Religio-spiritual insights affecting the attitude toward advertising during religious festival: Comparison between an irritating and a religious advertisement

Insights religioso-espirituais que afetam a atitude em relação à publicidade durante festas religiosas: Comparação entre uma propaganda irritante e uma religiosa

Junaid Ansari[1,2] , Ummi Naiemah Saraih[1] , Adi A. Azmin[1] , Safeena Yaseen[3] , and Muhammad S. Ramish[1,4]

[1] Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Perlis, Arau, Malaysia
[2] Institute of Business Management, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
[3] Bahria University, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
[4] Karachi, Institute of Economics and Technology, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan

Authors' notes

Junaid Ansari is now a post-doctoral researcher at the Faculty of Business and Communication of Universiti Malaysia Perlis and assistant professor in Management & HR Department of the Institute of Business Management; Ummi Naiemah Saraih is now an associate professor at the Faculty of Business and Communication of Universiti Malaysia Perlis; Adi A. Azmin is now a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Business and Communication of Universiti Malaysia Perlis; Safeena Yaseen is now an assistant professor at the Management and Social Sciences Department of Bahria University; Muhammad S. Ramish is now a post-doctoral researcher at the Faculty of Business and Communication of Universiti Malaysia Perlis and assistant professor at Karachi Institute of Economics and Technology.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Junaid Ansari, Jalan Kangar-Arau, Kangar, Perlis, Malaysia, ZIP code 01000. Email: junaid@unimap.edu.my

Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to measure the *religio-spiritual insights* of consumers during religious festivals and compare the results considering the *stimuli* of two advertisements, i.e., religious and irritating advertisements. When the *religio-spiritual insights* of the consumers are neglected in the designing of a TV advertisement for a religious festival, in particular, it can lead to irritation and affect the consumers' *attitude toward advertising*. Based on the theory of reasoned action (TRA), the mediating effect of *religio-spiritual insights* was measured between consumers' *attitude toward advertising* and independent variables (*irritation, credibility, information, good for the economy,* and *entertainment*).

Originality/value: This study uses the newly developed instrument of *religio-spiritual insights* to measure their influence on consumers' *attitudes toward advertising* and confirms the mediating effect of *religio-spiritual insights* between the consumers' *attitude* and other constructs, such as *credibility, entertainment, information, irritation,* and *good for the economy*.

Design/methodology/approach: Two hundred and fifty-five household consumers were selected using the non-probability convenience sampling techniques to collect the responses using the survey method. Each respondent was asked to fill out two questionnaires after watching the attached *stimulus* advertisement, i.e., one religious and one irritating advertisement. The partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach was used to test the hypothesis based on the bootstrapping test.

Findings: The results show that *religio-spiritual insights* significantly mediate *attitude toward advertising* and other constructs when there was a religious advertisement that depicted religious cues, symbols, and visuals. Contrarily, a non-significant effect of *irritation* was identified on *religio-spiritual insights* when there was an irritating advertisement.

Keywords: consumers' religio-spiritual insights, religious festivals, irritation, attitude toward advertising, PLS-SEM

Resumo

Objetivo: Este estudo tem como objetivo mensurar os *insights religioso-espirituais* dos consumidores durante festas religiosas e comparar os resultados considerando os estímulos de duas propagandas: uma propaganda religiosa e uma irritante. Quando os *insights religioso-espirituais* dos consumidores são negligenciados na concepção de um anúncio de TV para um festival religioso, em particular, isso pode levar à irritação e afetar a atitude dos consumidores em relação à propaganda. Com base na teoria da ação racional (TAR), o efeito mediador dos *insights religioso-espirituais* foi medido entre a *atitude em relação à propaganda* e as variáveis independentes (*irritação, credibilidade, informação, bom para a economia* e *entretenimento*).

Originalidade/valor: Este estudo usa o instrumento recém-desenvolvido de *insights religioso-espirituais* para medir sua influência na *atitude em relação à propaganda* e confirma o efeito mediador dos *insights religioso-espirituais* entre a *atitude dos consumidores* e outros construtos, como *credibilidade, entretenimento, informação, irritação* e *bom para a economia*.

Design/metodologia/abordagem: Duzentos e cinquenta e cinco consumidores domésticos foram selecionados usando a técnica de amostragem de conveniência não probabilística para coletar as respostas por meio do método de *survey*. Cada respondente preencheu dois questionários após assistir ao anúncio de estímulo em anexo, um anúncio religioso e um anúncio irritante. A abordagem de mínimos quadrados parciais – modelagem de equações estruturais (*partial least squares – structural equation modeling* [PLS-SEM]) – foi usada para testar as hipóteses com base no teste de *bootstrapping*.

Resultados: Os resultados mostram que *insights religioso-espirituais* mediaram significativamente a relação entre a *atitude em relação à propaganda* e outros construtos quando havia um anúncio religioso que retratava sinais, símbolos e visuais religiosos. Contrariamente, um efeito não significativo de *irritação* foi identificado nos *insights religioso-espirituais* quando havia um anúncio irritante.

Palavras-chave: *insights* religioso-espirituais dos consumidores, festivais religiosos, irritação, atitude em relação à publicidade, PLS-SEM

INTRODUCTION

Brands execute extensive advertising campaigns during religious festivals that are celebrated by consumers with high religio-spiritual contemplations (Keenan & Yeni, 2003; Moran & Curtis, 2004). The religio-spiritual contemplations are based on the concepts of religiosity and spirituality that have been extensively covered in the literature (Dasti & Sitwat, 2014; Weiss, 2009). These *religio-spiritual insights* are often targeted in advertisements by depicting religious symbols, messages, visuals, and different religious events. However, these *religio-spiritual insights* of consumers can be negatively affected if irritating content is depicted in the advertisements that conflict with these insights. When considering the high viewership of television advertisements, this study selected TV advertisements aired during a religious festival to measure the *religio-spiritual insights* and their influence on consumers' *attitudes toward advertising* (Cartwright et al., 2016).

