

# **Attitude toward Nudity and Advertising in General through the Mediation of Offensiveness and Moderation of Cultural Values: Evidence from Pakistan and the United States**

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## **Abstract**

Considering the ever-increasing trend of utilizing nudity content in marketing, this study investigates whether consumers' nudity attitudes modify their attitudes toward advertising in general (AAG) and also tests the mediation of offensiveness in this path. In addition, the study also tests the boundary condition of two cultural values (conservation and openness to change) on the relationship between nudity attitude and offensiveness. A cross-sectional, online survey was used to collect primary data from consumers of Pakistan and the USA (n=311). The analysis through SPSS and PROCESS techniques confirm that offensiveness mediates the relationship between nudity attitudes and AAG. The moderating roles of conservation and openness are also supported. Cultural sensitivity towards nudity has a profound impact on advertising effectiveness and thereby successful advertisements based

on nudity in one culture may fail to deliver in another because consumers develop negative AAG. The results suggest that no matter how global the brand may be, a standardized global advertising approach may not work. Therefore, advertisers should not use nudity appeals that may offend consumers in some regions and must consider cultural values when creating advertisements.

**Keywords:** Nudity attitude, attitude towards advertising in general, advertising offensiveness, conservation value, openness to change.

### **1. Introduction**

Advertising is a very important aspect of marketing, and attitude toward advertising is argued to be an essential construct to summarize advertising outcomes (Jin & Lutz, 2013). Attitude towards advertising in general (AAG) is the favorable or unfavorable evaluation of advertising in the consumer's mind, which can have serious positive or negative effects on the brand image. Advertisers across the world use nudity to grab consumer attention for strong advertising impact (Gazley et al., 2012), persuade and develop interest, and desire to enhance sales (Oniku & Joaquim, 2022). However, nudity is a provocative issue and a heightened sensitivity is found in many cultures where the orientation to individualism is low (Choi et al., 2022). Thereby, consumers in such cultures may hold negative nudity attitudes, and especially women feel offended (Oniku & Joaquim, 2022, Gan & Chen, 2023). This exposure to nudity can yield a negative AAG attitude that can have undesirable effects on the advertising outcomes. Therefore the understanding of AAG is an important determinant of advertising effectiveness.

Prior research has either focused on the consequences or predictions of AAG. Such as its influence on brand attitudes (Arendt et al., 2019; Huhmann & Limbu, 2016) and involvement with the advertisement (Bag et al., 2019), and resentment towards an advertisement (Choi et al., 2022; Ferreira & Barbosa, 2017; Liu et al., 2009). This study, on the other hand, highlights how AAG itself gets influenced by various factors, such as nudity acceptance and level of offensiveness, and cultural values, which have rarely been studied in tandem. Furthermore, there are hardly any studies that utilize data from culturally unique countries like Pakistan and USA. This is important because it can have important ramifications on how consumers respond to various advertising content, such as product or brand information (Jung et al., 2016), and the mechanism of its conversion into positive brand meaning (Tan & Chia 2007).

Nudity can be the most powerful advertising appeal (Knoll et al., 2011), particularly for the millennials (Oniku & Joaquim, 2022) but at the same time, it can be purveying sexism and a source of moral pollution (Jin & Lutz 2013; Varghese & Kumar, 2022). These two different views stir the debate about their impact on AAG. A non-favorable nudity attitude also evokes strong negative feelings (Grazer & Keesling, 1995; Hoyer & MacInnis, 2001) including offensiveness (Gazley et al., 2012; Robbins & Judge, 2013). This offensiveness nonetheless can be different for different cultures, depending on the acceptability of nudity. A recent study highlighted a list of advertising messages or content that can be offensive

to Muslim populations which included nudity, female objectification, and erotica (Choi et al., 2022; Wilson & Ayad, 2022). The studies on the cross-cultural acceptability of nudity (US, UK, France) show a more favorable nudity attitude in European countries than in the U.S (Huhmann & Limbu, 2016; Gazley et al., 2012; Kaynak & Herbig, 2014). However, only limited evidence exists for the acceptability of the nudity attitude and its effect on AAG in the Asian context (Choi et al., 2022; Gazley et al., 2012).

In high conservation cultures, consumers hold conformity values and tend to be more traditional such as in Pakistan. Whereas consumers in low conservation culture, such as the USA, are open to change and does not mind the advertised content. As Pakistan and USA can be differentiated on the basis of value of conservation versus openness to change (Schwartz; 2012), they provide good anchor points for comparison.

