Impacts of Bandwagon Effect and Product Type in Instagram Native Advertising on Generation Z Consumer's Behavior

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of bandwagon effect and product type in Instagram native advertising on consumer behavior (i.e., ad intrusiveness, attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the brand, purchase intention and intention to share). A 2x2 between subjects, factorial design was employed to collect data from 129 undergraduate students, who were Generation Z, in Thailand. The results showcase a statistically significant difference for intention to share between the low and high bandwagon effect treatments, with the high bandwagon one showing a higher mean score. Further, the results exhibit a statistically significant difference for purchase intention between the utilitarian product (notebook computer) and hedonic product (perfume), with the hedonic product showing a higher mean score. No interaction effect between bandwagon effect and product type was found in this study. Next to the generation of high bandwagon cues in form of likes and comments being a key aspect for impacting Thai Generation Z consumer's behavioral intentions, this research also highlights the importance of ad-media congruence for native advertising on social media platforms.

Introduction

Social media as advertising space has become vastly more important over the years due to its increased reach and better targeting potential (Wright, Khanfar, Harrington, & Kizer, 2010) as well as its added feature of two-way interaction (Hensel & Deis, 2010). This especially holds true among Generation Z with them being more active than other generations in sharing feedback or comments regarding brands or products. They also value the opinions of their peers (Liu, Wu, & Li, 2019).

When looking at the Thai market, social media usage is widespread, with a penetration rate of 81.2% and 56.85 million active users (Statista Research Department, 2021). While YouTube and Facebook are the most used social media platforms among Thai Generation Z, other social media platforms have displayed a strong rise in user base. The Thai user base of

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Instagram is estimated to rise to 20.28 million users in 2025 (Degenhard, 2021).

Along a variety of new and adapted disciplines for communicating with target audiences on social media, native advertising has developed into one of the most popular and arguably most efficient marketing tools for practitioners. In short, native advertising is advertising material, which in its content and visual design inherently resembles its surrounding content, in which it is implemented. Those characteristics of this form of advertising, especially in social media environments like Instagram, leads to several new opportunities of many partaking shareholders. Brands, which choose to market via digital native advertising, gain a new approach to reach their target groups and communicate their marketing communication goals. Publishers are given the opportunity to widen their revenue streams through this form of advertising, which can potentially counter the declining monetary income produced via more traditional ways of marketing (Probst et al., 2013). Consumers as well can profit from native advertising, as the native advertising builds upon their preference of editorial content, offering a higher value to the consumer than more traditional approaches to marketing (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012).

As described by Golan and Wojdynski in 2016, expenditure for native advertising was estimated to exceed 21 billion US Dollars by 2018. Among the ASEAN countries, Thailand shows one of the highest volumes of native advertising with one third of total online marketing being dedicated to online native advertising (Noda, Kolosova, Levoshich, & Zatsarinnaya, 2022). Research by Tunshevavong (2022) on native advertising exposure indicated that in-feed native advertisements were clicked on most. Further, the study showed that Instagram is the third most used social media platform among Thai Generation Z.

There are, however, other factors contributing to the consumers response to native advertising on social media besides heuristic cues. Research by Vijayasarathy (2002) on the impact of product type on consumer decision making during the early days of online environments shows that different product characteristics, directly affected consumers' behavioral intentions. Multiple studies indicate that consumers engage more in heuristic processing when confronted with hedonic products and utilize systematic processing when encountering utilitarian products, which in turn leads to

consumers valuing different informational cues dependent on the product type they interact with (Alvarez & Casielles, 2005; Mittal & Lee, 1989; Shiv & Fedorikhin 1999).

Despite its attractiveness for marketing strategies through its inherent native implementation in surrounding content and its vast implementation on social media by practitioners, native advertising, its persuasive aspects, and its impact on consumer behavior have been strongly debated by scholars. Therefore, the purposes of this study are threefold: 1) to study the main effect of bandwagon effect in Instagram native advertising on consumer behavior, 2) to study the main effect of product type in Instagram native advertising on consumer behavior, and 3) to examine the interaction effect of bandwagon effect and product type in Instagram native advertising on consumer behavior.

Native Advertising

With the term native advertising being relatively new, as it was conceptualized in 2011 (Lee, Kim, & Ham, 2016), various definitions and approaches to defining this discipline can be found.

According to Lee et al. (2016) the term native advertising can be defined in a narrow perspective as well as in a broader sense. Native advertising within the narrow perspective can be defined as "a term used to describe any paid advertising that takes the specific form and appearance of editorial content from the publisher itself" (Wojdynski & Evans, 2016, p. 157). Under this specific definition, native advertising may not be seen as a completely new discipline due to its resemblance to older marketing strategies like advertorials in print formats (Campbell & Marks, 2015).

Under the broader approach of defining the term native advertising, it can be described as advertising, which is cohesive with the editorial, resembling the overall design as well as exhibiting the same behavior as the source content, in order to create a sense of belonging of the advertisement in the eye of consumers and to establish engagement between product or brand and the consumer (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2019).

The core similarity between the narrow and broad perspectives on native advertising then lies in the resemblance of the advertising content with and the implementation in the editorial content.

Native advertising has become widely adapted on social media platforms, which can be explained through several reasons. While implementation of native advertising may differ between different social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or LinkedIn, the lessened intrusiveness plays a major role in its rapid spreading over those channels (Wojdynski, 2016). Fulgoni and Lipsman (2014) elaborate on the function of feeds within social media, which make it easy for the consumer to be exposed to native advertising without having to change their typical usage. Adding on to this is the large amount of time spent on these platforms, being heightened through the incorporation of mobile devices in the consumers usage patterns. Further, the vast user bases of social media platforms provide large enough potential targeting audiences to make native advertising profitable for brands to advertise in the first place (Fulgoni & Lipsman, 2014).

Important to mention is that these ads, while featuring the same aesthetics as the surrounding content, also include the same functions as any other post on the platform, meaning that these native ads can be liked, commented, and shared in the same way, thus making Instagram as a social media platform a congruent carrier for native advertising.

