

Factors affecting young people's avoidance of advertisements on social media platforms: A case study in Can Tho city

Ngoc Tran Luong¹, Thu Huong Tran^{2*}, Phu Tan Huynh³

¹Faculty of Marketing, School of Economics, Can Tho University, Campus II, 3/2 Street, Ninh Kieu Ward, Can Tho City, Vietnam

²Faculty of International Business, School of Economics, Can Tho University, Campus II, 3/2 Street, Ninh Kieu Ward, Can Tho City, Vietnam

³School of Economics, Can Tho University, Campus II, 3/2 Street, Ninh Kieu Ward, Can Tho City, Vietnam

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Abstract:

This study investigates the factors contributing to the avoidance of social media advertisements among young individuals in the Mekong delta region of Vietnam, employing reactance theory as the guiding theoretical framework. Data were collected from a sample of 232 young participants residing in Can Tho city, a pivotal urban centre within the Mekong delta. The analysis utilised descriptive statistics and a Chi-square test to evaluate the prevalence and behavioural patterns associated with social media advertising avoidance. To examine the influence of various determinants on ad avoidance, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted, focusing on five key constructs: goal impediment, ad clutter, negative experiences, privacy concerns, and perceived personalisation. Additionally, an independent sample T-test was performed to compare ad avoidance behaviours across the platforms of YouTube and Facebook. The results indicate that goal impediment, ad clutter, and negative experiences positively correlate with the avoidance of social media advertisements, with negative experiences emerging as the most significant determinant. Conversely, perceived personalisation negatively influences the relationship between ad avoidance and social media platforms, while privacy concerns do not exhibit a significant effect on ad avoidance among the youth in the Mekong delta. Furthermore, the findings reveal that advertisements on YouTube are more frequently avoided than those on Facebook. This study provides key insights for crafting marketing strategies that effectively reduce ad avoidance behaviours among consumers on social media platforms.

Keywords: ad avoidance, personalisation, reactance theory, social media advertising, Vietnam.

Classification numbers: 1.4, 2.2, 4.1

1. Introduction

Digital advertising has become an indispensable marketing tool worldwide, with spending in this field projected to account for nearly 70% of global advertising spending by 2023 [1]. Social media advertising is considered to be full of potential as users worldwide spend 38% of their online time using social media, with this figure even higher in some Asian countries [2]. The digital advertising space is becoming more competitive. To compete and advertise effectively, advertisers are increasingly monitoring people's online behaviour and using the information collected to display personalised content ads [3] and individually targeted ads [4, 5] to people. Online behavioural advertising benefits advertisers but raises privacy concerns and may lead to ad avoidance [4, 6]. The advancement of technology has made it increasingly easy for consumers to avoid ads [7, 8]. Therefore, research on user ad avoidance on social media is essential and a topic of interest to many researchers.

F. Celik, et al. (2022) [9] synthesised an integrative/conceptual framework of digital ad avoidance, which

encompasses antecedents, moderators, mediators, and outcomes related to ad avoidance, drawn from prominent studies over the past two decades. The factors identified have been examined across various contexts of online advertising, including social media advertising and personalised advertising, revealing complex interrelations. This study specifically aims to investigate the factors contributing to the avoidance of social media advertisements among young individuals in the Mekong delta region of Vietnam, employing reactance theory as the guiding theoretical framework - an extensively recognised theory for explaining advertising avoidance behaviour. Notably, the study incorporates key variables such as negative experiences, goal impediment, ad clutter, and perceived personalisation, which have been supported by influential research in the field, including works by C.H. Cho, et al. (2004) [10], L. Kelly, et al. (2010) [7], T.H. Baek, et al. (2012) [11], and W. Li, et al. (2016) [6]. These variables are posited to significantly impact ad avoidance behaviour on social media, thereby justifying their inclusion in the current model.

*Corresponding author: Email: kate.tranthuong@gmail.com

This study is expected to contribute three aspects both in academic and in practical insights to the advertising literature. Firstly, perceived personalisation was included in the model of social media ad avoidance variables. This element is crucial in proving that social media ads are relevant to young Vietnamese viewers in the particular environment. Perceptions of personalisation have been the subject of several prior research, particularly those dealing with online behavioural advertising or personalised advertisements [3, 6, 10]. In contrast to the majority of prior research, which has assumed or organised personalisation in social media ads, this study actually assesses how people perceive it, which sheds light on its effects [5, 12]. Our research indicates that there is a dearth of published works discussing the interplay between customisation, social media advertising's pervasiveness, and the phenomenon known as ad avoidance. Secondly, previous research on ad avoidance has mostly been conducted in developed countries such as the United States, Australia, China, etc. [6, 7, 9, 10]. However, users' behaviour is diverse and culture-dependent [12, 13]. Besides, the digital advertising market in Southeast Asia is growing rapidly, with a projected fivefold increase in scale over the next decade [11]. Therefore, this study was conducted in Vietnam, in the Mekong delta region, as a new contribution. Data were collected from a sample of 232 young individuals residing in Can Tho city, strategically situated in the heart of the Mekong delta region. Renowned as the economic nucleus of this region, Can Tho city boasts a dynamic and diverse young population, making it an ideal locale for examining socio-economic trends for the Mekong delta of Vietnam. Finally, the proliferation of social media ads and the rise of social commerce platforms have shifted the focus of academics and industry professionals towards digital channel engagement in recent years. Therefore, this study shows that major platforms (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) have varied percentages of ad avoidance. Advertisers looking to increase engagement and decrease ad fatigue can find practical recommendations in this comparison, which emphasises the significance of platform-specific methods.