Consumers often get irritated when they see inappropriate content in advertisements that conflicts with their *religio-spiritual insights,* eventually influencing the consumers' *attitude toward advertising.* Consumers start lodging complaints against such advertisements to media regulating authorities, which may even lead to the banning of such advertisements (Propakistani, 2015). For example, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) banned TV advertisements and TV programs during religious festivals such as Ramadan and Muharram, based on complaints lodged by the people (Brandsynario, 2017). When offensive content is depicted in a TV advertisement that conflicts with consumers' *religio-spiritual insights,* consumers do not like such TV advertisements, and their dislike may hurt the sales of a brand. Consumers' irritation sometimes leads to a backlash in the form of protests, which may result in loss of advertising investment due to the complaints lodged by consumers (Marmor-Lavie & Stout, 2016; Zabadi et al., 2012).

Consumers' *religio-spiritual insights* are often ignored in the marketing literature (Marmor-Lavie & Stout, 2016). Although religiosity has been covered extensively in the literature, there is a dearth of empirical evidence related to spirituality (Marmor-Lavie, 2010; Marmor-Lavie & Stout, 2016). Literature also lacks in providing the applications of religio-spirituality during religious festivals, such as Ramadan, Christmas, and Easter. Moreover, existing instruments for measuring religiosity and spirituality are inappropriate for measuring the religio-spirituality of the consumers, due to which these constructs are often ignored in marketing research. Consumers' Religio-Spiritual

Insights scale has been recently developed to measure the religio-spirituality of consumers during religious festivals considering a religious advertisement (Ansari, 2020). This study aims to measure the *religio-spiritual insights* of the consumers during the religious festival and compare the results considering the stimuli of two advertisements – religious and irritating advertisements. Hence, this study sets the following research objective:

- To investigate the mediating effect of consumers' *religio-spiritual insights* during the religious festival between:
  a) *credibility* and *attitude toward advertising*;
  b) *information* and *attitude toward advertising*;
  c) *entertainment* and *attitude toward advertising*;
  d) *good for the economy* and *attitude toward advertising*;
  e) *irritation* and *attitude toward advertising*.

This study uses the newly developed instrument of *religio-spiritual insights* to measure their influence on consumers' *attitudes toward advertising* and confirm the mediating effect of *religio-spiritual insights* between the consumers' *attitude* and other constructs, such as *credibility, entertainment, information, irritation,* and *good for the economy*. The results of this study will help marketing managers understand consumers' *religio-spiritual insights* so that they can design relevant TV advertisements for religious festivals. In this way, brands can avoid the risk of losses because a significant proportion of the advertising budget is usually allocated for popular religious festivals, such as Ramadan, Christmas, and Easter.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religion has been defined as the relationship of a human with a divine power/God that has become a code of ethics that explains some moral obligations (Yastion, 2009). Spirituality has been defined as an individual's intrinsic relationship with God/divine power (Nelson, 2009) that transforms an individual's experiences of life (Khanna & Greyson, 2014). *Religio-spiritual insights* are based on religiosity and spirituality that have a unique conceptualization in mythology, religion, folklore, and traditions that have evolved gradually over centuries. Religiosity and spirituality have been used across cultures, fashioned by the unique experiences of humans through wars, peace, famine, migrations, calamities, affluence, and crises (Leonard & Carlson, 2017; Motak, 2009; Sharabi, 2012; Sheldrake, 2007).

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Religiosity and spirituality in advertising

Religiosity and spirituality have been explored and extensively modeled in several domains, such as medicine, health, nursing, work environment, employee happiness, and well-being (Azarsa et al., 2015; Bauer & Johnson, 2019; Benefiel et al., 2014; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). For example, religiosity and spirituality have been studied for the treatment of incurable patients (Aukst-Margetić et al., 2005; Balboni et al., 2007). However, religiosity and spirituality in marketing/advertising domains received comparatively lesser attention (Marmor-Lavie & Stout, 2016).

Although constructs of religiosity have been used in marketing research (Niazi et al., 2019; Zehra & Minton, 2019), spirituality has been largely ignored in comparison to religiosity. One of the initial studies discussed spirituality in advertising by proposing spirituality in advertising framework (SAF) (Marmor-Lavie, 2010), but it was a qualitative research in which spirituality in advertising was explored among the students of religious, non-religious, and new-age orientations in the United States. Moreover, several instruments of spirituality are domain-specific, such as spirituality at the workplace (Benefiel et al., 2014) and spiritual experience in healthcare (Underwood & Teresi, 2002).

Another limitation of the existing instruments is the complex relationship between religiosity and spirituality (Bauer & Johnson, 2019; Hill & Maltby, 2009). When considering the complex relationship between religiosity and spirituality, a consolidated instrument of *religio-spiritual insights* was identified. This is a higher-order construct based on the subconstructs beliefs and practices, self-actualization, interconnectedness, association with higher power, heart and mind involvement, and knowledge and meaning (Ansari, 2020). Literature supports the conceptualization of these constructs. For example, Christians believe in the teachings of the Bible and practice the rituals of service at church, fasting during Lent, and celebrating the festivals of Christmas and Easter (Salamone, 2004; Tynan & McKechnie, 2006). Religion teaches people that having a good relationship with the Creator will help them in their daily matters of life (Sheldrake, 2007), while spirituality is more focused on developing and maintaining a relationship with an ultimate power, which can guide human beings in their daily lives (Mattis, 2000). Religion provides a bond between its followers to develop a community, and people of this community practice the same teachings provided by religion (Cohen & Hill, 2007; Gulevich, 2004).

Religiosity and spirituality are defined as the feelings, sentiments, and emotions that arise when one tries to find sacred meaning to existence

(Motak, 2009; Rinallo et al., 2012). Spirituality as a construct can be divided into three parts: naturalistic, humanistic, and religious. The naturalistic part of spirituality is derived from the human curiosity to search for a greater meaning to life and existential thoughts (Chida et al., 2009). The humanistic perspective is linked to the theory of self-actualization, put forth by Abraham Maslow, which refers to humans reaching their highest potential (Elkins et al., 1988). Finally, the perspective of religion is related to the people' beliefs in the existence of a superior being (Agarwala et al., 2019; Liu & Robertson, 2011; Marmor-Lavie & Stout, 2016).

The influence of religiosity in advertising has been reported often in the literature. Rinallo et al. (2012) suggest that there is an intrinsic difference between spirituality and consumption. Spirituality refers to a sublime concept of humans being good, whereas consumption refers to a phenomenon that is mundane, materialistic, and ultimately soulless. To reconcile these two concepts, many advertisers have frequently used religious symbols such as religious places, religious scholars, and holy books in advertisements (Naseri & Tamam, 2012; Taylor et al., 2010). By this means, advertisers have regularly tried to create a connection between internal spirituality and the external materialist nature of consumption.

