Advertising Avoidance: A Consumer Socialization Perspective

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Abstract

The current study adopts the consumer socialization framework to assess the socio-economic factors influencing advertising avoidance across newspapers, magazines, radio, and television via an online survey of 2,002 U.S. adults. Results show that attitude toward advertising in general is the strongest predictor of advertising avoidance, and that greater peer communication about consumption and amount of media usage are overall inversely related with this behavior. The data also demonstrates no gender differences, but that AngloAmericans and those of higher age, income, and education avoid the most advertising across all four media.

Keywords: advertising avoidance, consumer socialization, product placement, peer communication, attitude toward advertising

Introduction

It is often cited that the average person is exposed to approximately 3,000 promotional messages in a single day (Speck & Elliott, 1997). Market research firm Yankelovich reported this estimate, noting that in 2007 those living in an average city in the U.S. encounter approximately 5,000 such messages on a daily basis, with much of these exposures coming from mass media (Story, 2007). However, lest this commercial tide of messages seem overwhelming, consumers have developed numerous means of avoiding such persuasion efforts. Indeed, along with the rise in daily exposure to commercial messages there has recently been an ongoing, rapid diffusion of media technologies, predominantly for television and the Internet, allowing consumers to more effectively and easily avoid contact with such messages than ever before – DVR technology is estimated to be in 47 percent of American homes (Leichtman Research Group, 2014) and consumer adoption of premium cable channels, satellite radio services, and ad-blocking software online continues to grow. Advertisers are understandably concerned about the proliferation and use of such technologies and the resulting ad avoidance behaviors. If significant proportions of people completely avoid their messages (e.g., immediately changing channels when a commercial pod begins) or even partially do so (fast forwarding rapidly through TV commercials using digital video recorders or changing channels when commercials appear), marketers worry that the impact of their ads will be drastically reduced.

Over the years, three core types of advertising avoidance have been categorized and investigated – mechanical, cognitive, and behavioral (Speck & Elliott, 1997). When engaging in mechanical avoidance audiences utilize specific medium-related tools, such as a remote control in the case of TV or a dial in the case of radio, to avoid exposure to advertisements. Such avoidance has typically been discussed in the context of TV and radio media due to the mechanical nature of the avoidance. Thus, audiences can perform such actions as changing the channel/station during a commercial pod (zapping), hitting the mute button, and fast forward through the commercials when playing back recorded programming on VCRs or DVRs (zipping). Behavioral avoidance involves physical actions on the part of the audience to avoid commercial contact. Using this avoidance strategy, people can leave the vicinity of the medium while commercials are playing, talk with others, flip past a page containing advertisements, dispose of promotional inserts, or close pop-up and roll-over ads in a web browser. Audiences can also cognitively avoid by mentally ignoring ad messages (shifting their cognitive attention away from ongoing promotional message).

Research into such avoidance behavior has taken several core approaches. One stream of research experimentally examines whether and to what extent partially avoided ads, such as those fast-forwarded with VCRs or DVRs, have an impact on viewers (Bellman *et al*. 2010; Dix, *et al*. 2010; Tse & Lee 2001). Broadly, results from these studies show significant degradation in recall and recognition of both ad and brand as compared to full-attention exposure. Other researchers have used in-home observation to gain a more in-depth understanding of the specific behaviors audiences engage in during the avoidance act (Krugman *et al*., 1995; Schmitt *et al*., 2003; Smith & Krugman, 2009). Others have examined ad avoidance through analysis of large datasets of channel viewership and switching behavior obtained directly from measurement companies such as Nielsen and TNS, allowing the inclusion of program and commercial-related variables to be factored into their models (e.g., Danaher, 1995; Schweidel & Kent, 2010; Siddarth & Chattopadhyay, 1998). However, there have been few prior investigations focusing on the ad avoiders themselves, the sociostructural factors influencing this behavior, or avoidance in media beyond television (for exceptions see e.g., Goby, 2008; Heeter& Cohen, 1988; Speck & Elliott, 1997). In addition, data regarding demographic and psychographic influences on ad avoidance from such studies have been somewhat inconsistent. The current study uses consumer socialization (CS) as a framework by which to investigate the extent of, and socio-economic factors impacting, avoidance behaviors in response to television, radio, newspaper, and magazine advertisements among a sample of 2,002 US consumers.

Background

Consumer Socialization

Ward (1974, p. 2) proposed consumer socialization as the "processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace". His framework provides a structured means of investigating the means by which people come to understand how to perform their roles as consumers in society. Although children and adolescents make up the majority of consumers studied in prior research on CS, the process continues throughout adulthood (Brim, 1968; Moschis, 1987) as people modify their consumption-related behaviors and adapt to new or changing roles.

Adapted from Bush *et al*. (1999) and Moschis and Churchill (1978), Figure 1 models the general CS framework utilized in the current study. While the four components of Antecedents, Socialization Processes, Socialization Agents, and Outcomes are central to CS, the number and

nature of variables within each of these components is not fixed and can vary according to the specific nature of the topic being studied (Moschis 1987; Moschis & Churchill 1978).

