

# A Double-Edged Sword? Predicting Consumers' Attitudes Toward and Sharing Intention of Native Advertising on Social Media

American Behavioral Scientist  
2016, Vol. 60(12) 1425–1441  
© 2016 SAGE Publications  
Reprints and permissions:  
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav  
DOI: 10.1177/0002764216660137  
abs.sagepub.com



Joonghwa Lee<sup>1</sup>, Soojung Kim<sup>1</sup>, and Chang-Dae Ham<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

Despite the increasing popularity and advantage of native advertising on social media, advertisers are concerned about the possibility of native ads misleading consumers, resulting in boomerang effects. This study attempts to address this concern by comparing the predictive role of native ad nonintrusiveness with that of native ad manipulateness in consumers' attitude toward and sharing intention of native advertising. Findings from an online survey of 550 U.S. adult consumers showed that native ad nonintrusiveness was positively related to attitude toward and sharing intention of native advertising, whereas native ad manipulateness was not. Consumers' ad skepticism and persuasion knowledge were negatively related to attitude toward and sharing intention of native advertising; but persuasion knowledge became nonsignificant when native ad nonintrusiveness and manipulateness were included in regression models. Additionally, those with stronger information-seeking motivation showed more positive attitudinal and behavioral responses. This study advances the knowledge of native advertising by examining the possibility of its being a double-edged sword. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

## Keywords

native advertising, social media, ad nonintrusiveness, manipulateness

---

<sup>1</sup>University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND, USA

<sup>2</sup>University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, IL, USA

## Corresponding Author:

Soojung Kim, University of North Dakota, 221 Centennial Drive Stop 7169, Grand Forks, ND 58202-9037, USA.

Email: soojung.kim@und.edu

Since the term, native advertising, was conceptualized in 2011, the advertising and marketing industry has paid much attention to this form of advertising. The growth of native advertising is remarkable, reaching \$1.3 billion in 2013 and being forecasted to reach \$9.4 billion in 2018 in the United States (eMarketer, 2014). Native advertising was used as a newspaper format, has been employed in diverse platforms, and social media are not an exception in this rapid growth. In fact, native advertising emerged as a primary revenue source in social media, representing 38.8% of entire social media ad spending in 2014, and prospecting 42.4% in 2017 (eMarketer, 2015a).

Despite the increasing popularity of native advertising on social media (Dix & Phau, 2009), empirical and anecdotal evidence suggests that native advertising could be a double-edged sword (eMarketer, 2013; Kim, 2015; Truong, McColl, & Kitchen, 2010; van Reijmersdal, Neijens, & Smit, 2005). Consumers tend to be positive toward native advertising due to its less interruptive nature (Kim, 2015; Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012); however, they could negatively react to it when they perceive its covert format as manipulative (eMarketer, 2013). Although both reactions to native advertising can be found among consumer, little is known regarding which response is more common, especially on social media. Some studies have examined both the positive and negative effects of native advertising (i.e., native ad nonintrusiveness vs. manipulateness), in the contexts of advertorials (van Reijmersdal et al., 2005), banner ads (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012), and online video ads (Kim, 2015). However, no study has compared consumers' positive and negative responses with native advertising in social media.

This study examined whether native advertising on social media is indeed a double-edged sword, as advertisers have suspected. Particularly, this study tested which type of perception—native advertising as nonintrusive or manipulative—is a stronger predictor of attitudinal and behavioral responses to native advertising. Additionally, prior research has explained consumer responses to social media advertising based on consumers' motivations (J. Lee, Ham, & Kim, 2013; Luchman, Bergstrom, & Krulikowski, 2014; Tsai & Men, 2013) and their psychological characteristics, including ad skepticism and persuasion knowledge (Baek & Morimoto, 2012; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998). Therefore, in addition to consumers' positive and negative perceptions of native advertising on social media, this study focused on consumers' motivational and psychological factors to better understand consumer responses to native advertising on social media.

