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Factors Influencing Customers' Perceived Advertising Value and Attitudes Towards Fast-Food Native Advertisements.

By
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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Master of Science in Strategic Management and Digital Marketing at the Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy at the University of Malta

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Abstract

Purpose: Native advertisements, a new form of advertising, have become popular among organisations and marketing experts due to their ability to blend with the media in which they appear. This study's objective was to determine the principal factors that influence the customers' perceived native advertising value and investigate the relationship between the advertising value and customer attitudes towards fast-food native advertisements. Through a comprehensive literature review, this study identified six main influencing factors: informativeness, entertainment, irritation, credibility, personalisation, and interactivity.

Research Design: This study collected primary data through a self-administered questionnaire distributed across several social networking sites, targeting people residing in Malta aged between 18 and 54 who use social networking sites. The collected sample comprised 487 responses, which were analysed using SPSS and SmartPLS.

Findings: This study's findings revealed that the six factors were all predictors of advertising value. Informativeness, entertainment, credibility, personalisation, and interactivity were found to have a positive relationship with advertising value, while irritation had a negative relationship. Moreover, the findings also revealed a significant positive relationship between advertising value and customer attitudes towards fast-food native advertisements. These findings suggest that the higher the advertising value generated from the six identified factors, the more positive the customer attitudes towards these advertisements.

Originality and Value: This study is among the first to examine these six factors collectively in the context of fast-food native advertisements in Malta. Moreover, the current literature has limited studies focusing on the factors influencing customers' perceived advertising value towards native advertisements. Consequently, this study provides valuable insights into how fast-food native advertisements can be more effective by improving these six factors to generate a higher advertising value and positively influence customer attitudes towards these advertisements.

Keywords: Native Advertisements, Fast-Food Industry, Customer Attitudes, Advertising Value, Fast-Food Advertisements.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|---|
| AVE | Average Variance Extracted |
| CB-SEM | Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modelling |
| EU | European Union |
| FA | Factor Analysis |
| HTMT | Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations |
| KMO | Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin |
| NSO | National Statistics Office |
| PLS-SEM | Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling |
| RQ(s) | Research Question(s) |
| SNS(s) | Social Networking Site(s) |
| SPSS | Statistical Package for the Social Sciences |
| UGT | Uses and Gratification Theory |
| VIF | Variance Inflation Factor |
| WWW | World Wide Web |

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The birth of the Internet in 1983 brought radical changes to the daily lives of individuals and organisations. With the introduction of the Internet and the subsequent rise of the World Wide Web (WWW), social networking sites (SNSs) have evolved and are currently used by billions of people across the globe. According to a recent study conducted in 2022, 90.0% of European residents aged between 16 and 74 used the Internet three months prior to the survey, of which 58.2% used it for SNS purposes (Eurostat 2023). Consequently, the emergence of the Internet has resulted in organisations opting for online marketing methods as customers' attitudes and behaviours changed (Ha 2008, Rust, Lemon 2001). Additionally, a survey conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO 2023) revealed that currently, there are 366,130 Internet users in Malta, showcasing how the Internet is becoming an intrinsic part of our everyday lives.

Until 1994, every organisation that wanted to advertise its products did so through traditional methods of advertisement, including newspapers, radio, and magazines, among others (Markham, Gatlin-Watts et al. 2001). Since the arrival of the Internet and the WWW, advertisements shifted online, becoming a crucial tool for organisations to increase traffic, promote products and services, increase brand exposure, and convey specific messages to the right audience (Thomas 2011). In 1994, the first online advertisement was introduced, which revolutionised the entire context of advertisements, shifting it from traditional to online (Adams 1995). Consequently, online advertisements have become one of the key ways to reach customers, becoming popular among organisations that are continuously attempting to adapt to the rapid pace of digital marketing to remain relevant and exploit the opportunities that digital marketing presents.

Different online advertisement types have been established, each with its own distinct characteristics, including email advertisements, search advertisements, and display advertisements, among others (Kingsnorth 2016). Given the substantial number of advertisements a person encounters daily, it becomes increasingly challenging for organisations to capture consumers' attention. Therefore, organisations try to engage in different types of advertisements that may give them a higher chance to attract consumers'

attention and increase the overall value of their advertisements. One of the newest forms of advertisements is native advertisements, which is the main focus of this dissertation.

Native advertising is displayed in a format and place that corresponds to the media it is published on (Wojdyski 2016). Although native advertising is still relatively new, commencing in the early 2010s, it has gained significant popularity among organisations, industries, and marketing experts due to its ability to integrate with the media it is published on, which might lead to reducing interference, disruption, and intrusiveness (Campbell, Marks 2015, Krouwer, Poels et al. 2019). In 2021, organisations in the US spent approximately \$76 billion on native advertising, which accounted for 64.2% of the total display advertisement spending, demonstrating its prominence (Yuen 2022). As a result, in contrast to other non-native advertising, such as banners, native advertisements are perceived as more effective, highlighting one of the potential reasons why more organisations are devoting a higher portion of their marketing budgets to these advertisements (Chiang, Chuang et al. 2018).

The fast-food industry's competitiveness has been increasing rapidly, being more competitive than ever, especially in the larger cities (Sapic, Filipovic et al. 2019). Both locally owned and franchised organisations comprise Malta's fast-food industry, where there is noticeable intense competition. Farsons' Food Chain Restaurants is one of the organisations in Malta that introduced franchise restaurants such as Burger King, Pizza Hut, and KFC (Farsons n.d.). Furthermore, there are other fast-food restaurants in Malta, such as McDonald's and Domino's. As a result, for organisations to compete, they must differentiate themselves from their competitors, and advertisements are one of the tools that help achieve this. Every day, people are bombarded with online advertisements. Consequently, people cannot devote their complete attention to each advertisement. Hence, an organisation must determine the factors that positively influence customers' preferences for one advertisement over another.

In light of this competitive industry, native advertisement tools can provide fast-food organisations with a way to differentiate themselves from their competitors and get individuals' attention while being perceived as less intrusive. As previously stated, individuals are unable to devote their full attention to each advertisement, and advertisements are often perceived as intrusive, leading consumers to install advertisement blockers on their devices (Redondo, Aznar 2018). Given that native advertising is still relatively new and offers a new way of

advertising content, fast-food organisations should consider how to maximise the benefits of native advertising.

This study will focus on Ducoffe's 1996 model, explained in detail in the literature review (Ducoffe 1996). Various studies in this field focused on several factors influencing customers' perceived advertising value and attitudes towards online advertisements. Some of these influencing factors were consistent between studies, while others varied from one study to another. With the help of a systematic study conducted in this area, which will be explored in greater detail later, the six main influencing factors common in most studies were identified (De Battista, Curmi et al. 2021). The six identified factors are informativeness, entertainment, irritation, credibility, personalisation, and interactivity, as confirmed by another recent meta-analytic study (Lütjens, Eisenbeiss et al. 2022). This study will also focus on the context of the fast-food industry, which the main idea behind this industry developed throughout the literature review, where a limited number of studies were found in this field and identified a gap that this study intends to fill.

This study's purpose is to explore and understand which factors are the most effective in influencing the customers' perceived advertising value and the impact that advertising value has on customer attitudes towards fast-food native advertisements. Moreover, this study will also provide fast-food organisations with insights into how different factors may influence customers' perceived advertising value differently.

1.2 Research Aim

This study aims to identify the main factors likely to influence customers' perceived advertising value in the fast-food industry and the influence of advertising value on customer attitudes. This study does not exclude the possibility of other influencing factors; however, the author will focus on a set of influencing factors. Moreover, this dissertation aims to present a critical analysis of how individuals residing in Malta aged between 18 and 54 perceive fast-food native advertisements, as well as which factors have a favourable and unfavourable effect on the customers' perceived advertising value and the impact of advertising value on customers' attitudes.

Following the established aim of this study, the following research questions (RQs) are formulated to aid in the achievement of this aim:

1.3 Research Questions

RQ1: Which principal factors significantly influence the customers' perceived advertising value towards fast-food native advertisements?

RQ2: To what extent does the advertising value influence the customers' attitudes towards fast-food native advertisements?

1.4 Research Objectives

- To identify which factors affect the customers' perceived advertising value towards fast-food native advertisements.
- To investigate how these factors influence the native advertising value.
- To determine the effect of the advertising value on the customer attitudes towards fast-food native advertisements.

1.5 Dissertation Summary

This dissertation comprises six chapters. The first chapter was the introduction, where a general overview of this dissertation was outlined, highlighting the research aim, RQs, and the objectives intended to be attained by the end of the dissertation. The second chapter is the literature review, which will highlight the key concepts and research studies undertaken in the field of this dissertation. It will focus mainly on the fast-food industry, online advertising (including native advertising), customer attitudes, the Advertising Value Model, the factors influencing customers' perceived advertising value, and the relationship between advertising value and customer attitudes.

Subsequently, the third chapter focuses on the methodology framework undertaken for this study. This chapter will present the research design, data collection tools, sample selection criteria, analysis tools, ethical considerations, and limitations of this study. The fourth chapter

outlines the results obtained from the online self-administered questionnaire and presents an analysis of these findings.

The fifth chapter will discuss the main findings, highlighting the key points and outcomes identified. The discussion section also includes a comparison with existing literature in this field. The final chapter will conclude this dissertation by presenting the key findings, the implications of these findings, and areas of recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Native advertisements are a form of paid promotions that organisations can employ to promote their products or services. Different native advertisements may contain a variety of factors that can positively or negatively influence the value of the advertisement. Consequently, this study conducts an in-depth analysis of the factors influencing the customers' perceived advertising value, and the influence of advertising value on customers' attitudes towards native advertisements.

The literature review is divided into nine sub-sections, providing a comprehensive critical review to gain an understanding and insights into the existing research papers conducted up to date in this field regarding the research questions of this dissertation. It commences by introducing the fast-food concept and its industry before analysing the rise of online advertisements, particularly native advertisements. Subsequently, the literature review focuses on customer attitudes and the Advertising Value Model, followed by delving into the factors that influence customers' perceived advertising value, as well as the relationship between advertising value and customer attitudes. Finally, a concise conclusion is presented.

2.2 Fast-Food Industry

Food consumption is an integral part of our daily lives since food is essential for survival. A systematic study conducted in this field highlights how different countries classify food into distinct categories and define these categories differently (Moubarac, Parra et al. 2014). Moreover, there is no universal definition of fast food; instead, multiple authors define fast food differently.

Fast food refers to food ordered in fast-food establishments that is prepared and served quickly (Vaida 2013). Convenience food is another term used for fast food, referring to food purchased in self-service or take-away establishments where the service offered by waiters is excluded (Rosenheck 2008). Belasco (2008) identifies that the goal of fast food is to provide inexpensive and filling food to those who have a busy lifestyle and are constantly on the move. Bender (2014) defines fast food as having a limited menu that lends itself to production-line procedures, where suppliers often specialise in food such as pizza and burgers.

Another term for fast-food restaurants is quick-service restaurants, in which customers typically pay for their food before eating it (Wang, Wang et al. 2016). The goal of fast-food organisations is to serve customers as fast as possible at the lowest possible price. Food is usually precooked or preheated so that when customers order, they have shorter waiting times.

This research study refers to fast food as a combination of two definitions, the definition provided by Vaida (2013) and Bender (2014). Therefore, in this study, fast food refers to food that is served and consumed quickly, where suppliers specialise in food such as pizza and burgers.

The fast-food industry is one of the biggest industries, and it has been expanding rapidly. This business makes a substantial contribution to a country's economy as well as to the creation of jobs (Abdullah, Singam 2014). Some people perceive that fast food contains a nutritional imbalance that, when consumed in excess amounts, can have negative health impacts (Anderson, Rafferty et al. 2011, Fuhrman 2018, Majabadi, Solhi et al. 2016). Consequently, several fast-food establishments are responding to public health concerns by introducing healthier options such as salads and fruit (Gopaul 2015, Schröder, McEachern 2005).

Malta's NSO in 2017 revealed that a quarter of the Maltese population is obese, higher than the European Union (EU) average (NSO 2020). A later study in 2019 revealed that 28.1% of the Maltese population aged 15 years and over are obese, highlighting that the Maltese adult population obesity rate is the highest in the EU (NSO 2021). These findings may indicate that there is demand for fast-food products in Malta, attracting and encouraging fast-food organisations to increase their advertising efforts in Malta. Moreover, one of the reasons individuals consume fast food over healthier food options is its low cost and ease (Goh, Bogart et al. 2009).

2.2.1 Fast-Food Advertisements

A report conducted in 2019 highlights that fast-food establishments aggregated together five billion dollars spent in total on advertising, a 9.0% increase over 2012 (Harris, Fleming-Milici et al. 2021). Therefore, fast-food organisations devote a significant amount of their budget to advertising. As a result, they want to ensure that they get this right, given that there is a lot at stake. Consequently, organisations must advertise their products on the appropriate digital marketing platform based on their target audience. Target audiences tend to differ, with most organisations attempting to reach the entire public. Contrastingly, others focus on a specific audience based on the products they are promoting.

According to several papers in this field, advertisements can be tailored for children (Vandevijvere, Soupen et al. 2017), adolescents (Story, French 2004), adults (Bernhardt, Wilking et al. 2013) or according to gender (Zhong, Moon 2020) and geographic location (Souiden, Chaouali et al. 2019). These studies highlight how fast-food advertisements can lead to different effects on different segments. Although fast-food organisations attempt to target the entire population, particular organisations target the most vulnerable groups, mainly children, as they lack the cognitive ability to distinguish between informational tone and persuasive tone (Calvert 2008) and to build brand relationships from an early age (Story, French 2004). Fast-food advertisements aimed at children have triggered a number of serious concerns (Galbraith-Emami, Lobstein 2013, Wilde 2009).

A study conducted by Silva, Rodrigues et al. (2021) in Brazil demonstrates that food organisations employ persuasive advertising methods in their television and SNS advertisements. The objective of persuasion advertising methods is to convince customers to purchase the promoted products. This study further strengthens the argument that fast-food

organisations give significant importance to advertisements; for instance, McDonald's, one of the most well-known fast-food establishments, accounted for almost 39.0% of all food brand advertisements observed in the study (Silva, Rodrigues et al. 2021). Repetitive advertising, celebrity endorsements, product demonstration, and premiums are examples of such compelling methods (Rozendaal, Buijzen et al. 2011).

Numerous studies were undertaken and are still being undertaken in this field, analysing whether there is an association between fast-food advertising and consumption, with the majority finding and suggesting an association (Andreyeva, Kelly et al. 2011, Emond, Longacre et al. 2019, Giese, König et al. 2015, Lee, Kim et al. 2014, Scully, Dixon et al. 2009). Moreover, this implies that the greater the exposure to fast-food advertising, the more likely the individuals exposed to these advertisements will consume fast food. As a result, more organisations are investing significantly in advertisements.

2.3 Online Advertisements

Advertisements are a set of communications with the goal of delivering information to the organisation's target audience. These can also be perceived as paid promotions that organisations employ to promote and inform people about their products, services, and ideas (Kotler, Armstrong et al. 2017). Kerr and Richards (2021, p. 190) define advertisement as “paid, owned, and earned mediated communication, activated by an identifiable brand and intent on persuading the consumer to make some cognitive, affective or behavioural change, now or in the future”. Since people are devoting more time to the Internet, online advertisements have become essential for organisations to communicate with their customers. Hence, organisations are injecting large amounts of their budget into online advertisements.

