

# The Moderating Effect of Consumer's Cynicism on Corporate Attitude in Societal Marketing Campaign

Jungyeon Sung

Department of Business Administration, <sup>2</sup>Sungkyul University, Korea  
[jysung@sungkyul.ac.kr](mailto:jysung@sungkyul.ac.kr)

## Abstract

*The current study explores the consumer's cynicism response to the corporate attitude in a societal marketing campaign which is an effective communication tool related to introducing corporate social activities. Especially, this study investigates the source as one of the message contents in advertising impacts on the corporate attitude. Additionally, it examines the attitude toward advertisement in the context of societal marketing by moderating the role of consumer's cynicism. The result of the present study suggests how to effectively use the communication tools through understanding consumer information processing from the message of social marketing activities.*

**Keywords:** Consumer's Cynicism, Corporate Attitude, Societal Marketing Campaign

## 1. Introduction

Many companies are interested in societal marketing campaigns as corporate social responsibility and how to use them for long-term relationship with customers. This is because it increases customer loyalty and building a good reputation as a communication tool in social marketing [1]. The point of social marketing campaigns is to attract consumers and use a different way of communication in society, even though they are considered as a benefit from consumer's purchase [2]. So, the companies have expected to improve their image depending on consumer's attitudes, personality traits and response to message sources in social marketing.

Therefore, for investigating the effect of the societal marketing campaign, this study explores the relationship between the type of advertisement in the basis of consumer's information processing and corporate attitude by the moderating role of personal trait, consumer's cynicism.

## 2. Theoretical backgrounds

Previous researches addressed cynicism as a doubt of motives for advertising message or negative belief about the fact or negative emotional reaction [3][4]. This is somewhat a controversial definition compared with skepticism. The skepticism is more situational and not longer, while the cynicism is enduring and deep [5]. Also, skepticism is just the doubt about the communication, cynicism is not only doubt what is said but the motive for saying something [5][6]. This study anticipated the higher level of cynicism is a more negative belief and trust of social marketing campaign and then the corporate is focused on benefit by

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themselves even though they are communicated with the consumer in the basis of trust of social marketing [7]. However, this direction of theory and the personal trait is depending on the message source of contents in the advertisement. This study has differed two types, general model and earlier model as a message source of advertising in the societal marketing campaign. As the result of the previous research, it has shown a more positive attitude toward the trust of the model rather than the favor of it using a senior model incorporates commercial [8, 9]. Thus, effective societal marketing communication is considered the relations between consumer's cynicism and message source of advertisement as the main personality trait.

H1: Social marketing campaign that includes an earlier model (vs. a general model) as message source will be more positive corporate attitudes.

H2: The relation between two-type ads through message source and corporate attitude moderated by consumer cynicism.

H2a: For those with lower levels of cynicism, it will be not different between corporate attitude toward corporate in the earlier model message

H2b: The corporate attitudes in the general model message (vs. earlier model message) is stronger for consumers who have lower levels of cynicism

### **3. Methods and results**

#### **3.1 Procedures**

It was conducted using one hundred eighty-two undergraduates who volunteered at a university in Gyeonggi-do. They were requested to participate in the survey after seeing the advertisement of a fictional brand incorporate social marketing. Each variable of the survey is measured on a seven-point Likert scale from '1=strongly disagree' to '7=strongly agree'.

The stimuli used two print advertisements of corporate social marketing. Generally, a corporate has often mentioned welfare and employment of elderly people as one of the activities of social marketing. So, in this study, it used two types of message, stronger message versus weak message through advertising model which is the source as one of message contents related to both consumer's cynicism and attitude or purchase intention in the context of societal marketing. It is a different model of message source such as a general couple, not famous or pretty, but an ordinary male and female models (group=87), an elderly couple as a silver model (group=94). It took the participants to complete the survey for about 25 minutes.

#### **3.2 Measurements**

T-test was performed on the manipulation check which considered the involvement in corporate social marketing. The involvement has consisted of three modified items [10]. Also, the consumer's cynicism is measured using a scale developed [11] and the level of cynicism was measured by the median split. Finally, it measured the corporate attitude and attitude toward ads in social marketing campaigns as dependent variables [12][13] [Table 1].

**Table 1. Reliability**

	Cronbach's Alpha
Involvement toward societal marketing	.87
Consumer's cynicism	.73
Corporate attitude	.90
Attitude toward advertisement	.87

### 3.3 Results

The testing was analyzed via 2 (type of ads: general model vs. elderly model) by 2 (level of cynicism: higher vs. lower between subjects ANOVA).