Religio-spirituality in festivals of different religions

Different religious festivals, such as Christmas, Easter, Ramadan, and Diwali, are celebrated across the globe. Religious communities celebrate such festivals to practice their beliefs and increase their association with the divine power, i.e., God (Dasti & Sitwat, 2014; Keenan & Yeni, 2003). Some of these festivals are long-lasting, while others are celebrated for a short time. This study compared four different religious festivals based on common attributes, i.e., duration, fasting, gifts/charity/donations, prayer, scriptures, and family/congregation time. Table 1 depicts a summary of common attributes and advertising spending. The comparison suggests that Ramadan and Lent are the two long-duration festivals celebrated across the globe. However, the Muslim community has high religio-spiritual contemplations while celebrating the religious festival of Ramadan, as they follow the same recurring schedule of strict fasting for 30 consecutive days (Koku & Jusoh, 2016; Touzani & Hirschman, 2008). Moreover, there is a high advertising budget allocated by different brands for extensive advertising campaigns during the festival of Ramadan (Maqsood, 2014; Odabas & Attar, 2018).

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Table 1

Festivals celebrated by different religious communities and their respective advertising expenditures

	Islam		Christianity		Hinduism			Buddhism	
	Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr	Hajj and Eid-ul-Adha	Christmas	Lent and Easter	Shivaratri	Diwali	Karwa Chauth	Vassa	Kathina
Days	30 and 4 days, respectively	4 and 5 days, respectively	1 to 15 days	48 days	1 day	3 to 5 days	1 day	90 days	1 day
Fasting	Suhur – Maghrib, strict fasting	Optional	-	Avoiding "luxury" food, having only one full meal and two collations	Strict fasting	-	Strict fasting (before sunrise to moonrise)	Avoiding meat, alcohol, and smoking	-
Gifts/charity/ donations	Zakat, sadqah, Fitrah	Meat	Gifts	Donations	-	Gifts	Gifts: ten *karwas* (earthen pots) filled with sweets	Donations to temples	Robe offerings to monks
Prayer	Farz, Nafil, Taraweeh at Mosque or eidgah	Hajj Khutbah at Makkah only, Eid prayer at mosque/ eidgah	Church service	Extra prayer services at Church	Havan (whole-night prayer with three hours difference)	Prayer at Mandir	Worshiping the moon at night	Intensive meditation (monks)	Meditation and prayers
Scriptures	*Quran (Koran)*	"Khutba" from *Quran/Ahadith*	*Holy Bible*	*Holy Bible*	Panchakshara mantra and "Om Namah Shivaya"	Particular religious songs	-	-	-

(continues)

Table 1 (conclusion)
Festivals celebrated by different religious communities and their respective advertising expenditures

	Islam		Christianity		Hinduism			Buddhism	
	Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr	Hajj and Eid-ul-Adha	Christmas	Lent and Easter	Shivaratri	Diwali	Karwa Chauth	Vassa	Kathina
Family/ congregation time	Sehri and Iftari, eid get-togethers	Zawal-Maghrib at Arafat, Makkah, Qurbani and meat feasts	Christmas Evening (December 24th): musical events and family feasts	Church service	Feast	Fireworks and lighting	Moonsight	-	-
Advertising offers	Iftar meals, Sehri meals, and Eid celebrations	Advertisements associated with Kaaba and meat/ skin donations	Promotional offers	Promotional offers	Milk and food	-	-	Pavarana ceremony	Kathina ceremony (a cloth ceremony)
Symbols used in the advertisements	*Quran*, Crescent, and Mosque	Holy Ka'aba, goat, cows, and camels	Santa Claus	Cross, eggs, Christ, and heaven	Shiva	*Diya* (candle), Om"	Arti	-	-
Advertisements spending	$ 368 million	-	£ 5,6 billion (7.3 bn USD)	$ 501,9 million	-	$ 70000 million (10 bn USD)	-	-	-
Country/region	Egypt		United Kingdom	Australia		India			
Year	2015		2016	2017		2016			

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The duration of the fasting is from Suhur (before dawn) to Iftar (after sunset), and Muslims do not eat/drink during this time. However, Muslims make special arrangements for Suhur and Iftar, which often consist of parties in which immediate family, extended family, relatives, friends, neighbors, and others are invited to enjoy these spiritual moments (Keenan & Yeni, 2003). Moreover, this month is customarily reserved for paying the annual religious obligation of alms, Zakat and Fitrah, to the poor and deserving, and thus a source of increasing spiritual contemplations of Muslims (Müller, 2017; Odabasi & Argan, 2009). Intensive advertising campaigns have turned this religious festival into a shopping festival (Sandikci & Omeraki, 2007), affecting the *religio-spiritual insights* of the Muslim community. Therefore, the religious festival of Ramadan was selected in this study, considering the high religio-spirituality of Muslims.

Theoretical underpinnings and hypotheses development

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) has widely been used to predict the intentions and attitudes of humans based on their beliefs (Fishbein, 1967). Several studies have also developed conceptual frameworks based on TRA to predict the attitudes of the people (Dincheva & Nikolovska, 2016; Ramish et al., 2019; Terlutter et al., 2010; Ting & Run, 2015). Consumers' attitudes have been studied by applying TRA in the context of religious beliefs associated with Muslim consumers (Amin, 2013; Amin et al., 2011; Lada et al., 2009). Another study used TRA and concluded that advertising value and perceived levels of *entertainment* affect the consumers' *attitude* toward web advertising. Other variables such as *entertainment*, *information*, and *irritation* have also been studied to predict the consumers' *attitude toward advertising* (Usman et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2002; Zabadi et al., 2012). The conceptual framework of this study was developed by selecting variables such as *entertainment*, *information*, *credibility*, *irritation*, *good for the economy*, *religio-spiritual insights*, and consumers *attitude toward advertising*. These variables are discussed in detail below:

- *Attitude toward advertising*: Consumers' *attitude toward advertising* refers to a favorable or unfavorable response to an advertisement. Previous studies used TRA and suggested that people like advertisements that are informative, entertaining, and credible. Consumers' *attitude toward advertising* has been studied using different means, such as TV, radio, newspaper, magazines, yellow pages, and direct mail (Park & Kim, 2003;

Mehta, 2000; Petrovici & Marinov, 2007; Cope et al., 2005; Cartwright et al., 2016). However, this study used TV advertisements aired during the religious festival of Ramadan to measure consumers' *attitudes toward advertising*.

