

CLICK, WATCH, SHARE: UNPACKING WHAT DRIVES MILLENNIALS TO SPREAD ONLINE VIDEO ADVERTISING

An Nur Nabila Ismail¹
Nik Mohamad Shamim Nik Mohd Zainordin^{2*}
Nurhidayah Rosely³
Ayu Kamareena Abdullah Thani⁴
Mira Qerul Barriah Muhamad⁵
Nur Azreen Fariahah Ahmad⁶

¹Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan, Kampus Kota Bharu, Malaysia (Email: annurnabila@uitm.edu.my)

²Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan, Kampus Machang, Malaysia (Email: nikshamim@uitm.edu.my)

³Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan, Kampus Machang, Malaysia (Email: nurhidayahrosely@uitm.edu.my)

⁴Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan, Kampus Machang, Malaysia (Email: ayukamareenna@uitm.edu.my)

⁵Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan, Kampus Machang, Malaysia (Email: miraqerul@uitm.edu.my)

⁶Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan, Kampus Machang, Malaysia (Email: azreenfariahah@uitm.edu.my)

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Abstract: *The rapid evolution of digital media consumption has transformed advertising strategies, with online video advertisements (OVAs) emerging as a dominant medium. This study investigates the factors influencing millennials' intention to share OVAs, focusing on the role of attitude, subjective norms, and the mediating effect of personal involvement. Grounded in the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the research posits that both attitudinal and normative beliefs significantly shape behavioral intentions. Data were collected through a purposive sampling method targeting Malaysian millennials who actively engage with OVAs. Structural Equation Modeling using SmartPLS was employed to assess the hypothesized relationships. Findings reveal that attitude and subjective norms have a significant and positive influence on the intention to share OVAs. More importantly, personal involvement significantly mediates these relationships, indicating that when millennials perceive advertisements as personally relevant or engaging, their likelihood of sharing increases. This suggests that emotional and cognitive resonance with content amplifies the impact of internal evaluations and social influences. The study contributes theoretically by extending TRA with the inclusion of personal involvement as a mediating construct, offering a deeper understanding of the psychological*

mechanisms behind digital sharing behavior. Practically, it highlights the importance for marketers to craft engaging and personally relevant video content that aligns with millennials' interests and social values. By incorporating elements such as storytelling, personalization, and peer influence, advertisers can enhance the shareability and reach of OVAs. Overall, the research provides critical insights into designing more effective digital advertising strategies targeting the millennial segment. Future research may explore cross-generational comparisons or integrate other behavioral models to further enhance predictive validity and applicability across diverse demographic contexts.

Keywords: *Attitude, Subjective Norms, Personal Involvement, Online Video Advertising, Theory of Reasoned Action, Millennials*

Introduction

The advertising industry is undergoing a rapid transformation due to the widespread use of internet-enabled devices. This has resulted in consumers having quick access to information, thereby improving the potential for advertisers to reach their target audience effectively. Although TV still remains the dominant medium in terms of consumption time, the gap between TV and internet consumption is closing. According to a 2018 report by Zenith, it is predicted that daily internet consumption will surpass daily TV consumption for the first time by 2020. Businesses have adapted to this change in media consumption by increasing their spending on digital advertising (including display, video, search, and social) which surpassed TV spending for the first time in 2017 according to a report by Magna. Online video advertisements (OVAs) are one of the most commonly used platforms by marketers today. OVAs have become an increasingly popular tool for businesses to promote their products and services. The rise of social media platforms has made it easier for consumers to share OVAs with their network, potentially increasing the reach and impact of the advertisement. The rapid evolution of digital media has reshaped advertising practices, with online video advertising becoming dominant. However, despite this transformation, limited empirical attention has been given to how millennials decide to share such content. This is particularly important for businesses targeting the millennial generation, as they have been found to be major influencers in the spread of OVAs.

