INSTAGRAM AND TWITTER SUSCRIBERS' PERCEPTION OF PEAK MILK AND THREE CROWN EASTER CREATIVE MESSAGES

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Abstract

During festive periods, brands often utilise social media to forge connections with their audience through innovative content. This study examines how Instagram and Twitter subscribers perceived the Easter creative messages of Peak Milk and Three Crown, assessing how these align with intended brand communications. Grounded in cognitive response and selective perception theories, the study employed in-depth interviews with seven respondents to explore a range of reactions from indifference to positive or negative interpretations. Findings reveal that while some respondents viewed the messages as creative and aligned with the festive theme, others perceived them as controversial or offensive, particularly with respect to religious sensitivities. The study underscores the significant impact such messages can have on brand perception, revealing that while some consumers remained unaffected, others experienced shifts in attitudes and purchase intentions. The results highlight the importance for brands to navigate cultural and religious sensitivities carefully to maintain a positive image and effectively engage their audience. Thus, it is recommended that brands exercise caution in creating controversial content, recognising its potential to impact the brand image either negatively or positively.

Key Words: Instagram, Twitter, Creative Message, Advertisement, Perception,

Introduction

Social media has become a crucial part of everyday life, significantly shaping interpersonal relationships and interactions (Ameer, 2018). Over the past two decades, platforms like Instagram have evolved into powerful tools for marketing and communication. With over one billion active users, Instagram has rapidly grown into an effective, free platform for businesses to advertise and engage with consumers (Pastor & Bak, 2021). One of the key benefits of social media advertising is its grassroots nature, where consumers, driven by a need to interact, become advocates for products (Alexandrov, Lilly & Babakus, 2013). This dynamic makes social media marketing more cost-effective and convenient than traditional advertising, especially in a world where smartphones keep users constantly connected to the internet (Alalwan, 2018).

However, effective social media marketing requires a solid understanding of user behaviour and reactions (Bond et al., 2010). Advertising strategies must be clear, adaptable, and avoid creating confusion or market complexity in a diverse media environment (Lorenz, 2021). A brand, at its core, is a social construct (Klopper & North, 2011). In Nigeria, WAMCO's *Three Crowns Milk* and *Peak Milk* are two popular dairy products often consumed at breakfast. However, their Easter marketing campaigns, which included phrases like "Bruised and pierced for us" and "He has risen" — references to Jesus Christ's resurrection from the Bible (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:6) — sparked controversy. While some viewed it as a clever strategy to engage

Christian consumers, others saw it as disrespectful, leading the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) to demand the removal of the advertisements.

This incident highlights the delicate balance between creative marketing and religious sensitivity. For some, the campaign was a strategic move to attract a Christian audience during Easter, while others saw it as a misuse of religious sentiments. The controversy underscores both the potential benefits and risks of provocative advertising. Controversial campaigns often generate increased attention and visibility, but they also risk alienating significant portions of the audience (Agrawal, 2016). Positive controversies can create a larger audience and spark discussion, but negative reactions can lead to failed campaigns and long-term brand damage.

In this context, controversy plays a pivotal role in advertising. Provocative campaigns can capture attention and drive engagement, but they must be carefully executed to avoid backlash (Vézima & Paul, 1997; BenYahia, Touiti & Touzani, 2013). The primary aim of advertising is to raise awareness, build brand loyalty, and grow a customer base. However, controversy often seeks to disrupt, provoking strong reactions and inspiring heated discussions. While some brands have successfully leveraged controversy to increase profits and attention, it remains a high-risk strategy (Martins et al., 2019).

This research explores how controversial religious branding affects consumer loyalty towards *Three Crowns Milk* and *Peak Milk.* The study also examines how viral social media campaigns influence brand perception, particularly in relation to religiously sensitive advertisements. Through this exploration, the research aims to shed light on the relationship between controversial branding and consumer loyalty.

Statement of the Problem

Social media advertising has become a dominant force in publicity, surpassing traditional platforms due to its cost-effectiveness and extensive reach. The ability to engage a large user base has resulted in increased consumer loyalty and repeat purchases (Sriram et al., 2021). Brands leverage social media to create positive interactions, which significantly impact their brand equity and competitive positioning (Majeed et al., 2021).

During religious celebrations like Easter, which holds deep significance for Christians, brands often attempt to connect with consumers by aligning their content with the occasion. Two notable Nigerian dairy brands, *Three Crowns Milk* and *Peak Milk*, released promotional material to mark Easter, which sparked controversy. This controversy highlights the risks brands face when aiming to stand out creatively. The interpretation of brand messages is often shaped by the audience's perceptions, which can vary widely. It is crucial for brands to understand how their audiences will perceive creative content to avoid backlash.