This study aims to answer two central research questions: (a) to what degree do negative experiences, goal impediment, privacy concern, ad clutter, and perceived personalisation influence ad avoidance in a developing country, and (b) are there significant differences in ad avoidance between Facebook and YouTube ads? To address question (a), multiple linear regression was used to assess the relationship between ad avoidance and the influencing factors. For question (b), an independent sample t-test compared the mean values of two groups - those who frequently watch ads on Facebook and those who frequently watch ads on YouTube - to identify any significant differences between the platforms. The results of this study will shed light on key drivers of online video ad avoidance and provide actionable insights for enhancing online marketing efforts.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature; Section 3 outlines the analysis starting from the description of the dataset to the indexing method and the statistical model; Section 4 presents the findings of the analysis. Section 5 presents a discussion of our findings, including the academic and policy implications. From this, we derive conclusions and outline suggestions for future research, as well as the limitations of the study.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

2.1. Theoretical background

Ad avoidance

This section focuses on clarifying the concept of ad avoidance as adopted in this study, while the underlying psychological theory for the research model is discussed in the subsequent section. Ad avoidance refers to all actions taken by users to reduce the presence of advertising [9, 14]. C.H. Cho, et al. (2004) [10] identified three different aspects of ad avoidance: cognitive, emotional, and behavioural. Cognitive avoidance is related to consumers' thoughts and beliefs about advertising, and in this study, it is the tendency to ignore advertising, and not pay attention to advertising even though it is attractive. Emotional avoidance means disliking advertising, thinking that it would be better without it. The behavioural component of ad avoidance includes consumers' avoidance actions such as scrolling past, clicking to remove ads from the screen, or even exiting the website.

Some studies have addressed all three aspects of ad avoidance [6, 10, 15, 16], while others have focused only on the cognitive and behavioural aspects of avoidance [7, 17]. According to S. Youn, et al. (2019) [17], emotional ad avoidance compared to cognitive and behavioural avoidance is not yet clearly manifested through action. In their proposed model of social media ad avoidance, L. Kelly, et al. (2010) [7] mention two aspects of ad avoidance: cognitive and behavioural. Therefore, in this study, ad avoidance is measured in terms of cognition and behaviour.

Cognitive ad avoidance is a psychological defence mechanism, driven by consumers' beliefs about ads, which leads users to intentionally ignore advertisements to which they are exposed. Consumers engaging in cognitive avoidance remain exposed to the ad but shift their attention elsewhere. In this study, the cognitive dimension of ad avoidance is reflected by users disregarding ads and refraining from clicking on any advertisements on social media [7, 9, 18]. In terms of behavioural avoidance, it refers to any actions taken by consumers to avoid advertisements, aside from simply not viewing them [9]. Previous studies have identified various forms of ad avoidance behaviour, including skipping ads, scrolling past them, reporting them, and employing software or techniques to block ads [7, 9, 18]. This perspective provides a clearer and more realistic insight into how users on social

media engage in ad avoidance. To further explore the factors influencing consumer advertising avoidance, reactance theory is also examined.

Reactance theory

According to J.W. Brehm (1966) [19], psychological reactance is the phenomenon where an individual perceives a threat or loss of behavioural freedom and experiences a psychological reaction (or simply, reactance). When individuals perceive that their freedom is being affected by persuasive messages, they experience psychological reactance, which is an aversive motivational state [20], and they often tend to show an increasing preference for restricted behaviour or may engage in behaviour contrary to the desired behaviour [20]. For reactance to be elicited, one must possess the freedom to resist the threat [19]. Therefore, reactance is a response, not self-generated, as it only exists in the context of other agents prompting an individual to give up their freedom and comply with or eliminate the threat.

Threats to freedoms can be implied or directly expressed [19]. For example, in a group setting, when one observes others experiencing threats to their freedom, it can imply that one's own freedom may be at risk [21, 22]. Most participants in the survey of L. Kelly, et al. (2010) [7] avoided ads if they knew someone who had a negative experience or was warned by an authority figure. Besides, the importance of threatened freedom [19] and the number of freedoms threatened [23] will determine the degree of reactance. The perception of the intrusion of a threat depends on the intensity or focus of an individual's cognitive process [24]. Simply put, ads elicit a stronger reaction when they appear while an individual is focused on browsing social media. This characteristic also reflects the level of awareness and resistance of social media users to ads when they appear too frequently, hindering their goal of using social media. Personalised ads containing too much personal information can lead to consumer reactance and ad avoidance [25]. In this case, the degree of user reactance to ads depends on their concern for privacy and their ability to perceive the degree of personalization of ads.

On the other hand, reactance may decrease when threats come from powerful communication sources [26], when one is committed or has a tendency to interact in the future with the freedom threat [27], or when restoring freedom has negative implications for others [28] or for oneself [18]. When the pressure to comply or the costs for resisting the threat are greater than the motivation to restore freedom, people give up their freedom [20]. According to S.W. Edwards, et al. (2002) [24], a threat with a positive social impact elicits less reactance, and ads consistent with expectations and current cognitive activity may be considered to have a positive social impact and not be perceived as a threat.

The reactance theory explains why users resist unwanted ads during social media browsing. Unexpected ads interrupt

the user's social media experience and persuasive efforts in ads aimed at changing behaviour can lead to psychological reactance. The impact of advertising may not be as strong as other forms of direct coercion, but it still causes disruption and evokes a similar psychological reactance [26]. Importantly, users have the freedom to react to the advertisements they see, so avoiding advertisements to restore freedom is understandable.

2.2. Hypothesis

Goal impediment

Perceived goal impediment, which includes search hindrance, disruption, and distraction, has a significant positive impact on ad avoidance [9, 14]. Advertising appears without warning, interrupting the user's use of social networks, and leading to their psychological reactance [29]. Unsolicited ads that disrupt users' tasks [6] or are inconsistent with the website they are browsing [30] can lead to a tendency to avoid ads. T.V. Ho, et al. (2019) [31] mentioned that information on Facebook is displayed as data flow, and ads appear to disrupt this flow. F. Çelik, et al. (2022) [9] found that goal impediment positively impacts digital ad avoidance among telic users. According to Y. Chen, et al. (2023) [32] based on the psychological reactance theory, individuals experience discomfort when their independence is encroached upon, prompting them to seek to restore control. Ads that prevent users from accessing their desired content create frustration, leading them to circumvent the impediment [32]. Unanticipated advertisements hinder users from accessing their preferred content, prompting them to circumvent the impediment. This view is supported by S. Pahari, et al. (2024) [33], who identified significant links between goal impediment and both cognitive and behavioural ad avoidance among users of meta-platforms. As a result, the interruption of this flow by advertisements is considered an obstacle to achieving their goals. From this, the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H₁: Goal impediment has a positive impact on ad avoidance on social networks.