Previous research has shown that attitude, subjective norms, and personal involvement have a direct effect on the intentions to share OVAs. While attitude and subjective norms have been studied extensively in predicting digital sharing behavior, there remains insufficient understanding of how personal involvement mediates these relationships, especially in the context of online video advertisements. Attitude refers to a person's overall evaluation of an object or behavior (Park & Ha, 2014), subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressure to engage in a behavior (Okun, Karoly & Lutz, 2022), and personal involvement refers to the extent to which an individual is personally affected by or interested in the object or behavior (Zaichkowsky, 1986). However, little is known about how personal involvement mediates the relationship between attitude, subjective norms, and intentions to share OVAs. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the mediating role of personal involvement in the relationship between attitude, subjective norms, and intentions to share OVAs among millennials. It is expected that this study will provide a better understanding of the factors that influence

millennials' intentions to share OVAs and inform businesses on how to create more effective OVAs campaigns targeting this demographic.

Literature Review

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

The TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) states that behavioural intention can predict behaviour. According to Fishbein and Manfredo (1975), the TRA is a series of sociopsychological models linked together to understand and predict human behaviour. The intention to perform is the instant antecedent to any behaviour in the TRA, whereby the stronger one's intention, the more he/she is expected to act and the greater the possibility that the behaviour is acted upon (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). In light of the TRA, the behavioural intention of carrying out certain behaviour is influenced by a personal factor (attitude) and a social factor (subjective norm) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Hyllegard et al., (2010) applied the TRA to explain that one's stated intention to act in a given manner is seen as the outcome of his/her attitude towards the behaviour as well as his/her subjective norm. The TRA has been used to measure multiple advertising contexts, such as social media advertising (Ahmed & Raziq, 2018), mobile advertising (Wong, 2011), and video advertising (Lee, Ham, & Kim, 2013). For instance, Lee and Hong (2016) applied the TRA to forecast positive consumer reactions to social media advertising. For the current study applied TRA to measure the relationship toward the intention to share OVAs among Millennials.

Attitude toward sharing OVAs

Attitude towards a behaviour is defined as individuals' feelings, either positive or negative, about performing a specific behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980). It refers to a person's decision to perform a specific behaviour based on his/her estimation of the costs and benefits derived from the behaviour (Cheng, Lam & Hsu, 2006). Thus, one's positive or negative attitude towards an advertisement can influence his/her intention to watch or skip the advertisement. Kelly, Kerr, and Drennan (2010) found that consumers skipped advertisements on an online website because the advertisements were inconsistent with consumer attitudes. If consumers have unfavourable attitude towards advertisements played before them, they would neither watch nor share the advertisements with others.

Previous research has established that consumers' attitude towards a behaviour influences their behavioural intention (Quoquab et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2018; Ahn & Back, 2018; Bae & Chang, 2021; Yusuf & Busalim, 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). This finding is supported by the TRA and TPB, which states that a positive attitude leads to stronger behavioural intention (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980; Ajzen, 1985, 1987). Positive attitude towards advertising is created by a customer's state of mind that believes advertising is effective, whereby user acceptance of advertising has a direct link with attitudinal trust (Patil et al., 2020). There are links among people's needs, products they use, and advertising messages. People typically evaluate a product after viewing and accepting advertising (Soroa & Yang, 2010). Barwise and Strong (2002) depicted that acceptance is an attitude because it is an attitudinal permit that indicates customer's readiness to receive advertising information.

In the context of OVAs, Lee and Lee (2011) revealed the positive influence of attitude towards watching OVAs on the intention to watch OVAs. Similarly, Patil et al., (2020) found that when

consumers had good attitude towards the usage of computer technology, they exhibited higher intention to use the technology. Due to the growing population of Millennials and their proclivity for using technology and the internet (Ladhari, Gonthier & Lajante, 2019), the current study focused on the effect of Millennials' attitude towards sharing OVAs on the intention to share OVAs. Thus, the current study developed the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a positive and significant relationship between attitude toward sharing OVAs and Intention to share OVAs.

Subjective norms toward sharing OVAs

Subjective norms are defined as the perceived views of close people who are influential in a person's decision making, such as business partners, colleagues, relatives, close friends, and family members (Park, 2000). Generally, the stronger the subjective norms, the higher the behavioural intention (Lim & Dubinsky, 2005). According to Ajzen (1985, 1991, 1998), subjective norm denotes consumers' acceptance of normative opportunities from other people or nearby reference groups.