Pakistan has strong and distinct cultural values and has seen an emerging market with various sets of challenges, including assertive advertising (Khalid & Qadeer, 2017). Pakistani consumers are mostly Muslims and nudity is not easily accepted in all spheres of life (Sheeraz et al., 2018; Wilson & Ayad, 2022) On the other hand, US consumers are generally open to less clad models and nudity in advertising; especially men approve of nudity in advertising compared to women (Varghese & Kumar, (2022).

This is the first study to investigate the difference between Pakistani and US cultural values regarding nudity attitude to predict AAG. The study augments advertising literature by reconnoitering the role of cultural values and offensiveness in shaping up AAG. The study answers questions like whether advertising agencies should use same-sex and nudity appeals across various cultures or not and how varying cultural levels of offensiveness can affect AAG and the need to modify ads according to local cultural values and help the advertising agencies in streamlining their content for effective advertising.

## **2. Hypotheses Development**

### *2.1 Relationship Between Nudity Attitude and AAG*

AAG is influenced by personal attitudes towards advertising, the purpose of provision (information or entertainment), and the capacity for the creation of social roles and images (Tan & Chia, 2007). Negative AAG has been reported due to use of the nudity in advertisements (Benton-Greig et al., 2018). Nudity attitude is the consumer's assessment of sex/nudity appropriateness in the advertisement and is a function of socialization and beliefs about nudity (Liu et al., 2009), developed individually through a process of internalized sex appeal (Dianoux et al., 2014). Sex appeal can be defined as messages, brand information, or persuasiveness that are linked with sexual/nude material in a marketing context (Reichert et al., 2001). However, nudity is often used to manipulate AAG by shocking the audience, which increases the attention paid to both the ad and the brand (Choi et al., 2022; Sabri, 2017). The presence of erotic content in an advertisement may either lead consumers to reject the ad and the brand (Hudson et al., 2016), evoking

negative AAG, or they may like it, especially men (Oniku & Joaquim, 2022), depending on cultural affinity, positive nudity attitude, self-concept and religion (Khalid & Qadeer, 2021) Consumers who are not exposed to nudity are less tolerant of explicit advertising content (Prendergast et al., 2002), especially those consumers who generally hold negative nudity attitudes are likely to be shocked or annoyed by the use of nudity. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

- H<sub>1</sub>: The greater the acceptance of nudity attitudes the lesser will be the annoyance with advertising in general.

### *2.2 Relationship between Nudity Attitude and Advertising Offensiveness*

Advertising offensiveness is the content shown in advertising that causes displeasure or resentment and produces a negative feeling (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Wilson and Ayad (2022) define advertising offensiveness as ‘a content that uses strong, vulgar language; graphic, upsetting or offensive images that, are over-sexualized, demeaning or glamorize harmful behaviors. This becomes heightened for Muslim consumers who have a religious disagreement with advertising content along with the social norms (Wilson & Ayad, 2022). The growing concern is that acceptance of nudity and gender stereotypical behavior has conveniently found its way into advertising, especially in fashion and sports brands where 80% of models and sportswomen in magazines were overtly nude or showing suggestive poses (Grau et al., 2007; Hudson et al., 2016).

A recent study highlighted that consumers individually may like nudity and a sexual appeal but feel offensiveness when in a social setup or on social media and try to avoid sexual communication (Choi et. al., 2022; Sameeni & Qadeer, 2015). Offensiveness can damage a brand’s image and customer loyalty. Nudity may be a persuasive attempt but can be counterproductive in terms of decreased purchase intention and avoidance if the consumer’s acceptance of nudity is low (Choi et. al., 2022; Huhmann & Limbu, 2016; Oniku & Joaquim, 2022). This acceptance of nudity is influenced by the sexual self-schema (a self-report measure of cognitive view of sexuality) (Choi et. al., 2022), which is often shaped by religion, social norms, and general acceptance of nudity in culture (Gan & Chen, 2023; Wilson & Ayad, 2022). Advertising campaigns are often believed to be offensive because advertisers fail to understand audiences while creating messages (Prendergast et al., 2002; Terlutter et al., 2022). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- H<sub>2</sub>: A low nudity attitude leads to higher advertising offensiveness.