Ad clutter

According to M.T. Elliott, et al. (1998) [34], the term "perceived ad clutter" refers to a consumer's belief that the quantity of advertising within a particular medium is excessive. The number of liberties at stake affects the degree of reactance, usually in the same direction [20]. When users are exposed to too many ads, their experience is disrupted and the likelihood of ad avoidance increases [35, 36]. Y. Chen, et al. (2023) [33] proved to be a positive relationship between the perception of advertising clutter and the tendency to avoid them, which implies that advertisers might gain from streamlining their internet advertising, hence, fewer annoying ads will reach consumers, and they will be less likely to avoid them. Furthermore, N. Cao, et al. (2024) [37] investigates

the impact of previous negative experiences and personality characteristics on ad perceptions and ad avoidance behaviours among Chinese generation Y and generation Z users within two leading mobile social applications: WeChat and TikTok. Ad clutter is one of the crucial factors that influence ad avoidance, manifested through an excessive number of ads, causing users to be confused by information and confused in their shopping choices [10, 38]. The following hypothesis H_2 is derived from this:

H_2 : Ad clutter has a positive impact on ad avoidance on social networks.

Negative experience

According to S.J. Hoch, et al. (1989) [39], customers tend to rely on their own practical experiences to evaluate an issue. Negative experience is reflected through dissatisfaction, lack of benefits, and low motivation, leading to avoidance behaviour [10]. Besides, reactance arises when one person perceives a threat to another's freedom and fears similar threats [21, 22]. In the survey of L. Kelly, et al. (2010) [7], the majority of participants did not directly experience negative events, but only heard about them, such as hearing about computer virus infections or receiving inaccurate information from social media advertisements. Y. Chen, et al. (2023) [33] showed future advertisement avoidance has also been demonstrated to be influenced by past unpleasant experience with the advertising, clutter, or impediments of a brand by adopting a survey with a national sample of 513 university students in China. Furthermore, psychological reactance theory posits that advertising intrusiveness engenders impediment and threat, leading to adverse outcomes [40]. Moreover, F. Çelik, et al. (2024) [41] illustrate that perceived goal impediment and previous negative experiences exerted positive influences on affective avoidance during both ad-clutter and non-clutter periods. As a result, they were reluctant to click on any advertisements. Hypothesis H_3 is therefore developed as follows.

H_3 : Negative experience has a positive impact on ad avoidance on social networks.

Privacy concern

According to T.H. Baek, et al. (2012) [11], privacy concern is the degree of consumer concern about potential privacy violations, which can be triggered by intrusive ads. A.M. Miron, et al. (2006) [20] mentioned that the importance of threatened freedom affects the level of response, and in this situation, the threat of misuse of personal information can lead to reactance depending on the level of importance of people's perception of personal information. Privacy risk is one of the primary concerns associated with advertising [42]. Consumer attitudes toward privacy are evolving and impacting how companies can target consumers [43]. M. Morimoto (2021) [44] pointed out the positive impact of privacy concerns on

ad avoidance. M.H. Grubbs, et al. (2010) [45] found that the abuse of personal information, its publicisation, its use for purposes that users do not want, or concerns about account hacking or personal computer system virus infection greatly affect users' privacy and their avoidance of ads to protect their privacy. According to T.V. Ho, et al. (2019) [32], the privacy of information is a major concern for users. With these theories, hypothesis H_4 is proposed as follows:

H_4 : Privacy concern has a positive impact on ad avoidance on social networks.

Perceived personalisation

According to M.L. Roberts (2003) [46], perceived personalisation refers to users' perception that advertisements are tailored to their personal preferences or interests. Perceived personalisation increased attention and triggered more thoughts, leading to an overall positive effect on attitude toward the message [47]. According to S.W. Edwards, et al. (2002) [24], ads that meet viewer expectations are less intrusive and less avoided. One key distinction between traditional advertising and online behavioural advertising is that the latter provides a personalised experience [6]. Consumers tend to avoid advertisements if they perceive them as irrelevant and not aligned with their interests [48]. T.B. White, et al. (2007) [25] found that reactance to personalised ads can be determined by whether the perceived utility of the advertised products or services compensates for the psychological cost of receiving inappropriate personal messages. According to N. Cao, et al. (2024) [37] (WeChat & TikTok among Chinese Gen Y/Z), prior negative experience indirectly reduces perceived ad personalisation, which in turn increases ad avoidance. In other words, when users feel ads are no longer well-personalised (due to past poor experiences), personalisation fails to reduce avoidance. Therefore, the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H_5 : Perceived personalisation has a negative impact on ad avoidance on social networks.

3. Methodology

3.1. Measurement

This study measures six latent constructs using five-point Likert scales. They included advertising avoidance, perceived goal impediment, perceived advertising clutter, prior negative experience, privacy concern, and perceived personalisation. In addition, due to social media platforms' algorithms for tracking user behaviour have become increasingly sophisticated. Users must accept terms that allow these platforms to collect data, including audio-visual information from their devices and search history. For example, after searching for product A on Google, users often see related ads on social media. Therefore, this study develops the survey statement "I am concerned that social media platforms have too much access to my information" in the construct for privacy concern.

3.2. Data collection and sampling

The questionnaire, conducted in March 2023, has two main parts: one about user perceptions of social media advertising, and the other about factors influencing ad avoidance. The first part has qualitative questions about social media use and ad perceptions. The second part uses a five-point Likert scale to survey factors influencing ad avoidance from strongly disagree (level 1) to strongly agree (level 5) for all observed variables in the research model.