Social Media Marketing Communications

Communication is an important aspect of marketing, encompassing many aspects in order heighten marketing effectiveness. As Kotler, Keller, and Chernev (2021). elaborate, for today's marketing, it does not suffice to create a good product with good price in the right place anymore. Marketing communications needs to be implemented in order to act as a mediator for companies to express information regarding their products, with this concept becoming more complex with time. To this day, marketing communications as a concept has not been uniformly defined. However, there is a vast number of approaches, trying to define it from different perspectives.

Egan (2015, p. 32) in his work defines marketing communications as "the means by which a supplier of goods, services, values and/or ideas represents itself to its target audience with the goal of stimulating dialogue, leading to better commercial or other relationships." He further states, that marketing communication in itself is constantly evolving alongside broader factors like development of media, budget and consumer attitudes.

Kitchen, Brignell, Lit, and Jones (2004) express this change in marketing communications from two sides, from the marketing side as well as from the consumer side. Furthermore, digital developments have led to more customizable forms of communication, enabling targeted, personalized, and more responsive forms of communicating with consumers (Fill, 2011). This illustrates a shift from simple one-way communication with clear roles of sender and receiver, merely transmitting messages as information with persuasive intents, to two-way communication. Another key aspect of interaction on social media sites are features implemented into most platform structures. The interaction through- and influence of virality metrics on social media is a topic, which by now is in the eye of many researchers. These metrics are created to represent overall user interest and virality of the message by displaying aggregate numbers of overall consumers interactions with it (Kim, 2018). Prior research suggests that these interactive features in form of metrics can serve as cues for inferring other consumers attitudes toward content (Lee-Won, Abo, Na, & White, 2016). Sundar (2008) states, that those cues can activate so called bandwagon heuristics, referring to how consumers base their perceptions and attitudes alongside the reaction of other people. Former studies by various researchers exhibit that those bandwagon effects via virality metrics do in fact have significant impacts on consumer perceptions and behavior (Lee & Sundar, 2013; Lee-Won et al., 2016; Sundar, Xu, & Oeldorf-Hirsch, 2009).

Researchers, however, also argue that social media as an interactive form of media is not automatically superior to other, more traditional types of media serving as a vehicle for marketing communications, but that effectiveness of it is also determined in part by the congruence between message, advertising object and media vehicle (Calder & Malthouse, 2008).

Consumer Behavior

With the shift in global markets moving from a product-driven perspective to a more consumer-driven perspective (Kitchen et al., 2004), it now is more imperative than ever for marketers and researchers alike, to understand consumer behavior. With the ongoing emergence of digital environments

for consumers and its integration into their everyday life, this becomes even more important.

Consumer behavior describes a vast field of research. Solomon (2020, p. 22) describes it as "the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires." As he further elaborates, consumer behavior as a concept has undergone a shift from being seen as only as the interaction of producer and consumer at the time of acquisition to an ongoing process of consumption. Adding to that, consumer behavior explains the decision making involved to spend the consumers available resources (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019).

To understand consumer behavior, the underlying concepts of consumer perception, attitude, persuasion knowledge, heuristic processing, the decision-making process and the concept of involvement need to be reviewed.

Kotler and Armstrong (2021, p. 172) describe perception as "a process by which people select, organize, and interpret information to form a meaningful picture of the world," and as a major contributing psychological factor influencing consumer behavior. Solomon (2020) defines it as a process in which external stimuli are recognized and interpreted by the human senses. Perception, however, is highly subjective and varies between different consumers, as individuals receive and interpret stimuli differently (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021). Underling this, perception of consumers is not steered by the external stimuli alone, but also by the inherent needs and values or experiences of each individual consumer (Moutinho, 1987; Solomon, 2020).

One of the paramount hurdles to understand consumer behavior is represented by understanding consumer attitudes, as consumer attitude is one antecedent of consumer intentions (Solomon, 2020). Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019) define consumer attitude as a certain predisposition which is learned in order to behave in a consistent way towards a given object, may it be favorable or unfavorable. This definition is congruent with the definition by Baron and Byrne (1987), describing attitude as a general and lasting evaluation of many things, including people, objects, or issues. Katz (1960) details that attitudes exist to fulfill certain functions, constructing four functions in total within his functional theory of attitudes. The utilitarian function therefor

relates to reward and punishment regarding objects which ca create satisfaction or displeasure. The value-expressive function is related to the consumer's attitude formation via his or her self-concept and what the attitude object reveals about the consumer him- or herself. The ego-defensive function serves to protect consumers of threats or feelings and the knowledge-function applies when a consumer logs for meaning or structure when confronting a new product for example (Katz, 1960).

The persuasion knowledge contains the consumers' beliefs regarding the advertisement tactics used in the persuasion attempt. These cognitions strongly impact the attitude and behavioral intentions of the consumers. As Friestad and Wright (1994) put it, consumers draw conclusions on the use of tactics in persuasive attempts, disengaging the advertisement or discrediting it. Further, consumers assess aspects like effectiveness, appropriateness, or fairness, further impacting consumers' attitudes. There are, however, restraints to the activation of cognition on the side of the consumer. Campbell and Kirmani (2000) label these as the cognitive capability and accessibility of the agent's motive.

Under the heuristic-systematic model of information processing, devised by Chaiken (1980), consumers receive and moreover process persuasive messages. It further describes changes in attitude of consumers towards an attitude object. Two types of information processing can be differentiated. The heuristic type of information processing describes the formation or change of attitudes through easily accessible information, such as just the source of the persuasive message itself or other heuristic cues (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994).

The former type, in general, is more time consuming and requires more effort and motivation than the latter. Further, systematic processing of information is limited through the consumers cognitive capabilities and resources (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994; Sundar, 2008). When looking at the consumers perspective in a digital environment, heuristic cues can be labels and headings, virality metrics, such as the number of likes, comments or shares, or the time of the original posting (Go, Jung, & Wu, 2014; Lee-Won et al., 2016; Wojdynski, 2016).

