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Exploring the role of Humor and Music in radio advertisement: A quasi-experimental study on domestic tourist attitudes and behavioral intentions in the UAE

Introduction

The United Arab Emirates has emerged as a leading global tourist destination, attracting more than 20 million tourists. While much of the tourism development and attention has centered around Dubai and Abu Dhabi, several other emirates are also developing their tourism offerings. Ras Al Khaimah has recently invested heavily in the development of its tourism sector with a focus on leveraging its natural landscapes, and have directed some of the marketing focus towards attracting domestic tourists from other Emirates including Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah. Ras Al Khaimah is known for scenic mountains (Jabal Al Jais and Hajar Mountains), inclusive of natural hot springs, the world's longest zipline, and five star hotels and 'rustic' nature resorts. It is only a 45-minute drive from the Dubai International Airport by car, and therefore is a convenient destination to visit for the residents and tourists.

Moreover, radio is an important media platform in the UAE with 50+ operational radio stations in different languages (Radio Station World, 2017). According to estimates, 78% of UAE population listen to the radio daily (Communicate, 2016). A study by Price Water Coopers found a 60% increase in radio advertising revenue between 2006 and 2012 in the UAE, which is significantly higher than other countries in the region (Kalliny, 2014).

Destination marketing campaigns are often used to increase the awareness and positive perception about the destination. Tourist attitudes and intentions to visit a destination are directly related to the effectiveness of these campaigns as they can change tourist perceptions or reinforce previously held views about the destination (Hennessey et al., 2010). Among the different advertising channels used by marketers such as print media, TV, digital, online and social media, radio advertising still remain an integral part of the campaign (Forbes, 2015). Billions of dollars each year are spend on radio advertisement campaigns (Statista, 2019). The evidence from the literature suggest that shopping behaviour of consumer can be greatly influenced by radio advertisements (Rajagopal, 2011). A recent study by Nielsen Catalina Solutions shows that radio advertisements vis-à-vis other channels deliver an impressive return on investment of \$12 in sales for every \$1 spent on advertising (ADWEEK, 2018). However, given that radio advertisement solely rely on auditory stimuli, the advertisements need to have an attention-grabbing element which would aid in creating awareness-recall and recognition for the brand and companies being advertised (Buchholz and Smith, 1991). Moreover, this needs to be achieved in a relatively short time span of less than 30 second rather than the traditional 60 second television commercials (Allan, 2012). Therefore, for effective radio advertisements, the content and presentation must balance and harmonize with the timespan elements to indulge listeners, especially during long commercial breaks.

Previous studies have shown that radio advertisements are more effective when they are entertaining while disseminating the message (Rajagopal, 2011). The role of humor and music in radio advertising have examined widely in the literature (Cantor and Venus, 1980; Berg and Lippman, 2001; Brooker and Wheatley, 1994; Martina-Santana et al., 2015). For instance, Berg

and Lippman (2001) found humorous advertisements to be more effective than advertisements without humor, while Martina-Santana et al. (2015) found advertisements with music to be more effective than the ones without music. However, the tourism literature has not specifically investigate the impact of radio advertisements and the role of humor and music on tourist behavior.

This forms the motivation of this study, which aims to investigate the use and effect of radio advertisements a) without humor and music b) with humor only c) with music only d) with both humor and music on domestic tourist attitudes and behavioral intentions to visit Ras Al Khamiah.

Literature Review

Effectiveness of radio advertisements

Radio advertisements are a powerful medium to reach the target audiences. According to UNESCO (2013), radio can reach more than 95% of the population. Also, radio advertisements provide an opportunity to reach passive consumers who are not actively seeking information (Buchholz and Smith, 1991). The level of trust associated with radio advertisements are generally high vis-à-vis other advertising channels (EBU, 2018).

Several studies have found humor in radio advertising to achieve desirable results for the advertisers (Gelb & Zinkhan, 1985; Berg and Lippman, 2001; Flaherty et al., 2004, Benson and Perry, 2006, Cantor and Venus, 1980). However, Buchholz and Smith (1991) citing previous studies warned that if not executed carefully, the effect of humor in radio advertising can be damaging. For instance, Cantor and Venus (1980) reported that advertisements presented in serious context were more effective than advertisements presented in humorous context.