Although numerous studies have examined social media advertising (Sriram.et,al, 2021; Majeed, et. al. 2021; Otugo.et al 2015; Jiuquan, 2016; Eze, Ruhode. Iwu, 2021; Ekwuem, Okoro, 2018; Efendioglu & Durmaz, 2022), there is limited research on the influence of creative content on brand patronage. This study seeks to investigate Instagram and Twitter users' perceptions of *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns Milk's* creative campaigns during the 2023 Easter celebration in Nigeria, thus addressing a significant gap in brand communication research.

Research Questions

1. How do Instagram and Twitter Subscribers perceive the *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns Milk* controversial creative messages?
2. To what extent does *Peak Milk* and *Three Crown Milk* creative messages align with audience interpretation.
3. To what extent does the Peak Milk and Three Crowns controversial creative contents affect the brand image?
4. To what extent does the Peak Milk and Three Crowns controversial creative contents affect the Consumer attitudes?

5. To what extent does the Peak Milk and Three Crowns controversial creative contents affect the Purchase intentions?

Review of Related Literature

Social media has revolutionised how individuals share information, facilitating the exchange of text and multimedia through virtual communities (Kaplan & Mazurek, 2018). Its roots can be traced to the early days of the internet, but its modern conception is tied to web-based platforms enabling user interaction and content sharing. Biswas, Ingle, and Roy (2014) describe social media as an interactive network built on user-generated content, where interpersonal relationships thrive. Today, social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter have billions of users globally (Alhabash & Ma, 2016), shaping communication and altering how people interact.

Social media continues to evolve, creating diverse platforms that cater to specific user demographics. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) identify social media as a participatory network where users create and modify content collaboratively. The platform's rapid evolution reflects how people form and maintain relationships, share experiences, and convey ideas and emotions. This dynamic enables brands to connect with audiences and foster online communities, yet it also presents challenges regarding how messages are perceived by different user groups.

Instagram, a popular platform focused on visual content, exemplifies the shift towards image-based communication. Launched in 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, Instagram enables users to share photos, videos, and stories (Stec, 2015). Its appeal lies in its visual immediacy, making it a favourite for influencers, businesses, and creatives (Alhabash & Ma, 2016). Instagram's features, including hashtags and geolocation, expand the reach of content, engaging users in real-time. Russmann and Svensson (2016) argue that online communication transforms when centred on visuals, adding Instagram to the social media ecology for its distinct role in shaping perception.

Similarly, Twitter, founded in 2006, has been a key platform in microblogging. Its 280-character limit encourages concise communication, and it allows users to share real-time updates, news, and opinions (Alhabash & Ma, 2016). Despite concerns over its declining popularity, Twitter remains influential, especially in real-time conversations, driven by mentions, hashtags, and replies (Stec, 2015). The platform fosters rapid information dissemination, shaping public discourse, often amplifying voices on political, social, and economic matters (Duggan, 2015).

The concept of creative messaging plays a crucial role in social media communication. Heritage Printing (2021) notes that effective messaging must be attractive, memorable, and have a clear call to action (CTA). Creative messages stand out amidst information overload and can influence consumer behaviour by capturing attention and evoking emotions. These messages often involve storytelling, visual elements, and innovative formats, differentiating brands in a competitive marketplace.

Lastly, social media profoundly influences audience perception. McDonald (2011) asserts that perception is a cognitive process that shapes how individuals interpret reality. Social media platforms can skew perceptions, either positively or negatively, by reinforcing biases or encouraging conformity (Darshana, 2021). The content users engage with can affect their thought processes, leading to shifts in opinions, attitudes, and behaviours. Thus, social media's influence on perception underscores its power in shaping public opinion and cultural norms.

Empirical Review

The influence of social media advertisements on consumer purchase intention has been widely studied across various contexts. Sriram et al. (2021) conducted a case study focusing on the relationship between social media advertisements and consumer purchase intentions. Their quantitative research, involving 70 respondents, used Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to investigate the impact of advertisement features such as attention-grabbing details, celebrity endorsements, and emotional appeal on purchase decisions. They found that these factors

significantly influence consumer perceptions and, in turn, their purchasing behaviour. Based on their findings, they recommended that marketers should focus on these advertisement elements to enhance the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies. Moreover, Sriram et al. emphasized the need for businesses to integrate attention-grabbing techniques in their advertisements to capture and maintain consumer interest, ultimately leading to increased purchasing intent.