Antecedents   **Socialization Processes**   **Outcomes**
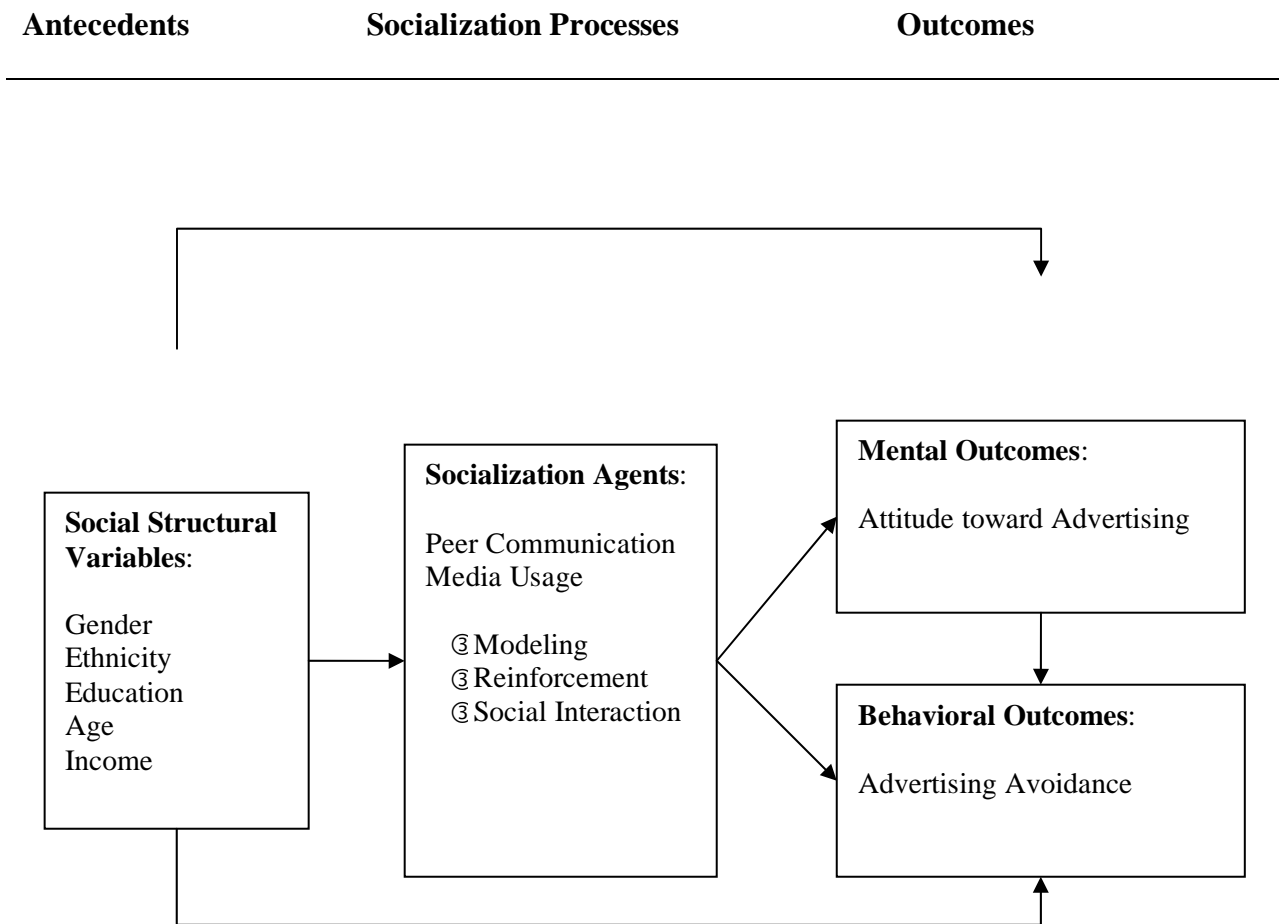
Note: Adapted from Moschis and Churchill (1978) and Bush, Smith and Martin (1999)

Figure 1: A conceptual model of consumer socialization and advertising avoidance

Although not a theory in itself, CS is grounded in the theoretical foundations comprising its Socialization Processes component. Two of the most commonly utilized theories to explain the CS process are cognitive development model and social learning. The former conceptualizes socialization as a psychological process that occurs during changes developing as people progress throughout their lives. The social learning perspective provides a framework that organizes and traces the external, environmental sources (Socialization Agents) of such processes, such as peers and media. These external sources provide norms and models of attitudes and behaviors from which learning and imitation occur. Three complementary mechanisms dictate how Socialization Agents influence CS outcomes – modeling,

reinforcement, and social interaction. These outcomes can take the form of both actual behaviors and cognitions. The modeling mechanism posits that people base their consumption-related attitudes and actions on those of important social agents such as peers, family, or media. Thus influential social agents transmit norms of acceptable/appropriate cognitions, responses, and behaviors, with socialization occurring as part of the process of imitating these influential others.

The reinforcement mechanism involves consumer learning occurring as the result of positive or negative reinforcement on the part of the socialization agent upon the consumer through a combination of modeling, reinforcement, and social norms (Moschis, 1987). For example, if one's peer group is highly negative toward advertising and often avoids promotional messages they encounter, one's own attitude and behavior is likely to be similar, shaped by interactions with the group in this context.

Outcomes. We discuss the Outcomes component of the CS model before the others due to the way we have structured the hypotheses in the following sections. While our focal interest is ad avoidance, we include general attitude toward advertising in the Outcomes component of the CS model. Researchers have demonstrated that attitudes toward and beliefs about advertising are inversely related with avoidance behavior. Lee and Lumpkin's results (1992) showed that as attitudes towards TV advertising increased, rates of both channel switching during commercials and fast forwarding through VCR-recorded ads in programming declined. A later study by Speck and Elliott (1997) revealed that stronger positive beliefs about advertising (being useful, interesting, believable) was generally linked with reduced avoidance across four media types, while stronger negative beliefs (annoying, excessive, waste of time) resulted in increased ad avoidance. More recently, in two studies examining ad avoidance behaviors in Turkey, Chile, and the UK, Rojas-Méndez and colleagues (2005, 2009) confirmed this pattern of results cross-culturally in that more positive attitudes toward advertising were negatively related with both mechanical and behavioral avoiding of TV commercials.