Additionally, studies that have investigated the impact of music in radio advertisements found that music can significantly improve the effectiveness of radio advertisements, and can derive a significant commercial advantage (Martín-Santana et al., 2015). According to Zander (2006), music is an important component of radio advertisement, as it attracts attention, conveys implicit and explicit messages, generates emotions and helps people retain information. However, if not executed properly, it has the potential to be distracting (Martín-Santana et al., 2015) or have little impact. For example, Brooker and Wheatley (1994) found addition of music in radio advertisement to have no impact on consumer attitudes and purchase likelihood.

This lack of consensus in the literature further highlights the need to investigate the effectiveness of radio advertisements, especially with humor and music.

Tourist attitudes and behavioral intention to visit a destination

Tourist attitudes are predispositions or feelings toward a vacation destination or service (Lam and Hsu, 2006). This include predispositions or feelings such as 'Pleasant', 'Favourable', 'Enjoyable', 'Fun', 'Positive', and 'Attractive' (Lam and Hsu, 2006; Byun and Jang, 2015). Behavioral intention has been defined as the individual's anticipated or planned future behavior (Swan, 1981) or the perceived likelihood that a consumer will engage in a given behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). In tourism context, it is the intention of selecting a travel destination (Lam and Hsu, 2006). To date few studies have investigated the influence of radio advertisements on tourist attitudes and behavioral intention to visit a destination, particularly within a domestic tourism context.

Methodology

To evaluate the impact of humor and music in radio advertisements on domestic tourists attitudes towards and intentions to visit Ras al Khaimah, UAE, a quasi-experimental research design was employed. For this study, a script was written for a radio advertisement promoting Ras al Khaimah as a weekend getaway destination for UAE residents, and four versions were recorded: one with no humor and no music, one with only humor, one with only music, and one with humor and music. All four groups were administered a pre and post survey measuring their attitudes and intentions to visit Ras al Khaimah. The seven items scale measuring attitudes and five item scale measuring intention to visit were developed based on previous literature (Lam and Hsu, 2006; Byun and Jang, 2015; Žabkar et al., 2010). All the questions used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “1”-strongly disagree to “5”-strongly agree.

The survey was first piloted with ten respondents, and some minor changes were made based on the feedback from the pilot test including readability of the questions, compatibility of the survey on various platforms such as smartphones and Apple devices.

A total 200 individuals were sampled with 50 respondents for each scenario. The respondents were targeted using non-probability purposive sampling technique based on three criteria: listen to radio, resident of UAE (outside of Ras al Khaimah), and had taken at least one domestic overnight trip for purposes of leisure in the last year. The survey was administered online and distributed through email and direct message on social media.

The responses were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 24. In terms of demographic profile of the respondents, 38% (n=76) of the respondents were male, and remaining 62% (n=124) were female; 58.5% (n=117) of the respondents belonged to the age bracket of 18-24 31.5% (n=63) respondents belonged to 25-34, and the remaining 10% (n=20) were above 35 years of age.

Before proceeding with the analysis, the reliability of the constructs were assessed using Cronbach’s alpha. The results (Table 1) shows that reliability scores are well above the recommended cut-off value of 0.7 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

Table 1. Construct Reliability

Constructs	No. of items	Cronbach Alpha
Initial Attitude	7	0.955
Post Attitude	7	0.981
Initial Behavioural Intention	5	0.924
Post Behavioural Intentions	5	0.957

Paired sample t-test, were employed to determine if there were any significant difference in means for attitudes and behavioral intentions for each group between pre and post intervention.

Results

Table 2 presents the paired sample t-test findings for all four scenarios. The pre and post mean scores (out of 5) are provided along with the t-values, which indicate whether the differences (initial and post) scores are significant or not.

For scenario 1 (no humor and no music), the results indicate that, at the construct level, there is no significant difference in the composite mean score for ‘overall attitude’. However, at the individual item level, four variables of attitude was found to show significant difference namely,

'It is an attractive place to visit' ($t=-2.374$, $p<0.05$), 'It is a pleasant place to visit' ($t=-2.087$, $p<0.05$), 'It is an enjoyable place to visit' ($t=-3.500$, $p<0.01$), and 'It is a fun place to visit' ($t=-3.144$, $p<0.01$). No significant difference was found for 'behavioral intentions', both at the construct level, and at the individual variable level.