The sampling method employed is convenience sampling. The survey targeted young individuals aged 18 to 35 who had seen advertisements on social media who were living or working in Can Tho, the central hub of the Mekong delta. Respondents were approached in densely populated areas where youth congregate, such as universities, parks, and cafes. Before conducting the official survey, a pilot study involving 20 respondents from Can Tho University and 10 respondents from the park provided practical insights for adjusting the wording, the number of questions, and the presentation of the questionnaire. The official survey employed a non-probability convenience sampling method to efficiently reach the target population of young individuals in Can Tho city - centre of the Mekong delta area. This approach facilitated timely and cost-effective data collection while ensuring representation of participants familiar with social media use and exposure to advertisements.

According to J. Hair, et al. (1998) [49], the necessary sample size for exploratory factor analysis is five times the number of items in the scale. The research model of this topic has 28 items in total, so the minimum sample size required is 140 observations. After inspecting and filtering the invalid observations, the final sample in this study is 232 respondents.

3.3. Analytical methods

Descriptive statistics and Chi-square were used to process the responses in the first part of the questionnaire which aims to reflect the current situation for the first specific research objective. Independent sample T-tests were also applied to evaluate the level of advertising avoidance on different social media platforms. For measuring and evaluating factors affecting advertising avoidance, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient test, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and multiple linear regression methods were applied. Cronbach's alpha eliminates unnecessary variables before using the EFA method to avoid the possibility of these variables creating false factors. After the scale had been standardised, multiple linear regression was chosen to proceed. According to J. Hair, et al. (1998) [49], regression is a powerful tool for exploring dependent relationships and can be used to study consumer decision-making, impressions, and attitudes. Therefore, the multiple linear regression model is appropriate to apply in this study. The regression equation has been formed as follows:

$$Y = B_0 + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + \dots + B_nX_n + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y: dependent variable

X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n : independent variables

B_0 : the intercept

B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n : regression coefficients

ε : the error term.

The implementation of a multiple linear regression model in this study serves not only to identify the factors that influence advertising avoidance but also to assess the relative importance and strength of their impact (based on the magnitude of the regression coefficients). Furthermore, multiple regression provides a means of evaluating the nature of the relationship between independent and dependent variables through the sign of the regression coefficients. In this study, the dependent variable is ad avoidance (AA), and the independent variables include goal impediment (GI), ad clutter (AC), negative experience (NE), privacy concern (PC), and perceived personalisation (PP). The proposed research model is presented in Fig. 1. A five-point Likert scale is used, and the value of each variable is calculated as the average of the items.

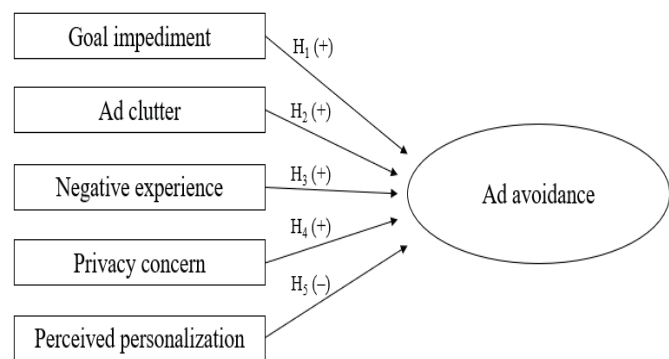


Fig. 1. Proposed research model.

4. Results

4.1. The status of advertising and the avoidance of advertising on social networks in the Mekong delta area of Vietnam

The survey was conducted in the central districts of Can Tho city using a non-probability convenience sampling method. The respondents were mainly aged 18-24 (accounting for 66.4%), with females being the majority (56.9%) compared to males (43.1%). At this age, most respondents have graduated from high school or university. The survey area also affects the level of education, as Can Tho is a large city with a high level of education, resulting in a high proportion of respondents who have completed high school. In this survey, there were no respondents with an educational level of primary or secondary

school. The income level of the survey sample varies across classes. The classes earning less than 15 million VND per month have similar proportions ranging from 17 to 21%, while the high-income one earning more than 15 million VND per month accounts for only 5.6%, equivalent to 13 respondents. Table 1 summarises the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1. Respondents' demographic profiles.

Demographic information	Frequency	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	100	43.1
Female	132	56.9
<i>Age</i>		
18-24	154	66.4
25-35	78	33.6
<i>Income</i>		
Under 1.5 million VND/month	45	19.4
From over 1.5 million - 3 million VND/month	43	18.5
From over 3 million - 4.5 million VND/month	40	17.2
From over 4.5 million - 7.5 million VND/month	50	21.6
From over 7.5 million - 15 million VND/month	41	17.7
Over 15 million VND/month	13	5.6
<i>Education level</i>		
High school	114	49.1
Intermediate/college	6	2.6
Undergraduate	104	44.8
Postgraduate (Master, Doctoral...)	7	3.0

Source: Results based on questionnaire responses from March 2023.

In terms of social media usage behaviour, the survey results indicated that Facebook was the most popular social media platform, with 100% of respondents reporting usage. This was followed by YouTube and Zalo, with usage rates of 93.5 and 88.4%, respectively. More than 50% of respondents said they most often see ads on Facebook, and YouTube followed with 31%. The majority of advertisements seen by respondents were in the fashion/beauty and media/entertainment (e.g., games, music) industries, as well as electronics/technology/telecommunications. Chi-square tests revealed that men were more likely to see advertisements for electronics/technology/telecommunications than women, while women were more likely to see advertisements for fashion/beauty than men.

4.2. Scale validation

The research model under consideration comprises six distinct factor groups. Results from the Cronbach's alpha test, as presented in Table 2, indicate correlation coefficients greater than 0.3 for both independent and dependent variable groups concerning the total variable, thus warranting their retention [43]. Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for

all variables exceeds 0.7, indicating the suitability of the scale [44]. After testing all 28 observed variables, no items were eliminated, thereby confirming the appropriateness of the scale for further analysis.