Apart from consumer perceptions and attitudes, consumer decision making is also a paramount factor in the overall consumer behavior. Solomon (2020) describes consumer

decision making as problem solving. Going further into detail, Lehto, et al. (2012) define consumer decision making as the different steps of information processing, which consumers go through, to make decisions. An important factor in consumer decision making and other aspects of consumer behavior is consumer involvement. Zaichkowsky (1985) defines consumer involvement as the perceived relevance of an object, which a consumer bestows on it, according to the consumer's needs, values, and interests.

Solomon (2020) states that the consumers degree of involvement determines how he or she evaluates and chooses a product, with motivation being the determining factor of level of involvement itself. He further elaborates, that different factors may influence the creation of involvement. Furthermore, involvement itself can be separated into three distinct types of involvement. Product involvement describes the consumers interest in a product. Consumers' product involvement strongly depends on the perceived risk, fearing negative consequences from his or her choice. This perceived risk comes in many forms, such as monetary risk or social risk. Another determinant of product involvement, as stated by Park and Moon (2003), is product type. Utilitarian products, being characterized through function and performance, lead product involvement to be facilitated through problem solving. Hedonic products on the other hand facilitate product involvement through the ability to provide feeling or pleasure, with the consumer experience in the foreground. Some Products may possess both utilitarian and hedonic characteristics at the same time (Hirschman, 1980).

Message involvement, according to Solomon (2020), surrounds media vehicles and their different abilities and characteristics with which they can influence the consumers motivation to heighten the attention. Situational involvement refers to the consumers engagement in the environment of consumption of products or services, may that be a store or a website (Solomon, 2020).

From the literature review, these following hypotheses can be propounded.

1. Bandwagon effect in Instagram native advertising has a main effect on consumer behavior.

2. Product type in Instagram native advertising has a main effect on consumer behavior.

3. Bandwagon effect and product type in Instagram native advertising have an interaction effect on consumer behavior.

Method

This research used an experimental approach via a 2x2 between subjects, factorial design. Its objective laid in examining the impacts of bandwagon effect and product type in Instagram native advertising on Generation Z consumer's behavior.

The independent variables were bandwagon effect and product type. The dependent variable was consumer behavior, with its sub-variables, ad intrusiveness, attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, purchase intention and intention to share. To clarify the research terminology for this paper, the main variables are operationalized as follows.

Bandwagon effect is a form of heuristic information processing, using shortcuts to evaluate objects, which relies on the collective opinion of others (Sundar, 2008). For this research study, bandwagon effect is based on quantitative bandwagon cues, such as virality metrics (Go et al., 2014; Sundar, 2008). In this study, high and low virality metrics through differing amounts of likes and comments on the Instagram native advertisement were chosen.

Product type refers to a group of products or services which display similar characteristics. For this research, product type was split into utilitarian and hedonic products. Utilitarian products are characterized through function and performance, are goal oriented, and can aid in problem solving as well as pose practical applications (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000). For this research, a notebook computer represented utilitarian products. Hedonic products are related to consumers' enjoyment. They are characterized through the ability to provide feelings and enjoyment, focusing on consumer experience (Hirschman, 1980). For this study, this product type was represented by perfumes.

Consumer behavior is defined as a process encompassing the selection, purchase and use of products, services, ideas, or experiences of individuals in order to satisfy needs as well as desires (Solomon, 2019). In this study, consumer behavior after being exposed to Instagram native advertising consists of five sub-variables, ad intrusiveness, attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the brand, purchase intention and intention to share.

One hundred and twenty-nine students from a large university in Bangkok, Thailand, aged between 18 and 24, were selected as participants for the experiment. The participants were randomly separated into four different treatment groups, each group (A1-A4) receiving a different treatment.

Treatment

Due to the reliance of this research on the 2x2 factorial design, four treatments were created. Thus, after separating the participants into four groups, each group was confronted with a different treatment. The participants in group A1 received the treatment of an Instagram native advertisement showcasing a utilitarian product with a high number of likes and comments. The participants in group A2 viewed an Instagram native advertisement showing a hedonic product with a high number of likes and comments. Group A3 was confronted with an Instagram native advertisement of a utilitarian product with a low number of likes and comments, while the participants in group A4 were shown an Instagram native advertisement of a hedonic product with a low number of likes and comments.

Stimulus Development and Selection

As bandwagon effect is based on virality metrics in social media environments, different numbers of likes were chosen for the groups A1 and A2 as well as for A3 and A4, according to high bandwagon effect and low bandwagon effect. Various researchers used likes in the high hundreds to high thousands for the high bandwagon effect treatment, with comments, if investigated, in the high tens to low hundreds (Ai, Li, & Ding, 2020; Johnson & Hong, 2020; Li, Vafeiadis, Xiao, & Yang, 2020; Smakova, 2017). Numbers of likes and comments for the low bandwagon effect treatment in most studies did not exceed ten likes or comments (Ai et al., 2020; Johnson & Hong, 2020; Li et al., 2020). According to these precedents, the number of likes and comments for the high bandwagon treatment was chosen to be 6.429 likes and 98 comments. The numbers for the low bandwagon treatment were chosen to be 7 likes and 1 comment. A pretest with a sample of 15 students was conducted to test the feasibility of those numbers. Results show that these numbers are indeed seen as feasible and thus were chosen to represent the treatment of high and low bandwagon effects.

As product type was split into utilitarian and hedonic products for this research study, pretests were conducted to find a representing product for each product type. The representing products were chosen through asking a student sample consisting of 16 students to identify 5 product categories, which in their opinion best fit the description of utilitarian and hedonic products, respectively. According to the results of the pretest, a notebook computer was chosen to represent the utilitarian product type in this research study. The most chosen product category for hedonic product was perfumes.

Instagram Native Advertisement and Brand Selection

For the experiment to resemble an Instagram in-feed native advertisement, a screenshot of the Instagram feed served as basis. All visual cues depicted resembled a standard Instagram in-feed native advertisement, Product pictures were adopted according to the chosen product. The number of likes and comments were altered according to the bandwagon effect.