### *2.3 Relationship between Offensiveness and AAG*

There are harmful effects of offensiveness on AAG (Lou & Cheng, 2021; Shafiq et al., 2017; Trivedi & Teichert, 2021). A higher level of the negative perception of advertising is a predictor of AAG (Ting & Run, 2015; Terlutter et. al, 2022). Furthermore, consumers who find ads offensive, negatively evaluate advertising in general (Choi et al., 2016; Lou & Cheng, 2021). Since consumers may vary in their responses to nudity and sexual content because of the cultural background of their country (Choi et. al., 2022), there is a higher

tendency that Muslim consumers to develop negative AAG and reject such advertisements and brands that exhibit offensive content (Gan & Chen, 2023; Hudson et. al., 2016). Moreover, consumers who generally find advertising offensive for multiple reasons have unfavorable AAG (Noor et al., 2022). Hence, the study hypothesized that:

- H<sub>3</sub>: A higher advertising offensiveness leads to less favorable AAG.

#### *2.4 Mediation of Offensiveness between Nudity attitude and AAG*

Appraisal theorists argue that the sole cause of offensiveness is the advertising content (sex/nudity), which creates undesirable resentments (Wondra & Ellsworth, 2015). Nudity content has been reported to elicit negative feelings (Ruth et al., 2002), which in turn affect AAG. Similarly, the negative attitude of an individual toward a specific object (sex/nudity) can generate negative feelings such as offensiveness which can ultimately affect general attitudes toward advertising using these objects (Choi et al., 2016). Offensiveness generated by the nudity attitude may develop negative AAG (Huhmann & Limbu, 2016). If the attitudes towards nudity are strongly negative, the effects may spill over from the judged content as unethical and create negative AAG (Mostafa, 2011). Therefore, the study proposes that:

- H<sub>4</sub>: Offensiveness mediates the relationship between nudity attitude and AAG.

#### *2.5 Moderating role of Cultural Values*

Culture has a strong influence on consumers' attitudes (Watson et. al., 2002). Although many researchers argue for a standardized advertising approach across cultures (De Mooij, 2018), evidence shows such varying cultural patterns that are difficult to unify. Italians for example, have higher acceptability towards nudity as compared to British and German consumers (Lass & Hart, 2004) and nudity in French advertising often shocks foreign consumers (Sabri, 2017). This in comparison to Saudi Arabia is striking, where even children are not allowed to watch Ariel the mermaid, because of the association of cartoon characters with "satanism and sexism" (Solomon et al., 2014). Nevertheless, even many nude appeals are expressed as being offensive by US consumers (Kaynak & Herbig, 2014). Pakistani hold high conservation values and conformity to tradition is important (Schwartz, 2012) and the retention of idealized traditions through patriarchy and religion is high. When such consumers are exposed to nude content, they would consider it harmful to themselves and to other members of society (Noor et al., 2022) and thus may retaliate against the advertisement in general and against the brand in particular. Therefore, the study proposes that:

- H<sub>5</sub>: A high level of conservation value positively moderates the relationship between nudity attitude and advertising offensiveness.

On the other hand, US consumers generally exhibit openness to change values, for whom self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, and achievement are important values (Schwartz,

2012). US consumers are self-directed; they symbolize their uniqueness and indulge in pleasure and gratification. US consumers also encourage new ideas and ignore visual aspects. The extent of offensiveness due to nudity will vary for Pakistani and US consumers (Davidov et al., 2008). This may be due to the high unemployment rate, under-developed structure of local industries, strong religious beliefs, and deep associations with traditions in Pakistan (Khilji, 2002). While on the other hand, US consumers are open to change and hold fewer conservation values. Consumers who have an openness to change are tolerant of new ideas, they might prefer advertisements that are sexist and explicit. Therefore, the study proposes that:

- H<sub>6</sub>: A high level of openness to change negatively moderates the relationship between nudity attitude and advertising offensiveness.

The above sub-sections on hypotheses development leads to the research model presented in Figure 1. The research model depicts a negative relationship between nudity attitude and AAG, mediated by offensiveness. The direct relationship between nudity attitude and offensiveness is strengthened when the conservation value is high and it is weakened when the openness to change value is high.