Prior studies have validated the positive affiliation between subjective norm and behavioural intention (see Sanne & Wiese, 2018; Zhang et al., 2018; Ahmed & Raziq, 2018; Bai, Wang, & Gong, 2019; Bae & Chang, 2021). Stronger subjective norm exerts stronger impact on one's behavioural intention (Dalziel & Bevan, 2019), because people frequently act based on their opinion of what others think they should be doing (Pavlou & Stewart, 2000). Subjective norm, social norm, social influences, modelling, normative pressure, and reference groups have been observed as key components of the change literature (Cooper & Zmud, 1990; Hung, Ku, & Chang, 2003; Teo & Pok, 2003; Nysveen, Pedersen, & Thorbjørnsen, 2005; Khan & Allil, 2010). The study by Kashif, Zarkada and Ramayah (2018) found that subjective norms strongly influence the ethical intentions of customer service managers. The same findings were discovered by Bai, Wang and Gong (2019) with regard to consumers' intention to purchase organic food.

Study from Sanne and Wiese (2018), Zhang et al., (2018), and Ahmed and Raziq (2018) corroborated that customers' socio-cultural setting (e.g., family, informal sources, & culture) is subjective norm that significantly influences their purchase decision. The positive link between subjective norm and intention to share OVAs was verified by Lee et al., (2017) among university students. Relevant to this study, Lee, Ham and Kim (2013) examined the relationship between subjective norms and the intention to share OVAs, discovering a positive relationship between the two in the context of university students. In contrast, the current study postulated that this relationship would exist in a different population, i.e., Millennials. Based on extant findings, it was hypothesised that:

H2: There is a positive and significant relationship between subjective norms toward sharing OVAs and Intention to share OVAs.

Personal Involvement mediates the Attitude and Subjective Norms toward Intention to Share OVAs

Personal involvement can be interpreted as object in terms of its importance (Lastovicka, 1979), concern (Hupfer and Gardner, 1971), centrality to the consumer ego structure (Day, 1970), and

personal relevance to the consumer (Petty et al., 1983). Zaichkowsky (1985) described personal involvement as “an individual's perceived relevance of an object based on individual needs, values, and interest.” This definition give two implication, firstly, as the consumer need, interest, and value for an object varies, the consumer involvement in that object is also likely to change and secondly, the object of personal relevance can be anything (Sharma & Klein 2020).

Personal involvement in video advertisements can lead to higher levels of engagement and recall, as well as positive attitudes towards the advertised product. This may be because personal involvement increases the perceived relevance of the advertisement to the viewer, leading to a more meaningful and memorable experience. Additionally, personal involvement can also lead to greater persuasion and behavioral intentions, such as increased likelihood of purchasing the advertised product. Study from Liu-Thompkins (2019) found that personal involvement in a video advertisement can increase the effectiveness of the advertisement. The study found that when participants were personally involved in a video advertisement, they had higher levels of recall, attitude, and purchase intent towards the product advertised. Furthermore, Stewart et al., (2019) also found that video advertisements for hedonic products resulted in stronger attitudes toward the ad and brand, and intentions to purchase. Video advertisements for low involvement products resulted in stronger purchase intentions and likelihood to opt-in for more information.

Personal involvement can plays a role in shaping viewers' attitudes towards the advertised product or brand. Rahimah, Aqfa and Astira (2025) found that personal involvement in a video advertisement can mediate the relationship between advertisement exposure and attitude towards the advertised product. The study found that when participants were personally involved in a video advertisement, they had higher levels of attitude towards the product advertised. Tseng and Wang (2023) found that personal involvement can have a positive effect on the attitude formation towards the advertised brand. It show that the personal involvement led to a higher attention, engagement and recall of the brand, which in turn positively influenced the attitude towards the brand. Overall, personal involvement can increase the perceived relevance of the advertisement to the viewer and leading to a more meaningful and memorable experience, can positively shape the attitude towards the advertised product or brand. Therefore, it was hypothesised that:

H3: Personal involvement mediates the relationship between attitude toward sharing OVAs and Intention to share OVAs.