While in the current study we include attitude toward advertising as an Outcome component, we consider it essentially a mediating outcome. Specifically, we propose that the social structural variables, and the two socialization agents of peer communication and media usage, impact advertising avoidance directly and indirectly via attitude toward advertising. As a corollary:

H1: *Attitude toward advertising will be inversely related with advertising avoidance.*

Socialization agents: peers. Interaction with peer group others is considered a basic psychological, physiological, and social need for humans (Moschis, 1987; Ward, 1974). According to the CS framework, peers serve as influential communicators of attitudinal and behavioral norms by which one's own beliefs and actions may be compared and calibrated (Moschis & Churchill, 1978; Bush *et al*., 1999). Peer groups offer a means of assessing whether and the extent to which one's own orientations and actions are "appropriate" among those groups of which one considers oneself to be part. Within the CS literature, peer groups have been one of the most commonly researched socialization agents and consistent results have shown that peer interactions regarding consumption-related matters is highly influential in shaping, among other things, retail patronage (Bellenger & Moschis, 1981), shopping orientations (Shim & Gehrt, 1996), and product placement attitudes and behaviors (de Gregorio & Sung, 2010).

In the current research we are interested in consumers' ad avoidance behaviors in general, not their perceptions or actions in response to specific ads. Therefore, we adopt the perspective that greater consumption-related communication with peers is indicative of a more positive orientation towards advertising and negatively related to advertising avoidance. If one engages in greater consumption-focused communications with one's peer groups, it is likely that one will be more positively disposed towards consumption-related objects such as brands and thus more willing to be exposed to brand messages originating from marketers. Initial findings in the attitude-toward-advertising-in-general arena confirm that peers are clear influencers ofattitudes/orientations toward advertising (Bush *et al*., 1999; Smith & Moschis, 1990). Thus, given the relationships found between peer communication and both consumption attitudes and behaviors:

H2a: *Peer communication about consumption will be positively related with attitude toward advertising.*

H2b: *Peer communication about consumption will be inversely related with advertising avoidance.*

Socialization agents: media. There are some initial indications that media exposure influences CS-related outcomes among adults. Specific to CS, amount of media usage (most commonly

operationalized in terms of television and TV commercial viewership) has been found to be positively related with attitudes toward advertising in general and specific forms of advertising such as product placement (Bush *et al*., 1999; de Gregorio & Sung, 2010), although not among the elderly (Smith & Moschis, 1990). With regards to ad avoidance behaviors, the evidence has been limited. Some researchers have found no relationship between amount of television viewership and ad avoidance (Abernethy, 1991; Heeter & Greenberg, 1985), while Speck and Elliott (1997) found a negative relationship between amount of radio usage and ad avoidance (although no such relationship was found for magazine, newspaper, and television exposure).

The preliminary data seems to indicate a weak or negligible relation between media exposure and ad avoidance, given that norm transmission with regard to ad avoidance behaviors would be unlikely given the limited instances of discussions or depictions of such practice (ads would simply appear as part of the regular pattern of media content scheduling rather than being focal points of content, particularly with regards to avoidance actions). However, we propose that social norms of ad avoidance would be transmitted and reinforced in a process similar to the mere exposure effect (e.g., Moschis & Churchill, 1978; Moschis & Moore, 1979; Smith & Moschis, 1990). The modeling component of the CS process may seem initially to be incompatible with the mere exposure conceptualization as there is no response or avoidance behavior to be imitated. But as noted earlier, the three key socialization processes in Figure 1 are not mutually exclusive. As it is not possible to completely avoid all forms of advertising in media, greater exposure to media should result in greater overall exposure to advertisements. According to mere exposure theory, as one sees more instances of advertisements, the more familiar they become and thus result in more positive attitudes toward the practice as a whole. This positive orientation towards the practice in turn is likely to decrease the likelihood of avoiding promotional messages. Thus:

H3a: *Greater media usage will be positively related with attitude toward advertising*.

H3b: *Greater media usage will be inversely related with advertising avoidance*.

Social structural variables. The structural variables used as part of the CS framework essentially mirror those used when businesses target consumers demographically, such as age, gender, or income. While the means by which people avoid, the reasons they avoid, and the programming characteristics influencing avoidance have been studied rather extensively, there

have been few focal efforts assessing demographic patterns in avoidance. Regarding gender, in a review of five studies over two years, Heeter and Greenberg (1985) found that men reported zapping rates of 2-1 over females, in Cronin and Menelly (1992) males in a student sample viewed only 22 percent of commercials in their entirety while females viewed 45 percent, males show greater mechanical vs. behavioral avoidance of TV commercials than females across three countries (Rojas-Méndez *et al*., 2009; Stafford & Stafford, 1996 for similar finding among a US sample), and Krugman *et al*. (1995) observed that men zapped commercials with using a remote control at a greater rate than females. However, the Krugman *et al*. (1995) data also showed that males' eyes-on-screen time during commercials was longer than females, while Danaher's (1995) analysis of Peoplemeter data from 1,100 panelists found no effect of gender on TV ad avoidance.