Table 2. Cronbach's alpha result.

Items	Corrected item-Total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
<i>Goal impediment: $\alpha = 0.858$</i>		
GI1	0.683	0.827
GI2	0.685	0.827
GI3	0.713	0.815
GI4	0.731	0.808
<i>Ad clutter: $\alpha = 0.851$</i>		
AC1	0.711	0.803
AC2	0.722	0.793
AC3	0.733	0.781
<i>Negative experience: $\alpha = 0.827$</i>		
NE1	0.639	0.788
NE2	0.641	0.788
NE3	0.626	0.792
NE4	0.521	0.822
NE5	0.693	0.772
<i>Privacy concern: $\alpha = 0.913$</i>		
PC1	0.744	0.900
PC2	0.772	0.895
PC3	0.789	0.891
PC4	0.809	0.887
PC5	0.779	0.893
<i>Perceived personalisation: $\alpha = 0.850$</i>		
PP1	0.669	0.819
PP2	0.699	0.810
PP3	0.699	0.809
PP4	0.620	0.832
PP5	0.631	0.828

Source: Results based on questionnaire responses from March 2023.

An exploratory factor analysis using PCA and Varimax rotation grouped observed variables into meaningful factors. The KMO coefficient was 0.902 (>0.5) [50], Bartlett's test is significant at 0.000, and the TVE was 69.211% (>50%) which is suitable for further analysis [42]. Factor loadings ≥ 0.3 [42] revealed items PC5, NE1, NE4, AC3, and AC2 exhibited loadings on two distinct factors. NE1 demonstrated a loading on factor 1 of 0.439 and on factor 3 of 0.603, indicating characteristics of negative experience and privacy concerns. The difference between these two-factor loadings was $0.164 < 0.2$, warranting consideration for elimination [45]. EFA results following NE1's elimination are in Table 3.

Table 3. EFA results of independent variables.

Factors	Items	Factor loading				
		1	2	3	4	5
Privacy concern	PC4	0.815				
	PC2	0.800				
	PC3	0.786			0.318	
	PC5	0.782				
	PC1	0.771				
Perceived personalisation	PP3		0.823			
	PP2		0.818			
	PP1		0.798			
	PP4		0.747			
	PP5		0.738			
Goal impediment	GI1			0.777		
	GI3			0.762		
	GI4			0.746		
	GI2			0.705		
Negative experience	NE3				0.775	
	NE5				0.722	
	NE2				0.661	
	NE4				0.602	
Ad clutter	AC1			0.300		0.794
	AC3			0.320		0.766
	AC2					0.753

Notes: KMO coefficient: 0.898; Sig. Bartlett test: 0.000; Total variance explained: 69.989%; Eigenvalues = 1,009 at the 5-factor level. Source: Results based on questionnaire responses from March 2023.

Table 3 indicates the KMO value is 0.898 (>0.5), Bartlett’s test is significant at 0.000, and TVE is 69% (> 50%), suitable for further analysis. Following NE1’s elimination, PC, PP, GI, NE and AC account for 69.989% of data variation. Items PC3, AC1, and AC3 exhibit loadings on two distinct factors but are retained as the difference between loadings exceeds 0.2 [45]. Primary factor loading coefficients of observed variables are >0.6, indicating suitability for further analysis [46]. The EFA results for the independent variable in Table 4 demonstrate that Sig. of Bartlett’s test, KMO coefficient, and TVE meet the conditions for the scale to be considered suitable.

Table 4. EFA result of dependent variable.

Factors	Items	Factor loading
Ad avoidance	AA1	0.836
	AA2	0.828
	AA3	0.802
	AA4	0.784
	AA5	0.774
	AA6	0.769

Notes: KMO coefficient: 0.846; Sig. Bartlett test: 0.000; Total variance explained: 63.853%. Source: Results based on questionnaire responses from March 2023.

4.3. Regression results

After testing the reliability of the scale and performing exploratory factor analysis, regression analysis was performed to test the hypotheses. Social media advertising avoidance behaviour is dependent on five independent variables: perceived personalisation, goal impediment, ad clutter, negative experience, and privacy concern. The Durbin-Watson coefficient = 1.881 so the results do not violate the first-order sequence autocorrelation assumption [47]. The VIF is all less than 2 means the model does not violate. The Sig. value of the model < 0.01 means that this model is statistically significant at a level of 1%. The R² coefficient = 60.4% shows that the independent variables in the regression analysis explain 60.4% of the variation in advertising avoidance, with the remaining 39.6% due to external variables and random error. Detailed regression results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Regression results.

Variable name	Normalised beta coefficient (Beta)	T	P. value	Statistical multicollinearity	
				Tolerance	VIF
Constant		2.582	0.010		
GI	0.262***	4.474	0.000	0.512	1.952
AC	0.226***	4.017	0.000	0.555	1.801
NE	0.361***	6.659	0.000	0.598	1.674
PC	0.037	0.662	0.509	0.548	1.825
PP	-0.145***	-3.323	0.001	0.925	1.081
N = 232, R ² = 60.4%, Adjusted R ² = 59.5%, F = 68.945, Significant = 0.000 < 1%, N = 232 respondents					

Note: Sig. at: *0.01; dependent variable: Ad avoidance; independent variable: PP - Perceived personalisation; GI - Goal impediment; AC - Ad clutter; NE - Negative experience; PC - Privacy concerns. Source: Results based on questionnaire responses from March 2023.

Regression results in Table 5 show that the significance levels corresponding to the variables GI, AC, NE, and PP have Sig. values less than 0.01. Therefore, at a significance level of 1%, it can be concluded that there is an impact of GI, AC, NE, and PP on the dependent variable AA (ad avoidance). Specifically, the variables GI, AC, and NE positively influence AA as their normalised coefficients are greater than 0. In contrast, PP has a negative impact on AA due to its normalised coefficient being less than 0. The remaining variable (PC) has a significant value greater than 0.05, so at the 5% significance level, it can be concluded that PC does not affect AA.