Goldfarb (2014) argues that one of the main distinctions between online and offline advertisements is the cost element. Online advertisements are more cost-efficient, given that the technology that constitutes online advertisements makes it possible to reduce costs. He further notes that the technology also makes it easier for organisations to measure interactions with online advertisements, such as click-throughs, unlike traditional media. Consequently, organisations can easily measure the effectiveness of their advertisements (Goldfarb 2014). Organisations can also create synergies by combining online and offline advertising, employing an integrated marketing communication approach (Lesscher, Lobschat et al. 2021).

Online advertisements have come a long way since the publication of the first online advertisement by Hotwired in 1994, which was a banner web advertisement (Adams 1995). Since 1994, different online advertisement types have been introduced, including display, content, and social media advertising (Kingsnorth 2016). These different types emphasise the rapid changes in consumer demands, as well as the continuous advancements and innovations of technology. Nowadays, organisations are also opting for artificial intelligence advertising in an effort to improve advertisement effectiveness and optimisation (Ford, Jain et al. 2023). Consequently, the ecosystem of online advertisements is continuously evolving.

Besides paid and organic advertisements, Goldfarb (2014) groups online advertising into three categories: a) Search advertising refers to advertisements placed on search engines, such as Google, as a result of an algorithm; b) Classified advertising refers to advertisements that appear on websites that do not consist of any other media content or algorithmic search; c) Display advertising refers to the primary source of revenue generator of online media that does not include search engines, comprising advertisements such as banner advertisements and video advertisements.

According to Breuer and Brettel (2012), online advertisements have short and long-term effects on customers. These effects vary based on the specific type of advertisement used, and organisations may employ different strategies to attract new and existing customers. For instance, organisations may opt for price comparison advertisements to target new customers, while organisations that want to target existing customers opt for coupon or loyalty advertising (Breuer, Brettel 2012). Consequently, this demonstrates that organisations should consider their target audience and the channels they will use when conducting advertisements (Bala, Verma 2018).

Given the various types of online advertisements, such as banners and pop-ups, that organisations have used and continue to use to communicate with and attract the attention of their customers, one of the most recent types is native advertising.

2.4 Native Advertisements

For this study, the focus will be on native advertisements, which have caught the eye of several organisations, and also researchers to conduct additional research (Jiang, McKay et al. 2017, Schauster, Neill 2017, Wojdynski, Evans 2016). When it comes to advertising, an increasing number of organisations are choosing native advertising formats to convey their message to their target audience.

The term "native advertising" refers to advertisements displayed in a format and place that matches and integrates with the media on which they are published (Wojdynski 2016). Hence, the primary objective is to avoid making the content look like an advertisement (Wojdynski, Evans 2016), following a non-paid format content (Wojdynski, Golan 2016). Researchers in this field also refer to them as a form of covert advertising, given their purpose (Pierre 2023, Wojdynski, Evans et al. 2018).

Native advertisements can occur in different forms, such as in-feed/in-content native advertisements, branded/native content, and content recommendation advertisements (IAB 2019). In-feed/in-content native advertisements refer to advertisements placed on home pages, section fronts, or within the page content that integrates with the surrounding site content. Branded/native content refers to paid content developed by a publisher either on behalf of or in collaboration with another brand and published in the same format as the publisher's website. Content recommendation advertisements refer to advertisements that adopt a recommendation format, often placed at the bottom of pages, and when clicked, these always lead the user to an external page or source (IAB 2019).

Throughout the years, native advertisements raised various ethical concerns regarding being perceived as deceptive promotional paid content due to the lack of transparency, with marketers and organisations attempting to mislead customers into not recognising it as paid promotional content (Schauster, Ferrucci et al. 2016, Schauster, Neill 2017) Additionally, it was suggested that native advertisements should be disclosed and labelled as paid promotional content (IAB 2019, Wang, Li 2017).

According to Lee, Kim et al. (2016), native advertisements can be seen from the perspective of a double-edged sword. On one hand, the ability of native advertisements to blend and integrate with the media they are published on reduces intrusiveness, thus making it smoother and resulting in a positive customer attitude. On the other hand, customers with high advertisement scepticism and persuasion knowledge have negative attitudes towards native advertisements. Moreover, consumers who view native advertisements as less disruptive and intrusive are more inclined to consume them and share them (Lee, Kim et al. 2016).

Evidence gathered from different studies conducted in this field suggests that native advertising is perceived differently from other online advertising types, making it more interesting to research (Chiang, Chuang et al. 2018, Krouwer, Poels et al. 2019, Li, Shen 2023). On Facebook, for instance, people perceive online advertising, such as banners and pop-ups, as annoying, while native advertising is viewed as more effective since it draws the user's attention to the advertising content while reducing interference (Chiang, Chuang et al. 2018).

Another study focusing on the news portal sector showcases that most participants did not perceive native advertising negatively, with half of the participants holding an objective view and reporting having a neutral perception (Jiang, McKay et al. 2017). Li and Shen (2023) also highlighted that native advertising was more effective than hard-sell advertising in developing positive attitudes towards the advertisements and the advertised products, leading to higher purchasing intentions. In addition, it also brings other benefits to the table; for instance, native advertisements have higher click-through rates than display advertisements (Aribarg, Schwartz 2020), and enhance advertisement attention (Jung, Heo 2023, Keyzer, Dens et al. 2023). Moreover, given that native advertising is perceived more effectively than other online advertisement types, organisations are allocating a higher portion of their budgets to it (Yuen 2022).

In contrast, users may still view native advertising as disruptive and intrusive since, when scrolling through the content feed, they have no choice but to encounter and view these advertisements due to their central placement (Huang, Yoon 2022). Furthermore, a study conducted on native advertisements reveals that negative experiences with newsfeed native advertising are highly associated with the perception of advertisement intrusiveness, which leads to advertisement avoidance (Youn, Kim 2019). Moreover, Chung and Kim (2021) suggest that to reduce native advertisement avoidance, organisations should make these

advertisements more informative and entertaining. Therefore, conducting native advertising alone is not enough; researchers suggest that native advertising should also provide content congruence to positively influence how consumers process the advertisement (Kim, Youn et al. 2019).

By observing native advertisements in different channels where they have gained popularity, this study focuses on native advertisements placed on SNSs such as Facebook and Instagram, two of the primary channels where these have garnered the most popularity. Moreover, 56.0% of EU organisations used at least one SNS in 2021, a 22.0% increase from 2015, demonstrating that more organisations are opting for SNSs to establish their online presence (Eurostat 2022).

2.5 Customer Attitudes

The introduction of online advertisements brought a significant interest in customer attitudes. Ajzen and Fishbein (2000, p. 16) define attitude as “a disposition to respond with some degree of favourableness or unfavourableness to a psychological object; attitudes are expected to predict and explain human behaviour”. Therefore, customers analyse the perceived value, which is the outcome of comparing the perceived benefits they will obtain against the sacrifices they make (Zeithaml 1988). Customer attitude in the context of advertising is similar to this definition in that customers reflect on an advertisement and decide whether they are in favour of or against it (Wilkie 1994).

Attitudes are based on an individual’s beliefs and cognitive process (Ajzen, Fishbein 2000). Consequently, our attitude toward something is formed based on our thoughts and beliefs about the information we have just been exposed to. According to MacKenzie and Lutz’s study, an individual attitude toward advertisement may significantly influence that individual, along with other variables: advertisement credibility, advertisement perception, attitude toward the advertiser, and mood (MacKenzie, Lutz 1989). Moreover, the individuals’ attitudes influence their reactions and responses to the advertisements they encounter.

2.6 Advertising Value Model

In 1995, after several models which included attitudes as part of their frameworks were introduced, such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein, Ajzen 1975), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen 1991), the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, Bagozzi et al. 1989), and the Belief Factor Model (Pollay, Mittal 1993), Ducoffe introduced the Advertising Value Model (Ducoffe 1995, 1996).

The Advertising Value Model, built on the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), identified three primary constructs: informativeness, irritation, and entertainment (Ducoffe 1995). The UGT provides a framework for comprehending mass communications while emphasising the individual rather than the media itself (Katz 1959). Moreover, this model defines four uses and gratification factors: cognitive, affective, personal, and social needs, from which Ducoffe (1995) placed informativeness in the cognitive group and irritation and entertainment in the affective group (De Battista, Curmi et al. 2021). In addition, the Advertising Value Model places substantial emphasis on the advertising value concept.

Advertising value represents the perceived value that advertisements contain to the customer. Moreover, it is a subjective assessment of an advertisement's relative worth or utility to the customer (Ducoffe 1995). Advertising value can measure the effectiveness of an advertisement and the attitude toward that advertisement, and it may also indicate customer satisfaction based on the communication products of organisations (Ducoffe 1995). Ducoffe developed the Advertising Value Model in 1995 and applied it to the WWW in 1996.

Ducoffe identified that informativeness, irritation, and entertainment factors are strong predictors that affect the advertising value, which in turn affects customer attitude toward an advertisement. The structural model of the advertising value consists of three factors: informativeness, irritation, and entertainment, which are strong predictors of advertising value (Figure 1).

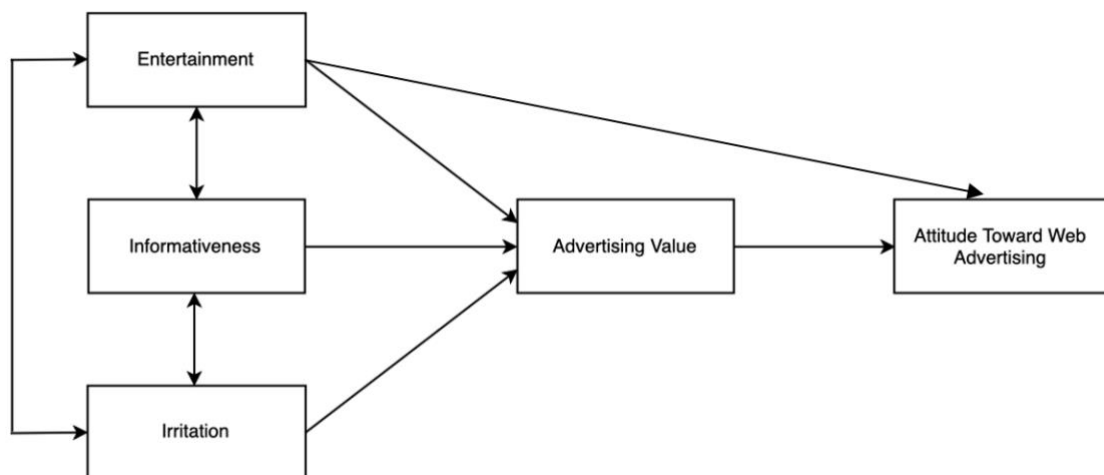


Figure 1: Ducoffe's Advertising Value Model (Ducoffe 1996)

Numerous researchers added other constructs to the Advertising Value Model (Brackett, Carr 2001, Kim, Han 2014). For instance, Brackett and Carr (2001) introduced and examined the credibility factor relationship with advertising value while also examining the three factors identified by Ducoffe (1996). Several researchers have also adopted this model for other channels, such as social media advertising (Arora, Agarwal 2019, Hamouda 2018) and smartphone advertising (Kim, Han 2014), as opposed to web advertising, and discovered that this model provides a good fit.

2.7 Influencing factors

A systematic literature review determined the main factors influencing young people toward advertisements (De Battista, Curmi et al. 2021). The authors compiled all previous research studies in this field, commencing from Ducoffe's work up until December 2020, and identified six main factors: informativeness, entertainment, irritation, credibility, personalisation, and interactivity. Informativeness, entertainment, credibility, and interactivity were recognised as the significant influencing factors, positively affecting the attitude towards advertisements. Irritation was discovered as a negative influence on attitudes toward online advertising. The personalisation factor is difficult to determine whether it has a positive or negative impact because it depends on the perspective from which it is viewed (De Battista, Curmi et al. 2021). These six influencing factors will be the factors that will be used for this study as well. However, in the context of this study, these will be evaluated based on their influence on advertising value, rather than customer attitudes, following a similar format of previous

research in this field (Arora, Agarwal 2019, Ducoffe 1996, Hamouda 2018). After each influencing factor, this study presents a hypothesis test.

2.7.1 Informativeness

The informativeness factor focuses on the advertisement's content part; the information it delivers to the individual encountering that advertisement. Informativeness is identified as one of the most essential factors, as from a consumer's point of view, an informative advertisement tends to increase customer satisfaction and enhance the purchasing decision (Ducoffe 1996). Consumers believe that when they see an informative advertisement, that is the primary reason that leads them to approve it (Bauer, Greyser 1968). Ducoffe (1995, 1996) identified a positive correlation between the informativeness of an advertisement and the advertising value obtained by people in his study. Consequently, informativeness influences positively the customers' attitude towards an advertisement (Ducoffe 1996), which has been tested by other researchers, such as the study conducted among Mexican millennials (Murillo, Merino et al. 2016) and the research conducted among Instagram users in Egypt (Gaber, Wright et al. 2019). These studies, among others, concluded that informativeness is a significant predictor of advertising value (Dao, Le et al. 2014, Lin, Hung 2009, Martins, Costa et al. 2019). Hence, it is hypothesised that:

H₁ - Perceived informativeness is positively associated with fast-food native advertising value.

2.7.2 Entertainment

The entertainment factor in advertisements can fulfil audience needs for escapism, diversion, aesthetic enjoyment, or emotional release (McQuail 1983). According to Zhou and Bao (2002), entertainment refers to the consumers' likeability of an advertisement and the pleasure and enjoyment gained from viewing it. Moreover, the purpose of entertaining advertisements is to create an emotional connection between the consumer and the brand's intended message (Azeem, Haq 2012). The entertainment factor is one of the factors introduced by Ducoffe (1995), who identified a positive correlation between entertainment and advertising value. In addition, customers enjoy encountering entertaining advertisements, which elicits a positive influence on customers' attitudes towards that advertisement (Gaber, Wright et al. 2019). Other studies in this field have also identified entertainment as a significant predictor of advertising

value (Brackett, Carr 2001, Dao, Le et al. 2014, Logan 2013). Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H₂ - Perceived entertainment is positively associated with fast-food native advertising value.

2.7.3 Irritation

The irritation factor pertains to advertisements defined as intrusive and annoying, causing a sense of disturbance to people when encountering them (Eighmey, McCord 1998). This sense of disturbance arises due to the advertisement's interference with the goal-directed behaviour of consumers (Li, Edwards et al. 2002). This factor has evolved into a significant concern for organisations when advertising. Ducoffe (1996) discovered a significant negative correlation between the irritation factor and advertising value. Consequently, irritation is identified as a negative influencing factor in customer attitudes towards an advertisement. The higher the irritation in an advertisement, the greater the negative impact (Ducoffe 1996). More recent studies have also found that the irritation factor has an adverse impact on advertising value (Dehghani, Niaki et al. 2016, Karunarathne, Thilini 2022, Saxena, Khanna 2013). However, studies in this field have also suggested that when additional factors, such as personalisation and entertainment, are present in the advertisements, customers tend to perceive the advertisements as less irritating (Cheng, Blankson et al. 2009, Dwinanda, Syaripuddin et al. 2022, Kim, Han 2014). This study hypothesised that:

H₃ - Perceived irritation is negatively associated with fast-food native advertising value.