For scenario 2 (humor only), the results indicated that there is significant difference in 'attitude' and 'behavioral intention' at the construct level, and at the individual item level with the exception of 'It is a pleasant place to visit' ($t=-1.731$, $p>0.05$) and 'I would travel to destination at least once' ($t=-1.976$, $p>0.05$). Moreover, the mean difference (MD) was relatively high (MD=0.38) for 'overall attitude' ($t=-2.843$, $p<0.01$), and for 'behavioral intention' (MD=0.60) ($t=-5.093$, $p<0.001$). Also, at the individual item level, considerable change in attitudes were witnessed for variables namely 'It is an enjoyable place to visit' (MD=0.50) ($t=-3.710$, $p<0.01$), 'It is an adventurous place to visit' (MD=0.58) ($t=-3.830$, $p<0.01$), 'It is a fun place to visit' (MD=0.44) ($t=-3.070$, $p<0.01$), and 'It is a positive place to visit' (MD=0.42) ($t=-3.059$, $p<0.01$). For behavioral intention, considerable change was witnessed for 'I would make an effort to travel to destination' (MD=0.64) ($t=-5.172$, $p<0.001$), 'I would choose to travel to destination again' (MD=0.64) ($t=-5.315$, $p<0.001$), 'I will recommend destination to friends and relatives' (MD=0.56) ($t=-4.073$, $p<0.001$), and 'I would likely visit the destination' (MD=0.56) ($t=-4.478$, $p<0.001$).

Table 2. Paired Sample t-test results

Constructs and variables	Scenario 1 (No humor, No music) [n=50]			Scenario 2 (Humor only) [n=50]			Scenario 3 (Music only) [n=50]			Scenario 4 (Both Humor and Music) [n=50]		
	Initial	Post	t-value	Initial	Post	t-value	Initial	Post	t-value	Initial	Post	t-value
Attitude (Overall)	3.48	3.68	-1.941	3.56	3.94	-2.843**	3.38	3.68	-2.605*	3.36	3.66	-2.393*
It is a favourable place to visit	3.60	3.62	-0.172	3.62	3.94	-2.419*	3.32	3.52	-1.852	3.40	3.54	-1.124
It is an attractive place to visit	3.42	3.70	-2.374*	3.52	3.90	-2.721**	3.26	3.56	-2.458*	3.38	3.58	-1.492
It is a pleasant place to visit	3.50	3.78	-2.087*	3.58	3.82	-1.731	3.40	3.58	-1.590	3.32	3.64	-2.682*
It is an enjoyable place to visit	3.38	3.78	-3.500**	3.46	3.96	-3.710**	3.34	3.72	-2.721**	3.42	3.62	-1.750
It is an adventurous place to visit	3.50	3.66	-1.033	3.52	4.10	-3.830***	3.36	3.72	-2.756**	3.36	3.58	-1.800
It is a fun place to visit	3.34	3.72	-3.144**	3.56	4.00	-3.070**	3.36	3.76	-3.130**	3.40	3.60	-1.400
It is a positive place to visit	3.54	3.68	-1.188	3.58	4.00	-3.059**	3.34	3.74	-3.500**	3.28	3.62	-2.560*
Behavioral Intention (Overall)	3.56	3.62	-0.465	3.42	4.02	-5.093***	3.28	3.56	-2.447*	3.28	3.56	-2.527*
I would travel to destination at least once	3.70	3.78	-0.540	3.58	3.88	-1.976	3.40	3.56	-1.532	3.50	3.44	0.434
I would make an effort to travel to destination	3.60	3.66	-0.401	3.28	3.92	-5.172***	3.16	3.50	-2.836**	3.18	3.54	-2.532*
I would choose to travel to destination again	3.46	3.62	-1.016	3.40	4.04	-5.315***	3.30	3.54	-1.899	3.28	3.50	-1.800
I will recommend destination to friends and relatives	3.60	3.74	-0.943	3.44	4.00	-4.073***	3.36	3.60	-1.950	3.32	3.62	-2.278*
I would likely visit the destination	3.46	3.44	0.144	3.40	3.96	-4.478***	3.14	3.54	-3.055**	3.16	3.58	-3.364**