Subjective norms refer to the perception of what is typical or expected behavior among a person's reference group. Xie and Madni (2023) mentioned that personal involvement in a video advertisement can have an effect on the formation of subjective norms towards the advertised product. Based on the study it conclude that, when participants were personally involved in a video advertisement, they had higher levels of subjective norm towards the product advertised. The study also found that personal involvement played a significant role in mediating the relationship between advertisement exposure and subjective norm towards the advertised product. Moreover, personal involvement led to a higher attention, engagement and recall of the brand, which in turn positively influenced the formation of subjective norm towards the brand. Therefore, role of personal involvement as a mediator can increase the

perceived relevance of the advertisement to the viewer and leading to a more meaningful and memorable experience, can positively shape the formation of subjective norms towards the advertised product or brand. Thus, it was hypothesised that:

H4: Personal involvement mediates the relationship between subjective norms toward sharing OVAs and Intention to share OVAs.

Intention to share OVAs

Ajzen (1991) defined intention as a motivational factor that influences behaviour, such as one's willingness to try and the effort in planning to perform certain behaviour. The stronger the intention to engage in certain behaviour, the more likely one would execute the behaviour. Certain behavioural intentions result in behaviour only if the target behaviour is under volitional control, that is, if one can decide at will to perform or not perform the behaviour. Intention is expected to influence performance more for an individual with higher behavioural control, to the extent that the person is motivated to try. Hence, this present study assessed the intention to share OVAs and its determining factors.

Lee and Lee (2011) examined factors that influenced the intention to watch OVAs based on TRA. They revealed that attitude towards watching OVAs, as well as subjective norm and prior frequency of watching OVAs positively influenced the very act of watching OVAs. Shehu, Bijmolt, and Clement (2016) assessed the effect of likeability dynamics on users' intention to share OVAs, particularly the role of moment-to-moment likeability of online advertisement. They found that high likeability at pre- and post-OVA stages appeared to be important, although post-effect was greater due to memory-based framework. Based on the discussion above, intention to share OVAs can be defined as a customer's intention to voluntarily pass along specific OVA to others (Choi, 2020). Previous studies generally agree that attitude and subjective norms influence sharing behavior, but some findings diverge regarding the relative strength of these factors across cultural contexts and product categories. This study addresses these inconsistencies by focusing on millennials and including personal involvement as a mediator.