2.7.4 Credibility

The credibility factor in an advertisement context refers to the consumer's perception of the truthfulness and believability of the advertisement they encounter (MacKenzie, Lutz 1989). It is another influencing factor, first identified by Brackett and Carr (2001). Moreover, credibility evokes a reaction expressed at the consumers' mental perception level, which forms their judgement of whether to trust the message (Lee, Hsieh 2009). A study conducted in this field identified that credibility positively influences advertising value, aligning with the findings of Brackett and Carr (Aydoğan, Aktan et al. 2016), while another study also suggested that customers' perceptions of credibility may vary depending on age (Bucy 2003). Brackett and

Carr (2001) also found a significant positive relationship between advertising value and customer attitudes towards that advertisement, implying that the higher the customers' perceived credibility, the higher the advertising value, and the more positive their attitude is towards an advertisement. Based on studies that have identified this significant positive relationship between credibility and advertising value (Arora, Agarwal 2019, Dao, Le et al. 2014, Lin, Hung 2009, Martins, Costa et al. 2019), the following hypothesis was constructed:

H4 - Perceived credibility is positively associated with fast-food native advertising value.

2.7.5 Personalisation

Personalisation occurs when the organisation collects customers' information, including demographics, interests, and purchasing intentions, for example, through cookies (Dempster, Lee 2015), which is another extension of the Ducoffe Advertising Value Model. By obtaining this information, the organisation can provide a tailored advertisement to the consumer based on their personal and preference information (Peppers, Rogers 1997). The personalisation factor offers customers an advertisement that serves as a solution while reducing the chances of sending irrelevant advertisements to customers. As suggested by Srinivasan, Anderson et al. (2002), personalisation can be a significant influential factor that drives an organisation's success, as they adapt their advertisements to tailor and cater to specific customers they desire to attract, preventing customers from having to search for a wide range of products. Regarding personalisation and its influence on advertising value, it is difficult to conclude whether it always has a significant influence. Certain studies found that personalisation significantly influences advertising value, while others found that personalisation does not significantly influence advertising value. For instance, a study focusing on YouTube advertisements identified a positive relationship between personalisation and advertising value (Dehghani, Niaki et al. 2016), aligning with another study's findings (Lina, Setiyanto 2021). On the other hand, a study focusing on personalisation towards social media concluded that personalisation is not a significant factor (Arora, Agarwal 2019). Given the benefits that personalisation may bring to the table, together with the rapid technological developments that may improve the personalisation element in advertisements (Winter, Maslowska et al. 2021) and studies that have found a significant positive relationship, this study takes the stance that personalisation is a significant positive predictor of advertising value. Hence, it is hypothesised that:

H₅ - Perceived personalisation is positively associated with fast-food native advertising value.

2.7.6 Interactivity

Interactivity is a type of engagement that can encourage a customer to act and respond to an advertisement; therefore, enabling a two-way communication between the organisation advertising and the individual encountering that advertisement (Liu 2003). In essence, the interactivity notion in advertising is concerned with determining the levels of engagement in an advertisement (Florenthal, Shoham 2010), where higher levels of interactivity can improve the customers' perceptions towards advertisements (Brajnik, Gabrielli 2010). In 2013, the interactivity factor was introduced, and the first study focusing on interactivity discovered a significant positive correlation between interactivity and customer attitudes towards the advertised product (Ching, Tong et al. 2013). Moreover, the higher the interactivity, the more positively customers view the advertisements (Ariffin, Aun et al. 2018, Islam 2017). According to the findings of the systematic study, interactivity may also vary depending on the culture (De Battista, Curmi et al. 2021). For instance, interactivity was valuable for Indian customers but not so much for Swedish customers (Deraz 2019). Subsequent studies in this field have focused on the relationship between interactivity and advertising value, finding a significant positive relationship (Hermann 2020, Ho 2022, Hussain, Ting et al. 2022). In other words, the higher the interactivity, the greater the value it delivers to the customers exposed to that advertisement. Hence, it is hypothesised that:

H₆ - Perceived interactivity is positively associated with fast-food native advertising value.

In summary, most of the studies discussed in this subsection focused more on the platforms (such as Facebook) on which advertisements are placed rather than on the various types of advertisements. Given this and the fact that native advertisements are still relatively new, few studies on such advertisements were found when examining the factors influencing the customers' perceived value towards these advertisements. Nienhaus and Nienhaus (2018) tested four of the six identified factors among millennials in the context of native advertisements: informativeness, entertainment, credibility, and personalisation. However, there remains limited research on the factors influencing customers' perceived native advertising value, which is even more pronounced in the fast-food industry.

2.8 Advertising Value and Customer Attitudes

According to Ducoffe (1996), the exchange theory offers a theoretical foundation that helps to explain the relationship between advertising value and customer attitudes. Moreover, it provides a useful context for comprehending how customers assess the advertising value of the advertisements they encounter (Ducoffe 1996). Houston and Gassenheimer (1987) emphasise the exchange relationship as a process between two entities with the goal of generating value that concludes when one of the parties deems the relationship inappropriate. In this study context, the organisation performs the action by conducting advertisements with the intention of providing value to the customers exposed to those advertisements. Furthermore, Ducoffe (1995) makes the same assumption as Houston and Gassenheimer, that the exchange can be the result of goal-seeking behaviour, and understanding whether the customers are getting what they desire can help explain their behaviour and attitudes towards that advertisement. Therefore, as stated by Ducoffe (1996), one can expect that the higher customers perceive the advertising value, the more positive effects it has on the customers' attitudes towards that advertisement. Several studies, including Ducoffe's research, have demonstrated that this is true (Brackett, Carr 2001, Ducoffe 1996, Logan, Bright et al. 2012). More recent studies focusing on social media advertising also identified a significant positive relationship between advertising value and customers' attitudes, aligning with the findings of Ducoffe and other authors who tested this relationship (Arora, Agarwal 2019, Hamouda 2018). Based on the previously available literature on this matter, this study formulated the following hypothesis:

H7 - Perceived native advertising value is positively associated with customer attitudes towards fast-food native advertising.

2.9 Conclusion

This literature review presents concepts and theories, as well as up-to-date research studies conducted in this field that are pertinent to this study theme. Furthermore, this review uncovers a gap in the literature regarding the factors that influence the customers' perceived advertising value of native advertisements, especially in the fast-food industry. Such occurrence could be because native advertisements are still relatively new. Consequently, no study on native advertisement was found for all six factors identified by a systematic study conducted in this field.

This chapter commenced by analysing several fast food definitions from which this study takes the stance that fast food refers to food that is served and consumed quickly, with suppliers specialising in food such as pizza and burgers. It analysed online advertisements, particularly native, which led to the notions of customer attitudes and advertising value. Based on this analysis, this study zooms in on the Advertising Value Model.

The subsequent section formulates the hypotheses of the six main influencing factors that affect customers' perceived advertising value toward online advertisements and concludes by analysing the link between advertising value and customer attitudes from which the last hypothesis is derived.

The next chapter will entail the research methodology for this study.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology employed in this study to answer the formulated research questions (RQs) and provide justification for each decision made. The RQs this study sought to address were the following:

RQ1: Which principal factors significantly influence the customers' perceived advertising value towards fast-food native advertisements?

RQ2: To what extent does the advertising value influence the customers' attitudes towards fast-food native advertisements?

The methodology of this study draws upon the research onion introduced by Saunders, Lewis et al. (2019). This chapter covers the research philosophy, research design, sample selection, and data collection method, as well as a discussion of the questionnaire's design and analysis tools. It concludes with an outline of the ethical considerations and the limitations of this study.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy notion is a set of beliefs and assumptions that govern the design of a research study and the development of new knowledge (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019).

This study adopted a positivist approach, which implies that knowledge is obtained through the collection of quantifiable and measurable data and executed in a value-free way (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019). Through a positivist lens, this study collected data in a structured manner and adopted a quantitative mono-method, both of which are characteristics of positivism (Crossan 2003). Moreover, this approach emphasises the empiricist method to obtain data and facts that are not influenced by bias or subjectivity (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019).

This study utilised existing literature in this field to develop and test the hypotheses, while the author strived to maintain objectivity and remain neutral throughout the entire research process to prevent influencing the study findings (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019). Consequently, this

study aims to prove the hypotheses using a scientific method and statistical analysis (Alakwe 2017).

3.3 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach to determine, from a statistical perspective, whether the factors identified influence advertising value and the effect of advertising value on customer attitudes. Quantitative research relies on statistical techniques to examine the relationships between variables and facilitates the analysis of a large sample of numerical data (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019). Therefore, these characteristics of quantitative research guided this study towards this approach as it required statistical methods, the collection of numerical data, and an objective perspective to address the RQs (Bryman, Bell 2011).

Furthermore, prior researchers primarily used a quantitative approach by employing constructs; hence, it was concluded that the same approach was ideal, allowing the findings of this study to be compared with previous studies (Brackett, Carr 2001, Martins, Costa et al. 2019, Murillo, Merino et al. 2016). This approach provided valuable insights into customers' perceived advertising value and attitudes towards fast-food native advertisements and facilitated the collection of numerical data from a large sample. The researcher had no direct interaction with the respondents; consequently, this approach avoided any possible bias that could have resulted from such interactions (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019).

Through a comprehensive literature review, several models were introduced, such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen 1991) and the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, Bagozzi et al. 1989). However, this study focused on the Advertising Value Model developed by Ducoffe (1996), a widely used model to explain customers' perceived advertising value and attitudes towards advertisements. The literature review contributed to identifying the six primary factors, and these were tested on people residing in Malta for fast-food native advertisements. Figure 2 depicts the conceptual model devised for this study, which aimed to analyse the relationship between the six factors identified and advertising value, and the influence of advertising value on customer attitudes.

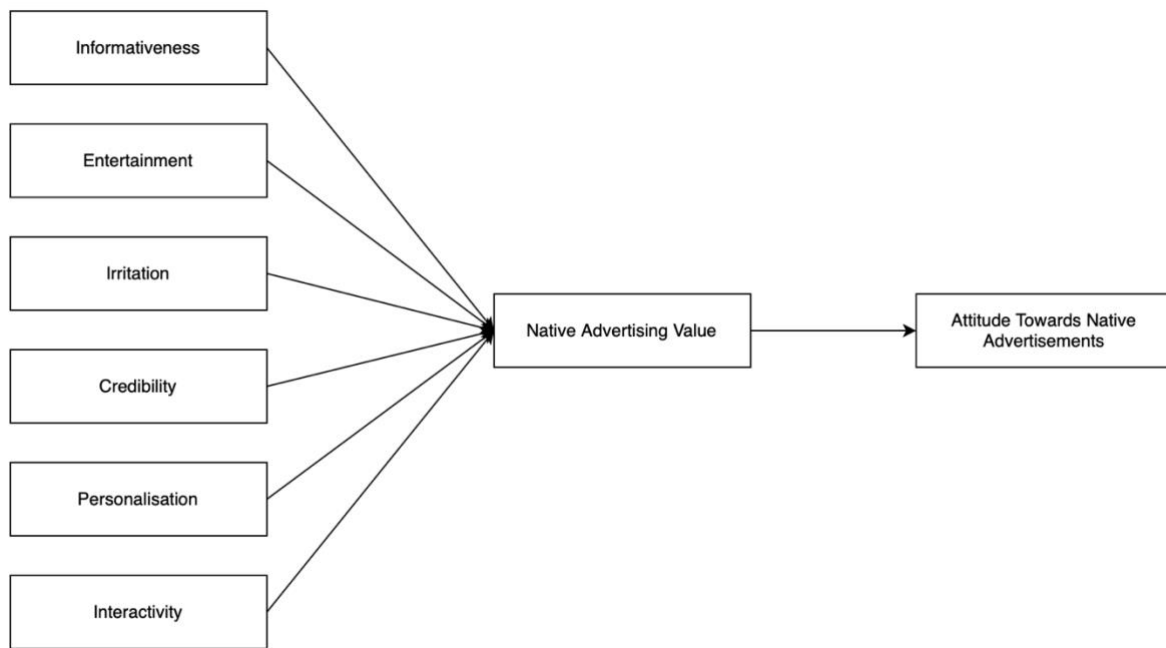


Figure 2: Conceptual Model

The following hypotheses were tested in this study, formulated from the literature review (Table 1).

| Hypotheses | |
|---|---|
| H ₁ – Informativeness | Perceived informativeness is positively associated with fast-food native advertising value. |
| H ₂ – Entertainment | Perceived entertainment is positively associated with fast-food native advertising value. |
| H ₃ – Irritation | Perceived irritation is negatively associated with fast-food native advertising value. |
| H ₄ – Credibility | Perceived credibility is positively associated with fast-food native advertising value. |
| H ₅ – Personalisation | Perceived personalisation is positively associated with fast-food native advertising value. |
| H ₆ – Interactivity | Perceived interactivity is positively associated with fast-food native advertising value. |
| H ₇ – Advertising Value and Attitude | Perceived native advertising value is positively associated with customer attitudes towards fast-food native advertising. |

Table 1: Hypotheses

Four approaches to theory development can be opted for: deductive, inductive, abductive, and retroductive (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019). The optimal approach to achieve the intended outcomes of this study involved employing a deductive approach, following a top-down strategy to test established theories (Creswell, Clark 2007). This research commenced with a review of existing literature in this field, from which the study took a theoretical stance to formulate the hypotheses, which were subsequently tested within the context of this study. As this study's RQs were drawn from existing literature, opting for a deductive approach enabled the researcher to address the RQs by determining whether the hypotheses should be accepted or rejected (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019). Through this approach, this study determined which factors significantly affect advertising value and whether advertising value affects customers' attitudes.

Additionally, an explanatory study focuses on comprehending the relationships between variables, which is necessary to determine the RQs and validate the hypotheses. Consequently, this study employed this approach to understand and investigate the hypothesised relationships (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019).

3.4 Sample Selection

This questionnaire employed three types of non-probability sampling techniques. The first is a snowballing technique in which participants could forward the questionnaire to other potential respondents within their network (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019). The second technique is convenience sampling, which entailed selecting respondents who were readily accessible and the most convenient to obtain for this study (Andrade 2021). The final technique is voluntary (self-selection sampling), in which the questionnaire was shared on social media feeds and groups, allowing participants to choose whether to volunteer in this study or not (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019).