As Instagram profiles require a brand name, a brand name had to be selected. For brand familiarity not to affect the results of the experiment, a fictitious brand name was chosen. To limit the possibility of different brand names affecting the participants, a pretest was conducted to choose one fictitious brand name to fit both notebook computers and perfumes. A pretest was conducted with a sample of 15 students. Five different fictional brand names were created through a random brand name generator. The results show, that the brand name "Huesity" was chosen by the sample group as the best fit notebook computers and perfumes.

Questionnaire and Variable Measurement

For the questionnaire, Ad intrusiveness was measured using a five-point Likert scale adapted from Li, Edwards, and Lee (2002) with a reliability score of .90. The participants were asked to state their level of agreement (1 meaning strongly disagree and 5 meaning strongly agree). For attitude towards the ad, the five-point semantic differential scale with four items, adapted from Holbrook and Batra (1987) was used with a reliability score of .78. The participants were asked to rate their degree of agreement, ranging from one, as strongly negative, to five, as strongly positive. To measure attitude toward the ad, a five-point semantic differential scale with five items,

developed by Spears and Singh (2004) was employed. The reliability score was .85. Participants were asked to respond according to their degree of agreement, ranging from one, as strongly negative, to five, as strongly positive. A five-point semantic differential scale with five items, adapted from Spears and Singh (2004) with a reliability score of .87, was used to measure purchase intention. Participants were asked to respond according to their degree of agreement, ranging from one, as strongly negative, to five, as strongly positive. Intention to share was measured using a five-point Likert scale adapted from Chen and Lee (2014) with a reliability score of .92. The participants were asked to rate their agreement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Research Procedure

The research participants were 129 undergraduate students. Before conducting the experiment, participants were randomly divided into four groups according to the Treatments A1, A2, A3 and A4. Each Group consisted of at least 30 participants. The data were collected in April 2022. After joining the *Zoom Cloud Meetings* online sessions, the original objective purpose was held back, and the researchers and assistants were introduced as market researchers doing research before launching a new product. The structure of the research questionnaire was explained to the participants, followed by the distribution of links to the Google Form questionnaires according to the preset treatment groups of the participants. Afterwards, the participants were given 20 minutes to fill out and complete the questionnaire. After completion, the researchers debriefed them on the circumstances of the study, and collected the filled-out answer sheets on the Google Form application. Further, the participants were thanked and rewarded for their participation through either one extra credit for the class or the possibility to win one of e-vouchers for a shopping application.

After the collection of the necessary data, they were coded and analyzed by utilizing the SPSS program. To test the main effects, an independent samples *t*-test was employed. Univariate analysis of variance was used to examine interaction effects. Further, to test the relationships among the dependent sub-variables, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used. For the analysis, the significance level was appointed at .05.

Results

One hundred and twenty-nine questionnaires were collected from the participants for this research. All the collected questionnaires could be used for analysis. Group A1 consisted of 32 participants. Group A2 comprised of 35 participants. Group A3 included 30 participants and group A4 consisted of 32 participants. In terms of gender, female was the majority of participants with 103 out of 129 total participants, accounting for 79.9%. In terms of age, 110 of participants were aged between 18 and 21 years, accounting for 85.4%, with 19 participants or 14.6% being 22 years old or older.

Manipulation Check

To make sure that the participants perceived the manipulation of the independent variable, bandwagon effect, correctly, five-point Likert scale was implemented into the questionnaires (two items; $\alpha = .79$). To see whether the manipulation of bandwagon effect was successful, an independent samples *t*-test was used.

The results show a statistically significant difference of mean scores from participants exposed to the high bandwagon effect ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.79$) and participants exposed to the low bandwagon effect ($M = 1.56$, $SD = 0.71$) ($t[127] = 13.76$, $p < .05$), showing that the manipulation for bandwagon effect was successful. To check whether the notebook computer was perceived as a utilitarian product and whether the perfume was perceived as a hedonic product, two five-point semantic differential scales, which were adopted from Voss Spangenberg, and Grohmann (2003), were implemented into the questionnaires A1 and A3 as well as into A2 and A4, respectively. The participants of groups A1 and A3 assessed four utilitarian dimensions of notebook computers (4 items; $\alpha = .82$) while the groups A2 and A4 evaluated four hedonic dimensions of perfumes (4 items; $\alpha = .89$).

To analyze the results, one sample *t*-tests were used. For the utilitarian dimension, the mean score for notebook computer was 4.50, showing a statistically significant difference to the test value 3 ($t[61] = 16.54$, $p < .05$). For the hedonic dimension of perfume, the mean score was 4.22, also showing a statistically significant difference to the test value 3.0 ($t[66] = 12.72$, $p < .05$). This leads to the conclusion that the notebook computer was perceived as a utilitarian product and that

the perfume was perceived as a hedonic product.

Main Effects of Bandwagon Effect on Consumer Behavior

To test Hypothesis 1, "bandwagon effect in Instagram native advertising has a main effect on consumer behavior," independent samples t-test was employed. The result for intention to share shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the scores for high bandwagon effect ($M = 2.02$, $SD = 0.75$) and low bandwagon effect ($M = 1.72$, $SD = 0.83$) ($t[127] = 2.15$, $p < .05$).

Contrary, no statistically significant differences for the sub-variable ad intrusiveness between high bandwagon effect ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 0.99$) and low bandwagon effect ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 0.79$) ($t[127] = -.17$, $p > .05$) was found. Similarly, there was no statistically significant difference between high bandwagon effect ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.41$) and low bandwagon effect ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.60$) ($t[127] = 1.85$, $p > .05$) for attitude towards the ad. Further, no statistically significant difference for attitude towards the brand between high bandwagon effect ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.62$) and low bandwagon effect ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.79$) ($t[127] = 1.16$, $p > .05$). Lastly, no statistically significant difference for purchase intention between high bandwagon effect ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 0.73$) and low bandwagon effect ($M = 2.04$, $SD = 0.79$) ($t[127] = 1.36$, $p > .05$) were established as well.

In summary, this research found that bandwagon effect only has a main effect on intention to share, while there is no main effect of bandwagon effect on ad intrusiveness, attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the brand and purchase intention. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is partially supported.