In a similar vein, Majeed et al. (2021) examined the mediating role of brand equity in the relationship between social media engagement and purchase intentions. Using data from 500 fashion consumers in Ghana and SEM analysis, their study found that brand equity significantly mediates the relationship between social media interaction and purchase decisions. They argued that domestic brands should clearly express their principles through social media engagement, thereby enhancing brand equity and driving consumer loyalty. Majeed et al. also recommended that marketers align their digital marketing strategies with the core beliefs and values of their target audience to increase brand loyalty and sales.

Focusing on Nigeria, Ekwueme and Okoro (2018) investigated the adoption and usage of social media advertising among Nigerian online businesses. They conducted a survey base of 100 businesses and applied the technological determinism and diffusion of innovation theories. Their study highlighted that social media advertising has been embraced by most businesses but identified a lack of technical expertise as a significant barrier to its full adoption. They recommended the implementation of the RIAER model (Research, Identify, Action, Evaluate, Repeat) to guide businesses in executing effective social media campaigns. This model emphasises the iterative process of refining and optimising marketing strategies based on customer feedback and performance analytics.

Otugo et al. (2015) explored the awareness, attitude, and responsiveness of Nigerian youths towards Facebook advertising. Their study, involving a purposive sample of 400 university students, found that while awareness of Facebook advertisements was high, the advertisements struggled to capture the attention of the target audience. This lack of attention could limit the effectiveness of social media campaigns among youths, a demographic heavily reliant on digital platforms. The authors recommended that businesses refine their advertisements to better engage this audience, ensuring that content is designed to resonate with their specific needs and interests.

He (2016) examined how conflicting information in brand crises affects consumer brand attitudes. Through an experimental study with 48 American college students, He demonstrated that conflicting information negatively impacts consumer brand perception, especially when brand commitment is low. He advised brands to address negative information promptly, using authoritative reports to manage public opinion. This swift response can mitigate the adverse effects of conflicting information and preserve consumer trust in the brand.

To further explore the impact of social media advertisements on consumer purchase intentions, additional studies have contributed valuable insights. A study by Alalwan (2018) examined the role of social media advertisements in shaping consumers' purchasing behaviour within the context of Jordanian markets. Using a sample of 300 respondents and a quantitative research approach, Alalwan found that consumer trust, perceived relevance, and interactivity of social media advertisements significantly influenced purchase intentions. This study emphasized the role of trust-building measures and personalised content in enhancing consumer engagement and motivating purchasing decisions. It recommended that advertisers prioritise building trustworthy relationships with their target audiences to increase the effectiveness of their social media campaigns.

Similarly, a study by Duffett (2017) focused on Generation Z consumers in South Africa, investigating how social media advertising affects their attitudes and purchasing behaviour. This quantitative study, with a sample size of 250 respondents, revealed that emotional appeal, content relevance, and advertisement frequency were key factors influencing purchase intention among younger consumers. Duffett's research highlighted that Generation Z

places great value on engaging and emotionally resonant advertisements, suggesting that brands aiming to capture this demographic's attention should invest in creative, interactive, and emotionally charged campaigns. Additionally, the study indicated that repetitive exposure to advertisements could reinforce brand recognition and positively influence purchase intent.

Together, these studies reinforce the growing significance of personalised, trustworthy, and emotionally appealing social media advertisements in driving consumer purchase intentions. Sriram et al. (2021) and Alalwan (2018) stress the importance of incorporating attention-grabbing features and trust-building strategies, while Majeed et al. (2021) and Duffett (2017) highlight the mediating role of brand equity and emotional appeal in influencing consumer behaviour. Moreover, Ekwueme and Okoro (2018) and Otugo et al. (2015) underscore the potential challenges businesses face in adopting social media advertising, such as technical barriers and attention issues among consumers, while offering practical models and recommendations to enhance campaign effectiveness.

Theoretical Frameworks
Cognitive Response Theory (CRT) provides insight into how individuals' thoughts and reactions shape their attitudes toward messages or stimuli. Originating from Greenwald (1968) and later refined by Petty and Cacioppo in the 1970s, CRT posits that people's cognitive processes—such as attention, perception, memory, and judgment—play a pivotal role in attitude formation and change. According to Ifedayo (2017), responses to persuasive communications are influenced by one's pre-existing beliefs and attitudes, which determine how messages are interpreted. Thus, understanding cognitive responses is crucial for analysing how individuals engage with content, such as advertisements or persuasive messages on social media.