This study's target audience is people residing in Malta between the ages of 18 and 54 who frequently use the Internet and are therefore exposed to online advertisements (Table 2). This target population was derived from the NSO publication, where a large proportion of the population in this age group interacted with the Internet three months before this survey, amounting to 279,484 (NSO 2023).

| Age Groups | Total Population in Each Age Group | Total Internet Users (Percentage) |
|--------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 16-24 | 45,625 | 45,625 (100%) |
| 25-34 | 92,526 | 91,719 (99.13%) |
| 35-44 | 82,977 | 81,097 (97.73%) |
| 45-54 | 63,294 | 61,043 (96.44%) |
| Total | 284,422 | 279,484 |

Table 2: Target Population (NSO 2023)

This study targeted a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of 4.5%. Hence, using the following formula, the sample size for this study was determined to be 473 participants.

$$\text{Sample Size} = \frac{\frac{(z^2)p(1-p)}{e^2}}{1 + \left(\frac{(z^2)p(1-p)}{e^2N}\right)}$$

z = z score, N = population size, and e = margin of error, p = population parameter

Hence, when calculated:

$$\text{Sample Size} = \frac{\frac{(1.96^2)0.5(1-0.5)}{0.045^2}}{1 + \left(\frac{(1.96^2)0.5(1-0.5)}{0.045^2 279484}\right)} = \frac{474.2716049}{1.001696954} = 473.468151 = 473$$

Due to time, budget, and lack of access to the list of Internet users, the sampling method employed was non-probability sampling, which implies that the probability of selecting each individual from the target population is unknown. Therefore, the results may not reflect a generalised view or be representative of the whole population (Bryman, Bell 2011).

3.5 Data Collection Method

Provided that the sample size is relatively large, this study employed a quantitative mono-method through a closed-ended self-administered questionnaire using Google Forms (Jones, Murphy et al. 2008). The questionnaire was administered online across several SNSs to enhance its reach and accessibility while also targeting different demographics. Furthermore, this distribution also satisfied one of the requirements for respondents to be SNS users.

The rationale for selecting a self-administered online questionnaire was that each participant was compelled to respond to the same questions while omitting interviewer assistance. Moreover, the primary goal of a questionnaire in this study was to provide a structured and effective way to ask questions to large samples and collect data. Another benefit is that it is a fast data collection method because physical presence is not required, mitigating one of the limitations of this study, which is time-bound. Lastly, it is cost-efficient, which is beneficial given the limited resources in this study (Bryman, Bell 2011).

When constructing the questionnaire, the objective was to find the optimal length to ensure the RQs were answered efficiently. It was made sure that it was not short, which could have excluded questions necessary to answer the main RQs. Conversely, the questionnaire was not excessively tedious to prevent people from being discouraged, potentially leading to abandoning it or responding arbitrarily. Another objective was to avoid double-barrelled and misleading questions, which would have resulted in respondents interpreting a question differently from the researcher's intention (Menold 2020). Additionally, this was ensured through a pilot study to enhance the questionnaire's validity and reliability (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019).

At the time of this study, there were no similar studies focusing on the perceived advertising value and attitudes of individuals residing in Malta towards fast-food native advertisements. Consequently, primary data was collected through a cross-sectional strategy, in which data was collected from the respondents at a single point in time (Creswell 2014).

3.6 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire consisted of six sections, which required approximately six minutes to complete (Appendix A). The first section introduced the study's primary aim, the approximate completion time, an emphasis on the anonymity of the responses obtained, and data handling. Once the respondents agreed to participate in this study, they proceeded to the second section, which contained demographic questions. The third section encompassed questions regarding SNS usage. The purpose of the second and third sections was to ensure that the participants met the required criteria, including being between 18 and 54 years old, residing in Malta, and using SNSs. Participants who did not satisfy these criteria were not allowed to answer

additional questions as they were deemed ineligible. The fourth section focused on fast food, which included a definition of fast food and a question regarding fast-food consumption.

The fifth section included a description and illustrations of native advertisements, followed by questions such as whether respondents had encountered such advertisements. The description provided for native advertisements was as simple as possible to ensure that participants could easily comprehend and relate to them. The illustrations of native advertisements were fictitious; no real advertisements were used (Appendix B). Additionally, the fast-food advertisements used were not the most appetising to reduce any potential bias that may have resulted from hedonic items.

The last section consisted of the essential constructs for this study's inclusion. The questionnaire included eight constructs (Table 3), which originated from past studies conducted in this field, and to ensure their reliability, each construct selected had to pass the Cronbach's alpha threshold of .70. Moreover, each construct was slightly adjusted to apply it to the context of this study's objectives.

| Construct | Items | Authors | Cronbach's alpha |
|-----------------|--|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Informativeness | Provides timely information. | (Ducoffe 1996) | .82 |
| | Is a good source of product information. Supply relevant information on products. Provides valuable information. | (Islam 2017) | .84 |
| Entertainment | Entertaining | (Ducoffe 1996) | .85 |
| | Enjoyable Pleasing Exciting | (Logan, Bright et al. 2012) | .91 |
| Irritation | Irritating Annoying Intrusive Confusing | (Mustafi, Hosain 2020) | .94 |
| Credibility | Credible | (Murillo, Merino et al. 2016) | .79 |
| | Trustworthy Convincing Believable | (Mustafi, Hosain 2020) | .81 |
| Personalisation | Delivered in a timely way. | (Xu 2006) | .83 |
| | Personalised for my usage. | (Kim, Han 2014) | .84 |

| | | | |
|-------------------|---|----------------------------|-----|
| | Contents are personalised. Tailored to me. | | |
| Interactivity | Effective in gathering customers' feedback. Makes me feel like it wants to listen to its customers. Gives customers the opportunity to talk back. Facilitates two-way communication between the customers and the firms. | (Arora, Kumar et al. 2020) | .83 |
| Advertising Value | Useful Valuable Important | (Ducoffe 1996) | .84 |
| Attitude | My general opinion of Internet advertising is favourable. I consider Internet advertisements essential. Overall, I like Internet advertising. Overall, I consider Internet advertising a good thing. | (An, Kim 2008) | .75 |

Table 3: Constructs

Each construct was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' in a matrix format. The decision to use a 5-point Likert scale aligns with the methodology of previous research studies conducted in this field, where the majority opted for a 5-point Likert scale (Brackett, Carr 2001, Logan 2013, Saxena, Khanna 2013). Using the Likert scale to generate numeric scores for measurable purposes is one of the common tools in quantitative research (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019).

This questionnaire incorporated three types of variables. The first type is the independent variable, comprising six influential factors: informativeness, entertainment, irritation, credibility, personalisation, and interactivity. The second type is the dependent variable, which is the advertising value. The third type is the outcome variable, encompassing the customers' attitudes towards native advertisements.

Before distributing the questionnaire to the entire population of interest, a pilot test is one of the essential steps (Teijlingen, Rennie et al. 2001). The aim of conducting a pilot study is to gather feedback and refine the questions accordingly to make them clearer and easier to understand while assessing and enhancing their validity and reliability (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019).

Thus, the questionnaire was tested with ten individuals of different demographics within the required age bracket whose feedback highlighted minor issues that required revision. This feedback revealed that some sentences required rephrasing, the questionnaires' background colour made it difficult to read certain words, and some questions were deemed irrelevant, among other things. Although all participants understood clearly what native advertisements are, some suggested that native advertisement illustrations should also include a desktop view since not everyone uses a mobile device to browse through SNSs. Based on this feedback, the questionnaire was revised to enhance its clarity.

After conducting the pilot study and submitting the URECA form for records, as it did not present any potential issues and risks in the research ethics domain and the target audience for this questionnaire was 18 years old and above, the questionnaire was distributed on SNSs such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. The data collection period spanned from the 22nd of July 2023 to the 18th of August 2023, during which 487 responses were gathered. Furthermore, the collected responses exceeded the initially calculated sample size of 473 responses.

3.7 Data Analysis

This study used two software packages for data analysis. Firstly, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 29 was employed for data cleaning and coding, demographic statistics, factor analysis (FA), and to execute the Cronbach alpha test. During this analysis, a codebook was compiled, containing information about each variable, including its name, label, numeric code, and variable measurement (Pallant 2016).

The second software used was SmartPLS 4 (Ringle, Wende et al. 2023), a renowned programme for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). This study chose PLS-SEM over Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM) for the following reasons: firstly, PLS-SEM offers explanations and predictions regarding the data, allowing this study to find a balance (Becker, Cheah et al. 2023), whereas CB-SEM offers only explanations (Hair, Matthews et al. 2017). Secondly, PLS-SEM is more flexible when dealing with data, while CB-SEM relies on rigid assumptions (Dash, Paul 2021). Lastly, given the common issue of non-normally distributed data in social science studies, highlighted by Hair, Matthews et al. (2017), PLS-SEM is better suited for analysing such data (Fauzi 2022, Hair, Matthews et al. 2017).

The first step in SmartPLS involved an evaluation of the reflective constructs' validity and reliability using the PLS-SEM algorithm tool. This step entailed the examination of the constructs' reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Hair, Hult et al. 2013). The subsequent step involved an assessment of the structured model by analysing the collinearity test, the coefficient of determination (R^2), and the effect size (f^2) using the PLS-SEM algorithm tool as well (Hair, Hult et al. 2013). Furthermore, another tool used was PLSpredict to examine the structured model's predictive power, developed by Shmueli, Ray et al. (2016). Lastly, SmartPLS was employed to test the formulated hypotheses through the bootstrapping tool (Hair, Black et al. 2018).

Although the researcher could have used SmartPLS for all analyses, SmartPLS was used only for the structured equation modelling features, as these were beyond SPSS capabilities. The rationale behind this decision is that the researcher possesses more experience in SPSS.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Several ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the data collection process. The first consideration was to provide respondents with an information page inviting them to participate in this study while outlining its scope and the use of the results (Creswell 2014). Participation in this study was voluntary, allowing participants to withdraw from this study at any point or decline participation without providing an explanation.

Another consideration was that participants remained anonymous throughout the whole research, and the data gathered was stored on a password-protected private external hard disk accessible and processed only by the researcher with the guidance of the supervisor to ensure confidentiality and privacy. The publication of results was in an anonymous format. Additionally, the questionnaire did not contain any sensitive or private information.

Once the result of this study is received, all collected data will be deleted within one month for data protection purposes. Lastly, the questionnaire was submitted through the URECA form to ensure that it abides by the guidelines set by the University of Malta, and once accepted, the questionnaire was published (University of Malta 2019).

3.9 Methodological Limitations

Despite the researcher's best efforts to mitigate limitations, this study encountered the following drawbacks. The first limitation encountered was related to time and resource constraint, which restricted this study from employing probability sampling. Consequently, non-probability sampling was employed, which implies that the findings of this study are not representative of the entire population of interest but instead represent only the respondents who participated in this study.

The second limitation was the potential bias of the respondents, which might have led to less accurate data collection, which is a common constraint in research (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019). The third constraint was related to the misunderstanding of native advertisements. As previously stated, the purpose of native advertisements is to blend advertisements with the media they are published on. Given that individuals may consume native advertisements without being aware that they are paid promotions, they may lack an understanding of what native advertisements are. Consequently, the questionnaire included a section devoted to defining and providing illustrations of native advertisements to address this limitation.

The online questionnaire may have posed several limitations. These limitations include the possibility that respondents misunderstood a question and consequently provided a different response. It is also possible that the participants' moods or other external factors influenced their responses while completing the questionnaire. Non-response bias may also have been present, which is the refusal or withdrawal of participants from the questionnaire (Saunders, Lewis et al. 2019).

Lastly, the author focused on a set of influencing factors, as it was not feasible to measure all the factors given the time constraint. Therefore, the author could have omitted other factors with a more significant effect on customers' perceived advertising value than those identified and tested in this study, such as value corruption and incentives.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter elucidated the research methodology undertaken to address the RQs. This study used a positivist lens and adopted a deductive approach to formulate and test the hypotheses. Furthermore, this quantitative study employed a closed-ended, self-administered questionnaire as the primary data collection method with a gathered sample of 487 participants, followed by a description of the questionnaire's main sections.

Additionally, before distributing the questionnaire to the public, a pilot study was conducted to identify potential issues and implement the necessary amendments. Following data collection, SPSS (IBM 2023) and SmartPLS (Ringle, Wende et al. 2023) were used to analyse the collected data. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations and the main limitations encountered throughout this research. The next chapter outlines the analysis of the results collected by employing this methodology.

4. Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results collected from the online questionnaire, which received a total of 487 responses. Following the data collection phase, the responses were extracted from Google Forms in Excel format and processed using SPSS version 29 (IBM 2023) and SmartPLS 4 (Ringle, Wende et al. 2023).

This chapter begins by presenting the demographic characteristics of the sample population, followed by an assessment of the measurement model. Subsequently, this chapter evaluates the structural model and concludes with hypotheses testing to address this study's research questions.

4.2 Demographic Statistics

Table 4 displays the demographic characteristics of the questionnaire participants. Among the 487 responses collected, 51.1% (n=249) of participants were males. Approximately 32% (n=154) of the participants fell within the 35-44 age bracket, followed closely by the 25-34 age group with 30.2% (n=147). The collected sample comprised 86.7% (n=422) employed participants, 11.5% (n=56) students, and 1.8% (n=9) unemployed participants. Furthermore, most participants possessed a postgraduate level as their highest level of education, encompassing 48.3% (n=235). Concerning the daily time spent on SNSs, 45.2% (n=220) of the participants reported spending 1-2 hours, 29.6% (n=144) reported spending 3-4 hours, and the least chosen option was less than one hour with 11.9% (n=58).

Demographics Data

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Male | 249 | 51.1% |
| Female | 238 | 48.9% |
| Total | 487 | 100% |

| Age Group | | |
|------------------|------------|-------------|
| 18-24 | 112 | 23% |
| 25-34 | 147 | 30.2% |
| 35-44 | 154 | 31.6% |
| 45-54 | 74 | 15.2% |
| Total | 487 | 100% |

| Occupation | | |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|
| Full-Time Employed | 372 | 76.4% |
| Part-Time Employed | 18 | 3.7% |
| Full-Time Student | 48 | 9.9% |
| Part-Time Student | 8 | 1.6% |
| Self-Employed | 32 | 6.6% |
| Unemployed | 9 | 1.8% |
| Total | 487 | 100% |

| Education | | |
|----------------------|------------|-------------|
| PhD Level | 11 | 2.3% |
| Postgraduate level | 235 | 48.3% |
| Undergraduate Level | 129 | 26.5% |
| Post-Secondary Level | 75 | 15.4% |
| Secondary Level | 37 | 7.6% |
| Total | 487 | 100% |

Table 4: Demographics Data

Figure 3 presents the most common SNSs used by the participants, with Facebook exhibiting the highest usage rate at 92.8%.