Main Effects of Product Type on Consumer Behavior

To test Hypothesis 2, "product type in Instagram native advertising has a main effect on consumer behavior," independent samples t-test was employed. The result for purchase intention shows a statistically significant difference between the utilitarian product ($M = 1.99$, $SD = 0.69$) and the hedonic product ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 0.80$) ($t[127] = -2.12$, $p < .05$).

In opposition, the result for ad intrusiveness shows no statistically significant difference between the utilitarian product ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 0.95$) and hedonic product ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 0.84$) ($t[127] = 1.19$, $p > .05$).

Moreover, the result for attitude towards the ad neither shows a statistically significant difference between utilitarian product ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 0.54$) and hedonic product ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.49$) ($t[127] = -1.23$, $p > .05$). Similarly, the result for attitude towards the brand does not support a statistically significant difference between utilitarian product ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.79$) and hedonic product ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.62$) ($t[127] = -1.16$, $p > .05$). Lastly, no statistically significant difference for intention to share was found between utilitarian product ($M = 1.81$, $SD = 0.80$) and hedonic product ($M = 1.94$, $SD = 0.81$) ($t[127] = -.87$, $p > .05$).

In conclusion, the independent variable, product type, has a main effect on purchase intention, not on ad intrusiveness, attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the brand or intention to share, however. Thus, the results partially support Hypothesis 2.

Interaction Effects of Bandwagon Effect and Product Type on Consumer Behavior

To test Hypothesis 3, "bandwagon effect and product type have an interaction effect on consumer behavior," Univariate Analysis of Variance was employed to test interaction effects of bandwagon effect sand product type on consumer behavior.

Results of the analysis show that interaction between bandwagon effect and product type on ad intrusiveness is not statistically significant ($F[125] = 0.79$, $p > .05$). For attitude towards the ad, the result from Univariate ANOVA shows no statistically significant interaction effects between bandwagon effect and product type ($F[125] = 0.23$, $p > .05$). Further, the result from Univariate ANOVA shows no statistically significant interaction effect between bandwagon effect and product type on attitude towards the ad ($F[125] = 0.36$, $p > .05$). Moreover, Univariate ANOVA for purchase intention does not show a statistically significant interaction effect between bandwagon effect and product type either ($F[125] = 0.79$, $p > .05$). Similarly, the result from Univariate ANOVA for intention to share, does not show a statistically significant interaction effect between bandwagon effect and product type ($F[125] = 0.79$, $p > .05$).

In conclusion, no statistically significant interaction effects of bandwagon effect and product type were found for any of the dependent sub-variables. Thus, Hypothesis 3 must be rejected.

Discussion

For the discussion, this section is separated into three parts, comprised of the main effect of bandwagon effect on consumer behavior, main effect of product type on consumer behavior, and interaction effect of bandwagon effect and product type on consumer behavior.

Main Effect of Bandwagon Effect on Consumer Behavior

The results show no main effect of bandwagon effect on ad intrusiveness (see Figure 1). While Lee et al. (2016) state that the effectiveness of native advertisements is dependent on whether consumers perceive the ad as intrusive, this result mirrors the findings of Li et al. (2020). Like the results of this research study, no main effect of bandwagon effect was found on perceived intrusiveness of the ad. This can potentially be explained through a couple of factors. Persuasion knowledge of the participants could be activated when confronted with the sponsored posts, as described by Friestadt and Wright (1994), mitigating any effect which the bandwagon effect could have on ad intrusiveness due to a heightened perception of persuasion. Adding on to this is the potentially high media literacy of the participants in this study, them being matriculated at a faculty of communication arts. Another mitigating factor for this result can be seen in brand credibility. Li et al. (2020) state that bandwagon effect in combination with brands with high credibility does have an impact on consumers' psychological reactance, going hand in hand with the findings of Li and Sundar (2018). However, a high bandwagon effect from brands which possess low credibility, does not suffice to positively change consumers' negative perceptions. As a completely unfamiliar, fictional brand with no prior perceived credibility among the participants was used for this study, this can potentially explain that bandwagon effect had no effect on the ad intrusiveness in combination with the activation of persuasion knowledge among the participants

Figure 1 Mean Scores of Consumer Behavior for Bandwagon Effect
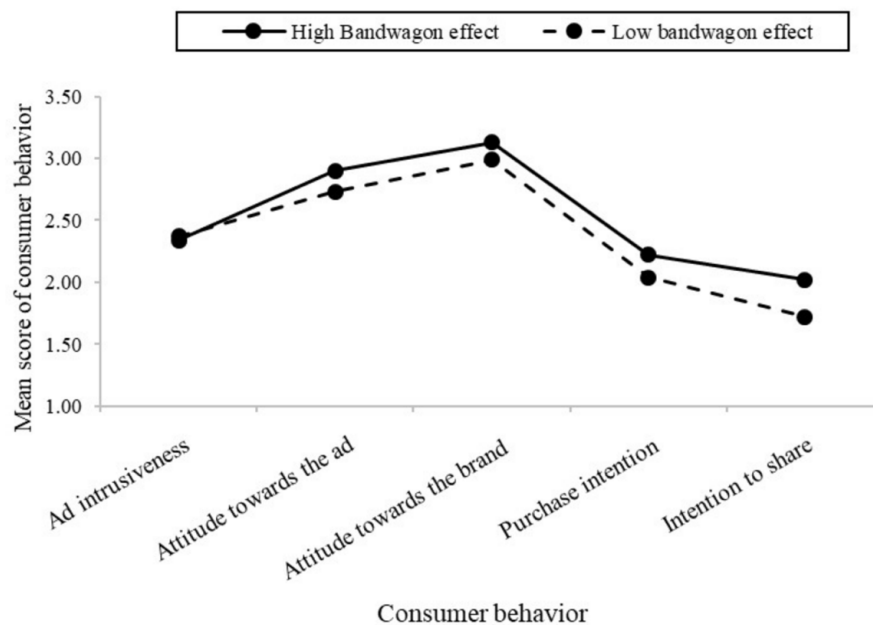
Results for attitude towards the ad show no statistically significant difference between high bandwagon effect and low bandwagon effect either (see Figure 1). This result goes hand in hand with the research findings of Li et al. (2020) of bandwagon effect having no effect on attitude towards the ad.