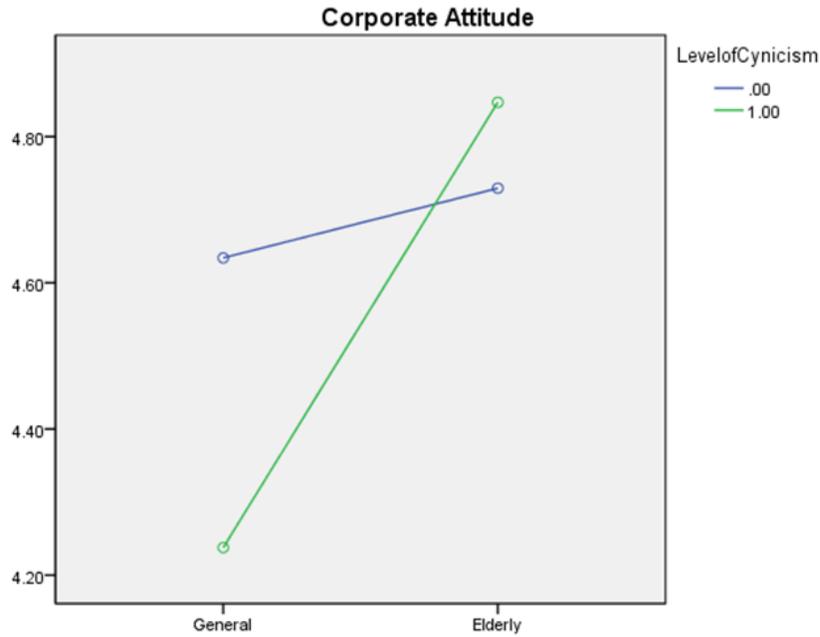
Hypothesis 1 is tested through a t-test to verify between an elderly model (vs. general model) as a message source and corporate attitude ( $M_{\text{general}}=4.43$  vs.  $M_{\text{elderly}}=4.80$ ,  $t=-4.91$ ,  $p<0.00$ ) [Table 2].

Also, as shown [Figure 1], the result of Hypothesis 2 indicated significantly the interaction effect of two-type ads (using a different model) and level of cynicism ( $F(1,177)=3.70$ ,  $p=0.06$ ) included involvements for a societal marketing campaign as a covariate variable.

**Table 2. Results**

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	Mean Square	F(1,177)	p
Attitude towards Corporate	A. Type of AD	5.59	6.93	.01
	B. Level of Cynicism	.84	1.04	ns
	C. A×B	2.98	3.70	.06

Additionally, the relationship between levels of cynicism and attitude toward advertisement as a dependent variable in social marketing campaigns was tested. As the results show, it verified between an elderly model (vs. general model) as a message source and the attitude toward advertisement in a social marketing campaign ( $M_{\text{general}}=3.42$  vs.  $M_{\text{elderly}}=4.25$ ,  $t=-4.91$ ,  $p<0.00$ ). Also, it has an interaction effect between the two types of ads, which included different message sources and levels of cynicism ( $F(1,177)=4.86$ ,  $p=0.03$ ) [Table 2].



**Figure 1. Results of H2**

Similarly, the attitude toward advertisement in social marketing like corporate attitude is the positive response of those who with a lower level of cynicism [Figure 2].

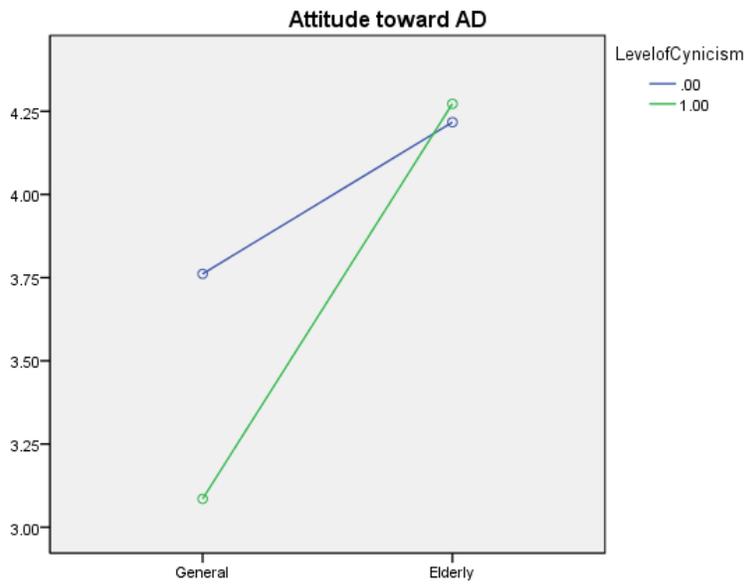
**Table 3. Results**

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	Mean Square	F(1,177)	p
Attitude towards Advertisement	A. Type of AD	30.37	24.45	.00
	B. Level of Cynicism	4.15	3.34	.07
	C. A×B	6.04	4.86	.03

#### 4. Conclusion

The current study argued that cynicism, as one of the consumer's responses, is important to understand marketing communication. It is stated in the context of using the silver model as an advertising source of social marketing, the higher level of cynicism is influenced by a positive attitude toward ads and purchase intention toward offering a service or product of a corporate.

Through the result of this study, it helps to understand consumer's response to the attitude toward ads of social marketing and also how it is used as an advertising source of message or contents in the basis of consumer's cynicism and designed to make the consumer more aware.



**Figure 2. Results of attitude toward the advertisement**

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