

# A Study of the Role of Prior Attitude and Persuasion Knowledge in the Effect Process of Mobile Application Contents for Public Interest

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**Abstract** This study explores the effect of consumers' prior smoking attitudes and persuasion knowledge in the effect process of corporate social responsibility communication. Preceded by a pilot study, a survey of consumers' perception is conducted toward a mobile CSR application. First, consumers' prior smoking attitudes and persuasion knowledge are revealed to have interaction effects on reputation of the tobacco company. Second, interactivity properties of the branded content and consumers' persuasion knowledge have interaction effect on the perceived authenticity of the company. Toward reputation, interactivity of the branded content and consumers' persuasion knowledge have no significant interaction effect, on the other hand, the level(high/low) of branded content has the direct effect on reputation. Practical implications, limitations and future study directions are discussed.

**Keywords:** Mobile application contents, interactivity, persuasion knowledge, corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication

## 1 Background and Purpose

These days, some major tobacco companies have conducted non-smoking campaigns for teenagers in various ways. In parallel with such movements, there have been numerous academic studies about the CSR campaigns and communications (Pracejus and Olson, 2004). Despite the efforts, relevant conclusion have not been established about the CSR effects and process rules, due to the influence of the consumer's suspicions on why the companies have campaigned for CSR(Ellen, Webb, and Mohr, 2006). Besides, earlier studies were mainly on unilinear influential relationship, so few studies were found on public contents which essentially have interactive properties of participation.

This study aims to find out the relationship between the perceived authenticity and perceived corporate reputation on which the tobacco companies' CSR using the branded contents have an influence. Also, this study aims to see how the persuasion knowledge, as the personal variable of a consumer, exerts an influence on persuasive communication (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill, 2004).

## 2 Research Question

Research Question 1. Does the persuasion knowledge exert an interaction effect with the interactive properties of mobile application on the intention of non-smoking?

Research Question 2. Does the persuasion knowledge exert an interaction effect with consumers' prior attitude toward smoking on the reputation of the tobacco companies?

## 3 Method

### 3.1 Pilot Test

It has been pretested to know the app.'s effects. For the research purpose, two apps(applications) were selected; one is the helper apps. for stopping smoking, the other apps. is the name of "returning for non-smoker". Especially they are not famous app. and, also, are containing of public interests. 40 college students' perception on the apps was investigated. The results of the pretest revealed that the apps were proved to contain the suitable public messages and were identified as being properly selected.

### 3.2 Main Survey

#### **Samples and Procedure**

Main survey was conducted toward 181 college students(male 85 person, female 96 person). 59(32.6%) were smokers; 122(67.4%) were non-smokers. Before the survey, subjects were heard about the branded contents' definition and the cases. Subjects were also heard the survey's contents would be used as the tobacco companies' PR Contents for the aim of securing subjects' involvement.

### 3.3 Measures and Measurement Instrument

#### *Interactivity*

Gao, Rau, & Salvendy(Gao, Rau, & Salvendy, 2009)'s 6 factors were used to measure the interactive properties of the mobile apps for antismoking. Specific items are : "I think this company which made this apps want to hear my opinion." "When I ask for some information about the apps to the company, I think the company immediately will give me some information." "I feel as if I share conversation with people through this mobile apps." "This application enables me to get response as if I talk with people actually." Items are measured by 4 point Likert-type scales. The Cronbach's alpha value was 0.930.

### ***Prior attitude toward smoking***

Prior attitude toward smoking was measured by 3 questions: "I am favorable of smoking." "I think positively on smoking" "I like smoking." The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the questions was 0.892.

### ***Persuasion knowledge***

Persuasion knowledge was measured by 4 items according to Kirmani and Zhu(2007). Those are as follows: "I think this application sponsored by the tobacco company is artificial." "I think this app is manipulated by the tobacco company." "I doubt the genuine intention of the tobacco company which sponsors this mobile app for non-smoking." "I don't believe the authenticity of the application contents because the contents was sponsored by the tobacco company." The questions are measured by 4 point Likert-type scales. Also the measured mean values were divided into high and low, based on mean value 2.54(standard deviation=0.632).

### ***Company authenticity***

Company authenticity was measured by 3 items according to Yoon & Thye(2011). Three items are: 'The CSR of this company matches with the value and trust of company.' "I think this company's CSR is true." "The symbol of this company CSR stands for what the company has believed."

### ***Corporation reputation***

Corporate reputation was measured by 6 items modified from the Fombrun, et al.(2000). The items are as follows: 'This company is serving the best product and service.' 'This company is not reluctant to serve innovated products and service.' 'This company has high potential power.' 'This company is active in CSR activities.' 'This company has great interest in the environment and actually participates in saving the environment.'

## **4 Results**

### **1. Validity and Reliability of the items**

Factorial analysis was conducted to see the validity of independent variables with VARIMAX rotating method KMO (Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin) and Bartletttest. For factorial eigen-value 1.0 standard was used, applied higher than 0.5 for factorial weight acceptance standard (Hair, 2006). In result of factorial analysis, five factors are extracted explaining 71.59% of total variance. Five factors are interactivity, prior attitude toward smoking, persuasion knowledge, corporate authenticity, and corporate reputation.

#### **4.1 The influence of the interaction in mobile apps content and consumers' persuasion on the corporation reputation (Research question 1)**

The results revealed no significant interaction effect between the degree of the

interactivity and persuasion knowledge of the responders in the apps( $F=1.176$ ,  $p=.676$ ). But the main effects by the t-test of the deviation between high interactivity group(2.75) and lower interactivity group(2.28) are revealed to be significant( $t=-4.56$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

Meanwhile, in the results by the 2-way ANOVA to see how the interactive attributions of the contents(mobile apps) and persuasion knowledge impact on the company authenticity, the interactivity and persuasion knowledge of the responders in the app contents influence significantly on the perceived authenticity( $F=4.481$ ,  $p=.037$ ).

#### **4.2 The influences of the pre-smoking attitude and persuasion knowledge on the on the corporation reputation (Research question 2)**

The degree of the pre non-smoking attitudes and persuasion knowledge had a significant impact on the corporation reputation by CSR ( $F=5.107$ ,  $p=.026$ ). Specifically, as for respondents who had negative prior attitude toward smoking, those low in persuasion knowledge showed higher corporate reputation points(2.57) than those high in persuasion knowledge did(2.18). On the other hand, as for respondents who had positive prior attitude toward smoking, those high in persuasion knowledge showed higher corporate reputation points (2.63) than those low in persuasion knowledge (2.52).

### **5 Concluding Remarks**

The results of this study showed the consumer's smoking attitude had significant impact on the tobacco company's reputation in interaction with the persuasion knowledge. This means that consumers who are trying to enjoy the mobile application contents are appreciating the CSR communication activities, according to the prior attitude of smoking.

Second, the interactivity of the contents and persuasion knowledge showed significant interaction effects on the perceived authenticity of the company. Especially, as the degree of the interactivity is higher, the authenticity of the company is perceived greater.

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