Various potential reasons for this result can be discussed. Similar to ad intrusiveness, the possibility of the participants activating their persuasion knowledge when confronted with the sponsored post cannot be out ruled, potentially affecting the attitudes of consumers towards the ad, as stated by Friestadt and Wright (1994).

Further, while Instagram lends itself to consumers processing information via heuristics, due to the vast amount of information flow, the products depicted in this study both were high-involvement products. As notebook computers and perfumes both can be classified as high involvement products, under the Heuristic-systematic model devised by Chaiken (1980), consumers will tend to rely on the systematic type of information processing, less relying on heuristic cues.

Due to the high risk, monetary, functional, or social, a high product involvement of the consumers with high information seeking motivation must be assumed, as described by Solomon (2020). It is likely that participants in this study were less affected by the heuristic cue of bandwagon effect than the information provided in the Instagram sponsored post and based their evaluations of the ad on this, due to the nature of Instagram, limited information.

Further, other information of the ad, like layout, style or product depictions can affect attitude towards the ad, as it is an evaluation of the advertisement in its entirety (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). This most likely is intensified by the nature of Instagram being a picture-heavy social media platform and thus the bandwagon effect only being a very small determinant of consumers' evaluation of these specific sponsored ads of high-involvement products, its impact being overshadowed by the consumers' evaluations of other parts of this sponsored post.

Moving to attitude towards the brand, the result does not demonstrate a statistically significant difference between high bandwagon effect and low bandwagon effect (see Figure 1). Once again can be assumed that the activation of persuasion knowledge at least in part diminishes any measurable impact of bandwagon effect on the attitude towards the brand. Another reason, which can be given to explain this result, is the fact that the participants in this research study were completely unfamiliar with the brand shown in the experiment. According to Gardner (1985), given that a consumer is unfamiliar with a brand, their evaluation of the advertisement can strongly impact their evaluation of the brand as well. This condition also applies in this research study. Neither the brand for the utilitarian product notebook computer, nor the brand for the hedonic product perfume exist in real marketplaces. For this study, similar to the findings of Darrel (1987) and the transformational effect, it could mean that, since the participants are unfamiliar with the brand, they base their attitude towards the brand on their attitude towards the ad as well. Consequently, their holistic evaluation of the

sponsored ad with the provided information, layout, style, and product depictions here again potentially diminishes any significant impact of bandwagon effect on attitude towards the ad.

Moving to the sub-variable purchase intention, the results do not support any significant difference between high bandwagon effect and low bandwagon effect (see Figure 1). This finding is congruent with prior findings by Li et al. (2020) showing no impact on behavioral intentions but contradicts prior studies by Anantharaman, Prashar, and Vijay (2022) stating an existing influence between bandwagon effect and purchase intention. This discrepancy can potentially be explained in multiple ways. While the study by Li et al. (2020) and this research study employed experimental research with different treatments of bandwagon effect, the study by Aantharaman et al. (2022) employed a questionnaire to generate results with no differentiation between high and low bandwagon effect.

Another explanation for the result showcased in this study can be offered due to the product involvement. Both the utilitarian product notebook computer and the hedonic product perfume are high involvement products, thus creating a high information seeking motivation among consumers as stated by Solomon (2020) with heuristic cues like bandwagon effect moving into the background. Instead, the participants might have evaluated different aspects of the product, like congruence of self-expression or product design with the perfume or functions and specifications of the notebook laptop, disregarding the heuristic cues of amount of likes ad comments, might they be high or low. In addition, missing necessity of conducting a purchase at the time of the experiment can explain this result as well. Another factor for purchase intention for high involvement products like notebook computer or perfume, is brand familiarity, as MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski (1991) state that familiar brands generate more motivation to generate attention among consumers for information processing in advertisements in comparison to unfamiliar brands.

Lastly, when looking at the results from the sub-variable intention to share, a statistically significant difference between high bandwagon effect and low bandwagon effect can be found (see Figure 1), which contradicts with the findings of Li et al. (2020), stating that no significant differences between high bandwagon effect and low bandwagon effect for behavioral intentions were found. However, prior research on this matter showed that bandwagon cues can,

in fact, impact the consumers' behavioral intentions. These prior findings are linked to the field of credibility judgement. Research by Xu (2013) indicates that news with high virality metrics attached to it are perceived as more credible and thus consumers are more likely to interact with it. This goes hand in hand with the findings of de Vries (2019), stating that users of social media, in part, form their credibility judgement of social media accounts on the amount which posts receive. Xu (2013) additionally indicates that this formation of credibility judgement is especially prevalent when consumers are confronted with a low credibility source. Additionally, as Li and Sundar (2018) express, that bandwagon cues not only affect cognitive abilities of consumers, but also emotional responses, weakening consumers' reactance to persuasive messages. As very little information about the fictional new brand was given to the participants in this study, the participants could have based their credibility judgement of the given information and brand on the amount of likes and comments given according to the treatments, thus explaining the statistical significance between high and low bandwagon treatments for the sub-variable of intention to share.

**Main Effect of Product Type on Consumer Behavior**

For ad intrusiveness, no significant difference between the utilitarian product type notebook computer and the hedonic type perfume was found (see Figure 2). This finding stands contrary to the findings of Zhao, Yang, and Wang (2017) demonstrating a statistically significant difference of advertising intrusiveness between sponsored posts with hedonic products and utilitarian products, the sponsored post with hedonic products being perceived as less intrusive. Instagram can very well be seen as a more hedonic social media platform due to its focus on activities and enjoyment. As advertisements consistent with their editorial content could lead to less perceived intrusiveness (Edwards, Li, & Lee, 2002), the result of this research study could be explained otherwise. As treatments for both the utilitarian product notebook computer and the hedonic product perfume both share basically identical layout of

the Instagram native advertisement, this could remedy the effects of congruence between sponsored post and editorial content, as Instagram relies heavily on its visual aspects (Linaschke, 2011). The advertisements for both product types in the experiment featured the same overall layout, font, type of product depiction and color scheme. The only differentiating aspects were the shown product and the text itself. While the manipulation check for product type was successful, it could be assumed that those differences alone were not enough to affect the participants' perception of ad intrusiveness.