- *Irritation*: Consumers get irritated when watching an advertisement because of annoying messages, inappropriate stimuli, or offensive content displayed in that advertisement (Aslam et al., 2016; Ducoffe, 1995; Zabadi et al., 2012). Advertising messages that contradict religious beliefs and practices may be considered offensive by consumers and will not be effective in attitude change (Michell & Al-Mossawi, 1999; Yaseen et al., 2020). Advertisements that contain offensive messages and upsetting themes may induce irritation among consumers, which they tend to recall over time (Abbasi et al., 2011; Waller & Fam, 2000). Consumers may belong to different sociocultural factors, such as various religious groups, which may require advertisers to produce creative advertisements that suit all religious groups (Naseri & Tamam, 2012; Taylor et al., 2010). Significant effects of *irritation* have been proven in the literature (Ansari et al., 2017; Zabadi et al., 2012). Consumers may get irritated if they see elements that involve objectifying the female body, seminudity, and music (Niazi et al., 2019).

- *Entertainment*: Consumers are attracted to advertisements that depict fun, enjoyment, entertainment, and pleasure – elements that make consumers happy (Ramish et al., 2019). *Entertainment* positively influences viewers' attitudes toward advertisements, and this is evident in the literature (Bauer et al., 2005; Ducoffe, 1995; Aslam et al., 2016; Hastings et al., 2004). Advertisements often have visual, auditory/sensory hedonic, entertaining, and amusing elements that stimulate a consumer's attitude toward such advertisements. Consumers will be more receptive and drawn to hedonic or entertaining advertisements that are aligned with the consumer's desired lifestyle (Ramish et al., 2019; Ting & Run, 2015).

- *Credibility*: The credibility of an advertisement refers to the presence of any emotional cues that can be undertaken as reliable sources for that advertisement. Such emotional cues can be in the form of a spokesperson, celebrity, or religious cues, such as religious scholars and places or objects of worship (Hameed et al., 2016). *Credibility* positively influences consumers' *attitudes*, which has been noticed in several advertisements studies (Zabadi et al., 2012). Religion is considered a credible social factor as it is one of the cultural institutions that influence consumers' attitudes at an individual and collective level (Zehra & Minton, 2019).

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Religion-rooted cultures have widely accepted the role religion plays in making advertisements more credible and enhancing the delivered message (Mansour & Fathelrahman, 2013).

- *Information*: The advertising message is based on verbal, visual, and execution-related content (Cope et al., 2005; Zabadi et al., 2012). Text, symbols, and images are used in advertisements to provide certain information to consumers related to a product/brand. Consumers' repetitive exposure to informative advertisements can create a positive or negative *attitude toward advertising* (Shih et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2010). The use of informative advertisements religiously in dominating religious cultures has been a significant means of advertising. Similarly, the globalized and hedonic advertising information, which, at some level, contrasts with Islamic values, is negatively evaluated by religious individuals (Cader, 2015; Naseri & Tamam, 2012). Advertisements have been using religious statements or phrases, such as quotes from the *Quran* (*Koran*) or *Holy Bible,* as informational cues to enhance the influence of that advertisement and make it more appealing for individuals having high religious contemplations (Maqsood, 2014; Naseri & Tamam, 2012).
- *Good for the economy*: It has been observed that advertisements help increasing consumption patterns, due to which consumers accept innovative products and adopt new technologies. This is the concept of *good for the economy*, which positively influences consumers' *attitudes toward advertising* (Ling et al., 2010; Petrovici & Marinov, 2007). Advertisements that are *good for the economy* are generally used to instigate false wants and superficial living standards for consumers. Such advertisements promote materialism and the thought of having "more than before" (Pollay & Mittal, 1993). The concept of materialism, which promotes consumption, is considered a distraction from inner spirituality and search for a higher deity. Hence, materialism is opposite to religio-spiritual practices (Veer & Shankar, 2011).
- *Mediating effect of religio-spiritual insights*: Religiosity and spirituality have been studied as mediating constructs in different works. The mediating role of religiosity was studied considering the relationship between celebrity *credibility* and advertising effectiveness, and a partial mediating effect on the relationship was found (Mansour & Diab, 2016). Since religiosity is directly connected to religion, it has also been used as a religious commitment in several studies (Worthington et al., 2003; Michell & Al-Mossawi, 1999). Religiosity has been studied as a mediating construct for advertising effectiveness (Michell & Al-Mossawi, 1995).

There is no construct specifically measuring the *religio-spiritual insights* of the consumers in marketing research. In other domains, such as patients' treatment, spirituality has already been well-researched. For example, in a study of treatment of patients with cancer, spirituality played a mediating role between psychological distress and mental adjustments (Jimenez-Fonseca et al., 2018). In a model proposed by scholars, spirituality has been found with religiosity as a mediating variable (Shek, 2012). Since spirituality is not a well-defined construct in marketing, few studies have discussed its mediating role. However, it has been considered a mediating variable in a study of spiritual well-being, which is mediated between religiosity (intrinsic) and voluntary simplicity (Alexander & Ussher, 2012; Chowdhury, 2018). Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis was developed for this study:

- Hypothesis 1 (H1): *Religio-spiritual insights* have a mediating influence between
  (a) *credibility* and *consumers' attitude toward advertising*;
  (b) *entertainment* and *consumers' attitude toward advertising*;
  (c) *good for the economy* and *consumers' attitudes toward advertising*;
  (d) *information* and *consumers' attitude toward advertising*;
  (e) *irritation* and *consumers' attitude toward advertising*.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects and sample size

The conceptual framework of this study was developed based on theoretical grounds. Therefore, a positivist deductive approach was followed to test the hypothesis. The religious festival considered for this study is Ramadan, which is one of the important Islamic months when Muslims experience obligatory fasting for 30 consecutive days (Odabasi & Argan, 2009). The significance of Ramadan among Muslims has already been discussed in the literature review section. Two hundred and fifty-five household consumers that had TV in their houses were selected using the non-probability convenience sampling because the sample frame is not available (Bryman & Bell, 2012) for the population of approximately 32 million households in Pakistan (Samaa, 2017). Household consumers were selected because they are more exposed to advertisements that can inspire as well as irritate them while watching TV programs (Cartwright et al., 2016).

