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Examining the effect of TV advertising appeals on brand attitudes and advertising efforts in Iran

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Abstract
Purpose – In recent years, increasing competition in communicational network of Iran has led to attracting more attention to marketing and particularly, advertising activities. The aim of this paper is to examine the effect of TV advertising appeals of communication companies (in this study, MTN Irancell Company) on customers’ attitude towards their advertising efforts and their brand.

Design/methodology/approach – The aim was achieved through an empirical study involving a survey. Of 400 questionnaires sent out, 384 were returned. The dataset from the sample underwent series of statistical analyses, i.e. reliability test, factor analyses (exploratory and confirmatory) and structural equation modelling (SEM).

Findings – Factor analyses extracted seven dimensions, i.e. one-sided appeal, two-sided appeal, humour appeal, fear appeal, comparative appeal, attitude toward advertising and brand attitude. All related indicators manifested their constructs, respectively. The results show that there is a positive, direct, and significant relationship between: advertising appeals and attitude towards advertising; advertising appeals and brand attitude; and attitude towards advertising and brand attitude.

Originality/value – The paper empirically justified the interrelationship among advertising appeals, attitude toward advertising and brand attitude in an integrated model. Communication companies may find this paper useful as perceptual measures can be empirically substantiated using SEM.

Keywords Advertising appeals, Attitude towards advertising, Brand attitude, MTN Irancell, Advertising, Brands, Iran

Paper type Case study

1. Introduction
Advertising as a major social event expresses a key change in values, beliefs, behaviour and buying patterns of the peoples which influence the lifestyles of
people (Usman et al., 2010). Consumer behaviour researchers have pointed out that individual differences among message recipients may lead to wide variations in the manner in which people respond to advertising appeals (Moore et al., 1995). Further, as advertisers increasingly seek greater communication effectiveness, more careful consideration needs to be given to the selection of the type of advertising appeal used for each target group (Ruiz and Sicilia, 2004). Previous studies have identified seven most used advertising appeals – comparative, humour, fear, sex, two- or one-sided, gain/loss framed, and metaphor-account for two-thirds of all advertisements (Allen and Raymond, 2007; Dahlen et al., 2010; Hornik and Miniero, 2010) and close to 85 percent of television commercials (Pechmann and Stewart, 1990). A shortcoming in the advertising appeal literature is a lack of clear, consistent construct definitions and conceptualizations, both on the predictor and on the criterion sides of ad appeal effects (Hornik and O’Keefe, 2009). Research demonstrated that advertising appeals can affect customers attitude towards the advertising (Liu et al., 2009; Hornik and Miniero, 2010) and brand attitude (Wang et al., 2000; Kim and Lee, 2012). However, it is intriguing that there is little published research indicating the interactive relationships among different types of advertising appeals, attitude towards advertising, and brand attitude in an integrated model. Our objective is to illustrate how attitude toward advertising and brand attitude are affected by the different types of advertising appeals. The main contribution of this paper lies in the analysis of the interactive relationships among these factors. In the next sections, we review the literature on the types of advertising appeals, the relationship between advertising appeals and attitude towards advertising and brand attitude. We then present our research hypothesis followed by a detailed description of the methodology. Analysis and discussion are presented at the end of the paper.

2. Background and theoretical development

2.1 Religion and marketing efforts

Religion as an institution significantly affects people’s attitudes, values and behaviours (Derun et al., 2010) at both the individual and societal levels. Scholars would agree that religion represents unified systems of beliefs and practices relative to the sacred things, and religiosity is viewed as the degree to which beliefs in specific religious values and ideal are held and practiced by an individual (Delener, 1993). Weaver and Agle (2002) reported that religiosity is known to have an influence both on human behaviour and on attitudes. They argue that behaviour is influenced by religious self-identity which is formed by the internalization of role expectations offered by religion (Weaver and Agle, 2002). In fact, religious beliefs play a significant role in sculpting social behaviour. Differences in religious affiliations tend to influence the way people live, the choices they make, what they eat and whom they associate with. Religion defines the ideals for life, which in turn are reflected in the values and attitudes of societies and individuals (Fam et al., 2004). Such values and attitudes shape the behaviour and practices of institutions and members of cultures. For example, several public holidays are often tied to religion. The holy days for each religion differ not only in number, but also in significance. Buddhists regard the birthday of Buddha as the most important day in their calendar; Christians view Easter Friday and Christmas Day as two important dates; Muslims regard Ramadan their holiest month and they usually fast from dawn to dusk; and Taoist and Confucian followers celebrate a number of festivals within the year (Fam et al., 2004).
According to Hirschman (1983), the religious affiliations of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews significantly shaped their attitudes towards dancing, magazines, restaurants, and political ideas. There is also a strong relationship between religious persons and greater concern for moral standards (Wiebe and Fleck, 1980), being conservative (Barton and Vaughan, 1976), and possessing more traditional attitudes (Wilkes et al., 1986). The impact of religion on consumption patterns usually relates to the restriction of certain foods and beverages, for example, Jews and Muslims do not eat pork, Hindus do not eat beef, and drinking alcohol is frowned upon if not forbidden by Islam and strict Protestants. Religion also influences gender roles in a particular culture. In Islamic countries, both men and women must cover their torso and upper legs at all times and in the case of women only their faces’ skin may be exposed (Deng et al., 1994). The influence of religious beliefs on individual and social behaviour is well documented (Anand and Kumar, 1982; Luqmani et al., 1987; Michell and Al-Mossawi, 1999; LaBarbera, 1987; McDaniel and Burnett, 1990; Waller, 1999; Birch et al., 2001). However, a review of the pertinent literature showed only a handful of studies that directly examined the influence of religion on marketing communications. Moreover, the religious studies which did look at the influence on marketing communications focused only on the influence of Islam on advertising content and regulation in Saudi Arabia (Luqmani et al., 1987) and message contentiousness among Gulf Co-operative Council countries (Michell and Al-Mossawi, 1999). Both of these studies revealed the importance of understanding the Islamic religion in relation to effective advertising. In particular, Luqmani et al. (1987) claim that provocative and unconventional advertising strategies and advertisements must obtain prior approval from religious authorities. Failure to do so will result in alienation of a wide segment of the conservative Saudi public. The findings from Michell and Al-Mossawi’s (1999) study of Gulf Co-operative Council countries showed religiously strict Muslims scored lower in terms of recall and were unfavourable towards contentious advertisements relative to lenient Muslims. The findings suggest that there is a difference in perceived controversial elements in advertisements between a devout and a lenient Muslim. These findings also highlight the importance of matching creative execution, message content, and, etc. to a society’s socio-cultural environment (Peebles and Ryans, 1984).