Selective Perception Theory, developed by Dearborn, Simon, and Seymour Smith, explains how individuals interpret media messages based on their cognitive and affective biases. This theory suggests that personal biases shape the perception of media content, leading to varying interpretations of the same message (Vallone et al., 1985). For instance, Arceneaux et al. (2012) highlight that audiences often perceive media messages through a biased lens, which can lead to confirmation bias—where individuals favour information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs while dismissing contradictory information. This phenomenon is particularly relevant in the context of social media, where users' pre-existing attitudes influence their interpretation of content. As demonstrated by Bowman et al. (2017), selective perception affects how individuals process and respond to media portrayals, including advertisements. For example, a "Happy Easter" message might be perceived positively by some while being seen as offensive by others, /depending on their personal biases and expectations.

Research Method

The research employed an interview method to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives on Instagram and Twitter advertising. In-depth interviews are a qualitative technique involving detailed, personal conversations with a select group to uncover their views, experiences, and meanings related to a topic (Carolyn et al., 2006; Pamela et al., 2020). This approach allows for varied insights into individual thoughts and feelings.
The study focused on Instagram and Twitter users in Nigeria, with an estimated population of 17.15 million users as of early 2023—12.2 million on Instagram (Statista, 2023) and 4.95 million on Twitter (DataReportal, 2023). The sample comprised 7 respondents who had seen the creative messages from Three Crown and Peak Milk before their removal. Purposive and available sampling techniques were employed, as the sample needed to include those who had interacted with the specific content before its removal.

Data collection was facilitated using an interview guide—a structured tool comprising 13 questions designed to elicit detailed responses relevant to the research questions. Interviews were conducted via social media platforms and phone calls, with responses recorded, transcribed, and analysed using a thematic approach. Thematic analysis involves identifying and interpreting

recurring themes and ideas within the qualitative data (Caulfield, 2019). The findings from the interviews were organised and examined to present a comprehensive analysis of user responses to the advertisements.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents

S/N	Names	Gender	Education	Duration	Age Bracket	Marital Status
1	Bolaji Ogundele	Male	1st Degree	10 Years on Instagram & 5 Years on Twitter	35-40	Married
2	Wunmi Adetola	Female	1st Degree	7 Years on Instagram & Years on Twitter	25-30	Single
3	Boluwatife Oke	Male	1st Degree	10 Years on Instagram	20-25	Single
4	Omobola Akinde	Female	2nd Degree	15 Years on Instagram	45-50	Married
5	Comfort Korede	Female	1st Degree	7 Years on Instagram & 4 Years on Twitter	25-30	Single
6	Temitope Olurundare	Female	1st Degree	8 Years on Instagram	20-25	Single
7	Marvellous Akingbe	Female	2nd Degree	6 Years on Both	20-25	Single

Research Question 1: How do Instagram and Twitter Subscribers perceive the *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns Milk* controversial creative messages?

Analysing the data on how Instagram and Twitter subscribers perceive the controversial creative messages from *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns*, responses were categorised into distinct themes. These themes encapsulate the varied perceptions and reactions shared by the respondents, facilitating a comprehensive and coherent examination of the creative messaging.

Theme 1: Indifference and Positive Reception of Creative Messaging
This theme captures the neutral to positive reactions from subscribers who did not perceive the creative messages as offensive. These respondents appreciated the creativity and timeliness of the messages, viewing them as normal seasonal greetings, without attaching religious or cultural significance.
1.   "I wasn't expecting any controversy... the two designs were actually passing the Easter messages." – Mr. Bolaji Ogundele
"The brands were just being creative... the post gave the impression that the brand was trying to incorporate their brand into the season." – Miss Wunmi Adetola
This shows that for a portion of the audience, the creative messages were interpreted as typical brand communication, appreciated for their ingenuity and relevance to the Easter period. Such respondents did not see the posts as controversial or disrespectful, highlighting that creativity in branding can resonate with audiences when aligned with seasonal themes.

Theme 2: Appreciation of Creativity vs. Concerns about Unconventionality
This theme combines both the admiration of creativity and the discomfort with the unconventional approach taken by the brands. While some respondents acknowledged the cleverness of the adverts, they expressed unease about the comparison of sacred religious symbols with commercial products. This reflects the tension between creativity and cultural sensitivity in advertising.
1.   "It's like comparing the gravity of what Jesus did on the cross to a tin of milk... a bit comical and slightly derogatory too." – Miss Comfort Korede
This theme illustrates that while brands can be lauded for creative ingenuity, they must tread carefully when incorporating religious or culturally significant symbols into their messaging. The discomfort expressed reflects a broader concern about how far creative licence should extend in sensitive contexts.