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As the approach of the study was based on theory testing and model comparison, the partial least squares – structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach was used to test the hypothesis. A sample of 250 respondents is enough for this type of study (Hair et al., 2011; Hair et al., 2014), as it is suggested at least 30 respondents for each construct to conduct a multivariate analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010; Sekaran et al., 2016). Based on the reviews collected from a panel discussion of five marketing scholars, one irritating and one religious advertisement were selected and attached as a *stimulus* with each questionnaire. Ratings were given by the panel to each advertisement (Varan et al., 2015). Marketing experts rated each TV advertisement from 1 to 5, with five being the highest value based on *religio-spirituality* and *irritation*. Religious advertisement belonged to a leading milk brand that portrayed celebrities, poetry, and different religious symbols. In turn, the irritating advertisement belonged to a mobile phone brand that was banned by the regulatory authority (PEMRA) in Pakistan. Two hundred and seventy respondents were approached and asked to fill out these two questionnaires with different *stimuli* so that unbiased opinions could be collected. Out of the 270 questionnaires distributed, 255 were found valid after deleting the empty and outlier responses.

Measurement and data analysis

A five-point Likert scale was used for the measurement of the constructs, which were adopted from previous studies with the established reliabilities. These constructs include 19 items for *religio-spiritual insights* (Ansari, 2020), four items for *information*, three items for *good for the economy*, four items for *entertainment*, four items for *irritation*, four items for *credibility*, and four items for *attitude toward advertising* (Ramish et al., 2019). After data collection, several statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics, reliability, validity, and structural equation model, were used for data evaluation. Due to the complexity of the conceptual framework, a structural equation model was executed to comprehend the latent constructs and analyze the mediation effect through SmartPLS (Garson, 2016; SmartPLS, 2015).

RESULTS

Profile of the respondents

The total size of the sample is 255 respondents, out of which 127 (50%) were male, and 128 (50%), female. The age ranges from 18 to 59 and above. In terms of educational level, 51 (20%) were high school graduates, 52 (20%) had their educational level up to an undergraduate degree, 78 (31%) had a graduate degree, 62 (24%) had a postgraduate degree, and the rest of them, 12 (5%), had other professional degrees. As far as occupational status is concerned, 35 (14%) were students, 56 (22%) were housewives/househusbands, 75 (29%) were employed, 46 (18%) were unemployed, and 43 (17%) were self-employed. Out of them, 135 (53%) respondents reported watching TV between one and three hours daily; 59 (23%), between four and six hours; 44 (17%), between seven and nine hours; and 17 (7%), above nine hours.

Reliability, validity, and correlation analyses

Responses were collected using two different *stimuli*, i.e., one was a religious advertisement, and the other was an irritating advertisement. Several statistical tests were conducted using Smart PLS – version 3.2, which includes reliability and validity analyses. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability tests were conducted to ascertain the reliability of the constructs. Table 2 shows that Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values were found to be greater than 0.7, which is considered acceptable (Garson, 2016; Hair et al., 2011). Average variance extracted (AVE) values were found to be greater than 0.5, which is considered acceptable, confirming the convergent validity tests (Garson, 2016; Kim et al., 2016; Kline, 2015). Discriminant validity was confirmed by checking the maximum shared variance (MSV), which is found to be less than the corresponding AVE values (Hair et al., 2006; Kundu et al., 2019). The square root of the variance extracted is also found to be greater than the corresponding correlation coefficients, confirming another discriminant validity test (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 2 shows the summary of reliability, validity, and correlation analyses conducted for the responses collected for irritating and religious advertisements.

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Table 2

*Summary of the reliability, validity, and correlation analyses*

	CA	CR	AVE	MSV	ATA	CRED	ENT	GE	INF	IRR	RSI
Irritating advertisement											
Attitude toward advertisement (ATA)	0.87	0.92	0.73	0.43	0.85						
Credibility (CRED)	0.84	0.89	0.67	0.37	0.41	0.82					
Entertainment (ENT)	0.79	0.86	0.60	0.32	0.65	0.53	0.78				
Good for economy (GE)	0.61	0.77	0.53	0.25	0.28	0.43	0.40	0.73			
Information (INF)	0.85	0.92	0.80	0.12	0.23	0.61	0.38	0.40	0.90		
Irritation (IRR)	0.89	0.93	0.77	0.16	-0.54	-0.23	-0.42	-0.10	-0.16	0.88	
Religio-spiritual insights	0.90	0.91	0.76	0.33	0.58	0.44	0.56	0.50	0.35	-0.40	0.64
Religious advertisement											
Attitude toward advertisement (ATA)	0.87	0.91	0.72	0.57	0.85						
Credibility (CRED)	0.85	0.91	0.77	0.59	0.20	0.88					
Entertainment (ENT)	0.79	0.87	0.70	0.37	0.51	0.61	0.84				
Good for economy (GE)	0.77	0.86	0.67	0.08	0.24	0.22	0.04	0.84			
Information (INF)	0.75	0.84	0.57	0.54	0.68	0.73	0.52	0.28	0.82		
Irritation (IRR)	0.93	0.95	0.83	0.05	-0.34	-0.21	-0.17	-0.12	-0.21	0.91	
Religio-spiritual insights	0.94	0.95	0.61	0.59	0.75	0.77	0.61	0.26	0.74	-0.22	0.71

