aspects for either male or female viewers in viewing the skincare advertisement.

It can be concluded from the last two findings that the visual communication model most likely applies differently to different individual cases of advertisement. In addition, the common belief about the perceived role of gender on people's perspectives towards skin care advertisements has been challenged by the findings of this study about this gender-based argument for being an irrelevant factor in the visual communication of skincare advertisements.

Examining mean differences in viewers' controversial considerations based on gender was the objective of the third research question. The results aligned with the findings of the third research question, which suggested that viewers' perceptions of a Malaysian skincare TV advertisement were not significantly influenced by their gender. The survey results revealed that both males and females held equal perceptions regarding viewers' perspectives on the advertisement. Licsandru & Cui (2019) contend that the substance of commercials dictates how controversial they are, and that when an advertisement is deemed controversial, gender is not a factor in the decision-making process, leading to equal perceptions. Depending on the topic that advertisers promote in their TV commercials, gender has varying effects. On the other hand, 72.6% of Malaysians believed that domestic abuse was a serious issue that should not be overemphasised or promoted in commercials (Aziz et. al 2019). Lester (2013) also stated that gender is not the determining factor when it comes to controversial considerations. If the general public believes that advertisements of any kind are controversial, then the outcome will show that men and women have similar opinions about the controversial issue. Consequently, when an advertisement was deemed problematic, equal impressions were noted, indicating that gender had no influence on controversial concerns.

In terms of theoretical implications, the findings of the research appeared to complement Lester's (2013) model of Perspectives in Visual Communication by elaborating the forms and directions of the relationship between each of the proposed perspectives by helping to show the types of viewers' perceptions towards controversial advertisements. In addition, this model was enlightened further in the context of the present research involving Malaysian TV advertisements with controversial nuances in which these advertisements are positively viewed to be emotionally appealing to the viewers accompanied by their positive perspectives on the technical and ethical elements embedded in the advertisements (Esa et al. 2024). In addition, cultural and critical elements, despite being proposed to be the other perspectives in the model, did not play a significant relationship with other perspectives in the context of controversial advertisements. The same non-significant relationship was also demonstrated with the role of different gender. Without invalidating the applicability and rigour of the model, these two perspectives as well as

the effects of different gender were potentially more appropriate in the context of the other types of TV advertisements. In fact, the present research managed to shed light on the significance of the theoretical model by offering more viewpoints and contexts as well as the extent of gender-based perception of the perspectives shown.

Conclusion

This research revealed that personal, technical and ethical perspectives impact viewers' perceptions of a Malaysian skincare TV advertisement. The initial impression influences the technical aspects employed by advertisers, which subsequently affects viewers' perspectives. The intertwining of personal and technical perspectives leads to ethical considerations, allowing viewers to evaluate the advertisement's ethicality. However, this study found that the advertisement was considered unethical. Critical and cultural perspectives, on the other hand, do not influence each other. The prominence of the top three viewpoints can be ascribed to the viewers' demand for an in-depth analysis that takes into account the advertisement's cultural and critical elements. Even though the technical, ethical and personal viewpoints are intertwined, viewers found that the cultural perspective was the most important aspect. This is due to the sensitivity surrounding the promotion of marital happiness through skincare products within the cultural context. The SlimmeWhite TV advertisement is controversial as it exaggerates an issue to promote the product, violating the Code and disrespecting cultural beliefs. Both males and females share equal views on viewers' perspectives and controversial considerations of the advertisement. Gender plays a role in how viewers perceive the content, with most having the same view if they find it sensitive and disrespectful.

For future studies on analysing perspectives of a Malaysian skincare TV advertisement, there are several considerations. Firstly, expanding the sample size would allow for comparisons and exploration of reasons behind controversial perceptions. Secondly, a mixed-method approach could be employed, involving interviews with professional advertisers to understand their decision-making process and motivations for creating controversial advertisements. This would provide a more comprehensive and balanced perspective. Lastly, if the research is not extended, analysing other controversial visual communications such as posters, billboards, and cover magazines using the framework of the Six Perspectives of Visual Communication by Paul Martin Lester could yield valuable insights for improving advertising and understanding public perspectives.

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