## Literature Review

### *Native Advertising and Its Use on Social Media*

The term, native advertising, has featured in the advertising and marketing industry since 2011. In terms of its conceptualization, native advertising can be defined based on either a narrow or a broad perspective. The narrow definition of native advertising is "any paid advertising that takes the specific form and appearance of editorial content from the publisher itself" (Wojdyski & Evans, 2016, p. 157). Based on this narrow definition, native advertising is not a new concept; rather it is similar to

advertorials in newspapers and magazines (Campbell & Marks, 2015). The broad definition of native advertising refers to branded content that is integrated in or similar to the format or design of the platform, including the social engagement features of the platform (e.g., sharing; IAB, 2013; Matteo & Zotto, 2015). Based on the broad definition, native advertising includes various types of marketing communication on social media, such as search ads, promoted tweets on Twitter, and suggested posts on Facebook, all of which allow active consumer interactions and participations (e.g., “like” and “share”).

Although native advertising has been the focus of advertisers’ attention (Campbell & Marks, 2015), academic research on this topic is in its infancy. Recently, Wojdyski and Evans (2016) tested the effects of disclosure position and language on consumers’ recognition and evaluations of online native advertising and found that middle or bottom positioning of native ads, coupled with the disclosure language of “advertising” or “sponsorship” in news articles, were effective in increasing ad recognition. However, those researchers were guided by the narrow definition of native advertising.

The core of commonality between the aforementioned narrow and broad definitions of native advertising is the similarity between the format of native advertising and its surrounding media content. The broad definition, however, includes the capacity for consumers to interact with native advertising by performing platform-specific behaviors. As one of the unique characteristics of social media ads is to provide active user interaction functions (Kim, Lee, & Yoon, 2015), the broad definition of native advertising on social media deserves empirical attention. In this study, native advertising is defined as “paid ads that are so cohesive with the page content, assimilated into the design, and consistent with the platform behavior that the viewer simply feels they belong” (IAB, 2013, p. 3).

### *Motivation for Social Media Use*

Motivation is considered one of the most important predictors of media use (Dobos, 1992; J. Lee et al., 2013; C. Lin, 1999; K. Lin & Lu, 2011). As higher user control is granted in the online media environment (Leung, 2009), motivation leads people to actively seek and use media to achieve their specific objectives (J. Lee & Lee, 2012; C. Lin, 1999). Researchers have identified motivation as an important factor in understanding individuals’ online media behaviors, including sharing online content (e.g., J. Lee et al., 2013) and using social networking sites (e.g., K. Lin & Lu, 2011).

As social media enable consumers to gain knowledge, learn about events, and connect with others (Tuten & Solomon, 2015), this study focuses on two motivational elements that can influence consumers’ perceptions and responses to native advertising on social media, namely, information seeking and socializing (Leung, 2009; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009). As suggested in the definition of native advertising, the primary benefit of native advertising is to minimally interrupt consumers’ social media use. Consequently, the more consumers are motivated to fulfill information-seeking and socializing motivations, the more they would appreciate native advertising. Thus, the following two hypotheses are posed:

**Hypothesis 1:** Information seeking will be positively related to (a) attitude toward native advertising and (b) consumers' intention to share native advertising.

**Hypothesis 2:** Socializing will be positively related to (a) attitude toward native advertising and (b) consumers' intention to share native advertising.

### *Consumers' Psychological Characteristics: Ad Skepticism and Persuasion Knowledge*

As a psychological state, ad skepticism refers to the "general tendency toward disbelief of advertising claims" and is an opposite concept of ad credibility (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998, p. 160). Previous studies have examined ad skepticism as a negative antecedent of advertiser-intended attitudinal and behavioral responses to ads (Baek & Morimoto, 2012; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998) based on a cognition–affect–behavior approach (Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999).

Although there are different ways to conceptualize persuasion knowledge, it generally refers to consumers' "overall knowledge of how persuasion works" (Ham, Nelson, & Das, 2015, p. 25). Consumers with lower persuasion knowledge are less likely to effectively process persuasion attempts (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981) and more likely to be susceptible to them (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2013; Bearden, Hardesty, & Rose, 2001).