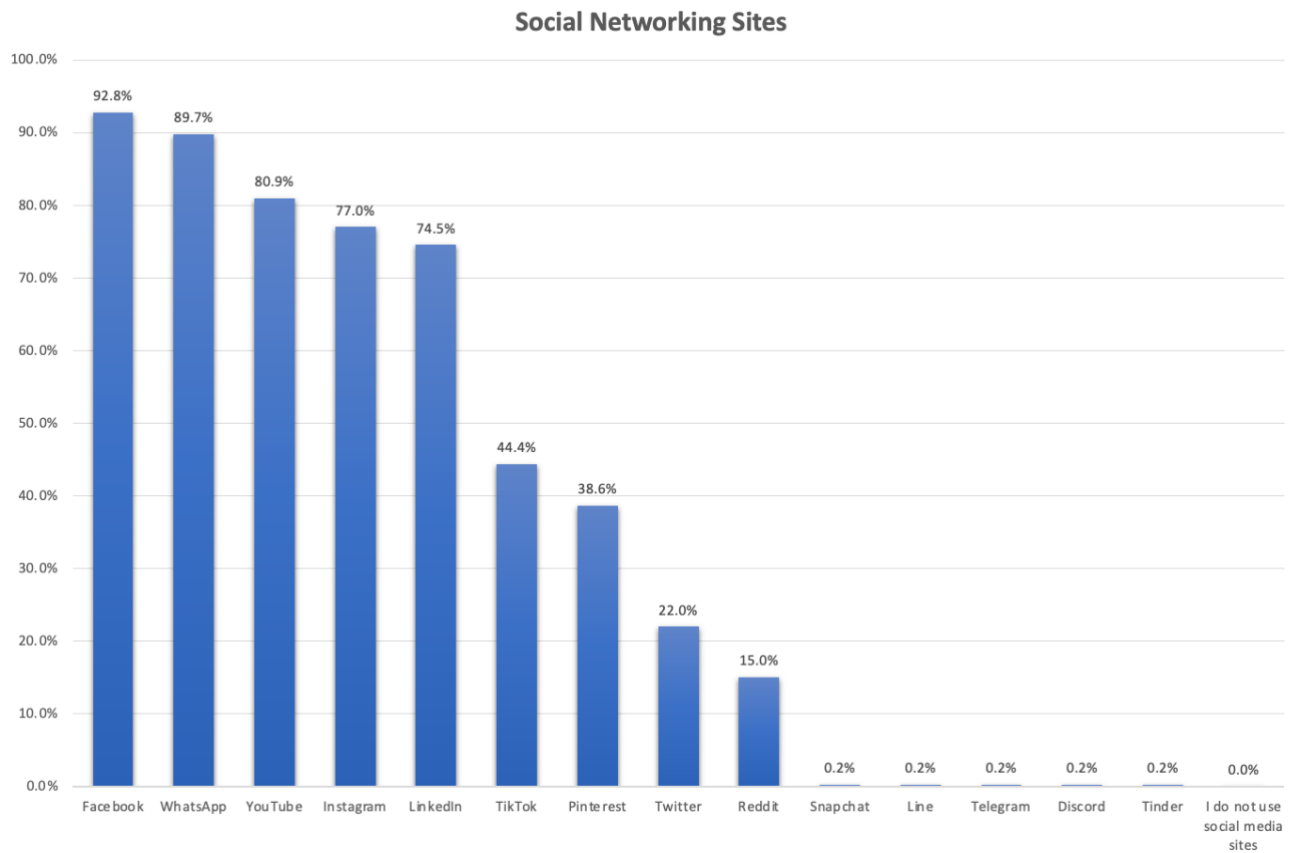


Figure 3: Common Social Networking Sites

As this study centres on the fast-food industry, participants were asked about their fast-food consumption. Thirty-eight per cent (n=185) of participants reported that they consume fast food approximately once a week, while the least option chosen was once a year by 3 (0.6%) participants (Figure 4).

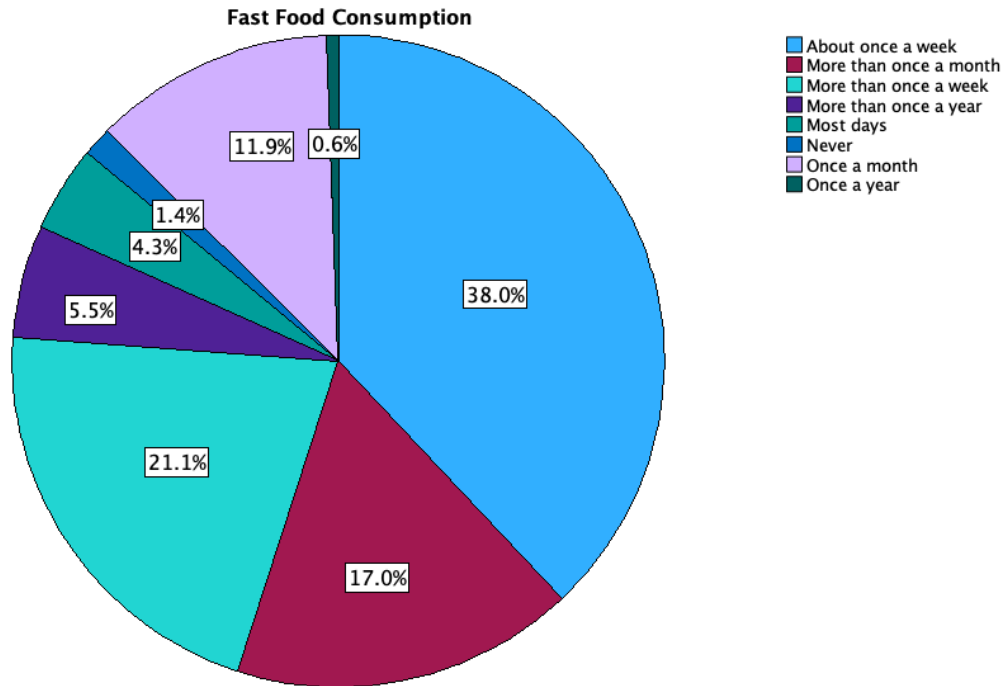


Figure 4: Fast-Food Consumption

The subsequent three questions centred on native advertisements. In total, 93.8% (n=457) participants recalled encountering native advertisements, while 87.7% (n=427) participants acknowledged their exposure to fast-food native advertisements. Lastly, 56.5% (n=275) of the participants reported that fast-food native advertisements did not influence their purchasing behaviour.

4.3 Evaluation of Measurement Model

The next step involved an evaluation of the measurement model to assess the reliability and validity of the variables employed in this study. This step is essential, as one can only proceed to the evaluation of the structural model if there is a degree of reliability and validity in the measurement model (Hair, Hult et al. 2013). This evaluation yielded valuable insights into the relationship between the indicators and the constructs, which commenced with a FA. This section continues with the construct's reliability and convergent validity analysis and concludes with a discriminant validity analysis.

4.3.1 Factor Analysis

FA is a technique used to uncover the underlying structure of a set of variables and acquire information regarding their interrelationships (Pallant 2016). This study employed FA to identify the correlations between the indicators and their relationships with the constructs. Consequently, indicators that exhibited low loadings on their corresponding constructs or high cross-loadings with other constructs were removed.

The initial step was to assess whether the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value exceeded the 0.6 threshold and whether Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (Tabachnick, Fidell 2013). The KMO value was .896, and Bartlett's test was significant ($p < 0.001$), suggesting it is adequate to run FA.

This study employed principal component extraction with a fixed number of eight factors following a priori criterion. From an initial set of 31 indicators representing different constructs, seven indicators were removed: Cred1, Irr4, Inf1, Pers1, Int1, Att2, and Adv2. Table 5 provides the measurement codes for each construct and indicator; for instance, the credibility construct measurement code is 'Cred'.

The removal of indicators comprised several steps. First, the correlation matrix was examined to pinpoint correlations exceeding 0.9, which may result in singularity issues (Field 2005). Subsequently, the total variance table was evaluated to determine whether the cumulative variance explained by the extracted factors exceeded the 60% target (Hair, Black et al. 2014). Additionally, communalities were assessed to identify indicators below the 0.5 threshold (Hair, Black et al. 2014). Finally, the rotated component matrix was analysed to pinpoint indicators with insufficient loadings on their constructs and high cross-loadings with other constructs.

Following a comprehensive examination, an eight-factor model comprising 24 indicators was developed. After omitting these indicators, the correlation matrix did not exhibit correlations surpassing the 0.9 threshold. Furthermore, the eight components covered 83.3% of the total cumulative variance, and all indicators exhibited a communality over 0.5.

Additionally, Table 5 displays the mean values for both the constructs and the indicators. The results revealed that the irritation construct has the highest mean, signifying that the average

responses for this construct ranged from neutral to agree, according to the 5-point Likert scale employed. In contrast, the remaining constructs exhibited a mean value below 3, indicating that the average responses for these constructs ranged from disagree to neutral.

| Constructs | Indicators | Measurement Code | Indicator's Mean (Standard Deviation) |
|--|---|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Informativeness (Inf) (Mean = 2.835, SD = .92) | Native advertisements provide timely information on fast food. | Inf1* | 3.03 (.97) |
| | Native advertisements are a good source of fast-food information. | Inf2 | 3.07 (1.06) |
| | Native advertisements supply relevant information on fast food. | Inf3 | 2.83 (1.04) |
| | Native advertisements provide valuable information on fast food. | Inf4 | 2.61 (1.01) |
| Entertainment (Ent) (Mean = 2.797, SD = .89) | I feel that fast-food native advertisements are: | | |
| | Pleasant | Ent1 | 2.92 (1.03) |
| | Enjoyable | Ent2 | 2.81 (.98) |
| | Entertaining | Ent3 | 2.72 (.95) |
| Irritation (Irr) (Mean = 3.214, SD = .94) | I feel that fast-food native advertisements are: | | |
| | Intrusive | Irr1 | 3.19 (1.01) |
| | Annoying | Irr2 | 3.26 (1.02) |
| | Irritating | Irr3 | 3.19 (1.02) |
| Credibility (Cred) (Mean = 2.682, SD = .84) | I feel that fast-food native advertisements are: | | |
| | Convincing | Cred1* | 3.14 (1.05) |
| | Trustworthy | Cred2 | 2.55 (.89) |
| | Credible | Cred3 | 2.65 (.96) |
| Personalisation (Pers) (Mean = 2.918, SD = .92) | Fast-food native advertisements: | | |
| | Are delivered in a timely manner. | Pers1* | 3.19 (.92) |
| | Are personalised for my usage. | Pers2 | 3.04 (1.00) |
| | Contents are personalised | Pers3 | 2.90 (1.02) |
| Interactivity | Fast-food native advertisements: | | |
| | Are effective in gathering customers' feedback. | Int1* | 3.00 (.98) |

| | | | |
|--|--|-------|-------------|
| (Int) (Mean = 2.682, SD = .89) | Make me feel like it wants to listen to its customers. | Int2 | 2.70 (.96) |
| | Give customers the opportunity to talk back. | Int3 | 2.66 (1.01) |
| | Facilitate two-way communication between customers and companies. | Int4 | 2.69 (.99) |
| Advertising Value (Adv) (Mean = 2.589, SD = .93) | I feel that fast-food native advertisements are: | | |
| | Valuable | Adv1 | 2.69 (.97) |
| | Useful | Adv2* | 2.95 (1.03) |
| | Important | Adv3 | 2.48 (1.01) |
| Customer Attitudes (Att) (Mean = 2.656, SD = .91) | My general opinion of fast-food native advertisements is favourable. | Att1 | 2.75 (.97) |
| | I consider fast-food native advertisements essential. | Att2* | 2.30 (1.00) |
| | Overall, I like fast-food native advertisements. | Att3 | 2.66 (1.00) |
| | Overall, I consider fast-food native advertisements a good thing. | Att4 | 2.56 (1.00) |
| * Indicator was removed due to poor loading or high cross loading. | | | |

Table 5: Factor Analysis

Lastly, Table 6 illustrates the rotated component matrix generated using Varimax rotation with a suppression of 0.4. Notably, all indicator loadings on their respective constructs exceeded the 0.4 threshold (Pituch, Stevens 2016). Furthermore, each indicator loaded exclusively on one component, resulting in no significant cross-loadings. In conclusion, an 8-factor model with 24 indicators was retained for further analysis.

| Rotated Component Matrix | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Ent1 | .813 | -.145 | .127 | .109 | .116 | .217 | .192 | -.011 |
| Ent2 | .853 | -.166 | .094 | .141 | .101 | .157 | .191 | .114 |
| Ent3 | .832 | -.154 | .077 | .135 | .071 | .162 | .092 | .151 |
| Ent4 | .816 | -.113 | .139 | .056 | .133 | .194 | .160 | .122 |
| Irr1 | -.123 | .889 | .007 | -.046 | -.018 | -.115 | -.041 | -.076 |
| Irr2 | -.175 | .911 | -.045 | -.058 | -.011 | -.080 | -.162 | -.071 |
| Irr3 | -.168 | .893 | -.010 | -.010 | -.049 | -.126 | -.187 | -.014 |
| Pers2 | .202 | -.014 | .826 | .123 | .161 | .095 | .140 | .040 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Pers3 | .077 | -.029 | .903 | .098 | .167 | .066 | .053 | .124 |
| Pers4 | .085 | -.009 | .876 | .117 | .195 | .116 | .094 | .071 |
| Inf2 | .123 | -.057 | .128 | .797 | .111 | .119 | .192 | -.041 |
| Inf3 | .112 | -.042 | .104 | .865 | .103 | .191 | .118 | .141 |
| Inf4 | .134 | -.016 | .120 | .815 | .153 | .168 | .151 | .213 |
| Int2 | .098 | .008 | .321 | .140 | .738 | .130 | .197 | -.010 |
| Int3 | .121 | -.050 | .144 | .122 | .897 | .079 | .067 | .132 |
| Int4 | .133 | -.035 | .137 | .107 | .886 | .082 | .043 | .138 |
| Cred2 | .212 | -.198 | .110 | .250 | .122 | .780 | .133 | .203 |
| Cred3 | .217 | -.099 | .084 | .204 | .084 | .833 | .176 | .096 |
| Cred4 | .312 | -.116 | .137 | .111 | .119 | .754 | .175 | .015 |
| Att1 | .312 | -.184 | .126 | .238 | .127 | .210 | .715 | .198 |
| Att3 | .318 | -.217 | .135 | .223 | .127 | .209 | .754 | .155 |
| Att4 | .168 | -.194 | .146 | .210 | .120 | .188 | .749 | .312 |
| Adv1 | .256 | -.121 | .160 | .256 | .185 | .251 | .364 | .671 |
| Adv3 | .189 | -.103 | .165 | .155 | .199 | .121 | .354 | .769 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | | | | | | | |
| Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. | | | | | | | | |
| a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations. | | | | | | | | |

Table 6: Rotated Component Matrix

4.3.2 Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

The next step involved the construct reliability and convergent validity analyses, depicted in Table 7. The construct reliability assessment evaluated the internal consistency reliability through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. These exceeded the 0.7 threshold for all constructs, implying an acceptable level of internal consistency reliability (Hair, Black et al. 2018, Hair, Hult et al. 2013).

The researcher also undertook a Cronbach's alpha test before removing the indicators outlined in the FA section. The Cronbach alpha values for informativeness, interactivity, irritation, and personalisation improved significantly, while advertising value, attitude, and credibility decreased slightly following the indicator's omission. Nevertheless, further analysis was

pursued without these indicators, as they exhibited poor loadings on their respective constructs or high cross-loadings.