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Hypotheses testing

Figure 1

Structural model tested using the religious advertisement

INF

GE

ENT

RSI

ATA

IRR

CR

0.321

0.088

0.200

-0.049

0.390

0.684

0.745

0.555
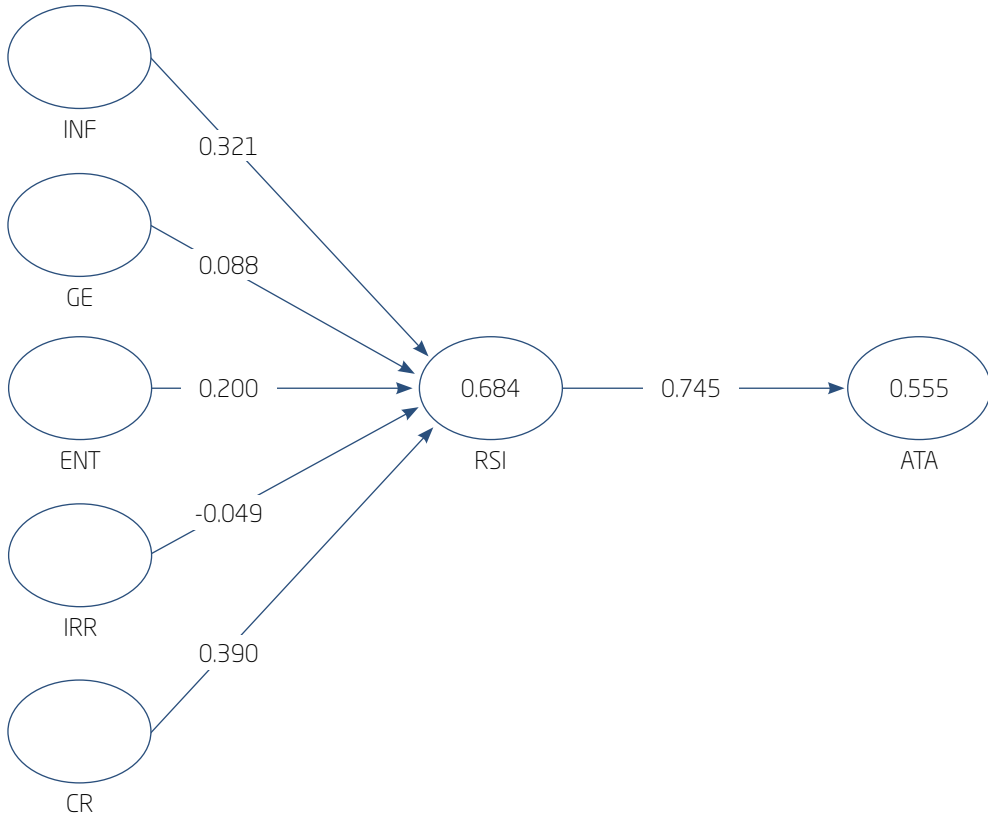
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Two data sets comprised of responses to the religious and the irritating advertisements were uploaded to SmartPLS. Structural models tested using the PLS-SEM approach can be seen in Figure 1 (for religious advertisements) and Figure 2 (for irritating advertisements). Initially, the second-order construct of *religio-spiritual insights* was validated using the repeated indicator approach in PLS-SEM. All the loadings of the first-order constructs were found to be greater than 0.5 (Garson, 2016). After validating the second-order construct, direct and indirect effects were tested using the PLS-SEM bootstrapping test.

When the hypothesis was tested for the religious advertisement, it was identified that *credibility* (β = 0.39, *t* = 6.29, *p* < 0.05), *entertainment* (β = 0.20,

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$t = 3.61, p < 0.05$), *good for the economy* ($\beta = 0.09, t = 2.21, p < 0.05$), and *information* ($\beta = 0.32, t = 5.27, p < 0.05$) significantly affect *religio-spiritual insights*. Consequently, *religio-spiritual insights* ($\beta = 0.75, t = 24.78, p < 0.05$) significantly affect *attitude toward advertisement*. However, it was identified that *irritation* ($\beta = -0.05, t = 1.38, p > 0.05$) has a non-significant effect. The mediating effect of *religio-spiritual insights* was also confirmed using specific indirect effects. *Religio-spiritual insights* significantly mediate (i) *credibility* and *attitude* ($\beta = 0.2, t = 6.06, p < 0.05$), (ii) *entertainment* and *attitude* ($\beta = 0.15, t = 3.49, p < 0.05$), (iii) *good for the economy* and *attitude* ($\beta = 0.07, t = 2.19, p < 0.05$), and (iv) *information* and *attitude* ($\beta = 0.24, t = 5.22, p < 0.05$). The hypothesis related to the mediating effect of *religio-spiritual insights* between *irritation* and *attitude* ($\beta = -0.04, t = 1.38, p > 0.05$) was not confirmed.

Figure 2

Structural model tested using the irritating advertisement t
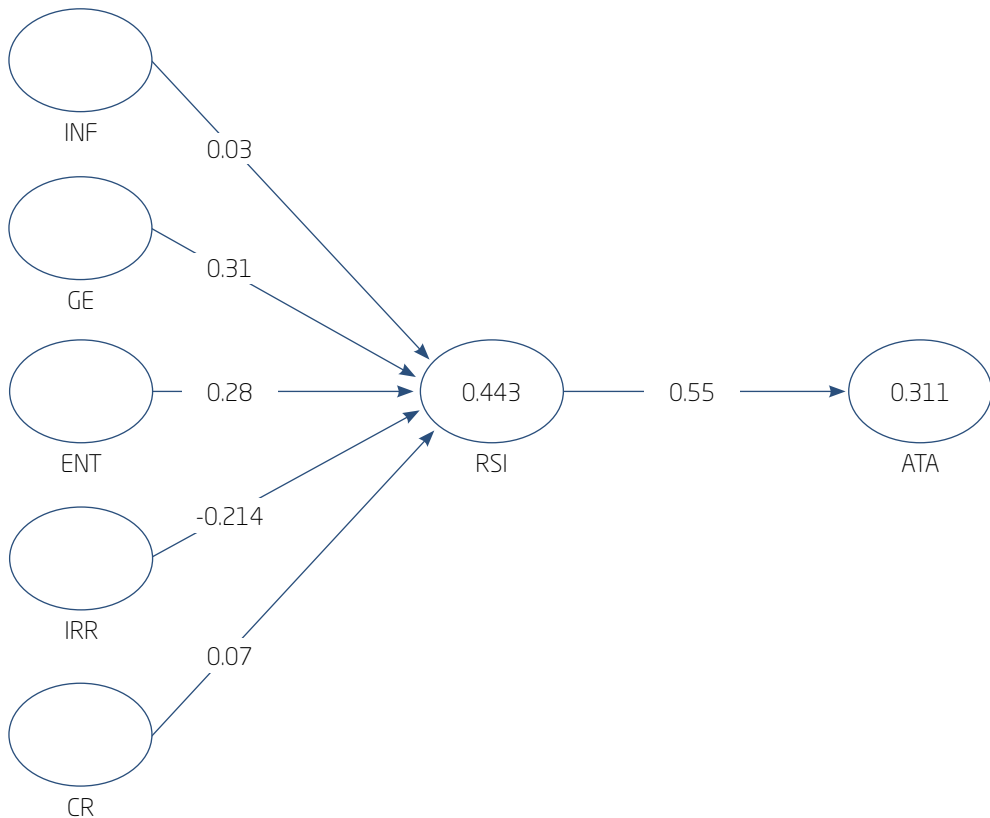
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