Theme 3: Offence and Accusations of Religious Mockery

The theme of offence focuses on respondents who strongly criticised the creative messages, perceiving them as an attack on their religious beliefs. These individuals felt that the brands had crossed a line by trivialising the significance of Easter and mocking the Christian faith.

2.   "I found it very offensive... as if they were trying to mock the Christian religion... I didn't find the creative message attractive and catchy; rather, I found it offensive and disappointing." – Mrs. Omobola Akinde

Religious offence in advertising can have far-reaching consequences, especially when it is perceived as a deliberate mockery. The strong negative emotions expressed by these respondents suggest that brands need to be mindful of the cultural and religious context when crafting messages for diverse audiences.

Theme 4: Controversy and Public Backlash

This theme examines the broader public reaction and the subsequent backlash, which resulted in the removal of the posts. This theme underscores the power of social media in amplifying controversies and the role of religious institutions in shaping public discourse.

1.   "This post got a lot of reaction and attention before it was taken down after the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) asked them to pull it down."

This theme highlights the ripple effect of public reaction on social media, where controversies can quickly escalate and pressure brands to take corrective action. The removal of the posts reflects the influence of religious and societal norms on corporate communication in a culturally sensitive environment.

Research Question 2: To what extent do *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns Milk* creative messages align the audience's interpretation?

Some themes emerged from the respondents' feedback on the extent to which *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns Milk's* creative messages align with the audience's interpretation. These themes reflect a range of perceptions, both positive and negative, providing insight into how the audience received the brands' creative Easter messages.

Theme 1: Positive Interpretation and Religious Reflection

This theme combines the "Positive Interpretation of Easter Greetings" and "Religious Reflection and Remembrance of Jesus' Crucifixion" themes. Respondents in this category perceived the creative messages positively, aligning with the brands' intentions of sending Easter greetings and reminding them of the religious significance of Jesus' crucifixion. The creative integration of Easter into the brand messages resonated well with these respondents.

1.   "He was able to interpret it from the perspective of the creatives because the two graphics actually passed messages relating to Easter." – Mr. Bolaji

2.   "It reminded me of how Jesus died for us and how he was crucified for our sake." – Mr. Oke

It shows that for a substantial portion of the audience, the creative messages succeeded in conveying both festive and religious sentiments. The alignment between the brand's message and the audience's interpretation highlights the successful reception of the creative campaigns by those who found value in their religious connotations.

Theme 2: Negative Interpretation and Perceived Mockery

This theme merges "Negative Interpretation and Perception of Mockery" with "Impact on Brand Perception." Respondents in this category expressed strong negative reactions, viewing the messages as disrespectful or mocking the Christian religion. These negative interpretations not only affected their immediate response but also altered their perception of the brands, leading to a potential loss of consumer loyalty.

1.   "I saw it as a way of mockery to the Christian religion... they didn't do it in the right way and this can be seen as an insult to the Christians." – Miss Comfort Korede
2.   "To me, like I said earlier, it wasn't attractive at all, it made me dislike *Three Crown Milk* products in the market." – Mrs. Omobola Akinde

By combining these themes, it becomes clear that negative interpretations can extend beyond the immediate reaction to the creative messages and have a longer-term impact on brand perception. The risk of alienating part of the audience, particularly on religious grounds, highlights the need for brands to exercise caution when incorporating sensitive themes into their marketing.

Theme 3: General Alignment and Creative Appreciation
This theme reflects the overall positive alignment of the audience with the creative messages. A significant majority commended the brands for their creativity and acknowledged the successful integration of Easter themes into their marketing.
1.   "The analysis also shows that the subscribers commended the brand for coming up with such a creative message." – Mr. Bolaji and Mr. Oke
This theme suggests that despite some negative feedback, some of the audience aligned with the brands' intended message and appreciated the creativity behind the campaign. The ability to balance brand communication with seasonal relevance was viewed positively by most respondents.

Research Question 3: To what extent do the *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns Milk* controversial creative affect the brand image?
The data addressing how the controversial creative messages from Peak Milk and *Three Crowns Milk* affected their brand image reflect a range of perceptions, from limited impact to potential harm, and highlight the role of the brands' established reputations.