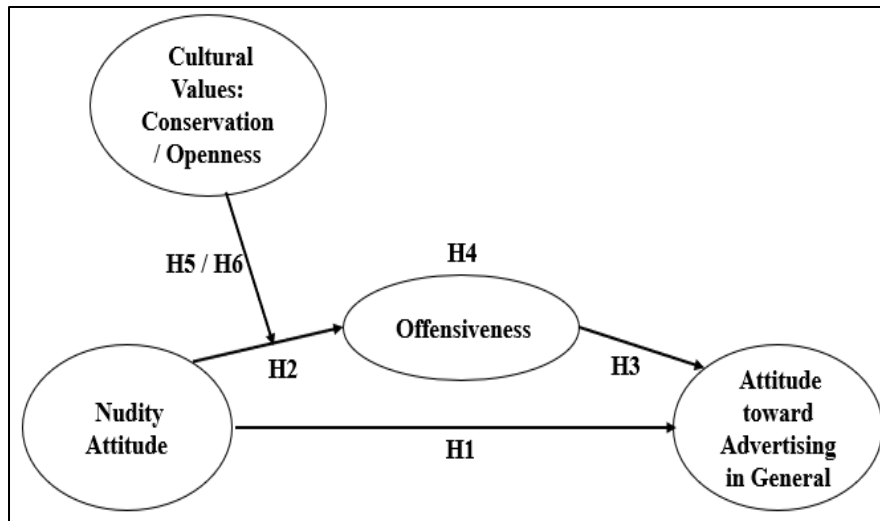


Figure 1: Research Model

### 3. Material and Methods

An online survey was conducted with minimal interference, in non-contrived settings to collect information about advertising attitude description-explanatory was a cross-sectional study and the unit of analysis was individual consumers. Owing to an online survey, Pakistani and US consumers were sampled on a convenience basis. An online questionnaire was developed on a website ([www.sogosurvey.com](http://www.sogosurvey.com)), and the link was sent through

electronic methods like email, WhatsApp, and social media messengers to the respondents selected from USA and Pakistan.

Nudity attitude was measured through four adopted items by Treise et al., (1994). AAG was measured through three items by Huhmann & Limbu, (2016). Four items were used to measure offensiveness (Alwitt & Prabhaker, 1994). Conservation value was measured through a six-item scale (Davidov et al., 2008); Five-item adopted scale was used to measure openness to change also from Davidov et al. (2008). The list of all items for the five constructs, corresponding scales, and Alpha values is provided in Appendix 1.

Individual-level demographic factors such as education, age, gender, and marital status were controlled because these demographic aspects are reported to have systematic relationships with the consumers’ attitude-related outcomes (Luthans et al., 2007).

All statistical tests were conducted at the 95% confidence level or ( $p < .05$ ), on (SPSS) v.24. Linear regression analysis (H1, H2, H3) and PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) was used to test mediation analysis (H4) and moderation analysis (H5, H6), as Process Macro is believed to be a better statistical technique to estimate direct and indirect effects in single mediator model (serial) and two-way interactions in moderation model along with regions of significance for probing interactions (Abu-Bader & Jones, 2021).

**4. Data Analysis and Results**

The link to the online questionnaire was sent to consumers in Pakistan and USA and follow-up reminders were sent after one week. The data collection continues for a month and received completed instruments from 338 consumers. After screening outliers, the final useable sample (n=311) is presented in Table 1. Overall, almost half (46%) were female consumers, the survey participation from Pakistani and US consumers was about 32% and 14% respectively. Among respondents, 54% were male consumers, about 42% belongs to Pakistan and about 12% holds US cultural values.

**Table 1: Gender and Nationality Distribution**

Category	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female		Freq	%
	Freq	%	Freq	%		
Pakistani	130	41.8	99	31.8	229	73.6
American	38	12.2	44	14.1	82	26.4
	168	54.0	143	46.0	311	100

The reliability of all the scales is good, Cronbach’s Alphas ranges from .70 to .85 for most of the scales (see Table 4.2), for nudity attitude this value is .64 which is also considered adequate (Taber, 2018). Per our expectations, the bi-variate correlation between nudity attitude with AAG is significantly negative (coefficient = -0.05,  $p < 0.05$ ); and that between

nudity attitude and offensiveness is significantly positive (coefficient = 0.41,  $p < 0.01$ ). The bi-variate correlation between offensiveness and AAG is significantly negative (coefficient = -0.05,  $p < 0.05$ ). These three associations provided initial support to the three direct hypotheses. The association of conservation values (first moderator) with offensiveness is positive (0.24,  $p < 0.01$ ), and that between openness to change (second moderator) with offensiveness is negative (-0.04,  $p < 0.05$ ). Overall, we can notice from Table 2, that the magnitude of the intercorrelations among the independent variable, two moderators, and the mediators ranges from 0.03 to 0.24 are well less than unity. Though this simple measure rules out the chances of multicollinearity (Montgomery et al., 2012).