Suffice to say, an alienated public will certainly have a negative attitude towards the advertisement and brand recall (Zinkhan and Martin, 1982; Gardner, 1985). Michell and Al-Mossawi (1999) claim an offensive advertisement will not be effective in capturing an audience’s attention or changing his/her attitudes. Furthermore, the guidelines provided in the Qur’an might not be strictly followed in the contemporary Muslim countries. A range of practices exists among Muslims regarding the times and places – ranging from prayer only to all the time – which women are expected to wear the hijab. This different perception influenced advertising industry among Muslims’ world. While in Saudi Arabia and Iran it is forbidden to show other than the above-mentioned body parts, in Dubai in United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Malaysia, and Egypt, the most liberal outdoor advertising is presented in the European version (Al-Olayan and Karande, 2000). In most Muslim countries, Islam also exerts great influence on advertising regulation. In Iran, for instance, the advertising code is heavily influenced by Islamic values. The Islamic principle of covering the aurat (i.e. private body parts) for women and the prohibition of using women as sex symbols in advertising are mentioned but not strictly enforced (Wah, 2006). In sum, reviewing published writings...
on religion and advertising led to the categorization of these studies under three categories. These categories are attitude toward advertising of controversial products (Derun et al., 2010; Fam and Grohs, 2007; Fam et al., 2004), presence of religious values in advertisements (Al-Olayan and Karande, 2000; Kalliny and Gentry, 2007; Michell and Al-Moussavi, 1995), and the consumers’ reactions to advertisements containing religious cues or symbols (Henley et al., 2009; Lumpkins, 2010; Taylor et al., 2010). According to the context of current study, the focus is on Islam religion. In fact, our study has been conducted in an Islamic country. Hence, we provided a brief explanation about this religion.

2.2 Islam as a religion
Islam was founded in Arabia and based on the teachings of Muhammad, who is called the Prophet. The Arabic word “Islam” literally means “to surrender”, but as a religious term in the Koran, it means “to surrender to the will or law of God”. One who practices Islam is a Muslim. According to the Koran, Islam is the primordial and universal religion, and even nature itself is Muslim, because it automatically obeys the laws God has ingrained in it. For human beings, which possess free will, practicing Islam does not involve automatically obeying, but rather freely accepting God’s commandments (Von der Mehden, 1986). Islamic social philosophy is based on the belief that all spheres of life: spiritual, social, political, and economic form an indivisible unity that must be thoroughly imbued with Islamic values. This principle informs such concepts as “Islamic law” and the “Islamic state” and accounts for Islam’s strong emphasis on social life and social duties. Even the cardinal religious duties prescribed in the five pillars of Islam have clear social implications. Islamic law, known as shari’ah (which is sourced from the Koran) is a code that prescribes and governs the duties, morals and behaviour of all Muslims, collectively and individually, in all aspects of life (Coulson, 1964; Terpstra and Sarathy, 1994; Luqmani et al., 1987). Olayan and Karande (2000) go on to explain that the shari’ah describes the values that Muslims should hold, including truth, honesty, social and collective obligations and responsibilities, the role of men and women, and the role of buying and selling. Muslims are not allowed to eat pork, gamble or drink alcohol, and nudity is prohibited. In addition, Muslims must not idol worship (statutes inclusive), must conform to sexual codes and adultery is strictly prohibited. Children should not deceive or disrespect their parents (Newland, 2000; Michell and Al-Mossawi, 1999; Deng et al., 1994; Onkvisit and Shaw, 1997). Islam is more than a religion. It controls the ways of society and factors associated with family, dress, cleanliness, and ethics. Muslims are required to live and think in the way that Allah has stated (Fam et al., 2004).