Both ad skepticism and persuasion knowledge can be explained by the persuasion knowledge model (PKM), which posits that consumers develop beliefs about persuasion tactics, advertisers/marketers, and persuasion topics to deal with persuasion attempts (Friestad & Wright, 1994; Nelson & Ham, 2012). Both are individuals' dispositional personality, but they are different in that ad skepticism focuses on consumers' negativity toward advertising (i.e., disbelief in ad claims), whereas persuasion knowledge is individuals' neutral and general knowledge about how persuasion works based on their self-confidence (Ham et al., 2015; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998). Consistent with the notion of the PKM, consumers with higher levels of ad skepticism and persuasion knowledge would show more negative attitudinal and behavioral responses to native advertising, since higher ad skepticism and persuasion knowledge motivate them to keep their guard up against the persuasion attempts of native advertising. Therefore, the following two hypotheses are posed:

**Hypothesis 3:** Native ad skepticism will be negatively related to (a) attitude toward native advertising and (b) consumers' intention to share native advertising.

**Hypothesis 4:** Persuasion knowledge will be negatively related to (a) attitude toward native advertising and (b) consumers' intention to share native advertising.

### *Native Advertising as a Double-Edged Sword: Nonintrusiveness Versus Manipulativeness*

Many advertisers suspect that native advertising is a double-edged sword. More specifically, native advertising attracts the attention of practitioners because of its ability to

blend into native media content (Kim, 2015; Truong et al., 2010; Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012). In contrast, the likelihood of native ads being perceived as manipulative causes practitioners to be wary of potential negative consumer responses (eMarketer, 2012, 2013). Empirical research addressing such practitioners' concerns is very limited (e.g., Kim, 2015; van Reijmersdal et al., 2005), however, and has not provided definitive answers. The following two sections will discuss the impacts of those two aspects on consumer responses to native advertising.

*Ad (Non)Intrusiveness.* Ad intrusiveness refers to "a psychological reaction to ads that interfere with a consumer's ongoing cognitive processes" (Li, Edwards, & Lee, 2002, p. 39). The perception of ads being intrusive has been found to be a significant negative predictor of attitudinal outcomes or a positive predictor of ad avoidance (Edwards, Li, & Lee, 2002; McCoy, Everard, Polak, & Galletta, 2008; Ritter & Cho, 2009).

Psychological reactance theory explains the negative relationship between ad intrusiveness and consumers' responses to ads. This theory posits that individuals who experience a threat to their behavioral freedom attempt to recover it by negatively evaluating the threat (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). Applying the theory to the advertising context, ads hindering consumers' media use would be perceived as a threat to their behavioral freedom. Consumers try to regain their freedom by perceiving those ads as intrusive and evaluating them negatively (Edwards et al., 2002; Ritter & Cho, 2009).

In fact, any type of ads interferes with consumers' media use to some extent. Yet native ads would be considered the least intrusive compared with other forms of advertising, as they appear to be part of native media content (Kim, 2015; Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012; van Reijmersdal et al., 2005). In particular, when consumers actively search for information on social media or try to connect with others in their social networks (Luchman et al., 2014; Tsai & Men, 2013), nonintrusiveness would lead them to produce positive attitudinal and behavioral responses to native advertising. Thus, the following hypothesis is posed:

**Hypothesis 5:** Native ad nonintrusiveness will be positively related to (a) attitude toward native advertising and (b) consumers' intention to share native advertising.

*Ad Manipulativeness.* According to Campbell (1995), perceived manipulativeness is defined as to "consumer inferences that the advertiser is attempting to persuade by inappropriate, unfair, or manipulative means" (p. 228). Previous studies have documented that perceived manipulativeness resulted in negative attitudinal and behavioral responses (Campbell, 1995; Lunardo & Mbengue, 2013; Morales, 2005).