**Table 2: Correlation Matrix of the Study Variables**

Variable	Alpha	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Nudity Attitude	0.64	7.07	1.35	1.00				
2. Offensiveness	0.74	6.57	1.31	0.41**	1.00			
3. AAG	0.71	4.53	1.22	-0.05*	-0.24**	1.00		
4. Conservation Value	0.85	4.32	1.17	0.50**	0.03*	0.13**	1.00	
5. Openness to Change	0.70	4.29	0.91	-0.03*	-0.04*	-0.03*	-0.04*	1.00

Notes: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; AAG = Attitude toward advertising in general

We tested the first three hypotheses by utilizing linear regression. The results presented in Table 3 show that, controlling for the four demographic variables, nudity attitude has a negative impact ( $\beta = -0.155$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). That is more acceptance of nudity appeal in advertising decreases consumers' annoyance towards advertising in general. Therefore, H1 is supported.

Our second hypothesis suggested that consumers who are less tolerant of nudity attitudes in advertising find advertising offensive. The regression results (Table 3) show that controlling for the four demographic variables, the increase in nudity appeals in advertising increases the offensiveness. In other words, nudity attitude positively advertising effectiveness ( $\beta = 0.446$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, consumers' offensiveness is dependent on their sex/nudity attitude and accordingly H2 is supported. Furthermore, H3 posits that as offensiveness increases, AAG becomes more unfavorable. The regression results (Table 3) show that controlling for the four demographic variables, offensiveness negatively impacts AAG ( $\beta = -0.264$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, H3 is supported too.



**Table 3: Linear Regression Results**

Hypotheses		B	SE	t	R <sup>2</sup>
H1	<i>Control</i>				0.092
	Gender	-0.060	0.144	-1.022	
	Age	-0.114	0.093	-1.500	
	Education	-0.003	0.045	-0.050	
	Marital-Status	0.002	0.192	0.033	
	<i>Independent</i>				
	Nudity Attitude	-0.155*	0.057	-2.457	
H2	<i>Control</i>				0.247
	Gender	0.123*	0.140	2.318	
	Age	-0.026	0.090	-0.378	
	Education	0.053	0.044	0.866	
	Marital-Status	-0.172*	0.186	-2.567	
	<i>Independent</i>				
	Nudity Attitude	0.446**	0.056	7.752	
H3	<i>Control</i>				0.136
	Gender	-0.034	0.141	-0.587	
	Age	-0.117	0.090	-1.581	
	Education	-0.002	0.042	-0.033	
	Marital-StatU.S	-0.043	0.189	-0.595	
	<i>Independent</i>				
	Offensiveness	-0.264**	0.053	-4.701	

Notes: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; AAG = Attitude toward advertising in general

The support for the second and third hypotheses provided the necessary conditions for the mediation of offensiveness between nudity attitude and AAG. To formally test H4, the study utilized Model 3 of the PROCESS macros in SPSS. The results (Table 4.4) depict that (a) nudity attitude has a significant relationship with offensiveness ( $\beta = 0.377$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) (b) and offensiveness also has a significant relationship with AAG ( $\beta = -0.263$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), (c) The direct effect of nudity attitude on AAG no longer remained in the presence of the mediator. The indirect effect of nudity attitude on AAG through offensiveness is significant, because the confidence interval (LLCI= -0.160, ULCI= -0.051), did not contain zero. This provides evidence that offensiveness mediated the relationship between nudity attitude and AAG. Thus, H4 is supported.