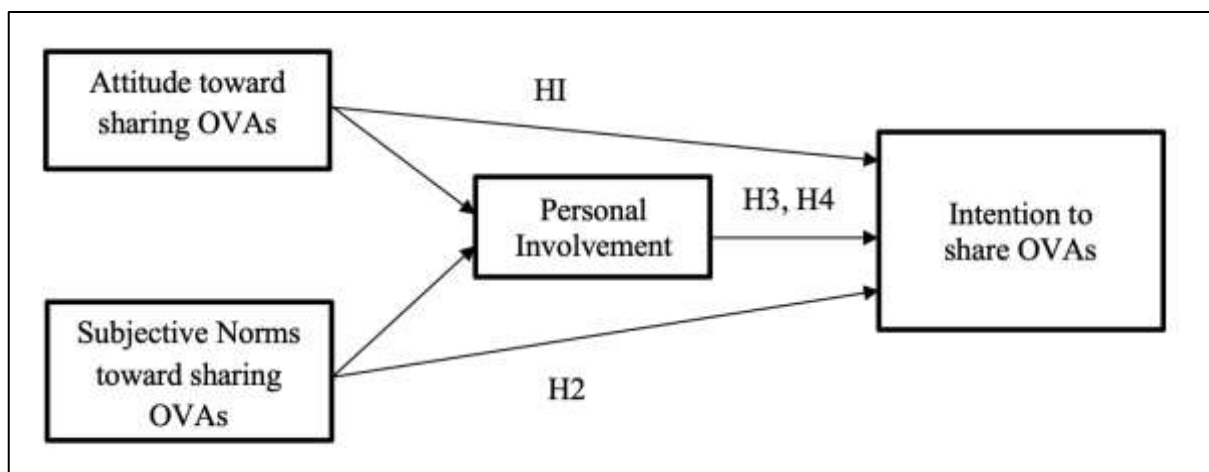


Figure 1: Research Framework

Methodology

Sampling and Data Collection

A total of 300 respondents participated in the survey. Questionnaire design: Items measuring attitude, subjective norms, and personal involvement were adapted from established scales (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, Zaichkowsky). All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). A pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents to refine clarity. This study employed a purposive sampling technique to identify and collect data from participants who meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. This method was chosen to ensure respondents had prior experience with OVAs, though this limits generalizability beyond the millennial cohort. The target population comprised Millennials, specifically individuals born between 1981 and 1996, who regularly watch and share online viral advertisements (OVAs). The purposive approach was justified by the need to ensure that all respondents have prior experience with OVAs, making them suitable for evaluating personal involvement and behavioural intentions in this context. Data were gathered through an online questionnaire, which was distributed via various digital platforms including social media and email to reach the identified demographic efficiently. The questionnaire included demographic questions to confirm respondents' generational classification and behavioural questions to verify their exposure to and interaction with OVAs. Only those who confirmed frequent engagement with OVAs were allowed to proceed with the full survey. This ensured the relevance and accuracy of the collected data in addressing the study's research questions.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through the SmartPLS software. SmartPLS was chosen for its suitability in analyzing complex models involving latent constructs and mediation effects, particularly in exploratory research and when the data do not meet normality assumptions. The analysis included assessment of the measurement model to evaluate reliability and validity of the constructs, including internal consistency (using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability), convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted, AVE), and discriminant validity. Following this, the structural model was examined to test the hypothesized relationships among the constructs, including the mediating role of personal involvement in the relationship between attitude, subjective norms, and intention to share OVAs. Bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 resamples were employed to determine the significance of path coefficients and mediation effects. The results provided insights into the behavioral patterns of Millennials in the context of OVA sharing, contributing to both theoretical and practical understanding of viral marketing effectiveness.

Results

Assessment of the Measurement Model

The evaluation of the reflective measurement paradigm encompasses the assessment of internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. According to Table 1, it can be observed that the factor loadings for most items exceeded the recommended minimum threshold of 0.50 as suggested by Hair et al. (2010), indicating satisfactory item reliability. Specifically, all items under Attitude (ATT), Subjective Norms (SN), Personal Involvement (PER.INV) and Intention to Share OVAs (INT) demonstrated strong loadings above 0.80. In terms of internal consistency, the composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs ranged from 0.917 to 0.974, which surpasses the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010), thereby confirming a high level of internal consistency among the indicators. Furthermore, the

average variance extracted (AVE) values for all constructs were above the threshold of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), with ATT (0.813), SN (0.866), PER.INV (0.537), and INT (0.926), thus establishing adequate convergent validity. To assess discriminant validity, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) were employed. As shown in Table 2, all HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85, thereby confirming that discriminant validity has been established.

Table 1: Loadings, AVE and CR

Constructs	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR
ATT	ATT 1	0.858	0.813	0.956
	ATT 2	0.877		
	ATT 3	0.923		
	ATT 4	0.922		
	ATT 5	0.928		
SN	SN 1	0.848	0.866	0.963
	SN 2	0.951		
	SN 3	0.961		
	SN 4	0.957		
PER.INV	PER.INV1	0.792	0.537	0.917
	PER.INV2	0.782		
	PER.INV3	0.880		
	PER.INV4	0.846		
	PER.INV5	0.813		
	PER.INV6	0.716		
	PER.INV7	0.755		
	PER.INV8	0.702		
	PER.INV9	0.844		
	PER.INV10	0.706		
INT	INT 1	0.968	0.926	0.974
	INT 2	0.949		
	INT 3	0.970		

Table 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT)

	ATT	SN	PER.INV	INT
ATT				
SN	0.902			
PER.INV	0.519	0.931		
INT	0.137	0.112	0.733	

Assessment of the Structural Model

The evaluation of the structural model was conducted to test the hypothesized relationships among the constructs and to determine the model's explanatory power. As presented in Table 3, the path coefficients and their corresponding t-values and p-values were assessed using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 subsamples. The results indicate that Attitude toward sharing OVAs (ATT) has a positive and significant effect on Intention to share OVAs (INT), with a standardized beta coefficient of 0.418, a t-value of 6.807, and a p-value less than 0.001. This suggests that a favorable attitude significantly enhances millennials' intention to share online video advertisements (OVAs). Similarly, Subjective Norms (SN) were also found to have a positive and significant influence on Intention to share OVAs (INT), with a standardized beta of 0.164, a t-value of 3.164, and a p-value less than 0.01. This indicates that social pressure or influence from peers plays a meaningful role in shaping individuals' sharing behavior.