As can be seen in Table 5, negative experience has the strongest influence on advertising avoidance (Beta = 0.361). Similar results were obtained by F. Çelik, et al. (2022) [9]; X. Li, et al. (2023) [51]; S. Pahari, et al. (2024) [33]; W. Li, et al. (2016) [6], these works confirmed consistent results in their study of user avoidance of online behaviour in social media advertising. The majority of respondents reported that social media advertising fails to provide any form of stimulation

that would engender loyalty or continued use of the service following engagement with an advertisement. Additionally, negative experiences or perceptions of social media advertising among acquaintances also generate concerns among respondents. Although survey results indicate that only 5.17% of respondents identified negative experiences as the primary reason for avoiding advertisements, in terms of impact level, once users have had negative experiences with social media advertisements, their avoidance behaviour becomes significantly more pronounced. Besides, seeing or hearing about negative experiences from others is also a primary reason users perceive negative experiences with advertising and consequently avoid social media advertising.

Next, goal impediment exhibits standardised beta coefficient = 0.262 > 0 has a positive impact on social media advertising avoidance. Following numerous prior studies, such as X. Li, et al. (2023) [51]; K.N. Salam, et al. (2024) [52] confirmed that goal impediment has been identified as a crucial factor influencing user avoidance of advertising [10, 16]. The majority of respondents reported that social media advertising impedes their ability to engage in leisure activities, seek information, etc. The appearance of advertisements distracts users from the primary content, causing discomfort and leading to avoidance behaviour.

Ad clutter is another factor that positively influences social media ad avoidance (Beta = 0.226). This finding is supported by prior studies such as the studies of C.H. Cho, et al. (2004) [10], L. Ha, et al. (2008) [36], K.N. Salam, et al. (2024) [52], and P. Perumal (2023) [53]. The excessive presence and disruptive nature of social media advertising increases the likelihood of user avoidance behaviour. Additionally, when advertisements for the same product from multiple suppliers appear in abundance, users may experience confusion when making purchasing decisions. In such instances, they tend to refrain from taking any action and simply scroll past the advertisements.

Perceived personalisation, with a standardised beta coefficient = -0.145 < 0, exerts an inverse impact on user avoidance of social media advertising. This result is consistent with the results of studies conducted by T.H. Baek, et al. (2012) [11] and W. Li, et al. (2016) [6]. Within the scope of this study, perceived personalisation has also been found to influence social media advertising in general, as most marketers are currently striving to personalise advertisements (in terms of both content and targeting) to more effectively reach their intended audience, and consumer awareness of advertisement personalisation is increasing. Accordingly, the more relevant an advertisement is to a consumer, the less likely they are to avoid it.

The only factor to be excluded is a privacy concern, according to the results from Table 5, there is no impact on social media advertising avoidance in the context of this study.

This finding is in alignment with S.M.C. Loureiro, et al. (2023) [54]. Based on empirical observations, users tend to perceive social media advertising as annoying or untrustworthy, rather than as a privacy invasion. However, when presented with items on a privacy concern scale, the majority of respondents indicated agreement or strong agreement. This suggests that users are relatively unconcerned about privacy issues in everyday situations and only become concerned when prompted.

In summary, corresponding to the significant independent variables in Table 5, hypotheses H₁, H₂, H₃, and H₅ are accepted. Conversely, hypothesis H₄ is rejected.

4.4. Independent sample T-test

Different social media platforms may vary in terms of their format, placement, and frequency of ad display, which can lead to ads interrupting the user experience differently on each platform. Therefore, a mean comparison test of advertising avoidance (AA) and variables affecting it in this research (NE, GI, AC, PP) with the classification variable being the social media page where ads are seen the most was conducted. According to survey results, most of the respondents see the most ads on Facebook (56.03%) and YouTube (31.03%), while other platforms have much lower rates. To ensure significant mean comparison test results, only Facebook and YouTube are used as classification variables to compare advertising avoidance levels using the independent sample T-test.

Table 6. Independent sample T-test results.

F		Levene's test for equality of variances		T-test for equality of means				
		Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference	
PP	Equal variances assumed	0.282	0.596	1.690	200	0.093	0.224	0.132
	Equal variances not assumed			1.681	144.349	0.095	0.224	0.133
GI	Equal variances assumed	2.341	0.128	-1.174	200	0.242	-0.159	0.135
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.228	166.701	0.221	-0.159	0.129
AC	Equal variances assumed	2.995	0.085	-2.034	200	0.043	-0.299	0.147
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.113	163.550	0.036	-0.299	0.141
NE	Equal variances assumed	2.501	0.115	-1.312	200	0.191	-0.162	0.124
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.391	172.745	0.166	-0.162	0.116
AA	Equal variances assumed	0.274	0.601	-1.898	200	0.059	-0.255	0.134
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.912	149.821	0.058	-0.255	0.133

Source: Results based on questionnaire responses from March 2023.

Table 6 shows Levene's test results for all variables are $>\alpha=0.05$, hence Sig. results of the T-test for equal variances are considered for all variables. AA, AC, and PP have Sig. values of 0.059, 0.043, and 0.093, respectively. Among these, AC is statistically significant at the 5% level, while AA and PP are marginally significant at the 10% level. In contrast, NE and GI have Sig. of T-test equal to 0.191 and 0.242 >0.1 . As a result, people who see the most ads on Facebook have the same level of negative experience and goal impediment as those who see the most ads on YouTube. This result suggests that there are some differences in ad avoidance, ad clutter, and perceived personalisation levels between these two platforms. The average perceived personalisation of users who see more ads on Facebook is higher than that of those who see more ads on YouTube (mean difference is 0.224). Those who see more ads on YouTube have higher average levels of ad avoidance and ad clutter than those on Facebook (the mean difference between YouTube and Facebook is 0.225 and 0.299, respectively). Therefore, YouTube ads tend to be avoided more because they are cluttered and less personalised than Facebook ads.