2.3 Iran as an Islamic country
As a Muslim country, Iran has its own cultural features. Religion, as a subculture, influences consumers’ perceived values, motivations, and beliefs about products or services. Iranian consumers, as Muslim consumers, are included in this subject. Iran’s religiosity is its most striking cultural feature and it pervades many aspects of life. As such, these markets and their consumers could potentially be more complex and unique. Iranian consumers, because of their collectivistic culture and religious beliefs, have a negative view through uniqueness value. It also seems that although hedonic value is important for them, it is not as bold as it is in the Western cultures.
Although Islam always associates success with moral values, it does not restrict efforts at material progress. It exhorts the individual to make all efforts toward achievement. In Iranian culture, materialism has been linked to success and possession and acquisition are signs of achievement.

Additionally, research indicated that Muslim consumers seek high involvement in all products, due to their faith and a tendency toward risk aversion (Wilson and Liu, 2010). In their study of halal-conscious consumers, Wilson and Liu (2011) found that they are risk averse, which drives discerning and high-involvement behavioural traits. In fact, the characteristic of risk avoidance also exists in Iranian culture. As a result, quality value and usability have a significant impact on products/services evaluation. Conspicuousness value is the most valuable item for Iranian consumers and it can be shown in advertising efforts. However, economic crisis, inflation, high levels of unemployment and the escalating prices of essential goods have all squeezed the Iranian family’s purse further and further.

It is obvious that in recent years Iran’s communications industry has emerged as one of the fastest growing economic sectors. Commercial advertising is common but subject to specific rules and regulations, including the time framework to prevent the fragmentation of programmes. By analysing a few advertisements from the pre- and post-revolutionary periods of Iran, Amouzadeh (2002) argued that advertising not only mirrors but also structures social realities. He indicated that the pre-revolutionary advertisements tend to represent Western social realities which do not recognise local cultural norms. He believed that themes such as the happiness of the family and women’s liberty could be regarded Western issues for Iranians at that particular time. In contrast, the advertisements in the post-revolutionary era attempt to construct social realities relevant to Iranian society such as national rival soccer teams, supporting local industry, and equality for women.

2.4 The MTN Group
MTN Group is a South Africa-based multinational mobile telecommunications company, operating in many African and Middle Eastern countries. Its head office is in Johannesburg. MTN acquired Investcom, thereby expanding to ten more countries, mainly under the Areeba and Spacetel brands. As of early 2007, MTN is active in:

• Afghanistan (Investcom).
• Benin (Investcom).
• Botswana (Botswana Mascom).
• Cameroon (MTN Cameroon).
• Republic of Congo (MTN Congo SA).
• Cote d’Ivoire (MTN Cote d’Ivoire).
• Cyprus (MTN Cyprus).
• Ghana (Investcom, MTN Ghana).
• Guinea Bissau (Investcom).
• Republic of Guinea (Investcom).
• Iran (MTN Irancell).
• Liberia (Lonestar Cell).
MTN has a 49 percent stake in government-controlled MTN Irancell, the second-largest mobile phone operator in Iran, and 21 percent of MTN’s subscriber base is from the country. In January 2012, the US-based advocacy group United Against Nuclear Iran (UANI) launched a campaign publicly calling for MTN to scale back its operations in Iran and end its business in the country. UANI charges that MTN technology is enabling the Iranian Government to track and locate cell phone users which it says is a violation of human rights (The Wall Street Journal, 2012). The company aims at being the leading provider of telecommunication services in Iran and provides the following services:

- Provision of wholesale and retail telecommunication services.
- Provision of mobile phone and related services.
- Provision of the internet and data and digital platform related products and services.
- Provision of all other sources of value added services that is currently available and to be developed in the future.
- Dealing with e-commerce, mobile-commerce activities of the above telecommunication networks.
- Provision of customer services, including but not limited to customer relationship management and call centre services.

MTN Irancell has a very clear brand identity which is underpinned by the following values:

- **Innovation/simplicity.** Ingredients including imagination, insight, and creativity.
- **Relationship/customer centricity.** Ingredients including teamwork, friendly, personal, warm and caring.
- **Integrity/fairness.** Ingredients including solid principles, trusted, togetherness.
- **Can do.** Ingredients including optimism, future focus, passionate, and happening.
- **Leadership.** Ingredients including foresight, commitment, and guidance.

MTN Irancell tries to provide customers with different types of advertising appeals such as one- and two-sided appeals, humour appeals, comparative appeals (in relation
to its main competitors – Hamrahe Aval Company) and sometimes fear appeals to attract more and more customers. In 2011, this company spent five million dollars for its advertising campaign. According to the special circumstances in Iran, the company has paid a significant attention to its advertising efforts. It has led to be recognized as one of the main telecommunication service providers in Iran.

2.5 Advertising appeals and consumer attitude

Advertising appeals can be divided into informational (or rational) appeals versus emotional appeals (Brennan and Binney, 2010), two basic strategies commonly used in designing persuasive communications (Dubea and Cantinb, 2000). Abernethy and Franke (1996) used that classification to conduct a meta-analysis on the influence of ad content on consumers’ response behaviour. An emotional appeal pictures various sensorial, social, or emotional aspects of one’s experience with the focal item being promoted, in our context, mobile services (Rossiter and Percy, 1997). Studies have documented the wide array of emotions that advertisements can evoke (Lee et al., 2009; Yang and Smith, 2009). With an emotional advertising appeal, consumers will rather think about the ad execution, and compare their evaluation of the ad to existing brand knowledge and affect. Rational appeals focus on the practical, functional, or utilitarian benefits derived from the use of the product (Hornik and Miniero, 2010). Interestingly, some empirical evidence has shown that consumers prefer rational appeals that provide information that explains clearly the differences between the advertised brand and its competitors (Tuan Pham, 2009).