**Table 4: Simple Mediation Results**

	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Outcome: Offensiveness</b>				
Nudity Attitude (NA)	0.377**	0.052	7.201	0.299
<b>Outcome: AAG</b>				
Nudity Attitude	0.044	0.057	0.768	0.101
Offensiveness	-0.263**	0.058	-4.533	
			<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Indirect Effect of NA on AAG	-0.099	0.027	-0.160	-0.051

Notes: \*\* p < 0.01; AAG = Attitude toward advertising in general

To test the moderating effects of the cultural values, the study utilized Model 1 of the PROCESS macros in SPSS. Results in Table 5 suggested that the confidence interval of the interaction term (nudity attitude and conservation values) effects on offensiveness did not contain zero (LLCI = -0.064, ULCI = -0.093) and the interaction term is significant ( $\beta = -0.214$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). To further elaborate on the nature of moderation, two regression lines at the low and high levels of conservation are graphically shown in Figure 2. Consumers with high conservation values feel more offended when they possess high nudity attitude as compared to consumers with low conservation values. Therefore, H5 is supported.

**Table 5: Moderation of Conservation and Openness to Change**

<b>Model</b>		<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>
	<b>Outcome: Offensiveness</b>				
H5	Nudity Attitude (NA)	0.353	0.176	2.568	0.204
	Conservation	0.318**	0.200	1.634	
	NA x Conservation Value	-0.214**	0.040	-3.624	
			<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>	
			-0.064	-0.093	
	<b>Outcome: Offensiveness</b>				
H6	Nudity Attitude (NA)	0.381	0.289	1.691	0.321
	Openness to Change	0.650**	0.335	2.973	
	NA x Openness to Change	-0.185**	0.052	-3.535	
			<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>	
	Notes: ** p < 0.01		-0.082	-0.288	

Similarly, Table 5 also depicts that the interaction term (nudity attitude and openness to change values) effects on offensiveness did not contain zero (LLCI = -0.082, ULCI = -0.288) and the interaction term is significant ( $\beta = -0.185$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). To further elaborate on the nature of moderation, two regression lines at the low and high levels of openness to change are graphically shown in Figure 3. Consumers with lower openness to change values feel more offended when they possess high nudity attitude compared to when they hold high openness to change values. Hence, Hypothesis 6 is also supported.