In terms of attitude towards the ad, the results show no statistically significant difference between the utilitarian product notebook computer and the hedonic product perfume (see Figure 2). This finding stands in contrast to prior research of interplay of content type and product type on consumers response to native advertising by Kim et al. (2019) stating that utilitarian products in native advertising outperform hedonic products implemented in native advertisements, mirroring the results of Lu, W. Chang, and H. Chang (2014) when researching consumers' attitudes of sponsored blog recommendations. They reason that this result was due to the features of utilitarian products being easier to evaluate by the consumers.

However, those prior research studies do not reflect the social media environment of Instagram as a generally hedonic platform, as other online platforms were used to conduct the research. Kim et al. (2017), while researching product type and spokesperson in native advertising on Instagram, found that native advertisements of hedonic products had a more positive influence on consumers' perceived congruence with the social media platform Instagram than utilitarian products.

For this study, it could be assumed that this perceived congruence between the hedonic product perfume and Instagram as a more hedonic social media platform (Yang & Jiang, 2021) mitigated the potential difference in evaluation of the advertisement between the utilitarian product notebook computer and the hedonic product perfume.

Figure 2 Mean Scores of Consumer Behavior for Product Type
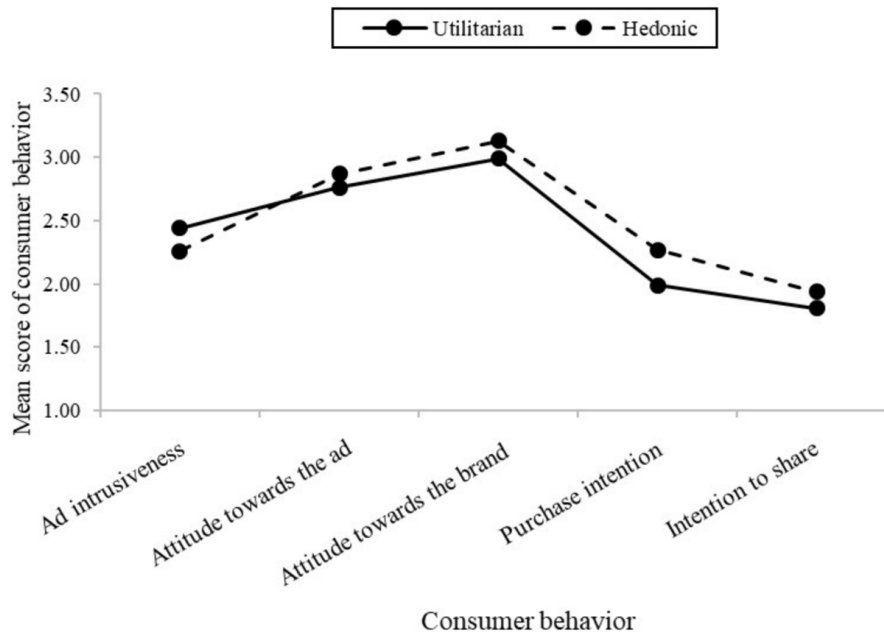
Moving to the sub-variable attitude towards the brand, the results show no statistically significant difference between the utilitarian product notebook computer and the hedonic product perfume (see Figure 2). This result is consistent with the findings of Santhadkolkarn and Anantachart (2017) whose results show no difference between utilitarian and hedonic products on attitude towards the brand either. This could be explained through both the utilitarian product notebook computer and the hedonic product perfume being high involvement products and the heightened perceived risk accompanying those type of products. Perceived risk for these high involvement products can have the dimensions of perceived financial risk and functional risk for the notebook computer as a utilitarian product as well as social and psychological risk for perfume as a hedonic product (Solomon, 2020). With the limited information provided in the Instagram sponsored post, the participants were given little information to counter the perceived risk. It seems plausible, that the high mean scores, again, can be explained through the transformational effect, resembling the findings of Darrel (1987), with the participants basing their attitude towards the brand on their attitude towards the ad. Adding on to that is the factor of brand familiarity. As the brand for both products in this research study is fictional, the participants had no prior brand experience, and according to Gardner (1985), it is likely that the participants based their attitude towards the brand on their attitude towards the

shown ad. To reduce risk due to little information and an unknown brand, the participants would have to search for more information to base their evaluation of the brand on (Ross, 1975) or turn to brands, which they are already familiar with and possess brand awareness.

Following up with purchase intention, a significant difference between the utilitarian product notebook computer and the hedonic product perfume was found, showing that the participants had a higher purchase intention towards the perfume than to the notebook computer (see Figure 2). This result can again be led back to both products in this study being high involvement products. As stated before, with increasement in product involvement, the perceived risk increases as well as other thought processes increase as well (Solomon, 2020). While the perceived risk of both notebook computer and perfume can be assumed as high, the perceived risk itself can differ. Mainly, the perceived financial risk for notebook computer is higher than the perceived risk for perfume. It could be assumed that the students serving as participants in this group are much keener to accept the in comparison lower financial risk of purchasing the perfume then they are to accept the higher financial risk of buying a notebook computer, given a certain risk level. Another explanation for this can be found in the participants relying more on visual aspects for the hedonic product, as opposed to the utilitarian product, for which consumers would need more additional information to form a decision, as

demonstrated by the findings of Liao, To, Wong, Palvia, and Kakhki (2016).

Further, as Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann (1983) state, purchase intention is dependent on the consumers level of interest in the product. With the participants being matriculated students, most of them likely already possess a notebook computer and thus do not have a high level of interest in the product. According to studies by Borgave and Chaudhari (2010) adolescent consumers, both male and female generally possess more than one perfume for daily use, which could explain a different level of interest and thus the difference in purchase intention within this study. Another factor potentially explaining this result is ad-media congruence Aligning with the findings of Kim et al. (2017), Yang and Jiang (2021) found that ad-media congruence between hedonic products in in-feed native advertisements and Instagram as a hedonic social media platform positively impact consumers' behavioral intentions, thus explaining the difference in purchase intention between notebook computer and perfume for this study.