A meta-analysis of eight advertising studies shows that advertising that provokes a strong emotional response without providing sufficient product information often breaks through the clutter but is unlikely to persuade (Picot-Zane, 2006). Recent research suggests that emotional content in advertising can influence brand favorability even when rational content has no effect (Heath, 2007). Hornik and Miniero (2010) conducted a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative literature review of more than a thousand reports to study whether and by what size advertisements with appeals are more persuasive and better liked than ads with no structured appeals. They compared the most common appeals (fear, humour, sex, comparative, gain/loss frame, two- or one-sided, and metaphor) to determine their relative effectiveness. The results of their cumulative meta-analysis (CMA) revealed that, the appeals have affected attitude towards advertising. Their proposed model has been shown in Figure 1. In this study, we aggregated two emotional appeals including fear and humour, and three rational appeals including comparison, one- and two-sided (Hornik and O’Keefe, 2009) in the context of communicational companies.

Fear is a negative emotion and is associated with a high level of arousal. Fear is caused by a threat that is perceived to be substantial and personally relevant to individuals (Ortony and Turner, 1990). Fear appeal literature indicates that fear can be described by mood adjectives, including feeling frightened, anxious, or nauseous, and also via ratings of concern or worry (Henthorne et al., 1993; LaTour and Rotfeld, 1997; LaTour and Tanner, 2003) and motivates actions aimed at reducing these unpleasant emotions (Tanner et al., 1991). The different theories and models on fear appeals propose two distinctive approaches of how fear relates to persuasion, namely:

1. outcomes related to acceptance of a the recommendations of a message, therefore assuming a linear relationship between fear intensity and persuasion; and
(2) outcomes related to rejection of the message (i.e. defensive avoidance, reactance, and denial), thus assuming a curvilinear relationship between the intensity of fear appeal used and attitudinal change (Barth and Bengel, 2000; Witte and Allen, 2000).

Although previous humorous advertising has revealed substantial impact of humour on consumers’ psychological responses (Cline et al., 2003; Eisend, 2009), researchers usually regard humour used in advertising as the message that delivers surprise (Elpers et al., 2004; Cruthirds et al., 2012). Psychology research indicated three groups of mechanisms, namely cognitive, affective, and interpersonal that determine the humour processing and humour appreciation (Beard, 2008; Shabbir and Thwaites, 2007; Lynch, 2002). Despite attempts to provide a general theory of humour (Veatch, 1998), it seems that it is the parallel use of the three humour conceptions that provides a more comprehensive interpretation of this individual phenomenon (Gulas and Weinberger, 2006; Lynch, 2002). Speck suggested that three underlying processes (incongruity – resolution, arousal – safety and humourous disparagement) lead to humourous appreciation. In incongruity resolution process (cognitive mechanism), some type of schema incongruity is perceived, since the advertising content “differs from the generally expected beliefs, attitudes and/or behaviours” (Alden et al., 2000). Then some advertising cues provide an explanation on the stimulus-incongruity and lead to the appreciation of humour. In the arousal-safety process (affective mechanism) “laughter occurs when a person has experienced heightened arousal but at the same time (or soon after the arousal) evaluates the stimulus as safe or inconsequential” (Rothbart, 1973, p. 249). Finally, humourous disparagement is an interpersonal mechanism for creating humourous expressions, where humour is a disguised aggression and serves as a reward for the joke-teller (Hatzithomas et al., 2011).

The combination of the three humour processes leads to five types of humour, namely: comic wit, sentimental humour, satire, sentimental comedy, and full comedy. Comic wit,
invoking only the incongruity resolution process, is a mind-game that leads to a
humourous interpretation. Sentimental humour is based only on the arousal-safety
process and constitutes an emotional way to engender humour. Satire combines
incongruity resolution and humourous disparagement processes. The audience laughs at
a “victim” in an indirect way (McGhee, 1974). Sentimental comedy is the product of
cooperation between incongruity resolution and the arousal-safety processes. Hence, it
provides cognitive pleasure such as comic wit and affective pleasure similarly to
sentimental humour. Full comedy is based on the combination of all three humour
processes (Beard, 2008). It is the most complex type of humour and thus the riskiest
communication strategy (Hatzithomas et al., 2011). According to the literature, humourous
advertising is better at getting attention, retaining the message, and promoting a positive
attitude toward desirable products (Beard, 2005; Chung and Zhao, 2003).

The one-sided appeal simply presents the positive claims or important attributes of
the product or brand. Thus, it presents only claims supportive of the product or service
(Sherman et al., 1991). A supportive one-sided appeal should not trigger the subject’s
desire to amass bolstering material because of the absence of negative information.
The one-sided appeal should incur the highest degree of counter argumentation as
product attributes are only shown supportively. Applied to advertising, correspondence
theory suggests that one-sided appeals, being the more traditional advertising format,
should lead more often to non-correspondent attributions on the part of the target
audience (Etgar and Goodwin, 1982). In addition, one-sided messages may represent
the adaptation level or the type of communication that the consumer is expecting.
Rucker et al. (2008) suggested that one-sided appeal can influence customers’ attitude
towards advertising and resulted in the greatest degree of belief change. The one-sided
message seems to work best with audiences who are already favorably disposed
towards the communicator’s position, while two-sided messages are more effective
with audiences who are opposed to the message, or who may be better-educated
(Sherman et al., 1991).