Theme 1: Established Brand Image and Limited Impact
Several respondents, including Mr. Bolaji, Mr. Marvelous, and Mr. Oke, expressed the view that the controversy surrounding the creative messages had little or no significant impact on the brands' image. They argued that both *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns Milk* are long-established brands with strong consumer loyalty, and thus, the controversy would not have a lasting effect on their patronage.
1.   "No, I don't think the controversial creative content had an impact on the images of *Three Crowns Milk* and *Peak Milk* because these 2 brands are already well established." – Mr. Bolaji
2.   "I don't think that the post has the ability to have an impact... my perception about the brand hasn't changed." – Mr. Marvelous

This theme suggests that for these respondents, the established nature of the brands acts as a protective factor, shielding them from the potential negative consequences of the controversy. The loyalty of long-term consumers and the strength of the brands' reputations are seen as mitigating any adverse effects from the creative messages.

Theme 2: Perception Unchanged Despite Disappointment
Miss Comfort Korede acknowledged a sense of disappointment with the creative messages, but maintained that their overall perception of the brand remained unchanged. Miss Korede, for instance, highlighted her loyalty to Peak Milk and expressed that her long-standing positive view of the brand outweighed any brief disappointment caused by the controversial post.
1.   "Since I am a loyal consumer, my perception towards *Peak Milk* has not changed. Although I felt a little disappointment, but no hard feelings." – Miss Comfort Korede
This theme indicates that for some consumers, loyalty to a brand can soften the impact of a controversial campaign. While there may be short-term discontent, it does not necessarily translate into long-term harm to brand perception.

Theme 3: Potential Negative Impact on Religious Consumers
This theme highlights the risk of using sensitive religious content in brand messaging. For certain segments of the audience, such as devout Christians, the creative content was seen as offensive, which could lead to a loss of trust and brand loyalty among these consumers. The potential for controversy to damage a brand's professional image underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity. Mrs. Omobola Akinde, believed that the controversial posts could harm the brands' image, especially among Christian consumers. She argued that the posts were perceived as mocking Christianity, which could tarnish the professionalism of the brands and potentially alienate a portion of their customer base.
1.   "Yes, it would definitely have an impact because this post has triggered a lot of Christians negatively... They now look unprofessional." – Mrs. Omobola Akinde

Theme 4: Controversy and Potential Positive Impact
Conversely, some respondents, including Miss Wunmi and Miss Temitope, felt that the controversy had no major negative impact on the brands. This theme suggests that controversy does not always result in negative outcomes. In this case, the heightened attention brought by the creative messages might contribute to greater brand recognition, potentially benefiting the brands in the long run by keeping them in public discourse.
1.   "It doesn't have any impact because people, even people who weren't happy about the post, still buy the product... it might have a positive impact on the brand by creating more awareness." – Miss Wunmi and Miss Temitope

Research Question 4: To what extent do *the Peak Milk* and *Three Crown Milk* controversial creative contents affect consumers attitudes?
The analysis of the data on how *Peak Milk* and Three Crowns *Milk*'s controversial creative contents affected consumer attitudes produces some themes.

Theme 1: No Influence on Consumer Attitude
This theme highlights the resilience of consumer attitudes for a segment of the audience, suggesting that brand loyalty and product perception may not always be swayed by controversial or potentially offensive marketing content. These respondents demonstrated a level of detachment, indicating that their opinions were shaped more by the established reputation of the brands rather than individual marketing campaigns. Mr. Marvellous, Mr. Bolaji, Mr. Oke, and Miss Temitope, indicated that the controversial creative content had no impact on their attitudes toward *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns Milk*. They maintained a neutral or indifferent stance, explaining that the content neither influenced their opinions nor shaped their consumer behaviours.
1.   "The creative content didn't influence my attitude or opinion towards them." – Mr. Bolaji
2.   "The content didn't influence my opinion... I only felt indifferent." – Mr. Oke

Theme 2: Negative Influence and Emotional Responses
This theme shows how emotionally charged content can negatively influence consumer attitudes, particularly when it involves sensitive cultural or religious themes. Omobola Akinde and Miss Comfort Korede described how the controversial content had a negative influence on their attitudes. Mrs. Akinde expressed strong emotions such as anger and disappointment, linking the content to an insult to her Christian beliefs, while Miss Korede admitted to a slight disappointment focused primarily on the visuals, though this did not affect her overall opinion of the brand.