Convergent validity is the degree to which an indicator within a construct correlates with other indicators in the same construct. For the constructs to have sufficient convergent validity, their average variance extracted (AVE) value should exceed the 0.5 threshold (Hair, Hult et al. 2013). Table 7 reveals that all AVE values exceeded 0.5, signifying that the constructs explain more than 50% of their indicator's variance.

| | Cronbach Alpha | Composite Reliability (rho_c) | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|------|----------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Inf | .866 | .918 | .790 |
| Ent | .923 | .945 | .812 |
| Irr | .921 | .950 | .864 |
| Cred | .875 | .923 | .800 |
| Pers | .903 | .940 | .838 |
| Int | .879 | .926 | .806 |
| Adv | .858 | .934 | .876 |
| Att | .904 | .940 | .840 |

Table 7: Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

4.3.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity examines the distinctiveness of the employed constructs, ensuring that they do not overlap or measure the same things (Hair, Hult et al. 2013). This evaluation encompassed two tests.

The first test is the Fornell-Larcker criterion, in which the square root of the AVE for each construct should be greater than its correlation with other constructs (Hair, Hult et al. 2013). The second test is the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT), where the correlation between two constructs must be less than 0.85 (Henseler, Ringle et al. 2015).

Tables 8 and 9 capture the results of these tests. Notably, the AVE square root for each construct was higher than its correlations with other constructs, and the values in the HTMT

table were below 0.85. Consequently, the measurements employed in this study exhibited a satisfactory degree of discriminant validity.

| | Adv | Att | Cred | Ent | Inf | Int | Irr | Pers |
|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Adv | .936 | | | | | | | |
| Att | .728 | .916 | | | | | | |
| Cred | .516 | .569 | .895 | | | | | |
| Ent | .499 | .578 | .553 | .901 | | | | |
| Inf | .495 | .522 | .482 | .360 | .889 | | | |
| Int | .437 | .377 | .338 | .331 | .358 | .898 | | |
| Irr | -.300 | -.427 | -.344 | -.375 | -.161 | -.120 | .929 | |
| Pers | .386 | .371 | .324 | .325 | .331 | .455 | -.100 | .916 |

Table 8: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

| | Adv | Att | Cred | Ent | Inf | Int | Irr |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Att | .823 | | | | | | |
| Cred | .588 | .639 | | | | | |
| Ent | .556 | .633 | .618 | | | | |
| Inf | .565 | .588 | .548 | .402 | | | |
| Int | .503 | .422 | .385 | .367 | .407 | | |
| Irr | .334 | .464 | .381 | .404 | .180 | .133 | |
| Pers | .437 | .409 | .364 | .355 | .373 | .510 | .107 |

Table 9: HTMT

4.4 Evaluation of Structural Model

The subsequent phase involved an evaluation of the structural model. This evaluation commenced with a collinearity test, followed by an analysis of the coefficient of determination and effect size, and concluded with an assessment of the predictive relevance.

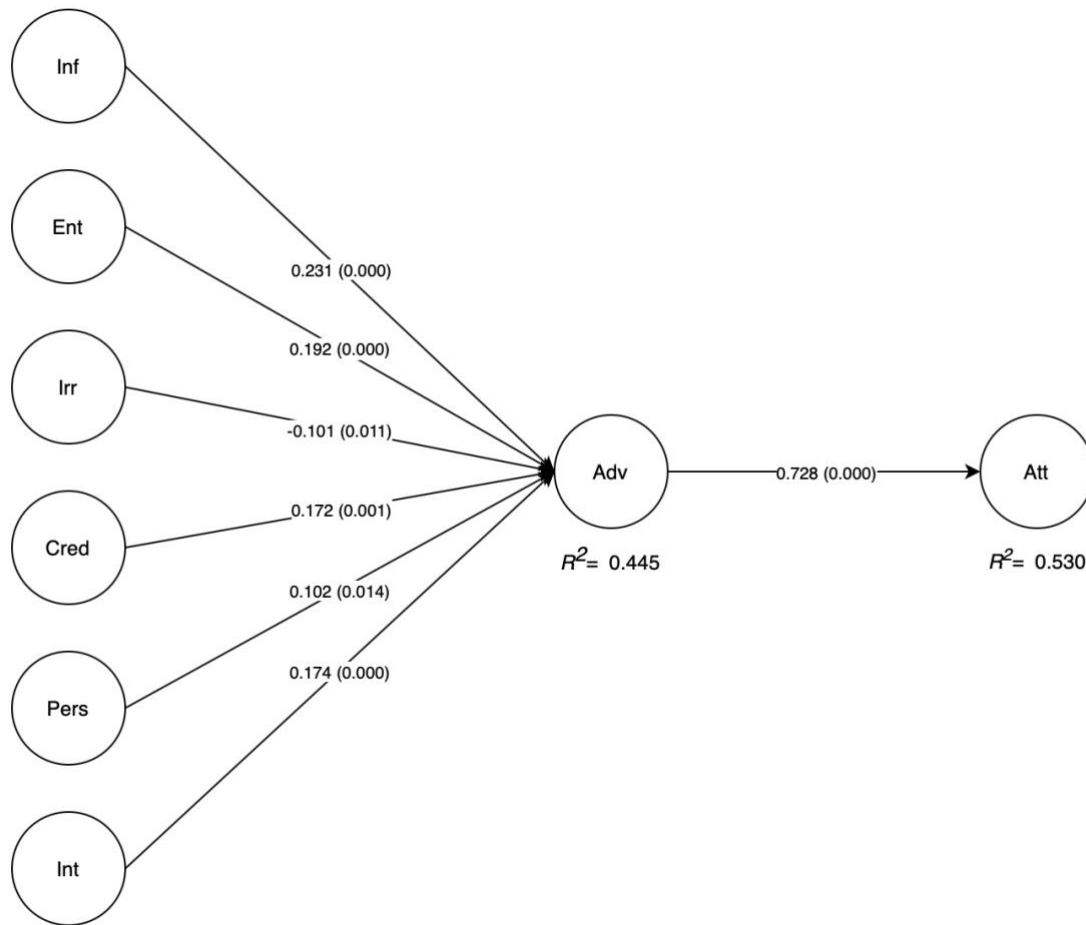


Figure 5: Structural Model

4.4.1 Collinearity Test

Hair, Hult et al. (2013) suggests that the primary step in evaluating a structural model is to run a collinearity test and analyse the variance inflation factor (VIF) values to determine whether there is multicollinearity. All VIF values fell within the range of 1 to 1.749, which were lower than the threshold level of 5, as suggested by Hair, Hult et al. (2013). Consequently, there are no multicollinearity issues.

4.4.2 Coefficient of Determination

The subsequent step inspected the coefficient of determination (R^2), which measures the model's explanatory power (Hair, Hult et al. 2021). The results revealed that 44.5% of the variance in advertising value is explained collectively by the exogenous variables comprising informativeness, entertainment, irritation, credibility, personalisation, and interactivity. Conversely, 53.0% of the variance in attitude is represented by advertising value.

4.4.3 Effect Size

Effect size (f^2) provides valuable insights for comprehending the magnitude of an effect in hypothesis significance testing (Hair, Black et al. 2018). Cohen (1988) classifies the effect size as follows: no effect ($f^2 < 0.02$), small ($0.02 < f^2 < 0.15$), moderate ($0.15 < f^2 < 0.35$), and large ($f^2 > 0.35$). Adhering to these guidelines, irritation and personalisation have no effect on advertising value, as their effect size is less than 0.02. Credibility, entertainment, informativeness, and interactivity have a small effect on advertising value, as the effect sizes range from 0.030 (Credibility) to 0.068 (Informativeness). Lastly, advertising value on attitude has an effect size of 1.126, implying a large effect.

4.4.4 Predictive Relevance

The model's predictive power was evaluated using the PLSpredict tool by observing the Q^2 test (Shmueli, Sarstedt et al. 2019). The Q^2 for advertising value was 0.43, and the Q^2 for attitude was 0.45, implying that the predictive error of the findings generated by PLS-SEM is smaller than that of employing the mean values, as they exceeded 0. Furthermore, the Q^2 values fall within the range of 0.25 to 0.5, indicating that this model possesses medium predictive relevance (Hair, Risher et al. 2019).

4.5 Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses testing involved an evaluation of p-values, t-values, path coefficients and confidence intervals, all generated through bootstrapping with a resampling size of 5000. For the hypotheses formulated to be accepted, they were required to have a p-value below 0.05 and a t-value greater than 1.96 (Hair, Hult et al. 2013).

The bootstrapping findings revealed that all the hypotheses had a p-value lower than 0.05 and a t-value greater than 1.96 (Table 10). Therefore, this suggested that a statistically significant relationship exists, which is the first step towards accepting the formulated hypotheses.

The second step is determining whether this relationship is positive or negative. As hypothesised, informativeness, entertainment, credibility, personalisation, and interactivity have a positive relationship with advertising value, and advertising value has a positive

relationship with customer attitudes. As illustrated in Table 10, the path coefficient values for these hypotheses are positive, implying that the relationships are positive. Therefore, H₁, H₂, H₄, H₅, H₆, and H₇ are supported. Furthermore, the hypothesis for irritation hypothesised that the relationship between irritation and advertising value is significant but negative. Moreover, the path coefficient value for this relationship is negative ($\beta = -0.101$, $P = 0.011$), implying that this relationship is negative. Thus, H₃ is also supported.

Furthermore, Hair, Hult et al. (2013) suggests that if 0 does not fall within the range of the bootstrap confidence interval, it further strengthens the argument that the relationship is significant. As observed in Table 10, all the hypotheses' bootstrap confidence intervals do not cross the 0 mark, supporting that there is a significant relationship.

| Structural Path | Original sample (O) | T statistic ((O/STDEV)) | P values | Confidence Interval Range [2.5%,97.5%] | Status |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------|----------|--|----------|
| H ₁₊ : Informativeness → Advertising value | .231 | 5.246 | .000 | [0.145,0.317] | Accepted |
| H ₂₊ : Entertainment → Advertising Value | .192 | 3.808 | .000 | [0.092,0.291] | Accepted |
| H ₃ : Irritation → Advertising Value | -.101 | 2.541 | .011 | [-0.181,-0.024] | Accepted |
| H ₄₊ : Credibility → Advertising Value | .172 | 3.303 | .001 | [0.069,0.272] | Accepted |
| H ₅₊ : Personalisation → Advertising Value | .102 | 2.455 | .014 | [0.019,0.185] | Accepted |
| H ₆₊ : Interactivity → Advertising Value | .174 | 3.988 | .000 | [0.090,0.260] | Accepted |
| H ₇₊ : Advertising Value → Customer Attitude | .728 | 32.424 | .000 | [0.682,0.771] | Accepted |

Table 10: Hypotheses Testing

4.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter outlines the findings from the online questionnaire. The analysis commenced with an overview of the demographic statistics, followed by an assessment of the measurement model, from which the results confirmed that the measures were valid and reliable.

Following this confirmation, this chapter proceeded with a structural model evaluation and concluded with hypotheses testing, where all the formulated hypotheses were accepted. The following chapter provides an in-depth discussion and interpretation of these findings while comparing them with the results of prior studies conducted in this field.

5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

As more organisations devote a significant proportion of their budget to promoting their offerings, individuals are exposed to several advertisements daily, making it more challenging for organisations to capture the individuals' attention. The rapid technological advancements and changes in market dynamics enabled organisations to engage in different forms of advertising to try and enhance their ability to attract individuals' attention.

Native advertising is one of the advertisement types that became popular among organisations due to its capacity to seamlessly integrate with the media platforms on which it is published. Although organisations are allocating more of their advertising budget to native advertising, there remains a gap in current literature regarding the factors that influence customers' perceived advertising value towards native advertisements, particularly in the fast-food industry.

Consequently, in view of this gap, this study formulated two primary research questions (RQs). The first question focuses on identifying the principal factors that significantly influence customers' perceived advertising value. Subsequently, the second question centres on the impact of the advertising value on customers' attitudes towards fast-food native advertisements.

This chapter provides an in-depth discussion and interpretation of the key findings presented in the results chapter, comparing them with the findings of prior studies in this field. This chapter commences with a demographic analysis of the questionnaire participants, followed by an analysis of the six identified influencing factors, and concludes with a discussion of the relationship between advertising value and customer attitudes.

5.2 Demographic Analysis

With a sample size of 487 responses collected, there was a fair balance in gender participation in this questionnaire, with 51.1% males and 48.9% females. The two age groups with the highest proportion of participants in this study were 35-44 and 25-34, accounting for more than half of the total participants, at 61.8%. These findings were as expected, given that, according to the NSO publication, these two age groups had the highest population of Internet users (NSO 2023).

An impressive 76.4% of full-time employed participants completed this questionnaire, skewing this data set towards this demographic group. These correspond to the age group's findings, as individuals aged 25 to 54 are typically employed full-time (NSO 2023). Furthermore, almost half of the participants, 48.3%, achieved a postgraduate level as their highest education level, while only 2.3% attained a higher level.

The subsequent two questions centred on SNSs, with Facebook reportedly having the highest usage rate among the participants (92.8%), followed by WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Most participants reported spending 1-2 hours or more on such sites daily, whereas only 11.9% reported spending less than 1 hour daily. This finding strengthens the argument that the Internet, specifically SNSs, is becoming an intrinsic part of our daily lives.

Providing to the participants the stance that this study takes when defining fast food, 38% reported consuming fast food approximately once a week. Furthermore, 21.1% acknowledged consuming fast food more than once a week, followed by 17% who consume fast food more than once a month. Interestingly, seven participants selected 'never' when asked about their fast-food consumption. These findings make it more enticing for fast-food organisations to advertise their offerings in Malta, given that most participants consume fast food frequently.

After introducing the fast-food industry, the questionnaire's subsequent section centred on native advertisements. The purpose of introducing the industry and native advertisements was to set the scene for the participants before delving into the constructs questions. Most participants recalled encountering native advertisements in general, which amounted to 93.8%, while 87.7% acknowledged their exposure to fast-food native advertisements on SNSs. One possible explanation for the lower recall of fast-food native advertisements could be that

individuals may be less inclined to remember and absorb the content or products of advertisements that do not align with their interests (Crompton 2004, McGillivray, Murayama et al. 2015).

Additionally, 56.5% of the participants responded 'no' when asked whether fast-food native advertisements influenced their behaviour to purchase fast food, while the remaining stated that yes, these advertisements influenced them. A plausible explanation for those participants who responded 'no' is that these advertisements were not effective and did not give them enough value to influence their purchasing behaviour. Given that this study did not assess whether native advertising value impacts customers' purchasing behaviour towards fast food, this presents future studies with the opportunity to investigate this relationship and any other possibilities that may influence the customers' purchasing behaviour towards fast food.

5.3 Identified Influencing Factors

Following a comprehensive literature review outlined in Chapter 2, a total of six factors were identified for the purpose of this study. The factors comprised informativeness, entertainment, irritation, credibility, personalisation, and interactivity, from which the researcher formulated a hypothesis for each identified factor. Firstly, the study commenced with a measurement model assessment before testing these hypotheses to ensure the measurements were valid and reliable. This assessment led to the removal of seven indicators in total from different constructs due to poor loadings on their respective constructs and high cross-loadings, thereby improving the validity and reliability of the constructs' measurements employed. The subsequent step entailed a structural model examination, from which the results chapter demonstrated that all formulated hypotheses were accepted as their p-values were lower than 0.05 and t-values were higher than 1.96.