Three theoretical approaches are applied in order to explain the effects of two-sided
messages. Attribution theory, particularly correspondence theory, describes the
processes an individual goes through in assigning causes to events (Jones and
McGillis, 1976; Kelley, 1973). Consumers can attribute claims either to the advertiser’s
desire to sell the product or to actual characteristics of the product. The inclusion of
negative information leads a consumer to conclude that the advertiser is telling the
truth. This enhances the perception of advertiser credibility. However, the message is
not necessarily more effective in terms of persuasiveness, since negative information
about a brand may also have a direct negative effect on attitudes toward the brand.
Attribution theory has guided the majority of the existing two-sided advertising
studies (Easley et al., 1995; Eisend et al., 2004). Optimal arousal theory (Berlyne, 1971)
suggests that two-sided messages are novel and thereby have a tendency to engender
positive effect, motivating consumers to pay attention to and process the message
which, in turn, increases the probability of favorable changes in attitude. The theory
has not yet been applied in a two-sided persuasion context, but is recommended by
Crowley and Hoyer (1994) as a plausible explanation to conflicting findings of previous
studies (e.g. findings that vary in the proportion of negative information included,
which may cause varying levels of discrepancies from an adaptation level). For low to
moderate discrepancies, arousal is probably most effective, whereas too strong of discrepancies may have rather negative effects.

Inoculation theory (McGuire, 1964) uses a physiological analogy and states that using mild attacking arguments and then countering or refuting them strengthens cognitions, reduces counterarguments, and as a consequence, enhances attitudes. This theory refers to a special type of two-sided messages, namely refutational appeals. Similar to two-sided messages, advertisers present positive and negative information but then attempt to refute or discount the negative information, attempting to inoculate the audience against possible counter-claims or opposing messages provided by competitors (Etgar and Goodwin, 1982; Szybillo and Heslin, 1973). Based on these theories, on previous research, and on knowledge of general advertising effects, Crowley and Hoyer (1994) developed an integrative framework and suggest a variety of propositions to explain the persuasive mechanisms of two-sided messages. According to Crowley and Hoyer (1994), if consumers’ prior attitude is negative or neutral, two-sided messages are more effective in altering evaluations, changing attitudes and enhancing purchase intention, and in being more consistent with the receiver’s attitudinal schema they may therefore encounter less resistance.

In case of positive prior attitude, the two-sided-message increases counterarguments if consumers are not aware of the negative information (since the message is perceived as counter-attitudinal). Hence, attitudes and purchase intentions are rather derogated, whereas perceived novelty should be enhanced and lead to higher motivation to process the message. Still, this leads to more unfavorable attitude changes since more counterarguments are processed. Two-sided messages are equally effective as one-sided messages if the consumers are aware of the negative information, but still hold a favorable prior attitude (Crowley and Hoyer, 1994). Additionally, Kamins and Marks (1987) suggested that, given product trial, consumers are generally not deceived by high levels of puffery in a one-sided form, whereas they appear to be more susceptible to deception when exposed to a two-sided refutational communication.

Comparative advertising usually contrasts one brand against others in the same product or service category. While this message content approach is still used, its effectiveness has been the center of controversy since it first began to grow in popularity during the 1960s. The degree of effectiveness of comparative advertising has been linked to its ability to provide consumers with important information, and to evaluate the relative benefits of competitive brands (Sherman et al., 1991). It has been found, however, that while comparative advertising produces higher message recall, it may also stimulate lower claim credibility. This occurs because of increased counterarguing by the viewer, and eventual loss of the advertiser’s credibility. In addition, when an advertisement makes specific claims about the negative attributes of the competitor’s brands, results may be dysfunctional. Consumers may become skeptical about the entire product category and general sales of all brands in the category may suffer (Sherman et al., 1991). According to above discussion, it is hypothesized that:

\[ H1. \] Advertising appeals (fear, humour, comparative, one-sided, and two-sided) of television has a positive direct influence on attitude toward advertisement.

Advertising research provides evidence that feelings are elicited by advertisings and positive moods evoked by advertisings facilitate brand attitude change (Pyun and
James, 2011). According to the marketing literature, attitude toward advertising has a positive effect on brand attitudes (Laczniak and Carlson, 1989; Kim and Lee, 2012). Recently, Yoon and Park (2012) investigated whether or not sensory appeal preferences in advertisements affect brand attitude. Their study indicated that self-referencing and positive affect both have significant mediating effects between sensory appeal preferences and attitudes toward a coffee brand. Dens and De Pelsmacker (2010) in their study of 509 Belgians found that advertising appeals (informational and emotional) affect attitude towards brand. Additionally, they found that attitude toward advertising has a significant impact on brand attitude. Therefore, it is deduced that:

H2. Advertising appeals (fear, humour, comparative, one-sided, and two-sided) of television has a positive direct influence on brand attitude.

H3. Attitude toward advertisement has a positive direct influence on brand attitude.

Figure 2 shows an overview of the conceptual model.