When hypothesis was tested for the irritating advertisement, it was identified that *entertainment* (β = 0.28, *t* = 3.36, *p* < 0.05), *good for the economy* (β = 0.31, *t* = 3.95, *p* < 0.05), and *irritation* (β = -0.21, *t* = 2.99, *p* < 0.05) significantly affect *religio-spiritual insights*. Consequently, *religio-spiritual insights* (β = 0.56, *t* = 10.55, *p* < 0.05) significantly affect *attitude toward advertisement*. However, it was identified that *credibility* (β = 0.08, *t* = 1.29, *p* > 0.05) and *information* (β = 0.04, *t* = 0.47, *p* > 0.05) have a non-significant effect. The mediating effect of *religio-spiritual insights* was also confirmed using specific indirect effects. It was identified that *religio-spiritual insights* significantly mediate *entertainment* and *attitude* (β = 0.16, *t* = 2.92, *p* < 0.05), *good for the economy* and *attitude* (β = 0.18, *t* = 4.09, *p* < 0.05), and *irritation* and *attitude* (β = -0.12, *t* = 2.82, *p* > 0.05). The hypothesis related to the mediating effect of *religio-spiritual insights* between *credibility* and *attitude* (β = 0.04, *t* = 1.26, *p* > 0.05) and *information* and *attitude* (β = 0.02, *t* = 0.46, *p* > 0.05) was not confirmed. Table 3 shows the summary of the hypothesis testing results.

Table 3
Hypothesis testing using PLS-SEM

	Beta	T-Stats	Sig	Hypothesis
Religious advertisement				
Credibility → Religio-spiritual insights	0.39	6.29	0.00	Supported
Entertainment → Religio-spiritual insights	0.20	3.61	0.00	Supported
Good for economy → Religio-spiritual insights	0.09	2.21	0.03	Supported
Information → Religio-spiritual insights	0.32	5.27	0.00	Supported
Irritation → Religio-spiritual insights	-0.05	1.38	0.17	Rejected
Religio-spiritual insights → Attitude toward advertisement	0.75	24.78	0.00	Supported
Credibility → Religio-spiritual insights → Attitude toward advertisement	0.29	6.06	0.00	Supported
Entertainment → Religio-spiritual insights → Attitude toward advertisement	0.15	3.49	0.00	Supported
Good for economy → Religio-spiritual insights → Attitude toward advertisement	0.07	2.19	0.03	Supported

(continues)

Table 3 (conclusion)

Hypothesis testing using PLS-SEM

	Beta	T-Stats	Sig	Hypothesis
Religious advertisement				
Information → Religio-spiritual insights → Attitude toward advertisement	0.24	5.22	0.00	Supported
Irritation → Religio-spiritual insights → Attitude toward advertisement	-0.04	1.38	0.17	Rejected
Irritating advertisement				
Credibility → Religio-spiritual insights	0.08	1.29	0.20	Rejected
Entertainment → Religio-spiritual insights	0.28	3.36	0.00	Supported
Good for economy → Religio-spiritual insights	0.31	3.95	0.00	Supported
Information → Religio-spiritual insights	0.04	0.47	0.64	Rejected
Irritation → Religio-spiritual insights	-0.21	2.99	0.00	Supported
Religio-spiritual insights → Attitude toward advertisement	0.56	10.55	0.00	Supported
Credibility → Religio-spiritual insights → Attitude toward advertisement	0.04	1.26	0.21	Rejected
Entertainment → Religio-spiritual insights → Attitude toward advertisement	0.16	2.92	0.00	Supported
Good for economy → Religio-spiritual insights → Attitude toward advertisement	0.18	4.09	0.00	Supported
Information → Religio-spiritual insights → Attitude toward advertisement	0.02	0.46	0.64	Rejected
Irritation → Religio-spiritual insights → Attitude toward advertisement	-0.12	2.82	0.01	Supported

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to analyze the mediating effect of *religio-spiritual insights* between consumers' *attitudes toward advertising* and their determinants. Two different advertisements were selected as *stimuli,* i.e., one was an irritating advertisement and the other was a religious advertisement. Data were col-

lected using the survey method, and household consumers were approached. The results of this study suggest that TV advertisements aired during a religious festival should contain the *religio-spiritual insights* of the consumers to avoid irritation. The results of the hypothesis are discussed below:

- *Religio-spiritual insights*: *Religio-spiritual insights* have emerged as a higher-order construct that has a significant effect ($\beta = 0.75$, p value < 0.05) on consumers' *attitudes toward advertising* in the case of the religious advertisement. When there was an irritating advertisement, *religio-spiritual insights* ($\beta = 0.56$, p value < 0.05) significantly affected the consumers' *attitude toward advertising*. Results not only validate the construct but also confirm the religio-spiritual contemplations of the consumers because the responses were taken during the religious festival of Ramadan. Results suggest that marketers should incorporate religio-spiritual contemplations of the consumers in their TV advertisements (Mansour & Diab, 2016; Masood, 2018; Minton, 2019). Results also suggest that marketers should design a separate TV advertisement for each religious festival because advertising campaigns designed for other festivals may offend consumers when they celebrate a religious festival with high religious and spiritual contemplations (Badri, 2000; Hasnain, 2017; Propakistani, 2015).

- *Credibility*: *Credibility* ($\beta = 0.39$, p value < 0.05) significantly affects consumers' *religio-spiritual insights* when there is a religious advertisement. However, it was identified that *credibility* ($\beta = 0.08$, p value > 0.05) has a non-significant effect when there is an irritating advertisement. Although previous literature has substantiated the significant effect of *credibility* (Ling et al., 2010; Sallam & Wahid, 2012), the *credibility* of the source does not matter when the advertisement irritates consumers. The results of this study emphasize the importance of celebrity selection for religious advertisements because a celebrity who is famous for other campaigns may offend consumers when cast in a religious TV advertisement (Mansour & Diab, 2016). Contrarily, a religious celebrity can be considered non-credible when an advertisement is irritating to consumers.