Consequently, this study's findings provide strong evidence that the identified factors in the systematic research by De Battista, Curmi et al. (2021) do indeed impact the customers' perceived value of fast-food native advertisements on SNSs. Before discussing each factor individually, it is worth mentioning that these six factors collectively explain 44.5% of the variance in advertising value, indicating a favourable level of explanatory power compared to prior studies conducted in this field (Murillo, Merino et al. 2016, Mustafi, Hosain 2020, Saxena, Khanna 2013). A 44.5% coefficient of determination may also suggest the possibility of other factors that were not included in this study, which can potentially increase the variance explained in advertising value, such as incentives.

The path coefficients (β coefficients) revealed that different factors under investigation had diverse influences on the perceived advertising value of fast-food native advertisements. Informativeness emerged as the most influential factor towards advertising value, followed by entertainment. Interactivity and credibility were the subsequent factors in terms of influence, while personalisation and irritation had the lowest influence on advertising value. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the path coefficients differ substantially across various studies. For instance, certain studies have identified informativeness as the most prominent influential factor, aligning with the findings of this study (Dao, Le et al. 2014, Murillo, Merino et al. 2016), while others have highlighted credibility as the most influential determinant (Aydoğan, Aktan et al.

2016, Lin, Hung 2009). Additionally, there are other studies that have reported different findings in this regard (Hussain, Ting et al. 2022, Logan 2013).

5.3.1 Informativeness

According to Ducoffe (1996), customers tend to have a more positive perception of advertisements that incorporate informational material. One of the primary reasons organisations engage in advertising is to make customers aware of their offerings and provide information (Kotler, Armstrong et al. 2017, Thomas 2011); therefore, the literature suggests that organisations need to consider the informativeness factor when conducting advertisements.

This study hypothesised that informativeness is a significant predictor of advertising value, and the statistical test conducted using PLS-SEM confirms this hypothesis ($\beta=0.231$, $t=5.246$, $P<0.001$). This implies that the more informative a fast-food native advertisement is, the higher the value it delivers to the customers encountering it. This finding is consistent with prior research in this field, in which different authors have also found that informativeness predicts advertising value (Dao, Le et al. 2014, Ducoffe 1996, Martins, Costa et al. 2019). Among the six factors tested, this factor exhibited the most influence on advertising value. Consequently, this study concludes that out of the six factors, an enhancement in informativeness will result in a more pronounced increase in advertising value compared to the other five factors among this study participants.

Despite this relationship, the mean for the informativeness construct ($M=2.835$, $SD=.92$) demonstrates that participants in this questionnaire did not find these advertisements as providing highly relevant, valuable, and good sources of information, with the responses for this construct falling between the disagree and neutral range on average. This observation provides a basis for the argument that, although participants revealed that more informative native advertisements will increase the value they garner from these advertisements, participants currently perceive that fast-food native advertisements on SNSs lack informativeness. Moreover, in light of the prevailing concerns about the nutritional imbalance in fast food, as indicated in the literature review, the inclusion of relevant and valuable informative content in fast-food native advertisements could be a step in the right direction to address these concerns, which leads to enhancing the value of the advertisements (Anderson, Rafferty et al. 2011, Fuhrman 2018, Majabadi, Solhi et al. 2016, WHO 2022).

5.3.2 Entertainment

Another factor investigated in this study is entertainment, which refers to the consumers' likeability of an advertisement (Zhou, Bao 2002). This study hypothesised that perceived entertainment is positively associated with native advertising value, from which the results obtained support this hypothesis ($\beta=0.192$, $t=3.808$, $P<0.001$), having the second highest path coefficient out of the six factors examined. Moreover, this indicates that the more entertaining the fast-food native advertisements placed on SNSs are, the higher the advertising value. In other words, providing entertaining advertisements to the participants can fulfil their needs for escapism, diversion, enjoyment, or emotional release (McQuail 1983). This finding is consistent with prior research conducted in this field, which found a significant relationship between entertainment and advertising value (Brackett, Carr 2001, Dao, Le et al. 2014, Ducoffe 1996, Logan 2013).

However, despite this relationship, the results for this factor reveal that the mean value of entertainment is lower than the mid-point ($M=2.797$, $SD=.89$). Although this mean is not the lowest, participants still reported that fast-food native advertisements lack entertainment. Moreover, this suggests that fast-food organisations are failing to make their native advertisements entertaining to this study's participants as, on average, participants' responses fell within the range of disagree to neutral when asked whether such fast-food native advertisements were pleasing, enjoyable, entertaining, and exciting. Additionally, the low perceived entertainment can also serve as a possible reason why the personalisation factor among the participants was perceived as lacking, as these advertisements did not meet their entertainment expectations. Therefore, participants may have felt that these advertisements were not tailored to them. In fact, Kim and Han (2014) discovered a significant positive relationship between the entertainment and personalisation factors, suggesting that advertisements can be entertaining by personalising them according to the interests of the customers perceiving them.

5.3.3 Interactivity

The ability to interact with advertisements can enhance the likelihood of capturing customers' attention to such advertisements, as interactive advertisements improve the customers' perceptions and attitudes (Brajnik, Gabrielli 2010). Based on previous research findings in this field, this study posited that interactivity has a significant positive relationship with advertising value.

The findings presented in the results chapter demonstrate that the relationship between interactivity and advertising value was significant and positive ($\beta=0.174$, $t=3.988$, $P<0.001$). This finding is consistent with previous studies conducted in this field (Ho 2022, Hussain, Ting et al. 2022). Moreover, the participants in this study expressed that interactivity in fast-food native advertisements enhances the value they garner from such promotional content. Hence, customers perceive that when they encounter an interactive advertisement, it has the ability to offer them an enhanced overall experience and motivate them to engage with that advertisement.

The results further reveal that the mean value for this construct was the lowest among the six factors ($M=2.682$, $SD=.89$), together with credibility. This finding suggests that out of the factors examined, the participants believe that the interactivity factor was one of the factors least present in fast-food native advertisements, implying that the participants did not find these advertisements as highly interactive, facilitating two-way communication with the organisations, and giving them the opportunity to talk back. Based on these findings, this study argues that organisations should improve the advertisement's interactivity characteristics to enhance the overall advertising value provided to the participants.

It can also be plausible that the inclusion of interactive characteristics may improve other factors. In fact, Alalwan (2018) concluded that most customers perceive advertisements as more entertaining and useful when they possess a high level of interactivity. Moreover, this can also be a potential area for future research to investigate how factors may affect each other and their impact on the value of native advertising.

5.3.4 Credibility

Credibility is another factor revealed through the literature review. In summary, credibility pertains to the degree to which customers perceive the advertisements they encounter as trustworthy, and believable (MacKenzie, Lutz 1989).

This study posited that credibility is a significant positive predictor of advertising value in the context of fast-food native advertisements, from which the findings of this study provide support for this hypothesis ($\beta=0.172$, $t=3.303$, $P=0.001$). Moreover, this implies that the more credible the participants perceive the fast-food native advertisements, the higher the advertising value they garner. Hence, this finding is consistent with previous studies, which have also established a significant positive relationship between perceived credibility and advertising value (Arora, Agarwal 2019, Brackett, Carr 2001, Lin, Hung 2009, Martins, Costa et al. 2019).

This study also revealed that the mean for this construct was at the lower end of the 5-point Likert scale employed and the lowest of the six identified factors ($M=2.682$, $SD=.84$), along with the interactivity mean. This demonstrates that, of the six factors examined, participants held the perception that fast-food native advertisements had the lowest levels of credibility and interactivity. Moreover, the participants generally did not find fast-food native advertisements as highly trustworthy, credible, or believable. A potential explanation for this low mean, among others, is that young people may view the Internet as more credible, in contrast to older respondents, who tend to perceive Internet material as less credible (Bucy 2003). Therefore, as described in the demographic analysis sub-section, the 25–44 age bracket accounted for more than half of the total participants, which may have resulted in a lower mean for credibility.

Moreover, the credibility factor is also an important consideration for fast-food organisations due to the negative perception of individuals towards advertisements, which stems from the belief that organisations often promote their products in a biased manner to mislead their customers (Bell, Mieth et al. 2021). Therefore, enhancing the credibility of advertisements would increase their perceived value while potentially mitigating the negative perceptions associated with them.

5.3.5 Personalisation

It has become common practice for organisations to collect data pertaining to their customers, including demographic information, preferences, and interests, with the aim of providing personalised advertisements.

This study hypothesised that a significant positive relationship exists between perceived personalisation and native advertising value. Moreover, the findings of this study support the formulated hypothesis ($\beta=0.102$, $t=2.455$, $P=0.014$), suggesting that the more personalised the fast-food native advertisements are towards the customers' needs and preferences, the greater the advertising value delivered to the participants. On one hand, this finding supports previous studies conducted in this field, which have found personalisation as a significant predictor of advertising value (Dehghani, Niaki et al. 2016, Lina, Setiyanto 2021). However, it also contradicts the findings of Arora and Agarwal (2019), who found that personalisation among Indian participants on social media was not a significant predictor of advertising value. In fact, De Battista, Curmi et al. (2021) concluded that studies provide a dichotomous stand on this factor, implying that this factor effect may vary between different studies.

This study also revealed that personalisation ranks as the fifth most influential factor among the six factors investigated, implying that within the realm of fast-food native advertisements, there exist other factors that contribute to a greater influence on the participants' perceived advertising value. Additionally, the mean value for personalisation was the closest to 3 on the 5-point Likert scale among all the constructs assessed ($M=2.918$, $SD=.92$). Although this illustrates that the average responses to personalisation in fast-food native advertisements were close to neutral, it still implies that fast-food native advertisements lack personalisation, as these fall within the range of disagree and neutral. In essence, the participants of this study feel that the fast-food native advertisements they are currently exposed to lack content that is tailored to them and personalised for their usage.

In summary, given the significant positive relationship and the mean value, improvement in the personalisation element of fast-food native advertisements is required, which, according to previous studies in this field, can also lead to additional benefits such as reducing advertisement avoidance, scepticism, and irritation (Baek, Morimoto 2012, Kim, Han 2014).

5.3.6 Irritation

Irritation refers to the degree to which an advertisement is perceived as intrusive and annoying, which in turn causes a sense of disturbance to the people who encounter it (Eighmey, McCord 1998). This study hypothesised that the irritation factor has a significant but negative relationship with fast-food native advertising value.

Furthermore, the results of this study support the formulated hypothesis ($\beta = -0.101$, $t = 2.541$, $P = 0.011$), indicating that the higher the irritation in these advertisements, the lower the customers' perceived advertising value, aligning with previous studies' outcomes (Dehghani, Niaki et al. 2016, Ducoffe 1996, Gaber, Wright 2014, Saxena, Khanna 2013). Out of the six factors tested, the irritation factor had the lowest influence on advertising value, which is also consistent with previous studies that found irritation to have the lowest path coefficient (Ducoffe 1996, Lee, Lee et al. 2017, Martins, Costa et al. 2019).

Additionally, it is worth noting that the average score for the irritation construct was the highest ($M = 3.214$, $SD = .94$), suggesting that the participants' perception of these advertisements as intrusive, annoying, and irritating ranged from neutral to agree. A potential explanation for this is that this study's findings demonstrated that participants perceived the other five factors as lacking in fast-food native advertisements, potentially contributing to participants finding these advertisements more irritating. This observation aligns with previous research in this field, which argues that when factors like personalisation and entertainment are present in advertisements, customers tend to view them as less irritating since the perceived advertising value increases (Cheng, Blankson et al. 2009, Dwinanda, Syaripuddin et al. 2022, Kim, Han 2014). Hence, when the advertisements offer minimal or no advertising value, individuals perceive such advertisements as intrusive, annoying, and irritating.

Consequently, this suggests that employing native advertisements alone to reduce irritation is not enough. However, to make advertisements less irritating, one must boost other factors that lead to a higher advertising value, such as credibility and entertainment.

5.3.7 Advertising Value and Customer Attitudes

Following the discussion of the relationships between the six identified factors and advertising value, this chapter will also discuss and interpret the relationship between advertising value and customer attitudes. According to Ducoffe (1995), advertising value measures both the advertisement's effectiveness and the customer's attitudes towards the advertisement they encounter.

This study hypothesised that advertising value has a significant positive relationship with customer attitudes, from which the results obtained support this hypothesis ($\beta=0.728$, $t=32.424$, $P<0.001$). Notably, this relationship exhibited the highest path coefficient value among all the relationships examined in this study, signifying its dominant influence. This result conforms with the existing research in this field, which has also found a significant positive relationship between advertising value and customer attitudes (Arora, Agarwal 2019, Brackett, Carr 2001, Ducoffe 1996, Logan, Bright et al. 2012).

This finding suggests that as the advertising value increases, the participants' attitudes towards fast-food native advertisements become more positive, with advertising value playing a significant role in formulating customer attitudes towards these advertisements. Moreover, in this study context, the participants' perceived advertising value will increase when they encounter informative, entertaining, credible, personalised, interactive, and non-irritating fast-food native advertisements, stimulating positive attitudes towards these advertisements. Furthermore, the results also indicate that the advertising value accounts for 53.0% of the variance in attitude, suggesting moderate explanatory power.

Despite this relationship, advertising value ($M=2.589$, $SD=.93$) and customer attitudes ($M=2.656$, $SD=.91$) mean values were lower than the midpoint. These values were the lowest among all the employed constructs, implying that although people residing in Malta are encountering fast-food native advertisements on SNSs, the value they perceive getting out of these advertisements, on average, is low, impacting their attitude negatively. In terms of advertising value mean, this illustrates that participants generally did not perceive native advertisements as highly valuable and important. Similarly, in terms of attitudes, participants' responses in this study, on average, ranged from disagree to neutral when asked whether their

opinion of fast-food native advertisements is favourable, whether they like these advertisements, and whether they consider them as a good thing.

One plausible explanation for this phenomenon leads us back to the previously mentioned factors. In situations where fast-food organisations fail to create native advertisements that comprise factors that have a significant positive relationship with advertising value, they will not enhance the value of the advertisement. Consequently, this results in a negative impact on customer attitudes towards these advertisements, as evidenced by the findings of this study. This explanation bolsters the argument of this study, emphasising the importance for organisations to initially identify and enhance the factors that improve customers' perceived advertising value before conducting native advertisements. Lee, Kim et al. (2016) also argues that when customers have high advertisement scepticism and persuasion knowledge, this may lead to a negative attitude towards native advertisements, which can be another potential reason for why participants held negative attitudes towards these advertisements.

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the discussion chapter began by revisiting the existing gap in the current literature and the RQs formulated for this study. This chapter then proceeded with a demographic analysis of this study's participants to gain a clear understanding of the demographic characteristics of the collected sample. Subsequently, this chapter continued with a discussion of the relationships among the factors identified and advertising value, as well as the influence of advertising value on customer attitudes towards fast-food native advertisements.