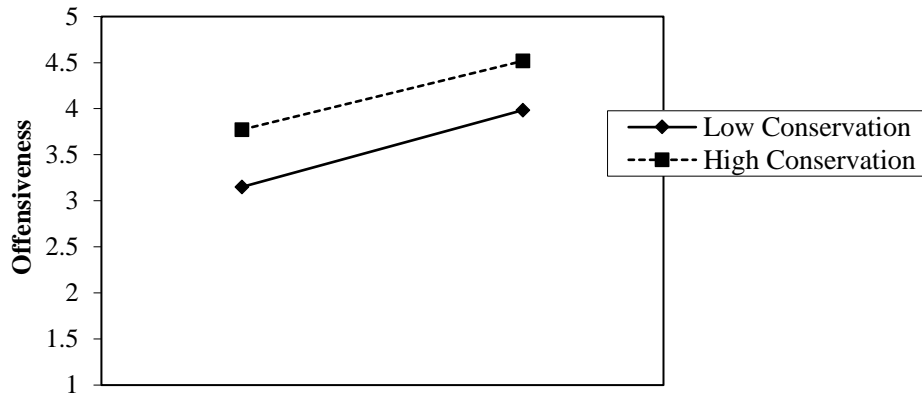


Figure 2. Nudity Attitude x Conservation Values with Offensiveness

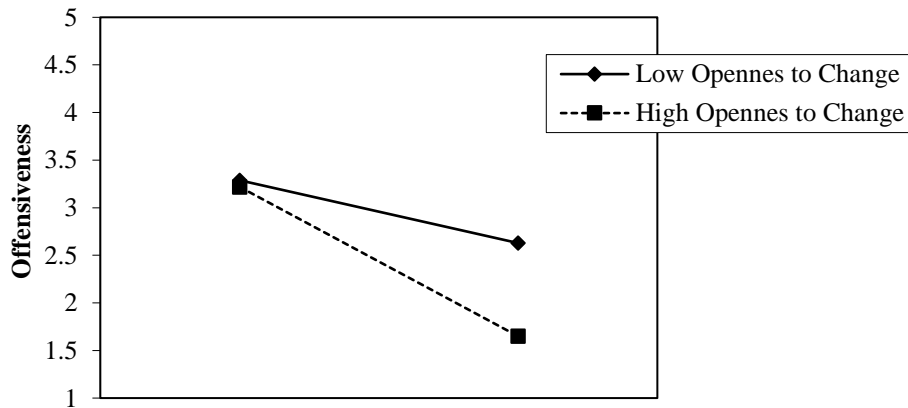


Figure 3. Nudity Attitude x Openness to Change Values with Offensiveness

## 5. Discussion

The study gauged the influence of nudity attitude on AAG as a comparison between USA and Pakistani consumers. This study explored the meaningful influence of cultural values on consumers' nudity attitude and offensiveness. The results support prior research that international marketers/ advertisers should carefully consider local cultural values to gain favorable advertising outcomes (Choi et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2009; Lou & Cheng, 2021; Gan & Chen, 2023; Oniku & Joaquim, 2022; Prendergast et al., 2008; Sailatha et al., 2014; Trivedi & Teichert, 2021; Varghese & Kumar, 2022). This is because consumers with conservation value orientation rate sexual ads less favorably in comparison to consumers with openness to change (liberal) orientation (Liang et al., 2022). The results are also in line with previous studies that suggest that offensiveness against the advertisement content causes a negative AAG (Terlutter et al., 2022; Yoo et al., 2022) that can impact the overall effectiveness of the advertisement (Choi et al., 2022; Oniku & Joaquim, 2022). Advertisements that are considered annoying or offensive because of negative nudity attitudes are disliked and have negative effects on AAG (Gazley et al., 2012; Stewart et al., 2022). For economies like Pakistan where, television commercials are taken as an entertainment source (Liu & Gupta, 2011), the offensiveness created due to nudity may hamper the effectiveness of the advertisement and also create resentment against the advertised brand (Gan & Chen, 2023; Oniku & Joaquim, 2022).

The results also suggest that Pakistani consumers who are less tolerant of nudity find advertising more offensive and have more negative AAG compared to the USA. This is in line with the findings of several studies that highlight that international advertising agencies must be careful about their target customer's cultural values, especially when adopting nudity appeal for advertising (Lou & Cheng, 2021; Prendergast et al., 2002; Sailatha et al., 2014; Trivedi & Teichert, 2021).

Results supported those Pakistani consumers having high conservation values considered the ads with nude content significantly more offensive than the US consumers. Advertising agencies should investigate consumers' nudity attitudes of their target market. The use of nudity in advertising has increased over time and our results provide powerful evidence that this may be the reason why attitude toward advertising is becoming less favorable (Lou & Cheng, 2021; Prendergast et al., 2002; Sailatha et al., 2014; Shavitt et al., 2004; Trivedi & Teichert, 2021).

### *5.1 Contributions and Managerial Implications*

The study contributes significantly to the advertising literature and postulates on the objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) that women are taken as objects in advertisements for persuasion and increased sales (Choi et al., 2022; Gan & Chen, 2023; Liang et al., 2022; Oniku & Joaquim, 2022, Varghese & Kumar, 2022). The acceptance of nudity in any culture is dependent upon social values as well as religion (Gan & Chen, 2023). Cultures that have an openness to change internalize nudity and especially that of women (Varghese & Kumar, 2022). However, according to the psychological reactance

theory (Brehm, 1989), consumers react negatively to advertising messages that stand against their cultural or religious values. Thus, creating offensiveness that leads to negative AAG.

This study utilized data from two countries; USA and Pakistan that have two opposing cultural values regarding conservation and openness to change enabling the researcher to get more variance in the data. Thus, the study contributes to the cultural values literature as well. In addition to it, most of the advertising literature comes from Europe, the USA, and Australia and provides a cultural reflection of these countries. Very few countries have focused on Pakistani consumers and their response towards nudity, advertising, and its effectiveness as AAG.

This study highlighted that the offensiveness created may have a higher impact on AAG than the content of the advertised product itself, as elucidated by psychological reactance theory and the expected result of the advertisement may not be reaped due to this (Lou & Cheng, 2021; Prendergast et al., 2002; Sailatha et al., 2014; Shavitt et al, 2004; Trivedi & Teichert, 2021). This means there may be a waste of brand investment just because of highlighting nudity to an audience that is not ready for it (Gan & Chen, 2023).

This study makes a practical contribution to the field of advertising by emphasizing the use of advertising appeal according to local cultural values to get favorable advertising results. The results extend the findings of (Huhmann & Limbu, 2016), by indicating that offensiveness can be moderated by cultural values. The relationship between offensiveness and AAG is worthy to explore as AAG turns more negative with an increase in offensiveness that can harm advertising effectiveness.