Results for other demographic variables show that young adults zap and zip television ads more than older adults (Cronin & Menelly, 1992; Danaher, 1995; Heeter & Greenberg, 1985 but only for single-person homes; Rojas-Méndez *et al*., 2009 only for behavioral avoidance) but avoid less newspaper ads (Speck & Elliott, 1997). Income level is positively related with ad avoidance in some cases (Danaher, 1995; Zufryden *et al*., 1993 for single-person households; Speck & Elliott, 1997 but not for radio), while other investigations find no relation (Heeter & Greenberg, 1985; Danaher, 1995 when looking at all households in his dataset) or an inverse relation (Heeter & Cohen, 1988). As with income, education level has sometimes been positively related with promotional avoidance (Speck & Elliott, 1997; Zufryden *et al*., 1993 only for newspapers; Rojas-Méndez *et al*., 2009 for behavioral but not mechanical avoidance) but not in others (Heeter & Greenberg, 1985). While cross-cultural studies of ad avoidance exist, only one academic study has specifically reported ethnicity data in US-based studies. Speck and Elliott (1997) found no relationship between race and ad avoidance across any of four media types. Finally, we note that in an analysis of scanner panel data from 1,712 households, Siddarth and Chattopadhyay (1998) found not a single demographic variable to be related with household TV ad avoidance behavior.

It should be noted that, although CS outcomes can be influenced by social structural variables directly, as well as indirectly via the socialization agents (see Figure 1), the social learning mechanisms described earlier apply only to the processes by which the socialization agents indirectly impact the outcomes. The framework does not provide a theory-oriented means of explaining how the social structural variables directly influence CS outcomes. Given this lack

of an explanatory mechanism, and in light of the fact that there have been limited analyses of demographic differences in advertising avoidance and conflicting results when such data have been examined, we propose the following:

RQ1: *In terms of attitude toward advertising, how do consumers differ in regard to(a) gender, (b) ethnicity, (c) education level, (d) age, and (e) income?*

RQ2: *In terms of advertising avoidance, how do consumers differ in regard to(a) gender, (b) ethnicity, (c) education level, (d) age, and (e) income?*

RQ3: *What are the differences in advertising avoidance across the four media?*

Method

Sample

All 18,640 potential participants from an online consumer panel maintained by a large southwestern university were selected survey invitation via e-mail. After this invitation 2,859 completed surveys were received, resulting in a response rate of 15.3 percent. Among them, a total of 857 non-U.S. residents were eliminated as the current study focuses on American consumers only. As a result, the final sample size was 2,002 American consumers. Among the 2,002 respondents, 1,314 (65.7%) were females and 687 (34.3%) were males. Approximately 6.4 % of the respondents were ages 26-35 (27.1%), followed by ages 36-45 (25.9%), ages 46-55 (25.3%), ages over 55 (15.3%), and ages 19-25 (6.4%). AngloAmericans comprised 82.4% of the sample, followed by Hispanics (7.1%), AfricanAmericans (5.4%), and Asian-Americans (5.1%). Additional demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the sample

			Frequency	*Percent*
Gender		Male	687	34.3%
		Female	1314	65.7%
Age		19-25	128	6.4%
		26-35	542	27.1%
		36-45	519	25.9%
		46-55	507	25.3%
		Over 55	306	15.3%
Education Level		Did not finish High School	18	0.9%
		High school	241	12.0%
		Some college	644	32.2%
		Bachelor's degree	631	31.5%
		Master's / professional degree	437	21.8%
		Other	31	1.5%
Household Level	**Income**	Less than $15,000	75	3.7%
		$15,000-$29,999	256	12.8%
		$30,000-$44,999	353	17.6%
		$45,000-$59,999	340	17.0%
		$60,000-$74,999	295	14.7%
		More than $75,000	683	34.1%
Ethnicity		African-American	108	5.4%
		Anglo-American	1650	82.4%
		Asian-American	102	5.1%
		Hispanic	142	7.1%

Measures and Reliabilities

Peer communication about consumption. This variable was assessed using Moschis and Churchill's (1978) six-item, five-point, Likert-type peer communication about consumption scale, with 1 being "Never" and 5 being "Very Often". For example, respondents were asked to indicate how often each of the six items occurs (e.g., You ask your friends for advice about buying things). The six items were found to be reliable ($\alpha = .84$).

Media usage. This variable was measured in line with Speck and Elliott (1997), using openended items asking participants the number of minutes per week they spent listening to/reading/watching each medium.

Attitude toward advertising. Because the current study seeks to assess attitudes toward advertising in general, and not the underlying beliefs or dimensions that comprise such attitudes, the survey adapted and applied Muehling's (1987) three-item, five-point semantic differential scale to measure this construct (bad vs. good; negative vs. positive; unfavorable vs. favorable). The three items were found to be reliable ($\alpha = .91$).

Advertising avoidance. Advertising avoidance was measured using Speck and Elliott's (1997) items. These measures use three items for each of four media (television, radio, newspapers, and magazines). These items were found to be of acceptable reliability (television $\alpha = .84$, radio $\alpha = .84$, newspapers $\alpha = .85$, and magazines $\alpha = .75$).

Results

Hypotheses Testing

The relationships between attitude toward advertising, peer communications, media usage, and ad avoidance were examined using correlation analyses. As shown in **Table 2**, the results indicate that there is a negative correlation between attitude toward advertising and advertising avoidance ($r = -.34$, $p < .001$), supporting H1. In support of H2a and b, peer communication about consumption was positively related with attitude toward advertising($r = .23$, $p < .001$), and negatively correlated with advertising avoidance ($r = -.12$, $p < .001$). Further, H3a and b were each supported through a positive association between media usage and attitude toward advertising ($r = .04$, $p < .05$) and a negative correlation between media usage and advertising avoidance ($r = -.09$, $p < .001$).