Lastly, the results in this study do not support any significant difference between utilitarian product and hedonic product regarding intention to share (see Figure 2). This finding stands in contrast to the results in the study of Yang and Jiang (2021) indicating that native advertisements of hedonic products create a higher consumer engagement on Instagram then native advertisements featuring utilitarian products.

The intention to share on Instagram is driven by the consumers' hedonic motivations, as stated by Järvinen et al. (2016), and is entertainment-driven (Pelletier, Krallman, Adams, & Hancock, 2020). However, hedonic motivations can be applied when engaging with utilitarian products.

Further, as stated by Linaschke (2011) native advertisements on Instagram are driven by visual appearances. One reason for the discrepancy of the findings could be led back to the limited visual differentiation between the utilitarian product of notebook computer and the hedonic product perfume. As the two advertisements, besides the featured product and minimal text are visually identical, it could be assumed that this led to the insignificant difference of sharing intention between the notebook computer and the perfume.

Interaction Effect of Bandwagon Effect and Product Type on Consumer Behavior

When looking at the interaction effect between the independent variables on consumer behavior, the results of this research study support no interaction effect between bandwagon effect and product type on either of the sub-variables of the dependent variable consumer behavior, ad intrusiveness, attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the brand, purchase intention or intention to share. Thus, instead of discussing each of the dependent sub-variables independently, the results for interaction effect between bandwagon effect and product type on consumer behavior will be discussed holistically.

While, to the researchers' knowledge, no prior research has been conducted on the interaction effect between bandwagon effect and product type, preceding literature on the heuristic-systematic model introduced by Chaiken (1980) can help in explaining the findings of this study. The Heuristic-systematic model of persuasion implies that while heuristic processing and systematic processing of persuasive messages can co-exist, when confronted with high involvement products, consumers tend to use systematic processing more to attain more information foe their evaluation. This in turn leads to a diminishing impact of heuristic cues under the heuristic information processing (Chaiken, 1987).

As stated before, both the chosen treatment products notebook computer and perfume must be considered as high involvement products. Thus, under consideration of the heuristic-systematic model of persuasion, it could be assumed that the participants used systematic processing rather than heuristic processing to gain as much informational knowledge about the presented native advertisement and featured products as possible, no matter if the product is considered a hedonic product or a utilitarian product. The use of the systematic processing route among the participants could have led to a diminishing effect of the bandwagon effect treatment for the utilitarian product notebook computer and the hedonic product perfume leading to an insignificant interaction effect between bandwagon effect and product type on all the sub-variables of consumer behavior.

This explanation matches with findings of Sundar et al. (2009) stating that product involvement mediates the relationship between bandwagon cues and behavior intentions of consumers.

One additional reason could be found in the inherent design of the Instagram native advertisement of the utilitarian product notebook

computer and the hedonic product perfume. With the social media platform Instagram being driven mainly through visual appearances, as stated by Linaschke (2011), it could be assumed that the inherently similar design of the native advertisement of notebook computer and perfume further contributed to the result of insignificant interaction effect between bandwagon effect and product type in Instagram native advertising on consumer behavior and its sub-variables ad intrusiveness, attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the brand, purchase intention and intention to share.

Research Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As this research study was conducted using experimental research method, the independent variables as well as the created treatments, including the same design pattern among all different treatments and a fictional brand name to achieve a high level of internal validity, this study might show a lower external validity.

Further, most of the participants selected for this experiment were female, with a low percentage of males participating. While the creation of stimuli was set to be gender neutral, this disparity in gender might have partially affected the research results. In order to strengthen research in this area in the future, these factors should be considered.

Practical implications

The results of this research study can be applied to real market environments in terms of social media marketing communications. However, while Instagram is used globally, those proposed approaches might not apply to all target groups regarding age and nationality, as this research paper solely focused on Thai Generation Z consumers.

As demonstrated in this study, a high number of likes and comments in a sponsored post on Instagram leads to higher behavioral engagement in form of sharing intention. Thus, among other factors, the generation of quantitative heuristic cues in form of bandwagon cues can be seen as imperative to achieve the sponsored post's full engagement potential with the desired target groups. The effectiveness of these heuristic cues however is most likely dependent on the product involvement and motivation of consumers and thus, this key point should be considered when creating social media strategies on Instagram for brand and product.

Even more, the results regarding the impact of product type on consumer behavior in social media environment can lead to more effective strategies among communicators and marketers. As the hedonic product (perfume) performed better on Instagram, being considered a hedonic social media platform than the utilitarian product, this research showcases the important factor of perceived ad-media congruency in social media environments among Thai consumers. Marketers should fit their marketing channel according to their product and advertisement attributes to achieve the maximum potential of their advertising strategies on social media. Should practitioners still want to market a utilitarian product via Instagram native advertising, they might want to try and focus not only on utilitarian characteristics, but also potential hedonic aspects of their product to achieve better ad-media congruency on the more hedonic social media platform Instagram.

Conclusion

As native advertising on social media platforms like Instagram, although fairly new, grows into one of the predominant forms of advertising, it is imperative to understand how it works in conjunctions with the provided social media metric functions, as well as how the type of product advertised impacts this discipline. By investigating the impacts of bandwagon effect and product type in Instagram native advertising among Thai Generation Z consumer's behavior, this research establishes that high bandwagon cues in form of likes and comments on Instagram affect the consumer's behavior in form of a heightened intention to share. Further, this paper highlights the importance of ad-media congruency, as the results show that the hedonic product advertised on Instagram lead to a higher purchase intention among consumers, compared to the utilitarian product. While the results of this research do not support any interaction effect between bandwagon effect and product type, the results lead to implications for practitioners. However, future research in this field is needed to further understand the interplay of the discipline native advertising in social media environments, bandwagon cues in form of virality metrics and product type.

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