According to the PKM (Friestad & Wright, 1994; Nelson & Ham, 2012), consumers use a set of persuasion knowledge, including perceived appropriateness (or manipulativeness) of persuasion tactics, to cope with and respond to marketers' persuasion attempts. Although persuasion knowledge does not always generate negative consumer responses to persuasion attempts (Ham et al., 2015), inappropriate or manipulative persuasion tactics would negatively influence attitudinal and behavioral responses (Campbell, 1995; Nelson & Ham, 2012).

Industry data suggest the potential negative effects of native advertising (eMarketer, 2012, 2013). More specifically, more than half of 2,516 adult online survey participants found sponsored video ads that appeared to be original video content, Facebook's sponsored stories, and promoted tweets misleading (eMarketer, 2013), and this led them to evaluate the promoted brands negatively (eMarketer, 2012). Thus, the following hypothesis is posed:

**Hypothesis 6:** Native ad manipulateness will be negatively related to (a) attitude toward native advertising and (b) consumers' intention to share native advertising.

Based on relevant literature and theories, it is reasonable to expect that consumers could find native ads nonintrusive, resulting in positive reactions to such ads (Edwards et al., 2002; Kim, 2015; Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012). Consumers could also find native ads misleading and manipulative, generating negative responses (Campbell, 1995; Lunardo & Mbengue, 2013; Morales, 2005). Due to the lack of empirical evidence, however, the question of which ad perception would be more prominent remains unanswered. Consequently, we ask the following:

**Research Question 1:** Which perception of native advertising—nonintrusive or manipulative—will be a stronger predictor of (a) attitude toward native advertising and (b) consumers' intention to share native advertising?

## Method

### *Sample and Procedure*

An online survey was conducted using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). A total of 550 MTurk users voluntarily participated in this study in exchange of a U.S. dollar. Among 550 voluntary respondents, a total of 503 (91.5%) respondents who qualified the following two criteria were included in the final data analyses: (a) age 18 years and older and (b) have experienced native advertising on social media in the past six months. Once respondents agreed with the consent on the online questionnaire, they were guided to read the definition of native advertising with two examples (IAB, 2013, p. 3): "Native advertising is a form of paid advertisements that are so cohesive with the page content, assimilated into the design, and consistent with the platform behavior that the view simply feels that they belong." In this study, we examine one major type of native advertising found in social media platforms: An in-feed social media ad that appears within a social networking platform's normal content and allows users to link off of the site to content, or to play, read, view, or watch content without leaving to a different site.

The ad format may vary, but the following is some typical examples of such ads: (a) While checking your Facebook, you notice a post in your news feed. The post appears to have been created by one of your Facebook friends, but was actually created by Nordstrom. The post is designated as a suggested post. (b) While checking your Twitter,

you notice a new tweet. The tweet looks very similar to a regular tweet, but turns out to be promoted by CenturyLink Business. The tweet is identified as a promoted tweet.

After reading the definition and examples, respondents were asked to answer the screening question. Only respondents who indicated that they had seen native advertising in the past six months were asked to complete the questionnaire. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

## Measures

*Information-seeking motivation* was measured by using three 7-point Likert-type scales: *to broaden my knowledge base*; *to refine my thinking*; and *to get more information* (Leung, 2009; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .82$ ,  $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ). *Socializing motivation* was measured by using three 7-point Likert-type scales: *to express my feelings*; *to share my views, thoughts, and experience*; and *to let my family and friends know about my recent situations* (Leung, 2009; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ,  $M = 4.73$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ). *Native ad skepticism* was measured by adopting nine 7-point Likert-type scales of ad skepticism from Obermiller and Spangenberg's (1998) scale (e.g., *I can depend on getting truth in most native ads*). All items were reverse-coded (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .97$ ,  $M = 4.97$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ). *Persuasion knowledge* was measured by adapting Bearden et al.'s (2001) three 7-point Likert-type scales (e.g., *I know how native advertising works*; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .76$ ,  $M = 5.20$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ). *Native ad nonintrusiveness* was measured by using Edwards et al.'s (2002) eight 7-point Likert-type scales: *I think native advertising is . . . interfering, intrusive, forced, obtrusive, bothersome, invasive, distracting, and disturbing*. All items were reverse-coded (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .96$ ,  $M = 2.78$ ,  $SD = 1.62$ ). *Native ad manipulateness* was measured by adapting Campbell's (1995) three 7-point Likert-type scales (e.g., *The way native advertising tries to persuade people seems unacceptable to me*; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ,  $M = 4.74$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ). *Attitude toward native advertising* was measured by using five 7-points semantic differential scales: *bad–good*, *negative–positive*, *unfavorable–favorable*, *harmful–beneficial*, and *not useful–useful* (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .95$ ,  $M = 3.04$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ). *Intention to share native advertising* was measured by using two using 7-point Likert-type scales: *I plan to share or retweet native ads* and *I intend to share or retweet native ads* (Pearson's  $r = .97$ ,  $M = 1.71$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ).