Moreover, this study contradicts standardized advertising for global marketing and advocates adopting local cultural values for advertising (Fam & Grohs, 2007; Lou & Cheng, 2021; Noor et al, 2022; Trivedi & Teichert, 2021). Thereby, advertisers need to modify advertisements according to different cultures during the developing stages, even if the modification is minor, to increase the likelihood of positive reactions and perceptions. In high conservation cultures providing consumers “something to talk about” could be harmful as discussion could develop negative buzz about advertised products (Noor et al., 2022). It also suggests that Pakistani consumers remain offended and dissatisfied with nudity which diminishes their perception of AAG, in comparison to US consumers. Thus, advertisers need to avoid exposing nude content to lessen consumers’ unfavorable AAG (Liu et al., 2009).

Furthermore, this study has contributed to the existing research on the cross/cultural acceptability of nudity by investigating the nudity attitude of Pakistani and US consumers. The findings of this study support the debate on standardization versus localization as Pakistani consumers had significantly different responses to the nudity than US consumers.

Thus, the standardization-localization-globalization debate is real and the one size fits all approach does not apply when it comes to advertising in Pakistan.

### 5.2 Future Direction

A recent study reveals that in Asian cultures when western models are used in sexually explicit advertising the consumers perceive such models to be sexy and are generally more tolerant of nudity in public, but the same level is not acceptable for the local model (Gan & Chen, 2023; Liang et. al., 2022; Varghese & Kumar, 2022). One interesting element of conservation culture is that the disclosure of sexuality has been

restricted and seductively dressed women are not considered respectable. (Gan & Chen, 2023). This shows that it is not just the nudity portrayal alone that is offensive in conservation culture but rather the fear of infiltration that creates negativity towards AAG. This can be taken further to see how international models may contribute to different reactions from local consumers and whether it is the advertising content or its impact that stirs offensiveness.

Moreover, it seems that assertive or powerful sexuality is becoming a new sexual ideal in the context of the globalization of Western postfeminism (Gan & Chen, 2023). A future research study may look at how this assertive femininity or employing sexual empowerment discourse could be an effective advertising strategy in Asian cultures. A recent example is the backlash of the Aurat March in Pakistan in 2022.

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### Appendix 1. Constructs and Scale Items

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*Nudity Attitude (Treise et al., 1994; Alpha = 0.64)<sup>a</sup>*

- 1) Tastefully done, there is nothing wrong with using sexy ads to sell some kinds of products (R).
- 2) There are too many sex appeals in today's advertising.
- 3) Nudity in print advertising is not appropriate for general-interest magazines.
- 4) Sexy ads play a role in a teenager's decision to become sexually active.

*Attitude toward Advertising in General (Huhmann & Limbu, 2016; Alpha = 0.71)<sup>a</sup>*

- 1) I really do not enjoy television commercials.
- 2) Overall, advertising annoys me.
- 3) On the whole, advertising is not believable.

*Offensiveness (Alwitt & Prabhaker, 1994; Alpha = 0.74)<sup>a</sup>*

- 1) There is too much sex in advertising.
- 2) There is too much violence in advertising.
- 3) Most ads are in poor taste.
- 4) Ads are more offensive than they used to be.

*Conservation value (Davidov et al., 2008; Alpha = 0.85)<sup>b</sup>*

- 1) I believe that people should do what they're told and follow rules at all times, even when no one is watching.
  - 2) It is important to me, to always behave properly and avoid doing anything people would say is wrong.
  - 3) I believe I should always show respect to my parents and to older people. It is important to me, to be obedient.
  - 4) Religious belief is important to me. I try hard to do what my religion requires
  - 5) I think it is best to do things in traditional ways. It is important to me to keep up the customs I have learned.
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- 6) It is important to me to be humble and modest. I try not to draw attention to myself.

*Openness to change (Davidov et al., 2008; Alpha = 0.85)<sup>b</sup>*

- 1) I seek every chance I can to have fun. It is important to me to do things that give me pleasure.
  - 2) Enjoying life's pleasures is important to me. I like to 'spoil' myself.
  - 3) I like to take risks. I am always looking for adventures.
  - 4) It is important to me to be independent. I like to rely on myself.
  - 5) Being very successful is important to me. I like to impress other people.
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<sup>a</sup> Rated on a nine-point Likert scale, (R) = reverse-coded

<sup>b</sup> Rated on six-point scale, 1 = not like me at all, 6 = very much like me.