Table 2: Correlation coefficients matrix

	Peer Communication	Media Usage	Advertising Attitude	Advertising Avoidance
Peer Communication	1.00			
Media Usage	.06**	1.00		
Advertising Attitude	.23***	.04*	1.00	
Advertising Avoidance	-.12***	-.09***	-.34***	1.00

*Significant at .05 level
**Significant at .01 level
*** Significant at .001 level

Research Questions

Because there are limited theoretical bases supporting the development of hypotheses with regard to the effects of the social structural variables, the analyses used to answer RQs 1 and 2 are considered exploratory in nature. An independent samples t-test was conducted for gender and an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for the ethnicity, age group, and education variables discussed below. As noted earlier, we also sought to understand the relationships between respondents' demographic characteristics and their peer communications about consumption and brand consciousness.

Gender. As shown in **Table 3**, the results suggest that there is no significant difference for attitude toward advertising between males ($M = 3.15$) and females ($M = 3.23$) ($t = 1.57$, *n.s.*). Similarly, the results indicate there is no difference in advertising avoidance between males ($M = 3.68$) and female ($M = 3.68$) ($t = .05$, *n.s.*).

Ethnicity. The results of the ANOVA show a significant effect of ethnicity on both overall attitudes toward advertising and ad avoidance. As shown in **Table 3**, overall attitude toward advertising is most favorable among African-Americans ($M = 3.72$), followed by Hispanics ($M = 3.48$), Asian-Americans ($M = 3.37$), and Anglo-Americans ($M = 3.13$) ($F = 13.89$, $p < .01$). The nature of this effect was determined using a Bonferroni pairwise comparisons test. The results indicate that African-Americans' attitude toward advertising is significantly more

favorable than Anglo-Americans ($p < .01$). Consistent with the above findings, African-Americans exhibited the lowest levels of advertising avoidance. The level of ad avoidance is the highest among Anglo-Americans ($M = 3.75$), followed by Hispanics ($M = 3.45$), Asian-Americans ($M = 3.42$), and African-Americans ($M = 3.10$) ($p < .01$). The results of Bonferroni pairwise comparisons tests indicate that African-American respondents showed significantly lower levels of ad avoidance than any other ethnic groups ($p < .01$).

Education. As shown in **Table 3**, the results suggest that there are significant mean differences in attitude toward advertising across respondents' education levels ($F = 2.24$, $p < .05$). That is, advertising attitude was the most positive for the group of respondents who finished some college ($M = 3.29$), followed by Bachelors' degree holders ($M = 3.21$), high school graduates ($M = 3.18$), those who did not finish high school ($M = 3.14$), Master's/professional degree holders ($M = 3.08$), and those with other kinds of education ($M = 2.96$). The Bonferroni tests suggest that respondents with MA/professional degrees exhibited significantly different attitudes toward advertising mean scores from those who had finished some college ($P < .05$). Regarding the advertising avoidance, as shown in **Table 3**, different education levels exhibited significantly different mean scores ($F = 13.12$, $p < .01$). That is, ad avoidance was the highest for the groups of respondents with MA/professional degrees ($M = 3.89$), followed by Bachelor's degrees ($M = 3.75$), other ($M = 3.60$), those who finished some college ($M = 3.54$), high school graduates ($M = 3.49$), and those who did not finish high school ($M = 3.31$). The Bonferroni tests suggest that respondents with either BA or MA/professional degrees exhibit significantly different mean ad avoidance scores from those who did not finish high school ($p < .05$), high school graduates ($p < .01$), and those who completed some college ($p < .01$).

Age. The results of the ANOVA indicated a significant age difference for attitude toward advertising ($F = 3.74$, $p < .01$) as well as overall ad avoidance ($F = 2.41$, $p < .05$). **Table 3** shows that respondents over 55 years held the least favorable attitude mean score ($M = 3.05$) and significantly different overall advertising attitudes from the other groups of respondents ($p < .01$). Further results indicate that respondents 19-24 ($M = 3.33$) showed the highest level of overall attitude toward advertising followed by people over 36-45 ($M = 3.30$), 26-35 ($M = 3.24$), 46-55 ($M = 3.13$), and over 55 ($M = 3.05$). Regarding ad avoidance, the results showed the highest level of ad avoidance among respondents 26-35 years old ($M = 3.75$).

Income. As shown in **Table 3**, there are no significant mean score differences in respondents' overall attitude toward advertising with respect to income levels ($F = 1.74$, *n.s.*). In contrast, the higher respondents' income levels, the more they are likely to avoid advertising ($F = 6.95$, $p < .01$). That is, the mean score was highest for the group making more than \$75,000 ($M = 3.82$), followed by \$45,000-59,999 ($M = 3.67$), \$60,000-74,999 ($M = 3.63$), \$30,000-44,999 ($M = 3.61$), \$15,000-29,999 ($M = 3.53$), and less than \$15,000 ($M = 3.49$).