## Analyses

In testing Hypothesis 1 through Hypothesis 6, a series of hierarchical regression was conducted with control variables (i.e., gender, age, education level, and household income) entered in the first block using the stepwise method, two social media use motivations entered in the second block using the enter method, ad skepticism and persuasion knowledge entered in the third block using the enter method, native ad nonintrusiveness and manipulateness entered in the fourth block using the enter method, and attitude toward native advertising and consumers' intention to share native advertising entered as dependent variables. To test Research Question 1, a general linear test approach was performed to compare two regression coefficients (Kutner, Nachtsheim, Neter, & Li, 2004).

**Table 1.** Characteristics of Survey Respondents ( $N = 503$ ).

	<i>n</i>	%
Age, <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	34.2 (10.0)	
Gender		
Male	288	57.7
Female	211	42.3
Total	499	100.0
Race		
White or Caucasian (non-Hispanic)	382	77.0
Black or African American	21	4.2
Asian	51	10.3
Hispanic or Latino	28	5.6
Native American or Alaska Native	2	0.4
Native Hawaiian or other pacific islander	1	0.2
Other or mixed race	11	2.2
Total	496	100.0
Education		
None	0	0.0
Grades 1-8	0	0.0
High school incomplete	3	0.6
High school graduate	56	11.2
Associate degree	47	9.4
Some college	109	21.8
Bachelor's degree	222	44.3
Graduate/professional degree	64	12.8
Total	501	100.0
Income (\$)		
Less than 10,000	8	1.8
10,000-under 20,000	28	6.2
20,000-under 30,000	46	10.1
30,000-under 50,000	119	26.2
50,000-under 75,000	126	27.9
75,000-under 100,000	71	15.6
100,000-under 200,000	40	8.8
200,000 or more	16	3.5
Total	454	100.0

## Results

### *Respondent Characteristics*

A total sample of 503 MTurk users was included in final data analysis. Table 1 shows respondents' characteristics. The average age of the respondents was 34.2 years ( $SD = 10.0$ ), ranging from 19 to 70 years. Males slightly outnumbered (57.7%) than



**Table 2.** Hierarchical Regression Results Predicting Attitude Toward Native Advertising and Intention to Share Native Advertising.

Model	Predictors	Attitude toward NA		Intention to share NA	
		B (SE)	$\beta$	B (SE)	$\beta$
1	Education level	-.12 (.05)	-.10*	-.12 (.05)	-.11*
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		.01*		.01*
2	Education level	-.11 (.05)	-.10*	-.11 (.05)	-.10*
	Information seeking	.17 (.05)	.17**	.18 (.04)	.19**
	Socializing	.06 (.04)	.06	.05 (.04)	.06
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		.05**		.05**
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		.54**		.27**
3	Education level	-.01 (.04)	-.01	-.05 (.04)	-.04
	Information seeking	.07 (.03)	.07*	.12 (.04)	.13**
	Socializing	.01 (.03)	.01	.03 (.04)	.03
	NA skepticism	-.69 (.03)	-.67**	-.44 (.04)	-.44**
	Persuasion knowledge	-.16 (.04)	-.13**	-.11 (.05)	-.09*
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		.54**		.27**
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		.70**		.31**
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		.70**		.31**
4	Education level	-.01 (.03)	-.01	-.05 (.04)	-.04
	Information seeking	.05 (.03)	.05	.11 (.04)	.12**
	Socializing	.03 (.02)	.03	.03 (.04)	.03
	NA skepticism	-.38 (.03)	-.37**	-.30 (.05)	-.31**
	Persuasion knowledge	-.06 (.03)	-.05	-.09 (.05)	-.08
	NA nonintrusiveness	.40 (.03)	.47**	.26 (.05)	.31**
	NA manipulativeness	-.06 (.03)	-.07	.07 (.04)	.09
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		.70**		.31**