3. Methodology

Sample and procedure

Sample. The study focused on MTN Irancell Company, one of the main mobile operators in Iran. All respondents were users of mobile in University of Shiraz and volunteered to participate in the study. Respondents were familiar with MTN Irancell Company and have previously used its services. Questionnaires, written in Farsi, containing items measuring the above dimensions were distributed to 400 users. A total of 384 respondents returned usable questionnaires; yielding a 96 percent response rate. A cluster-sampling plan was used to collect data. Two stages of sampling approach were used in this study: first, we provided a list of universities in Shiraz, and then a number of universities were selected randomly. Finally, students who were studied in those universities, selected randomly to achieve estimated sample. The majority of respondents were female (61.8 percent). Further, 71.8 percent of respondents were under 25 years old and 62.8 percent of the respondents had university degree. In terms
of length of watching TV in week, a half of the respondents (44.9 percent) watch TV less than 1 h, and tendency to watching TV advertising was very low (43.8 percent).

Procedures. Survey questionnaires were pre-tested, using a small number of respondents (30 respondents; the pre-test participants did not participate in the final data collection). As a consequence of the pre-testing, relatively minor modifications were made in the written instructions and in several of the demographic items. The revised survey was then administered to the respondents in the universities of Shiraz Province, during normal education hours. Written instructions, along with brief oral presentations, were given to explain (in broad terms) the purpose of the research. The participants were all given the opportunity to ask questions and were encouraged to answer the survey honestly. Data was gathered during the month of September-December 2012 (Table I).

Questionnaire design
The primary goal of this study was to investigate the effect of TV advertising appeals of communication companies on attitude towards advertising and brand attitude. The research model includes seven factors and each factor is measured with multiple items. All items were adapted from extant literature to improve content validity (Straub et al., 2004). These items were first translated into Persian by the researchers. All items were measured with a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Items of fear, humour, comparative, one-sided, and two-sided appeals were adapted from Hornik and O’Keefe (2009). Items of brand attitude were adapted

<table>
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<td>Length of watching TV in week</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 h</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 h</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 4 h</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendency to watching TV advertising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To some extent</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I. Sample profile

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from Pyun and James (2011) to reflect the effect of advertising on brand attitude change. Finally, Items of attitude toward advertising were adapted from Kim and Lee (2012) to reflect the relationship between attitude toward advertising and advertising appeals. The questionnaire was in seven parts: a first part with questions about one-sided appeal (three items), a second part with questions about two-sided appeal (two items), a third part capturing comparative appeal (two items), a fourth part with questions about humour appeal (three items), a fifth with questions about fear appeal (two items), a sixth and seventh part to identify customers’ attitudes toward advertising and brand (seven and eight items), respectively. Socio-demographic information of research participants was obtained by items including gender, age, education level, length of watching TV in week, and tendency to watching TV advertising.

**Analytical procedure**

The statistical procedures and measures used in this paper are methodologies recommended by Hair *et al.* (1998), Bontis (1998) and Khong and Richardson (2003). These methodologies aim to find the causal relationships among advertising appeals, attitude toward advertising, and brand attitude. The procedures and measures, in chronological order, are:

1. reliability analysis;
2. exploratory factor analysis;
3. confirmatory factor analysis; and
4. structural equation modelling (SEM).

### 4. Findings

#### Reliability analysis

Reliability is the “extent to which a variable or set of variables is consistent in what it is intended to measure” (Hair *et al.*, 1998, p. 90). Reliability analysis in this paper refers to the internal consistency of variables, measured by interval scale items, in a summated scale. Therefore, the summated scales, which are the concepts or constructs, should be measured by highly correlated manifesting variables. In short, the summated scale of the manifesting variables is consistently determining their respective constructs. In the context of this paper, there are three summated scales, i.e. advertising appeals, attitude toward advertising, and brand attitude. Cronbach’s $\alpha$ was used to verify the internal consistency reliability. Cronbach’s $\alpha$ values greater than 0.07 are acceptable and deemed to be adequate (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Using SPSS, a statistical software package, the results of reliability are as follows.

The research variables including fear appeal, humour appeal, comparative appeal, two-sided appeal, one-sided appeal, attitude toward advertising, and brand attitude show a significant internal consistency of 0.821, 0.729, 0.695, 0.743, 0.857, 0.868, and 0.885, respectively. This indicates that the survey instrument (questionnaire) can be a reliable tool to measure the seven concepts (constructs) consistently.

#### Exploratory factor analysis

While this analysis is used to reduce numerous variables to a more manageable set of factors (Aaker and Day, 1986), no constraints are made on the variable loadings. Therefore, each variable will indicate loadings on the set of factors. Consequently,
exploratory factor analysis is used to summarise and reduce the data. Using SPSS, the results of exploratory factor analysis, with the assumption of extracting via principal components method and rotating via varimax, are given in Tables II and III.

The rotated component matrix revealed seven significant factors, i.e. one-sided appeal, two-sided appeal, humour appeal, fear appeal, comparative appeal, attitude toward advertising and brand attitude. Based on the literature mentioned earlier, the seven concepts (constructs) examined are one-sided appeal, two-sided appeal, humour appeal, fear appeal, comparative appeal, attitude toward advertising, and brand attitude. The seven factors which emerge from this analysis could be classified and named as:

1. one-sided appeal (variance 53.12 per cent);
2. two-sided appeal (variance 8.63 per cent);
3. comparative appeal (variance 7.06 per cent);
4. humour appeal (variance 6.43 per cent);
5. fear appeal (variance 5.72 per cent);
6. attitude toward advertising (variance 50.29 per cent); and
7. brand attitude (variance 10.70 per cent).