Table 3: Summary of independent samples t-Test and ANOVAs

		N	Overall Ads Attitude		Overall Ads Avoidance	
			Mean/S.D	t or F	Mean/S.D	t or F
Gender	Male	1315	3.15/1.14	1.57	3.68/0.82	.05
	Female	687	**3.23/1.05**		3.68/0.85	
Ethnicity	African-American	108	**3.72/1.04**	14.81**	3.10/0.95	29.51**
	Anglo-American	1650	3.13/1.07		**3.75/0.80**	
	Asian-American	102	3.37/1.10		3.42/0.95	
	Hispanic	142	3.48/1.09		3.45/0.83	
Education	Didn't finish high school	18	3.14/1.05	2.24*	3.31/0.86	13.12**
	High school	241	3.18/1.14		3.49/0.83	
	Some college	644	**3.29/1.10**		3.54/0.88	
	Bachelor's	631	3.21/1.02		3.75/0.77	
	Master's/professional	437	3.08/1.11		**3.89/0.81**	
	Other	31	2.96/0.95		3.60/0.93	
Age	19-25	128	**3.33/1.06**	3.74**	3.65/0.78	2.41*
	26-35	542	3.24/1.04		**3.75/0.83**	
	36-45	519	3.30/1.05		3.61/0.85	
	46-55	507	3.13/1.11		3.66/0.87	
	Over 55	306	3.05/1.08		3.73/0.82	
Income	Less than $15,000	75	3.15/1.18	1.74	3.49/0.86	6.95**
	$15,000-$29,999	256	3.12/1.11		3.53/0.87	
	$30,000-$44,999	353	3.09/1.07		3.61/0.80	
	$45,000-$59,999	340	**3.28/1.05**		3.67/0.84	
	$60,000-$74,999	295	3.21/1.10		3.63/0.87	
	More than $75,000	683	3.25/1.07		**3.82/0.81**	

*Significant at .05 level

**Significant at .01 level

Finally, in order to answer RQ3 a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to explore the mean score difference for the respondents' ad avoidance across four different media. As shown in **Table 4**, the level of ad avoidance was the highest for TV ads ($M = 3.87$) followed by magazine ($M = 3.66$), radio ($M = 3.65$), and newspaper ($M = 3.55$) ($F = 65.08, p < .01$).

Table 4: Independent samples t-Test and ANOVAs for advertising avoidance across four media

		N	*TV Avoidance*		*Radio Avoidance*		*Newspaper Avoidance*		*Magazine Avoidance*	
			Mean/S.D	*t or F*	Mean/S.D	*t or F*	Mean/S.D	*t or F*	Mean/S.D	*t or F*
			3.87/0.98		**3.65/1.10**		**3.55/1.11**		**3.66/1.02**	
Gender	Male	1315	3.86/0.95	.67	3.59/1.08	1.82	**3.61/1.14**	1.82	3.63/1.00	.51
	Female	687	**3.89/1.01**		**3.68/1.11**		3.52/1.03		**3.66/1.03**	
Ethnicity	African-American	108	3.50/1.13	13.20**	3.34/1.25	4.41**	2.78/1.17	26.86**	2.78/1.13	43.82**
	Anglo-American	1650	**3.93/0.95**		**3.68.1.08**		**3.64/1.08**		**3.76/0.97**	
	Asian-American	102	3.56/1.13		3.50/1.20		3.34/1.07		3.27/0.97	
	Hispanic	142	3.64/1.05		3.57/1.13		3.25/1.08		3.34/1.03	
Education	Didn't finish high school	18	3.59/0.99	7.97**	3.00/1.11	15.43**	3.38/0.99	5.55**	3.24/0.94	9.41**
	High school	241	3.65/1.04		3.33/1.15		3.65/1.12		3.57/0.99	
	Some college	644	3.77/1.04		3.49/1.14		3.77/1.15		3.50/1.04	
	Bachelor's	631	3.94/0.92		3.82/1.02		3.94/1.06		3.68/1.01	
	Master's/professional	437	**4.05/0.91**		**3.87/1.03**		**4.05/1.06**		**3.91/0.95**	
	Other	31	3.75/1.02		3.35/1.01		3.75/1.13		3.65/1.12	
Age	19-25	128	3.94/0.89	3.53**	3.85/0.99	12.82**	3.45/1.02	3.85**	3.37/1.04	4.73**
	26-35	542	3.91/0.95		**3.88/1.06**		3.54/1.09		3.67/0.99	
	36-45	519	3.73/1.02		3.65/1.09		3.45/1.08		3.58/1.01	
	46-55	507	3.88/0.99		3.48/1.11		3.58/1.16		3.63/1.02	
	Over 55	306	**3.96/0.98**		3.44/1.12		**3.74/1.07**		**3.79/1.03**	
Income	Less than $15,000	75	3.74/1.05	3.62**	3.39/1.18	6.12**	3.40/1.11	3.91*	3.41/1.08	5.24**
	$15,000-$29,999	256	3.75/1.03		3.39/1.19		3.45/1.09		3.50/1.07	
	$30,000-$44,999	353	3.79/1.01		3.61/1.03		3.47/1.06		3.58/0.97	
	$45,000-$59,999	340	3.83/1.01		3.64/1.07		3.58/1.11		3.65/0.99	
	$60,000-$74,999	295	3.84/1.01		3.64/1.16		3.42/1.16		3.60/1.08	
	More than $75,000	683	**3.99/0.92**		**3.79/1.05**		**3.69/1.09**		**3.79/0.98**	