Note. NA = native advertising.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

females. A majority of respondents were Whites (77%). In terms of education, about half of the respondents had bachelor’s degree (44.3%). About 50% of the sample reported earning more than \$50,000 household income per year before taxes.

### Hypotheses and Research Question Testing

First of all, among four control variables, education level was found to be a significant negative predictor of attitude toward native advertising ( $B = -.12$ , standard error [ $SE$ ] = .05,  $\beta = -.10$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and consumers’ intention to share it ( $B = -.12$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $\beta = -.11$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating that those who were more educated showed more negative attitude toward native advertising and lower intention to share it (see Table 2).

Hypothesis 1 predicted the positive relationship between information-seeking motivations and (a) attitude toward native advertising ( $A_{NA}$ ) and (b) consumers’ intention to share native advertising ( $I_{NA}$ ). The result revealed that information-seeking

motivation was a significant positive predictor of  $A_{NA}$  ( $B = .17, SE = .05, \beta = .17, p < .01$ ) and  $I_{NA}$  ( $B = .18, SE = .04, \beta = .19, p < .01$ ; see Table 2), indicating that consumers who use social media to search information are more likely to show positive attitude toward native advertising and higher intention to share it. Thus, Hypothesis 1a and Hypothesis 1b were supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted the positive relationship between socializing motivation and (a)  $A_{NA}$  and (b)  $I_{NA}$ . The result showed that socializing motivation was not a significant positive predictor of  $A_{NA}$  and  $I_{NA}$  (see Table 2). Thus, Hypothesis 2a and Hypothesis 2b were not supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted the negative relationship between native ad skepticism and (a)  $A_{NA}$  and (b)  $I_{NA}$ . As hypothesized, native ad skepticism was a significant negative predictor of  $A_{NA}$  ( $B = -.69, SE = .03, \beta = -.67, p < .01$ ) and  $I_{NA}$  ( $B = -.44, SE = .04, \beta = -.44, p < .01$ ; see Table 2) indicating that consumers who have higher native ad skepticism are more likely to have negative attitude toward native advertising and less likely to share it. Thus, Hypothesis 3a and Hypothesis 3b were supported.

Hypothesis 4 posited the negative relationship between persuasion knowledge and (a)  $A_{NA}$  and (b)  $I_{NA}$ . As predicted, persuasion knowledge was a significant negative predictor of  $A_{NA}$  ( $B = -.16, SE = .04, \beta = -.13, p < .01$ ) and  $I_{NA}$  ( $B = -.11, SE = .05, \beta = -.09, p < .05$ ; see Table 2). That is, consumers with higher persuasion knowledge exhibit more negative attitude toward native advertising and a lower level of intention to share it. Therefore, Hypothesis 4a and Hypothesis 4b were supported.

Hypothesis 5 predicted the positive relationship between native ad nonintrusiveness and (a)  $A_{NA}$  and (b)  $I_{NA}$ . As predicted, native ad nonintrusiveness was a significant positive predictor of  $A_{NA}$  ( $B = .40, SE = .03, \beta = .47, p < .01$ ) and  $I_{NA}$  ( $B = .26, SE = .05, \beta = .31, p < .01$ ; see Table 2). That is, when consumers find native ads nonintrusive, they tend to show more positive attitude toward native advertising and have stronger intention to share it. Thus, Hypothesis 5 and Hypothesis 5b were supported.