Table 3: Path Coefficient Assessment

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-value	Result
H1	ATT -> INT	0.418	0.061	6.807	Significant
H2	SN -> INT	0.164	0.052	3.164	Significant

Assessment of the Mediation

Additionally, the model examined the mediating role of Personal Involvement (PER.INV). The results reveal that Personal Involvement significantly mediates the relationship between Attitude and Intention to share OVAs, with a standardized indirect effect of 0.689 and a t-value of 9.753 ($p < 0.001$). Likewise, Personal Involvement also mediates the relationship between Subjective Norms and Intention, with an indirect effect of 0.602 and a t-value of 9.30 ($p < 0.001$). These findings confirm that higher levels of personal relevance and engagement with OVAs enhance the strength of both attitudinal and normative influences on sharing intentions.

Table 4: Mediation Assessment

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-value	P-Value	Result
H3	ATT -> PER.INV -> INT	0.689	0.070	9.753**	0.000	Significant
H4	SN -> PER.INV -> INT	0.602	0.068	0.930*	0.000	Significant

Discussion and Implications

The findings of this study provide empirical support for the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) in explaining millennials' intention to share online video advertisements (OVAs). The results show that both attitude toward sharing OVAs and subjective norms significantly influence the intention to share, aligning with previous studies (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Lee et al., 2013). Among these, attitude demonstrated a stronger influence, suggesting that millennials are more likely to share OVAs when they hold favorable evaluations of the content. This reinforces the importance of affective and cognitive engagement in shaping digital sharing behavior. Furthermore, personal involvement was found to significantly mediate the relationship between both attitude and subjective norms with the intention to share OVAs. This confirms that when millennials perceive an advertisement as personally relevant or engaging, it strengthens the effect of their internal evaluation (attitude) and external influence (subjective norms) on their behavioral intention. These findings highlight the central role of emotional and cognitive investment in influencing viral sharing behaviors in the context of digital advertising.

Theoretical implications

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital advertising and consumer behavior by extending the application of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) within the context of online video advertisements. It introduces personal involvement as a key mediating variable, enriching the TRA framework by showing how internal psychological engagement deepens the effects of attitude and subjective norms on behavioral intentions. Additionally, by focusing on the millennial generation, the study offers insights specific to a digitally native and socially connected demographic, thus enhancing the understanding of generational behavioral patterns in digital media sharing. The results support the integration of personal involvement as a meaningful construct in predictive models of online sharing behavior, especially for user-generated or viral content.

Practical implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings provide valuable guidance for marketers and advertisers aiming to enhance the shareability of their video content among millennials. First, efforts should be directed at creating positive attitudes toward OVAs by ensuring the content is engaging, relevant, and aligned with the audience's values and preferences. Elements such as humor, storytelling, relatability, and emotional resonance can increase likability and perceived value.

Second, marketers should leverage social influence by encouraging users to share content within their peer networks. This can be facilitated through social proof, testimonials, influencer endorsements, or interactive features that increase visibility and normative pressure. Most importantly, the study highlights the critical role of personal involvement. Advertisers should design OVAs that foster personal relevance, perhaps by targeting niche interests, using personalized messages, or addressing issues that deeply concern or interest millennials. Creating opportunities for viewers to engage with the content (e.g., user-generated responses, calls to action) can also increase involvement and sharing behavior.

Conclusion and future research directions

This study examined the effects of attitude, subjective norms, and personal involvement on millennials' intention to share online video advertisements. The results affirm that both personal and social factors significantly influence sharing behavior, with personal involvement serving as a crucial mediating mechanism. These insights reinforce the value of designing OVAs that not only appeal emotionally and cognitively but also connect personally with the audience.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. The sample was limited to millennials who actively watch and share OVAs, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other generational cohorts or less digitally active users. Future research could explore cross-generational comparisons, examine cultural influences, or integrate other behavioral models such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) or the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Additionally, longitudinal or experimental studies could provide a more in-depth understanding of how attitudes and involvement evolve over time and influence real-world sharing behaviors. In conclusion, understanding the psychological and social drivers behind OVA sharing can help marketers design more compelling content and campaigns, ultimately enhancing brand reach and consumer engagement in the digital era

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