- *Entertainment*: *Entertainment* ($\beta = 0.20$, p value < 0.05) significantly affects *religio-spiritual insights* when there is a religious advertisement. Similarly, *entertainment* ($\beta = 0.28$, p value < 0.05) significantly affects *religio-spiritual insights* when there is an irritating advertisement. The significant effect of *entertainment* has also been observed in the literature, and the results

are consistent with previous studies (Aydın, 2016; Le & Nguyen, 2014; Raktham et al., 2017; Zabadi et al., 2012). Although *entertainment* is referred to as the concept of fun and enjoyment depicted in advertisements, consumers often feel entertained when they see a sophisticated and nice advertisement as well. Therefore, it does not mean that a religious advertisement has to depict socially unacceptable visuals during religious festivals. In religious TV advertisements, consumers enjoy lively moments presented in the advertisement, such as happiness, love, and feelings (Abdel-Khalek & Tekke, 2019).

- *Good for the economy*: *Good for the economy* (β = 0.09, *p* value < 0.05) significantly affects consumers' *religio-spiritual insights* when consumers watch a religious advertisement. When consumers watched the irritating advertisement, results suggested that there is a significant effect of *good for the economy* (β = 0.31, *p* value < 0.05). The results are consistent with the previous studies (Wang et al., 2002; Wulan & Ariyanti, 2017; Zabadi et al., 2012). Although the effect of *good for the economy* is not a good effect, i.e., the coefficient is less than 0.2 (Cohen, 1988; Kline, 2015), discounts and promotions attract consumers to such TV advertisements (Odabas & Attar, 2018; Odabasi & Argan, 2009). Products offered during religious festivals are often marketed as package deals that are liked by consumers. TV advertisements should promote nationalism and unity among the people to motivate the customers to use their brand, which may bring a change in their lifestyle (Munusamy & Hoo, 2007; Wulan & Ariyanti, 2017).

- *Information*: *Information* (β = 0.39, *p* value < 0.05) significantly affects consumers' *religio-spiritual insights* when consumers watch a religious advertisement. Contrarily, it was identified that *information* (β = 0.04, *p* value > 0.05) has a non-significant effect in the case of the irritating advertisement. The results are consistent with previous studies of advertising in which *information* has been selected as an independent variable (Wang et al., 2002; Zabadi et al., 2012). TV advertisements designed for religious festivals should present information related to the product/service, as the consumers will try to seek information through such advertisements. However, the provision of information does not matter if consumers find that advertisement irritating. Anyway, heavy or cluttered information must be avoided (Aaker & Bruzzone, 1985), as people celebrating a religious festival may be distracted by text-based visuals since too much text can develop clutter in the consumers' minds.

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- *Irritation*: When consumers responded to a religious advertisement, a non-significant effect of *irritation* (β = -0.05, *p* value > 0.05) was identified on consumers' *religio-spiritual insights*. However, the effect of *irritation* (β = -0.21, *p* value < 0.05) on *religio-spiritual insights* was found significant when there was an irritating advertisement. Although several studies on advertising show the significant effect of *irritation*, there are some studies in which this effect was found to be insignificant. For example, a study conducted to analyze the effect of *irritation* on attitudes toward mobile advertising in Pakistan shows a non-significant effect of *irritation* (Hameed et al., 2016).

In this study, the non-significant effect of *irritation* shows that consumers may not get irritated if they are engaged in religio-spirituality in a TV advertisement aired during a religious festival. The *religio-spiritual insights* engage the consumer, and their attitude becomes positive toward TV advertisements, neglecting the effect of *irritation* (Ansari, 2020; Hameed et al., 2016). Contrarily, if an irritating advertisement is broadcast, brands may deal with consumer backlash as the consumers start lodging complaints, due to which TV advertisements can be banned by the regulatory authority (Hasnain, 2017).

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence that advertisements incorporating *religio-spiritual insights* reduce the *irritation* of consumers and that such advertisements can be aired during religious festivals to attract more consumers. For marketers and practitioners, this study suggests that incorporating *religio-spiritual insights* can help avoid the loss of marketing investment due to backlash of consumers, who protest when their religious contemplations are affected, which often leads to the banning of advertisements by regulators. Another contribution of this study is providing a comparison between two advertisements and providing empirical evidence that neglecting the religious and spiritual contemplations can increase the consumers' *irritation*, which negatively affects consumers' *attitude toward advertising*.

Theoretically, this study identified the significant mediating effect of *religio-spiritual insights* between consumers' *attitudes toward advertising* and other constructs, such as *credibility, information, entertainment,* and *good for the economy*. The instrument of *religio-spiritual insights* extends the conceptual

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models developed based on the TRA. TV advertisements should convey a concise and clear advertising message to consumers considering their religious and spiritual contemplations to avoid irritation.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Advertisements aired during religious festivals carry a high stake because huge budgets are typically allocated for advertising campaigns during popular long-duration religious festivals. Brands should design their advertisements in such a way that the types of products advertised during religious festivals fit into the spirit of such festivals, during which the religio-spiritual contemplations of the consumers are much higher than on other days. This study suggests that advertisements during religious festivals should incorporate the subconstructs of beliefs and practices, association with a higher power, interconnectedness with others, experiences, self-actualization, heart and mind involvement, knowledge and meanings related to humans, and individualism, in order to create a positive attitude toward advertising.

In this research, consumers that had a TV in their houses within a geographic boundary of a metropolitan city were approached for data collection. Two TV advertisements were selected as *stimuli* for the responses. TV advertisements of other brands related to detergents, oil, and charity organizations are ignored in this study. Further research can be conducted to analyze the impact of religio-spirituality on consumers' *attitudes toward advertising* during other religious festivals. Consumer buying behavior and the attitudinal changes that occur after watching TV advertisements can also be investigated. Future research may also be conducted with other types of advertisements, such as radio, web, and short-message-service (SMS) advertisements. Since the research was conducted considering the religious festival of Ramadan, non-religious festivals that are celebrated across different cultures may also be studied.

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