1.   "The brand has influenced my opinion about the brand negatively... I feel anger, disappointment because whenever I remember the content, I feel Christianity has been insulted." – Mrs. Omobola Akinde

2.   "The creative content has slightly influenced my opinion but it is only towards the visuals, not to the brand generally. I just felt a slight disappointment." – Miss Comfort Korede

Theme 3: Positive Influence and Continued Loyalty

In contrast, this theme shows that some consumers may view controversial content as a bold or creative move by brands, reinforcing their positive perceptions and loyalty. It also suggests that controversy can attract attention and foster loyalty among consumers who do not find the content offensive. Respondents like Miss Wunmi reflected a positive or unaffected attitude despite the controversy. This response indicates that for some consumers, controversial content does not necessarily result in negative attitudes, and may even reinforce loyalty.

1.   "The content didn't change my opinion... I felt they did a good job... it didn't shape my attitudes negatively." – Miss Wunmi

Research Question 5: To what extent does the *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns Milk* controversial creative contents affect the Purchase Intentions?

Analysis of the data on how *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns Milk*'s controversial creative content affected purchase intentions, shows a number of themes.

Theme 1: No Influence on Purchase Intentions

This theme suggests that for the majority of consumers, brand loyalty, quality, and economic considerations outweigh the potential influence of controversial marketing content. Their purchasing behaviour remains consistent despite any temporary reactions to the Easter visuals, demonstrating a strong attachment to the product's functional benefits over any perceived negative messaging.

Respondents like Mr. Oke, Miss Comfort Korede, Miss Wunmi, and Mr. Bolaji, indicated that the controversial creative content did not influence their purchase intentions. Their decisions to buy *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns Milk* were primarily driven by personal preferences, product quality, and economic factors. The content played little to no role in shaping their likelihood to purchase the brands.

1.   "The content didn't influence my likelihood of purchasing the product... I prefer Peak to others." – Mr. Oke

2.   "The content didn't influence my likelihood to purchase the product... I still see Peak Milk as the best." – Miss Comfort Korede

Theme 2: Economic Factors and Purchase Decisions

This theme underscores the role of financial considerations in consumer purchasing decisions. Even in the face of potentially controversial messaging, economic factors such as pricing and packaging options significantly influence the behaviour of consumers, indicating that practical factors outweigh brand messaging in some cases. While the content itself did not directly affect purchase intentions, respondents like Miss Wunmi and Mr. Bolaji noted that economic factors played a more significant role in their decision-making process.

1.   "Yes, I'll still buy *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns Milk*... I have stopped buying the smaller SKUs because buying the refill pack is more economical for me." – Miss Wunmi

2.   "It did not increase or reduce my level of patronage... I can't really say I was influenced per se." – Mr. Bolaji

Theme 3: Negative Influence on Purchase Intentions

This theme illustrates that while most consumers were not influenced by the controversial content, for some, especially those with strong emotional responses, the messaging had a

significant negative impact. In such cases, the content had the power to diminish purchase intentions, particularly when it conflicted with deeply held values or beliefs.

Mrs. Omobola Akinde reported a negative influence on their purchase intentions due to the controversial content. The emotional response triggered by the perceived insult to Christian beliefs led Mrs. Omobola to reconsider purchasing the brands, and she mentioned that she would only buy the products if her preferred alternatives were unavailable.

1.   "This has really influenced my likelihood to purchase the brand because whenever I see the product, it triggers me." – Mrs. Omobola Akinde

Theme 4: Price and Quality as Purchase Influencers
This theme indicates that price sensitivity and concerns about product quality are paramount considerations for consumers. For those like Mr. Marvellous, issues unrelated to the content of the marketing message were more influential in shaping purchasing behaviour, demonstrating that product attributes remain a critical factor. This view suggests that product-related factors rather than marketing content drive purchase intentions.

1.   "The price doubled or even tripled... you should also improve the quality or at least retain the quality." – Mr. Marvellous

Discussion of Findings

The findings from this research reveal nuanced perspectives from Instagram and Twitter subscribers regarding the *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns Milk* Easter creative messages. These perspectives align with empirical studies and theoretical frameworks, providing a deeper understanding of how audiences interpret and respond to controversial creative content.

Research Question 1: How do Instagram and Twitter subscribers perceive the *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns Milk* controversial creative messages?
This research shows that subscribers' perceptions varied significantly. For some, the creative messages were seen as clever and appropriate for the Easter season, aligning with Sriram et al.'s (2021) findings that creative advertisements can resonate with audiences when they reflect seasonal relevance. However, others found the content offensive due to its religious implications, which echoes He's (2016) argument that conflicting information or offensive content can negatively affect consumer attitudes. The application of Selective Perception Theory is evident, as personal biases and religious convictions influenced how the messages were interpreted (Arceneaux et al., 2012). These divergent reactions underscore the importance of cultural sensitivity in brand messaging, especially in multicultural and religiously diverse contexts.