In order to define which factors determine the advertising appeals, attitude toward advertising, and brand attitude, confirmatory factor analysis method was used (given below).

**Confirmatory factor analysis**

When conducting confirmatory factor analysis, variables are assigned to specified factors. It is common that variables with high factor loadings will be assigned to describe the respective factors. Therefore, variables that have low loadings on respective factors are constrained to zero (Hair et al., 1998). According to Carmines and Zeller (1979), the acceptable threshold for factor loading is 0.3 or above. Consequently, variables with loadings less than 0.3 will be constrained to zero. Results of confirmatory factor analysis are presented in Table II.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>One-sided appeal</th>
<th>Two-sided appeal</th>
<th>Comparative appeal</th>
<th>Humour appeal</th>
<th>Fear appeal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appeal1</td>
<td>0.852</td>
<td>0.201</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>0.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal2</td>
<td>0.711</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>0.406</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal3</td>
<td>0.638</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>0.366</td>
<td>0.396</td>
<td>0.235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal4</td>
<td>-0.109</td>
<td>0.530</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>0.438</td>
<td>0.510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal5</td>
<td>0.289</td>
<td>0.816</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>0.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal6</td>
<td>0.145</td>
<td>0.159</td>
<td>0.855</td>
<td>0.261</td>
<td>0.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal7</td>
<td>0.130</td>
<td>0.176</td>
<td>0.848</td>
<td>0.342</td>
<td>0.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal8</td>
<td>0.337</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>0.151</td>
<td>0.859</td>
<td>0.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal9</td>
<td>0.495</td>
<td>0.367</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.614</td>
<td>0.195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal10</td>
<td>0.371</td>
<td>0.259</td>
<td>0.153</td>
<td>0.625</td>
<td>0.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal11</td>
<td>0.398</td>
<td>0.407</td>
<td>0.201</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>0.579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal12</td>
<td>0.267</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>0.377</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>0.782</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** $\chi^2 = 2.859; p = 0.000$
factor analysis are presented in Table IV. Based on the confirmatory factor analysis, all of variables were retained. Most item loadings are larger than 0.3 and \( t \)-values indicate that all loadings are significant at 0.001. The retained variables will be used in estimating a model via SEM method.

Structural equation modelling

SEM is a model analysis technique encompassing methods such as covariance structure analysis, latent variable analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, path analysis, and linear structural relation analysis (Hair et al., 1998). Generally, SEM is used to estimate “multiple and interrelated dependence relationship and the ability to represent unobserved concepts in these relationships and account for measurement error in the estimation process” (Hair et al., 1998, p. 584). SEM is particularly useful in this paper because it can estimate “a series of separate, but interdependent, multiple regression equations simultaneously” in a specified structural model (Hair et al., 1998). Therefore, SEM is the most suitable analysis to estimate the strength of causal relationship among advertising appeals, attitude toward advertising, and brand attitude.

In estimating the goodness-of-fit indices (GFI) for measurement and structural models, \( \chi^2 \) test was used. In addition, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was used as an absolute fit index. The incremental fit index (IFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and the comparative fit index (CFI) were used as incremental fit indices. For GFI, RFI, CFI, and TLI, coefficients closer to unity indicate a good fit, with acceptable levels of fit being above 0.90 (Marsh et al., 1988). For root mean square residual (RMR) and RMSEA, evidence of good fit is considered to be values less than 0.05; values from 0.05 to 0.10 are indicative of moderate fit and values greater than 0.10 are taken to be evidence of a poorly fitting model (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). Figures 3 and 4 show the specified relationship between advertising appeal, attitude towards advertising, and brand attitude. The overall model fit was good, \( \chi^2 = 283.06, \text{ df } = 98, \text{ Normed } \chi^2 = 2.89, \text{ RMSEA } = 0.079, \text{ RMR } = 0.01, \)
GFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.96, IFI = 0.96, RFI = 0.93, NFI = 0.96, NNFI = 0.94, and AGFI = 0.90. The effect of advertising appeals on attitude toward advertising and brand was significant ($p = 0.000 < 0.001$).

**Hypotheses testing**

All tests are directional $t$-tests of the critical ratios of the regression weight estimates over the estimates of their standard errors provided in the LISREL output. As shown in Figure 4, all of three paths specified in the hypothesized model are found to be statistically significant. When $t$-values are in the range of $-1.96-1.96$, the hypothesis will reject (Hair et al., 1998). As predicted, $H1$ was largely supported by the data of this study, in that advertising appeals had a positive and significant effect on attitude toward advertising ($\beta = 0.85$, $t = 11.92$). As predicted by $H2$, advertising appeals was supported by the data, in that advertising appeals had a positive and significant effect on brand attitude ($\beta = 0.62$, $t = 8.55$). The structural equations results supported $H3$. The results are shown in Table V. As predicted by $H3$, attitude toward advertising was positively related to brand attitude ($\beta = 0.36$, $t = 4.92$); supporting $H3$.