*Significant at .05 level

**Significant at .01 level

Assessing Relative Influence of CS Variables

To further explore the relative influence of consumer socialization variables on advertising avoidance, five separate regression analyses were conducted. First, advertising attitude, peer communication, media exposure, age, gender, education, income, and ethnicity were regressed on overall advertising avoidance (i.e., the composite score of the four individual media advertising avoidance measures). The tolerance values of the variables were examined using the conventional .1 cutoff point for high multicollinearity (Hair *et al*., 1998). The results show that all predicting variables had tolerance values from .83 to .95, suggesting an absence of multicollinearity. As shown in **Table 4**, attitude toward advertising and most of the demographic variables are significant predictors of overall ad avoidance ($R^2_{adj} = .18$, $F = 42.99$, $p < .001$). As shown in **Table 5**, the results of the stepwise regression indicate significant standardized beta coefficients for the ten predictors. The variable with the most predictive power for overall ad avoidance is attitude toward advertising (Beta = -.31, $t = 14.60$, $p < .001$), followed by African-American ethnicity (Beta = -.13, $t = 6.07$, $p < .001$), education (Beta = .12, $t = 5.38$, $p < .001$), Asian-American ethnicity (Beta = -.08, $t = -3.94$, $p < .001$), income (Beta = .08, $t = 3.51$, $p < .001$), Hispanic ethnicity (Beta = -.07, $t = -3.42$, $p < .01$), Age (Beta = -.07, $t = -3.23$, $p < .01$), peer communication (Beta = -.05, $t = -2.41$, $p < .05$), and media usage (Beta = -.04, $t = -2.06$, $p < .05$). Gender was found to be a non-significant predictor (Beta = -.02, $t = -1.00$, *n.s.*). Next, four additional regression analyses were performed across the four media. Regarding TV advertising avoidance, the consumer socialization variables with the most predictive power are attitude toward advertising (Beta = -.28, $t = -12.71$, $p < .001$), education (Beta = .09, $t = 4.02$, $p < .001$), Asian-American ethnicity (Beta = -.08, $t = -3.53$, $p < .001$), African-American ethnicity (Beta = -.06, $t = -2.56$, $p < .05$), Hispanic ethnicity (Beta = -.06, $t = -2.55$, $p < .05$), and Age (Beta = -.05, $t = -2.01$, $p < .05$). Regarding radio advertising avoidance, the variable with the most predictive power is attitude toward advertising (Beta = -.20, $t = -9.24$, $p < .001$), followed by Age (Beta = -.17, $t = -7.22$, $p < .001$), education (Beta = .13, $t = 5.48$, $p < .001$), income (Beta = .09, $t = 3.68$, $p < .001$), Asian-American ethnicity (Beta = -.06, $t = -2.96$, $p < .01$), media usage (Beta = -.06, $t = -2.87$, $p < .01$), gender (Beta = -.04, $t = -2.05$, $p < .05$), and African-American ethnicity (Beta = -.04, $t = -2.05$, $p < .05$).

Finally, regarding avoidance for the two print media, similar results were observed except for two variables: income and Asian-American ethnicity. That is, as shown in **Table 5**, such consumer socialization variables as advertising attitude (newspaper: Beta = -.24, $t = -10.79$, $p < .001$; magazine: Beta = -.27, $t = -12.69$, $p < .001$), peer communication (newspaper: Beta = -

.10, t = -4.45, p< .001; magazine: Beta = -.09, t = -3.87, p< .001), education (newspaper: Beta = .07, t = 3.14, p< .01; magazine: Beta = .09, t = 4.00, p< .001), African-American ethnicity (newspaper: Beta = -.14, t = -6.32, p< .001; magazine: Beta = -.17, t = -7.99, p< .001), and Hispanic ethnicity (newspaper: Beta = -.07, t = -3.10, p< .01; magazine: Beta = .07, t = -3.54, p< .001) were significant predictors for both newspaper and magazine avoidance. However, income (Beta = .06, t = 2.83, p< .01) and Asian-American ethnicity (Beta = -.08, t = -4.01, p< .001) were significant predictors of advertising avoidance only for magazines.

In sum, similar to the result from overall ad avoidance, attitude toward advertising has the most predictive power for advertising avoidance across the four types of media (TV, Radio, Newspapers, and Magazines). That is, an individual with more positive attitude toward advertising is less likely to avoid advertising in all four media. The results also exhibit significant impact of age on TV and radio, but not on newspaper and magazine ad avoidance. However, peer communication did not show significant predictive power for both TV and radio advertising avoidance, but did for newspaper and magazine. In addition, younger respondents are more likely to avoid ads on TV and radio than older ones.

Table 5: Summary of multiple regression analyses

	Overall Ad Avoidance		TV Avoidance		Radio Avoidance		Newspaper Avoidance		Magazine Avoidance	
	Beta	*t*	Beta	*t*	Beta	*t*	Beta	*t*	Beta	*t*
Overall Adv Attitude	-.31	-14.60***	-.28	-12.71***	-.20	-9.24***	-.24	-10.79***	-.27	-12.69***
Peer Communication	-.05	-2.41*	-.02	-.94	.04	1.67	-.10	4.45***	-.09	-3.87***
Media Usage	-.04	-2.06*	-.01	-.46	-.06	-2.87**	-.03	-1.40	-.03	-1.51
Gender	-.02	-1.00	.00	-.11	-.04	-2.05*	.02	.83	-.04	-1.76
Age	-.07	-3.23**	-.05	-2.01*	-.17	-7.22***	-.01	-.29	-.01	-.17
Education	.12	5.38***	.09	4.02***	.13	5.48***	.07	3.14**	.09	4.00***
Income	.08	3.51***	.06	2.68**	.09	3.68***	.04	1.70	.06	2.83**
African-American[1]	-.13	-6.07***	-.06	-2.56*	-.04	-2.05*	-.14	-6.32***	-.17	-7.99***
Asian-American[2]	-.08	-3.94***	-.08	-3.53***	-.06	-2.96**	-.04	-1.85	-.08	-4.01***
Hispanic[3]	-.07	-3.42**	-.06	-2.55*	-.03	-1.49	-.07	-3.10**	-.07	-3.54***
R²	.18		.12		.11		.12		.17	
F	42.99***		26.06***		24.87***		28.72***		40.21***	