5. Discussion and implications

5.1. Discussion

This study explores ad avoidance in the context of Vietnam - a developing country that has had different results contributing to the research field on users' avoidance of advertising on social networks. Applying the theory of psychological reactance, more specific findings and theoretical contributions of this study are presented as follows.

First, negative experience, goal impediment, and ad clutter all have a positive effect on ad avoidance among social media users. This is consistent with previous studies by C.H. Cho, et al. (2004) [10], W. Li, et al. (2016) [6], Z. Seyedghorban, et al. (2016) [16], T.V. Ho, et al. (2019) [31], N. Cao, et al. (2024) [37], and F. Çelik, et al. (2024) [41]. Furthermore, the conceptual model of A. Sahli, et al. (2024) [55] test antecedents and outcomes of advertising intrusion based on surveys of 170 respondents and structural equation modelling, and presented that personalised mobile ads, privacy concerns and perceived vulnerability heighten intrusion, leading to resistance behaviours like avoiding ads and negative brand attitudes. However, the degree of impact of each factor varies among studies that arise from different research subjects and survey areas. In this research, negative experience has the strongest impact on advertising avoidance, similar to W. Li, et al.'s (2016) [6] result; whereas C.H. Cho, et al. (2004) [10] indicated that ad clutter is the most important factor in their study.

The next highlight is that perceived personalization also affects social media advertising avoidance because most marketers strive to personalise ads to deliver content to the right people, increasing consumers' avoidance of ads. This is consistent with the work of M. Morimoto (2021) [44], and W. Li, et al. (2016) [6] on personalised advertising and online behavioural advertising. Perceived utility (e.g., some rewards and benefits from restricted freedom) significantly reduces consumer response [23]. Enhancing an individual's connection to an advertisement will decrease the tendency to avoid it [48]. Y. Pasadeos (1990) [56] also found that personalised content is the most effective way to avoid ads considered annoying.

Third, privacy concerns do not affect ad avoidance by young people in Can Tho. This result differs from the research of T.V. Ho, et al. (2019) [31] because their study was conducted in Ho Chi Minh city, where the e-commerce index is much higher and awareness of privacy on online platforms is also higher than in most provinces in Vietnam [57]. During our survey, when not directly mentioning the possibilities of privacy infringement, respondents did not know and did not pay much attention to it. However, most respondents agree or strongly agree with perceptions such as "I feel uncomfortable when my information on social media is shared without permission". In the study by N. Cao, et al. (2023) [42], privacy concerns influence ad avoidance among Gen Z in China; however, the impact is less significant than in previous studies. It is likely that Gen Z is less worried about privacy because they understand the trade-offs of using free and personalised app services, aided by improved privacy protection measures and a greater awareness of how advertising functions. This also indicates the diverse perspectives on privacy concerns among digital natives.

Moreover, the T-test result shows that people who see the most ads on YouTube tend to avoid ads more than on Facebook. This is because ads on YouTube are usually not skippable, while on Facebook, most ads can be scrolled past or skipped leading to a higher perception of repetition and clutter with ads on YouTube [58]. Facebook focuses on social interaction, whereas YouTube does not, and these differing platform functionalities lead to distinct consumer experiences [59]. This research indicates that YouTube ads are often avoided more frequently because they are viewed as more cluttered and less tailored to individual users than Facebook ads.

Ad avoidance is a challenge in the digital age, with social media full of ads and fierce competition among marketers to reach customers. Factors such as negative experience, goal impediment, ad clutter, and perceived personalisation affect ad avoidance on social media whereas privacy concerns

exist, but do not affect ad avoidance by responding in normal situations. Besides, differences in ad avoidance between different social media platforms need to be considered. This result is characteristic of the target group in the Mekong delta area of Vietnam, a developing country, compared to similar studies in developed countries.

5.2. Implications

In terms of theoretical implications, this study contributes to demonstrating the applicability of reactance theory in explaining advertising avoidance on social media in the Mekong delta region of Vietnam, a developing country. The factors of negative experiences, goal impediment, ad clutter, and perceived personalisation significantly influence ad avoidance, consistent with the principles of reactance theory, in contrast, privacy concerns do not significantly impact ad avoidance in this research indicates that cultural differences have a substantial effect on the applicability of the theoretical framework. Furthermore, the Levene's test results reveal individuals exposed to a greater number of advertisements on YouTube exhibit higher average levels of ad avoidance and ad clutter compared to those on Facebook. YouTube ads are often avoided due to their cluttered nature and lower level of personalisation compared to Facebook ads.

From the factors affecting ad avoidance derived, this research proposes some management implications for advertisers and businesses. First of all, perceived personalisation negatively affects consumers' advertising avoidance. If users perceive that advertising is tailored to them, with optimised experiences, they are less likely to avoid advertising. To best personalise ads, marketers need an understanding of their target audience. Therefore, researching the market and targeting customers carefully before running ads is necessary. Analysing consumer needs will help reduce negative experiences and ad avoidance [6].

Negative experiences and goal impediments have a positive influence on advertising avoidance. To reduce negative experiences and reduce the feeling of advertising interference during users' use of social networks, producing appropriate ad content and setting ad targets to reach the right audience is very important. Ads that provide value in the form of information or entertainment are considered less disruptive, and less annoying [30]. It is crucial for advertisers to identify the intended audience for their ads and ensure that these advertisements provide value to the consumers who encounter them [48].

When creating ads, setting the right display frequency is necessary because it is closely related to the ad clutter - one of the factors affecting positively on ad avoidance. Repetition makes consumers become familiar with that content and gradually trust it. A. Hassan, et al. (2021) [60] found that

perceived truthfulness increased as repetition increased, and this increase is logarithmic. The largest increase in perceived truth comes from encountering a statement for a second time; beyond that, there are diminishing increases in perceived truth for each additional repetition. Therefore, repeating an ad too many times in a short period is not necessarily good and sometimes makes resources more wasteful.

