

**An empirical investigation of consumer socialization and
the impact of internet use on scepticism towards advertising
among young adults**

by

CHAN MAN CHI
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A DISSERTATION

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I hereby certify that the work embodied in the Dissertation Project is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

CHAN MAN CHI

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SYNOPSIS

Consumer socialization of young people has been a popular area of academic research. Besides parental and peer influences, the effect of media, including advertising communications via the television and the internet, has also been shown to be a powerful socialization agent on young people. Thus, the aim of this research was to explore how various socialization influences impact the development of skepticism towards advertising, which is a positive outcome of consumer socialization, among young adults in Hong Kong. Yet, unlike previous research that focused mainly on the parental, peer and media influences, the purpose of this research was to examine also the role of the Internet as a new socialization agent.

A questionnaire-based survey was conducted to address the research question. University undergraduate students aged 18 to 24 were recruited as the respondents for this research by the snowball sampling method. Analysis of the data indicted that 63.55% of the respondents were females and 36.45% males. Most of them were between 18 to 21 years of age (80%). Nearly all of them (94%) had internet access at home and utilized internet services every day. The results suggest that the social structural variables under study, i.e., age, gender and income do not have significant impact on the development of skepticism to advertising among young adults. Among the three socialization agents, i.e., parents, peers and media, media normative influence was the variable with the most predictive power for the dependent variable, i.e., advertising skepticism. Internet, being a new socialization agent under study, also demonstrated significant results in the socialization process. So the findings suggest

that (1) advertising media and the internet have significant impact on the development of skepticism to advertising on young adults; and (2) parental and peer influence, which are strong during adolescence, diminish as individuals reach young adulthood.

The results supports the fact that socialization of young adults is not limited to the traditional sources of influence, such as parents, friends and media, but extends to the new source of influence from the Internet.