* Significant at .05 level

** Significant at .01 level

*** Significant at .001 level

1 Dummy variable with 1 as African-American

2 Dummy variable with 1 as Asian-American

3 Dummy variable with 1 as Hispanic

Discussion

Implications for Theory and Practice

Several studies have demonstrated the influence that our peers have on attitude toward advertising and its various sub-forms (e.g., Bush *et al*., 1999; de Gregorio & Sung, 2010; Wang, Yu & Wei, 2012). The current study's findings replicate these results while expanding our understanding of avoidance behavior by showing that such actions are inversely related with peer communications, a factor that has not been investigated in prior assessments of avoidance. More (presumably positive) communication within one's peer group(s) about consumption-related topics results in less overall ad avoidance in general, and less print media (newspaper

and magazine) advertising avoidance in particular. This inverse relationship functions directly, but also works indirectly via influencing attitude toward advertising. Indeed, general attitude toward advertising was found to be the strongest predictor of avoidance, both as a global index measure and for television, radio, newspaper, and magazine media individually. Based on the logic of the CS framework, the more consumers discuss consumption-related matters with their peers, the more positively they are disposed towards marketing communications messages and thus will avoid them less overall. In terms of demographic patterns in avoidance behaviors, the current study's results hold interesting implications for marketers. The bulk of prior studies would seem to indicate that ad avoiders are predominantly male (e.g. Cronin &Menelly, 1992; Rojas-Méndez *et al*., 2009). However, in line with Speck and Elliott (1997) and Danaher (1995), no significant differences in ad avoidance were found across any of the four media (and indeed no such differences were similarly found with regards to perceptions of advertising). However, in contrast with Speck and Elliott's (1997) findings that ethnicity is unrelated to avoidance, we find clear and significant differences by ethnic groups. African-Americans demonstrated the least amount of ad avoidance for each of the four media analyzed, and also evinced the most positive attitude toward advertising. In contrast, Anglo-Americans were the least in favor of advertising and also showed the most avoidance for all the measured media. This pattern of results is consistent with the meditational role of attitude we propose in the CS model. African-Americans have been found to have the most positive perceptions of advertising as a whole among the core ethnic groups (Bush *et al*., 1999; Yoon, 1995).

In looking at the other demographic variables, results indicate that greater education, age, and income all result in increased avoidance of commercial messages. Indeed, when examining the pattern of demographic results in **Table 4** it is notable that with the single exception of education, all statistically significant variables show consistency across all four media. For example, those making more than $75,000 show the most avoidance across all four media, as do African-Americans, and consumers with Master's and professional degrees. The single exception is for age where the oldest age group (55+) shows the most avoidance for TV, magazine, and newspaper ads, but 26-35 year olds have the highest rate of radio avoidance. This highly consistent pattern of results contrasts greatly with the more dispersed patterns found by Speck and Elliott (1997), the only study thus far to examine ad avoidance across multiple media.

For advertisers and media planners the above results suggest that in order to increase the likelihood of their placed messages being seen/heard, careful attention must be paid to the demographics of the vehicle around which said messages are being placed. Certainly advertisers already consider such segmentation issues when selecting media and vehicles in terms of audience-target market match-up, but our study magnifies the importance of such decisions in that the type of audience comprising one's chosen medium varies in its propensity to avoid promotional messages. Indeed, advertisers must also be wary of ethical considerations when making some of these demographically–related decisions. While deliberately targeting programming/media that feature diverse ethnic audiences and/or older consumers who may harbor minimal ethical considerations, the targeting of those with little education or low income (often considered to be vulnerable consumer populations) is fraught with risk in terms of fairness and moral obligations (Smith & Cooper-Martin, 1997).

Future Research Directions

Researchers are encouraged to build upon the current work in adding to our understanding of advertising avoidance. We chose to limit our study to the four core non-Internet related media due to the constantly and rapidly expanding number of ad, and ad avoidance, options that seem to come into existence online. Thus, one clear possible future path lies in the examination of whether the relationships and patterns found here hold for promotional messages on the Internet and other new media (e.g., mobile, social media). At this time a handful of studies have addressed this topic, but more from a perspective of how and why avoidance occurs rather than through investigation of the socio-economic factors impacting such behavior (Cho & Cheon, 2004; Kelly *et al*., 2010; Okazaki, Molina & Hirose, 2012; Walsh, 2010). Large-scale studies in this vein using CS as a guiding framework would help greatly in enhancing knowledge of how avoidance changes, if at all, when in an online context.

A limitation of the survey method used in the current study in relation to ad avoidance is that it relies on participants' self-assessment of and reflections upon their behavior, rather than examining actual behavior. A fruitful area of future study would be to assess whether the findings revealed in the current work are borne out when behavioral ad avoidance data are analyzed. We suggest an approach that combines analysis of large-scale behavioral data such as that compiled by audience measurement firms like Nielsen and Arbitron with insight gleaned from in-home observation studies. While behavioral data for TV and radio audience behavior exist, similar data for print media is not regularly collected. A limited number of studies

examining such data have been published (e.g. Schweidel & Kent, 2010; Siddarth & Chattopadhyay, 1998), but with the exception of Zufryden *et al*. (1993) none have specifically examined/reported socio-economic variables in their analysis and all have focused solely on television (as have all prior in-home observational work). A combination of these approaches, while certainly challenging, would take us markedly further in understanding cross-media ad avoidance behavior.

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