The findings of this study revealed that all formulated hypotheses were accepted, suggesting that the factors that significantly influence the advertising value of other types of advertisements were also supported in one of the latest forms of advertising, which is native advertising. Following this discussion and interpretation of the mentioned relationships, this study concluded that fast-food organisations should incorporate and enhance factors with a significant positive relationship with advertising value while reducing irritation to increase the perceived advertisement value. Consequently, this study also concluded that increasing advertising value leads to more positive customer attitudes towards fast-food native

advertisements, given the significant positive relationships between advertising value and customer attitudes.

The subsequent and final chapter of this dissertation will address this study's RQs, the implications of these results and provide further recommendations.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The final chapter of this dissertation commences by listing the research questions (RQs) formulated for this study and answering these questions in line with the findings. Furthermore, this chapter will also outline a discussion of the results implications, both practical and theoretical, and will conclude with recommendations for future studies.

6.2 Summary of Results

The two main RQs formulated for this study were the following:

RQ1: Which principal factors significantly influence the customers' perceived advertising value towards fast-food native advertisements?

RQ2: To what extent does the advertising value influence the customers' attitudes towards fast-food native advertisements?

The findings of this study allowed the researcher to address these RQs. In response to the first RQ, the factors that significantly influence the customers' perceived advertising value towards fast-food native advertisements on SNSs comprised informativeness, entertainment, interactivity, credibility, personalisation, and irritation. These factors are listed in descending order according to their influence on advertising value (β coefficient values). Moreover, all six factors identified by the systematic study conducted by De Battista, Curmi et al. (2021) were significant predictors of native advertising value among people residing in Malta aged 18 to 54 who use SNSs. Furthermore, five of these factors positively influenced customers' perceived advertising value, comprising informativeness, entertainment, interactivity, credibility, and personalisation. In contrast, only the irritation factor negatively influenced the customers' perceived advertising value.

In response to the second RQ, this study revealed that advertising value has a significant and positive relationship with customer attitudes towards fast-food native advertisements, implying that when the advertising value increases, customer attitudes become more positive towards

these advertisements. Therefore, this study identifies a link between the factors, the advertising value, and customer attitudes. In other words, when the factors that have a significant positive relationship with advertising value increase, the advertising value also increases, which leads to a more positive customer attitude.

6.3 Implications

6.3.1 Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, this study's findings suggest that these six factors tested are important considerations when creating fast-food native advertisements targeting people residing in Malta, aged between 18 and 54, who use SNSs. Therefore, the factors investigated in this study can be augmented to develop more effective fast-food native advertisements, resulting in a higher overall advertising value, and stimulating positive attitudes.

According to this study's findings, the optimal scenario for generating a higher perceived advertising value for customers involves the implementation of native advertisements that are informative, entertaining, interactive, credible, personalised, and non-irritating. This study also suggests that while all factors were significant, not all had the same influence on advertising value. In view of this, in situations where firms are unable to incorporate all six variables into their native advertisements, this study provides guidance on the prioritisation of these factors over one another based on their influence.

Additionally, this study also illustrates that current fast-food native advertisements are seen as irritating and lacking in terms of providing information, interactivity, personalisation, credibility, and entertainment among this study's participants. This observation can serve as a sign for fast-food organisations that there is a need for improvements in their native advertisements. Therefore, native advertisements that are irritating and lack the remaining five factors are increasingly problematic. This is because they contribute to a lower perceived advertising value, and with individuals being exposed to numerous advertisements daily, grabbing their attention is becoming even more challenging, especially if the advertising value is low.

6.3.2 Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical standpoint, this study's findings offer theoretical contributions to the current body of literature about native advertisements. This study tested six identified influencing factors among SNS users in Malta aged 18 to 54. Consequently, this study goes beyond the current literature by examining these factors in the context of fast-food native advertisements, where no previous academic studies investigated these six factors collectively in native advertisements on SNSs, specifically in the fast-food industry. One potential reason for this gap and the limited literature focusing on the factors influencing customers' perceived advertising value and attitudes towards native advertisements is that these advertisements are still relatively new, having begun in the early 2010s.

In terms of theoretical implications, the factors tested in this study, identified through the literature review, were significant predictors of native advertising value. This study also identified a significant positive relationship between advertising value and customer attitudes towards fast-food native advertisements. Furthermore, this study can serve as a foundation for future research endeavours seeking to explore the determinants influencing native advertising value, which consequently impacts customers' attitudes, as demonstrated by this study. However, more research is needed to identify which other factors may be more significant than these factors or how they may differ among different industries, products, and even demographics. The subsequent section will outline the recommendations for future research, elucidating how future studies can further build on the theoretical findings of this study.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

In light of this study's findings and limitations, the following are recommendations for future research. Firstly, future research can adopt a qualitative approach through interviews or other qualitative means to generate more detailed findings that facilitate a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the individuals' perceived advertising value and how advertising value influences the individuals' attitudes towards fast-food native advertisements.

Secondly, the structural model devised for this study examined the relationship between the factors identified and advertising value. Consequently, it would be beneficial for future studies

to investigate the direct relationship between each factor and customer attitudes and compare whether these findings diverge from the relationship between the factors and advertising value.

Thirdly, this study examined only six factors: informativeness, entertainment, irritation, credibility, personalisation, and interactivity. Future studies can consider including other variables, such as incentives and value corruption, which could potentially have a more significant influence than the variables examined in this study and increase the variance explained in advertising value. Future research can also compare whether different demographics, such as gender and age groups, perceive the advertising value and the resulting attitudes towards fast-food native advertisements differently.

The time and resource constraints did not permit this study to employ probability sampling; therefore, the results may not reflect a generalised view. In view of addressing this limitation, future studies need to employ probability sampling to ensure that the collected sample is representative of the entire population under investigation.

In addition, this study focused on fast-food native advertisements published on all SNSs. Future studies can narrow the focus to a specific SNS, such as Instagram, or to other sites where native advertising has gained prominence, such as online newspaper sites. Finally, future research can shift its focus from fast-food products and instead investigate whether the factors that significantly influence customers' perceived value of fast-food native advertisements also hold true for other products. Additionally, this presents an opportunity for scholars to compare how these factors may differ based on different products and industries.

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Appendices

Appendix A- The Questionnaire

| Construct | Question | Measurement | Original Source |
|--------------|--|---|-----------------|
| Demographics | Gender <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male • Female • Other | 1= Male 2= Female 3= Other | N/A |
| | Age <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18-24 • 25-34 • 35-44 • 45-54 • 55+ | 1= 18-24 2= 25-34 3= 35-44 4= 45-54 5= 55+ | N/A |
| | Are you currently residing in Malta? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No | 1= Yes 2= No | N/A |
| | Current Employment Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-Time Student • Part-Time Student • Employed Full-Time • Employed Part-Time • Self-Employed • Unemployed | 1= Full-Time Student 2= Part-Time Student 3= Employed Full-Time 4= Employed Part-Time 5= Self-Employed 6= Unemployed | N/A |
| | What is the highest education level that you have obtained? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PhD Level - Doctoral Research Degree • Postgraduate Level • Undergraduate Level • Post Secondary Level (Advanced and Intermediate Levels) • Secondary Level • Primary Level | 1= PhD Level - Doctoral Research Degree 2= Postgraduate Level 3= Undergraduate Level 4= Post Secondary Level 5= Secondary Level 6= Primary Level | N/A |
| | Do you use social media site/s? (For example, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, etc). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No | 1= Yes 2= No | N/A |
| | Which social media sites do you use? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook | 1= Facebook 2= Twitter | |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|---|
| Social Media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twitter • YouTube • Pinterest • LinkedIn • Reddit • Instagram • WhatsApp • TikTok • I do not use social media sites • Other: _____ | 3= YouTube 4= Pinterest 5= LinkedIn 6= Reddit 7= Instagram 8= WhatsApp 9= TikTok 10= I do not use social media sites 11= Other | N/A |
| | How many hours do you typically spend daily on social media sites? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 1 hour • 1 - 2 Hours • 3 - 4 Hours • More than 4 hours | 1= Less than 1 hour 2= 1 - 2 Hours 3= 3 - 4 Hours 4= More than 4 hours | N/A |
| Fast Food | How often do you consume fast food? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most Days • More than once a week • About once a week • More than once a month • Once a month • More than once a year • Once a year • Never | 1= Most Days 2= More than once a week 3= About once a week 4= More than once a month 5= Once a month 6= More than once a year 7= Once a year 8= Never | N/A |
| Native Advertisements | Have you ever noticed native advertisements while using social media sites? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No | 1= Yes 2= No | N/A |
| | Have you ever noticed native advertisements for fast-food products on social media sites? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No | 1= Yes 2= No | N/A |
| | Has your purchasing behaviour ever been influenced by native advertisements regarding fast food? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No | 1= Yes 2= No | N/A |
| Entertainment | Entertainment Factor - I feel that fast-food native advertisements are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entertaining | 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral | (Ducoffe 1996) (Logan, Bright et al. 2012) |

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyable • Pleasing • Exciting | 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree | |
| Credibility | Credibility Factor - I feel that fast-food native advertisements are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credible • Trustworthy • Convincing • Believable | 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree | (Murillo, Merino et al. 2016) (Mustafi, Hosain 2020) |
| Irritation | Irritation Factor - I feel that fast-food native advertisements are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritating • Annoying • Intrusive • Confusing | 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree | (Mustafi, Hosain 2020) |
| Informativeness | Informativeness Factor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native advertisements provide timely information on fast food. • Native advertisements are a good source of fast-food information. • Native advertisements supply relevant information on fast food. • Native advertisements provide valuable information on fast food. | 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree | (Ducoffe 1996) (Islam 2017) |
| Personalisation | Personalisation Factor – Fast-food native advertisements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are delivered in a timely manner. • Are personalised for my usage. • Contents are personalised. • Are tailored to me. | 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree | (Xu 2006) (Kim, Han 2014) |
| Interactivity | Interactivity Factor – Fast-food native advertisements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are effective in gathering customers feedback. • Make me feel like it wants to listen to its customers. • Give customers the opportunity to talk back. • Facilitate two-way communication between customers and companies. | 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree | (Arora, Kumar et al. 2020) |
| | I feel that fast-food native advertisements are: | 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree | (Ducoffe 1996) |

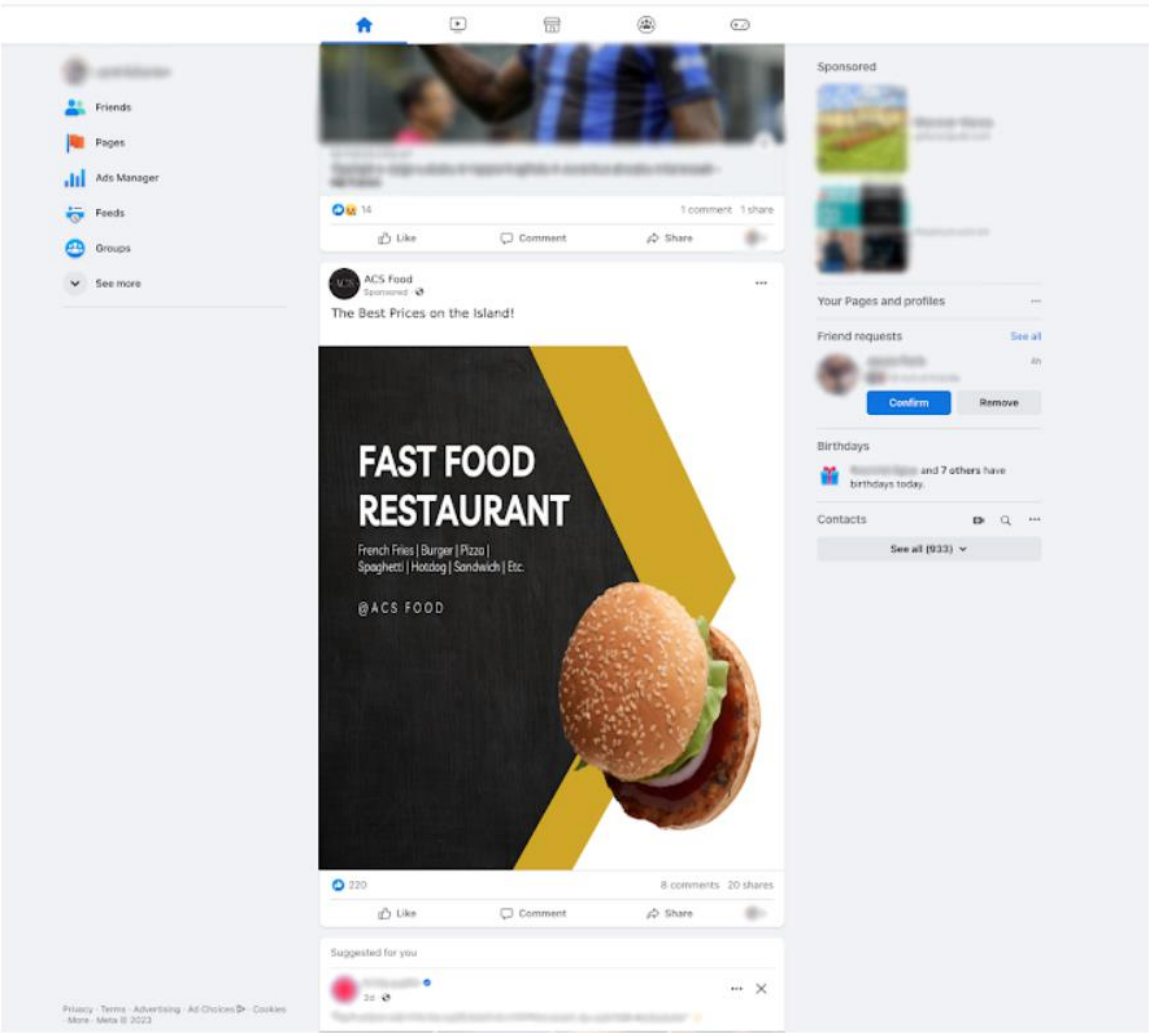
| | | | |
|-------------------|--|---|----------------|
| Advertising Value | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful • Valuable • Important | <p>3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree</p> | |
| Attitude | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My general opinion of fast-food native advertisements is favourable. • I consider fast-food native advertisements essential. • Overall, I like fast-food native advertisements. • Overall, I consider fast-food native advertisements a good thing. | <p>1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree</p> | (An, Kim 2008) |

Appendix B- Native Advertisements Illustrations



Native Advertisement on Facebook (Mobile View)







Native Advertisement on Facebook (Desktop View)



Native Advertisement on Instagram (Mobile View)

For you ▾  



   


88,360 likes

compartilhe impressões e passeie com filhos no mar de águas cristalinas no dia de hoje. É isso que dá 25 anos. Foi nesse dia que... more

View all 2,758 comments

1 day ago • [See translation](#)





 ACS Food
Sponsored 



SAVE 50%



PIZZA


ORDER NOW
123-456-7890





   

2,456 views

The Best Prices on the Island!

 [@user](#) 



Native Advertisement on Instagram (Desktop View)

Instagram

- Home
- Search
- Explore
- Reels
- Messages
- Notifications
- Create
- Profile

More

For you Following

836,295 likes

See translation

View all 47 comments

Comments on this post have been limited.

ACS Food
Sponsored



The best prices on the Island.

Add a comment...

Instagram profile header for 'instagram_reels'.