To optimise the reach of the ad to the target customer, the experience after clicking on the ad also needs to be thoroughly optimised. M. Wendlandt, et al. (2007) [61] found that perceived utility (e.g., some rewards and benefits from restricted freedom) significantly reduces consumer response to loyalty programs. Each personalised touchpoint is perceived as necessary to optimise ads that match consumer preferences [10]. Optimising the customer experience after clicking on an ad helps increase personalisation for ads while increasing credibility for businesses - reducing negative experiences, thereby minimizing ad avoidance in subsequent times.

In addition, marketers must carefully consider their choice of communication channels, as the degree of advertisement avoidance varies across different social media platforms. Individuals exposed to advertisements predominantly on YouTube tend to exhibit higher levels of ad avoidance, perceive lower personalisation, and find advertisements more cluttered compared to those who frequently encounter ads on Facebook. This discovery plays a crucial role in informing advertisers' media planning and decision-making processes.

Finally, to develop sustainably in the long term, businesses need to build customer sentiment towards the brand. According to M.E. Heilman (1976) [24], threats from powerful sources are less likely to cause psychological reactance. If ads are broadcast from reputable and trustworthy sources, they will be more accepted and less likely to encounter psychological reactance. According to S.W. Edwards, et al. (2002) [24], consumers tend to have fewer negative emotions towards messages/ads from marketers with whom they have had previous business interactions (e.g., purchases and correspondence). If businesses want to develop sustainably in the long term, understanding customers and making them love their brand is significant.

6. Conclusions

The use of reactance theory as a framework for our analysis has allowed our study to shed light on the factors that influence young people in the Mekong delta region of Vietnam to avoid advertisements on social media platforms. According to the findings, the tendency to

avoid advertisements is highly influenced by a number of factors, including aim obstruction, ad clutter, and negative experiences, with negative experiences being recognised as the most important component. Consequently, this indicates that marketers should make the creation of ad experiences that are both good and engaging a priority in order to reduce avoidance behaviours.

It is interesting to note that perceived personalisation was found to have a negative effect on ad avoidance. This finding suggests that specifically tailored advertising methods have the potential to increase engagement and decrease avoidance rates. On the other hand, concerns about privacy did not have a significant impact on ad avoidance among this cohort. This finding suggests that concerns over data privacy may not be as strong in the context of social media advertising among young consumers in the Mekong delta.

Furthermore, the comparison of ad avoidance behaviours across platforms revealed that there is a stronger tendency to avoid commercials on YouTube than there is on Facebook, which highlights the necessity of marketing strategies that are tailored to certain platforms.

Taking everything into consideration, this study offers crucial insights that are necessary for marketers who are looking to optimise their tactics in the highly competitive world of social media advertising. Marketers are able to build tailored interventions that not only improve the effectiveness of their campaigns but also foster a more favourable reception of commercials among youthful audiences. This is made possible by the understanding of the factors that determine what causes people to avoid advertisements.

7. Research limitations

This study, while offering valuable insights, has several limitations. Primarily, it examines social media advertising broadly rather than focusing on specific platforms or advertising formats (e.g., video ads, catalogue ads, or livestream ads). Future research could yield more targeted insights by narrowing its scope to particular advertising methods or specific product categories, such as fashion or electronics. Additionally, the study’s geographical focus on Can Tho city, a pivotal urban centre within the Mekong delta, limits the generalisability of the findings to other regions, and the demographic sample is restricted to young adults aged 18-35. Expanding age ranges and including other developing countries in future studies could enhance the representativeness of the results. Finally, the quantitative approach in this study does not fully capture user insights into digital ad avoidance. Qualitative research exploring ad avoidance behaviours, particularly within developing economies, could offer a more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon.

APPENDICES

Questionnaire items used in the study.

Constructs	Items code	Survey statement	Source
Goal impediment	GI1	Ads on social networks increase obstacles during the search	[6, 9, 32]
	GI2	Ads on social media disrupt my reception of desired content	
	GI3	Ads on social media distract me from the main content on that social network	[6, 9, 18]
	GI4	Ads on social media interrupt continuity while I browse social media	
Ad clutter	AC1	There are too many ads on social media	[9, 31]
	AC2	Excessive ads on social media confuse me during the process of receiving content	[31]
	AC3	Numerous similar ads on social media confuse me when making shopping choices	
Negative experience	NE1	I am dissatisfied with my decision to click on social media ads	
	NE2	Clicking on social media ads does not benefit me	[9]
	NE3	There is no incentive for me to remain loyal and continue using services after clicking on social media ads	
	NE4	I have seen people around me have negative experiences with social media ads	[19, 20]
	NE5	Most people familiar to me think social media ads should not be clicked	[7]
Privacy concern	PC1	I feel uncomfortable when my information is shared without permission	[6, 10]
	PC2	I am concerned that social media platforms have excessive access to my information	Recommended by the author
	PC3	I am concerned that the personal information I provide could be misused	
	PC4	I am concerned that my personal information on social media might be used for unanticipated purposes	[6, 36]
	PC5	I am concerned that clicking on social media ads could lead to fraudulent websites (e.g., hacking or viruses)	
Perceived personalisation	PP1	Social media ads provide the information I need	
	PP2	Social media ads offer purchase recommendations that match my needs	[6, 10]
	PP3	Social media ads enable me to buy the products I need more easily	
	PP4	Social media ads make me feel like I am a unique customer	
	PP5	Social media ads are customised to my preferences	[10]
Ad avoidance	AA1	I ignore ads on social networks	
	AA2	I do not click on any ads on social media, even if the ads draw my attention	[7, 9, 18]
	AA3	I scroll past or skip social media ads	
	AA4	I respond to social networking sites to reject ads	
	AA5	I install software to limit ads on social networks	[18]
	AA6	I use tricks to limit social media ads	

CRediT author statement

Ngoc Tran Luong: Conceptualisation, Methodology, Software, Data curation, Writing - Original draft preparation; Thu Huong Tran: Formal analysis, Supervision, Writing - Reviewing and Editing; Phu Tan Huynh: Validation, Investigation.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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