**5. Discussion, managerial implications, and future research**

The current research focused on advertising appeals and its effects on attitude toward advertising and brand attitude in the context of communication industry.
**Table V.**
The results of hypotheses testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Dependant variable</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$-value</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$H1$</td>
<td>Advertising appeals</td>
<td>Attitude toward advertising</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>11.92</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H2$</td>
<td>Advertising appeals</td>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>8.55</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H3$</td>
<td>Attitude toward advertising</td>
<td>Brand attitude</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effect of TV advertising appeals**

**Figure 3.**
Standardized path coefficient

**Figure 4.**
Significant coefficients

Notes: $\chi^2 = 283.06; \text{df} = 98; \text{p-value} = 0.00000; \text{RMSEA} = 0.079
(in our study, MTN Irancell). Analysis of information obtained from a questionnaire revealed that the elements of advertising appeals including fear, humour, comparative, two-sided, and one-sided have significant impact on formation of attitude toward advertising and brand attitude. In addition, attitude toward advertising had a significant impact on brand attitude. In addition, two-sided appeal had the highest rank among other appeals. It should be noted that, previous studies considered sex appeal as a predictor of attitude toward advertising. However, our study was conducted in an Islamic country. Hence, cultural context of Islamic countries and their law led to removing sex appeal from our analysis. As a result of the analysis, the following major suggestions in utilizing advertising appeals can be outlined:

(1) Advertising contributes to consumers’ knowledge about quality products which in turn lead to positive attitude towards advertisement. Consumers have positive attitude towards advertisement if they bring pleasant memories in consumers mind. Hence, exciting advertisements attract their customers and create positive buying attitude towards the advertised product.

(2) The use of advertisements with a common appeal makes advertisements more persuasive and better liked but also the effects are not especially great. The implication is that advertisers should consider carefully the cost of appeals to ensure appropriate return on investment.

(3) According to the findings, emotional and informational appeals including fear, humour, one-sided, two-sided, and comparative, for a given brand not only engender positive evaluations of the brand itself, but can also most strongly benefit brand attitude as a whole. Erevelles (1998) reports that positive moods that advertising stimuli evoke enhances brand attitudes. This outcome is apparently also the case for using suitable appeals. With informational and emotional appeals, on the other hand, consumers rely more on their evaluation of the advertised brand to alter their brand attitudes.

(4) The more positive respondents’ feelings about advertising in general, the more attention pay to the advertising, and more they are persuaded by it. To the extent that advertisements themselves shape overall attitude towards advertising, offers aimed at:
   • helping consumers better understand the role of advertising in the marketplace; and
   • running advertising that is honest, fresh, entertaining and informative, will make advertising a more viable part of the marketing mix.

(5) Marketers can use experts and designers to provide customers with suitable content of advertising programs. It can lead to form positive and persuasive attitude toward advertising and brand. Marketers should include advantages, applications, attributes, and other information about their products (in our case, mobile services).

(6) Marketers should utilize creative ideas in their advertising appeals to form positive attitude among audiences toward advertising programs. It can lead to sell more and more products. In fact, customer would not guess the result and follow advertisement curiously. Hence, it is important that marketers continuously change the content of advertisement to be fresh and persuasive.
(7) Utilizing synergy principle in advertising activities can help organizations to more effectiveness in their efforts related to forming positive attitude toward their brand. Advertising tools should be convergent and stable elements should be employed in their designation. It helps to customers to tie integrated communication systems (advertising, sale promotion, public relations, personal sale, and direct advertisement) into each other.

(8) Marketers should use differentiation principle in their advertising activities. Never follow the crowd. Organizations should differentiate themselves from their competitors by using unique, fresh, and different advertisement.

(9) Marketers and managers need to be aware of the religious perceptions of the consumers in their target market in order to become successful in marketing their products/services and to gain public acceptance. They must be aware of some important and sensitive ethical issues which may make their products/services controversial in the eyes of the consumers and create offensiveness. Taylor and Raymond (2000) stated that religion and social values concerning modesty and the offensive nature of the products/services make it difficult to promote socially sensitive products/services.

(10) Finally, religion is an element of culture that pervades every aspect of a society. Therefore, its effect on behaviour cannot be underestimated by marketers. Cultural dimensions are very dynamic in a society, but religious tenets form a stable and static pillar in the society. Once the fundamentals of a religion have been grasped, marketers can be assured they will not be changing all too frequently. Religion is not a fad that can be dismissed by the marketer as a short-term change, but rather it is a long-term phenomenon, and should be an area of further research for marketers. For global marketers it is advisable to devote considerable time and resources on understanding religious beliefs upon entering a new market, particularly where Islam is the faith of the majority. Understanding the impact of religion on the value systems of a society and the effect of value systems on marketing efforts must not be underestimated.

The first limitation of this study is that the target industry was only telecommunication industry. To generalize the results of current study, future research could look into extending the study population to include collect input from other types of industries and organizations. The second limitation of our study is the use of student samples in universities of Shiraz Province, Iran. Although students are often being used as a proxy to what the “real” consumers think, for example in experiments or cross-cultural studies, they may be less fitting when the study involves religious beliefs. Being young there may be some question as to the strength of their religious belief, and how it influences their perceptions.

References


Peebles, D. and Ryans, J. (1984), Management of International Advertising, Allyn & Bacon, Boston, MA.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Journal/Book</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


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