Research Question 2: To what extent do the *Peak Milk* and *Three Crowns Milk* creative messages align with audience interpretations?
The findings indicate that the creative messages successfully communicated festive sentiments to a substantial portion of the audience, who appreciated the messages as celebratory. This aligns with the Cognitive Response Theory (Greenwald, 1968), where respondents' pre-existing positive attitudes towards the brands shaped their favourable interpretations of the content. However, a notable minority perceived the messages as disrespectful or offensive, a reflection of Selective Perception Theory (Vallone et al., 1985). The divide in audience interpretation highlights the challenge brands face when aligning their messages with diverse consumer beliefs. Majeed et al. (2021) suggest that careful brand communication can enhance loyalty, but when cultural or religious symbols are misused, it risks alienating segments of the audience.

Research Question 3: To what extent did the controversial creative content affect brand image?
The findings suggest that the controversy had mixed effects on the brand image of Peak Milk and Three Crowns. While loyal consumers appeared unaffected, viewing the brands' established

reputation as a buffer against potential harm, others felt the brands' professional image was tarnished. This supports He's (2016) findings that conflicting or offensive information can damage brand perception, especially when consumer trust is compromised. Nevertheless, a few respondents acknowledged that the controversy brought heightened attention to the brands, potentially boosting brand awareness in the long term. This echoes the idea that controversy does not always lead to negative outcomes but can enhance visibility and engagement.

Research Question 4: To what extent did the controversial creative content affect consumer attitudes?
Consumer attitudes towards the brands showed a spectrum of reactions. Many remained loyal, with no significant change in their perception of the brands, which aligns with Duffett's (2017) findings that emotional appeal in advertising can reinforce brand loyalty, even when content is controversial. However, some respondents, such as Mrs. Omobola, expressed negative attitudes shaped by emotional responses to religious sensitivities. This reflects the influence of cognitive responses on attitude formation, as suggested by Ifedayo (2017). For others, the controversy reinforced their positive perception of the brands, illustrating the complexity of consumer attitudes.

Research Question 5: To what extent did the controversial creative content affect purchase intentions?
The research reveals that purchase intentions were largely unaffected by the controversial content. Most respondents prioritized factors like product quality and price over marketing controversies, supporting Alalwan's (2018) finding that practical considerations such as trust and quality often outweigh the influence of advertising. However, for a minority of consumers, particularly those emotionally affected by the religious controversy, the content had a negative impact on their purchasing decisions. This underscores the role of emotional and cultural factors in shaping consumer behaviour, as noted by Sriram et al. (2021).
The findings reflect the importance of cultural and religious sensitivity in social media advertising. While creative messages can enhance brand engagement, they must be carefully crafted to avoid alienating consumers with strong cultural or religious beliefs. The application of Cognitive Response and Selective Perception theories demonstrates how personal biases and cognitive processes influence consumer interpretation and responses to brand messages.

Conclusion

Drawing upon the data analysis, this study concludes that creative messages and advertisements can be perceived positively or negatively based on subscribers' cognitive responses. Content features can significantly influence consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. While not all advertisements may garner attention or spark controversy, some advertisers resort to controversial content to stand out in a competitive market. The study acknowledges both positive and negative outcomes of controversial advertising, emphasizing the need for effective marketing strategies to secure consumer loyalty. The study suggests further exploration into the nuanced effects of controversial advertising and highlights the importance of selecting appropriate content for Instagram advertisements to create brand awareness without causing emotional distress.

Recommendations
1.   The study reveals that subscribers had diverse reactions to the Easter creative, with some finding it slightly derogatory or offensive to the Christian religion. This underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity in advertising to avoid potential negative consequences on brand image and consumer behavior.
2.   The study emphasizes the complexity of consumer perceptions and responses to creative content on social media, indicating the need to incorporate diverse perspectives during the creative process to identify and avoid potential sensitivities.

3.   Subscribers' reactions to the Easter creative varied, with some finding it comical and others finding it offensive. Placing greater emphasis on analyzing the emotional impact of creative content is crucial to refining messaging and avoiding potential controversies.

4.   Some respondents felt negatively influenced by the controversy, perceiving the brands as unprofessional and expressing disappointment. Developing strategies for brand image repair is important in the event of a controversy to rebuild trust and positive brand associations.

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