Likert Scale: 1 - 5 ***significance at $p < 0.001$; **significance at $p < 0.01$; *significance at $p < 0.05$

For scenario 3 (music only), the results also indicated that there is a significant difference in 'attitude' at the construct level ($t=-2.605$, $p<0.05$) and at the individual item level with the exception of 'It is a favourable place to visit' ($t=-1.852$, $p>0.05$), 'It is a pleasant place to visit' ($t=-1.590$, $p>0.05$). For behavioral intention, though the results are significant at the construct level ($t=-2.447$, $p<0.05$), at the individual variable level, only two out of the five variables, namely 'I would make an effort to travel to destination' ($t=-2.836$, $p<0.01$), and 'I would likely visit the destination' ($t=-3.055$, $p<0.01$) are significant. At the individual variable level, considerable change in attitude was mainly observed for 'It is a fun place to visit' (MD=0.40) ($t=-3.130$, $p<0.01$), and 'It is a positive place to visit' (MD=0.40) ($t=-3.500$, $p<0.01$). For behavioral intention, considerable change was only witnessed for 'I would likely visit the destination' (MD=0.40) ($t=-3.055$, $p<0.01$).

For scenario 4 (humor and music), though the results are significant at the construct level for 'attitude' ($t=-2.393$, $p<0.05$), at the individual item level, only two out of the seven variables namely 'It is a pleasant place to visit' (MD=0.32) ($t=-2.682$, $p<0.05$), and 'It is a positive place to visit' (MD=0.34) ($t=-2.560$, $p<0.05$) showed significant difference. For behavioral intention, the significant difference was found at the construct level ($t=-2.527$, $p<0.05$) and at the individual item level with the exception of 'I would travel to destination at least once' ($t=0.434$, $p>0.05$), and 'I would choose to travel to destination again' ($t=-1.800$, $p>0.05$). However, considerable change was observed only for 'I would likely visit the destination' (MD=0.42) ($t=-3.364$, $p<0.01$).

Conclusion and Discussion

The results in general suggest that radio advertisements can affect tourist attitudes and behavioral intention about the destination. However, radio advertisements with humor and/or music were found to be more effective than radio advertisements with no humor and music. This supports the notion in the literature that radio advertisements are more effective when they are entertaining while disseminating the message (Rajagopal, 2011). In terms of presentation, radio advertisements with humor was found to be more effective than radio advertisements with music, and radio advertisements with humor and music. The results supports the findings in the generic literature that purchase intentions are higher for humorous advertisements than those conveying message directly (Pornpitakpan and Tan, 2000; Cantor and Venus, 1980). While the effectiveness of radio advertisements with music was found to be less than the radio advertisements with humor, still it was found to be more effective than advertisements with humor and music combined. The radio advertisements combining humor and music, though effective than plain advertisements, was less effective than advertisements with either humor or music alone.

In terms of managerial implications, the findings provides a better understanding on the contingent use of radio advertisement for promoting a travel destination. For instance, depending on whether destination marketers need to promote a place as a fun place or adventurous place, they can choose the advertisements accordingly. Similarly, tailored advertisement campaigns can be enacted to attract first time visitors or repeat visitors. For example, 'I would choose to travel to destination again' and 'It is a favourable place to visit' are influenced only by humorous advertisements. On the other hand, behavioral intention such as 'I would travel to destination at least once' was not influenced by any of the radio advertisements.

In terms of research implications, this study is arguably the first attempt to explore the impact of different types of radio advertisements on tourist behavior in a domestic tourism setting. However,

more research is needed to enhance the generalizability of the findings, especially given that the results of this study are based on only on one country and one destination. Also, in future studies, the impact of radio advertisements on tourist behavior can be better understood by controlling the effect of participant's characteristics such as age, gender, income etc. Despite these limitations, we believe this study provides an initial insights for destination marketers and other concerned stakeholders on using radio advertisements for promoting a tourist destination.

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