Hypothesis 6 predicted the negative relationship between native ad manipulativeness and (a)  $A_{NA}$  and (b)  $I_{NA}$ . Unexpectedly, native ad manipulativeness was not a significant negative predictor of  $A_{NA}$  and  $I_{NA}$  (see Table 2). Thus, neither Hypothesis 6a nor Hypothesis 6b were supported.

Finally, Research Question 1 asked whether native ad nonintrusiveness or manipulativeness would be a stronger predictor of (a)  $A_{NA}$  and (b)  $I_{NA}$ . As an initial test of Research Question 1, a Pearson correlation coefficient of native ad nonintrusiveness and  $A_{NA}$  and that of native ad manipulativeness and  $A_{NA}$  were compared. Correlation coefficients (a) between native ad nonintrusiveness and  $A_{NA}$  and (b) between native ad manipulativeness and  $A_{NA}$  were  $.77 (p < .01)$  and  $-.61 (p < .01)$ , respectively (see Table 3). The difference between these two dependent correlation coefficients (absolute values) was found to be statistically significant ( $z = 4.65, p < .01$ ; I. Lee & Preacher, 2013). A hierarchical regression analysis result also indicated that native ad nonintrusiveness ( $B = .40, SE = .03, \beta = .47, p < .01$ ) was a stronger predictor of  $A_{NA}$  than native ad manipulativeness ( $B = -.06, SE = .03, \beta = -.07, p = .07$ ; see Table 2).

Similarly, a Pearson correlation coefficient of native ad nonintrusiveness and  $I_{NA}$  and that of native ad manipulativeness and  $I_{NA}$  were compared. Correlation coefficients (a)

**Table 3.** Zero-Order Correlations.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Information seeking	—							
2. Socializing	.34**	—						
3. NA skepticism	-.20**	-.16**	—					
4. Persuasion knowledge	.08	.14**	.27**	—				
5. NA nonintrusiveness	.14**	.06	-.61**	-.28**	—			
6. NA manipulativeness	-.09	.00	.55**	.43**	-.68**	—		
7. Attitude toward NA	.21**	.13**	-.73**	-.31**	.77**	-.61**	—	
8. Intention to share NA	.22**	.14**	-.50**	-.20**	.49**	-.34**	.58**	—

Note. NA = native advertising.

\*\* $p < .01$ .

between native ad nonintrusiveness and  $I_{NA}$  and (b) between native ad manipulativeness and  $I_{NA}$  were .49 ( $p < .01$ ) and  $-.34$  ( $p < .01$ ), respectively (see Table 3). The difference between these two dependent correlation coefficients (absolute values) was found to be statistically significant ( $z = 2.80, p < .01$ ; I. Lee & Preacher, 2013). A hierarchical regression analysis result also indicated that native ad nonintrusiveness ( $B = .26, SE = .05, \beta = .31, p < .01$ ) was a stronger predictor of  $I_{NA}$  than native ad manipulativeness ( $B = -.07, SE = .04, \beta = -.09, p = .11$ ; see Table 2). Therefore, the result indicates that native ad nonintrusiveness is a stronger predictor of (a)  $A_{NA}$  and (b)  $I_{NA}$  than native ad manipulativeness.

### Discussion

In order to address advertisers’ concerns about native advertising potentially being a double-edged sword, this study examined two ad perceptions—perceived nonintrusiveness and manipulativeness—that can be, respectively, positively and negatively associated with consumers’ attitude toward and intention to share native advertising. Additionally, this study tested the relationship between consumers’ motivational and psychological characteristics and their attitudinal and behavioral responses to native advertising.

Results showed that information-seeking motivation was positively related to attitude toward native advertising and sharing intention, whereas socializing motivation was not. In addition, both ad skepticism and persuasion knowledge were found to be negatively associated with attitude toward native advertising and sharing intention. Regarding two ad perceptions, native ad nonintrusiveness was a positive predictor of attitude toward native advertising and sharing intention, yet native ad manipulativeness was not.

As noted in previous studies (J. Lee et al., 2013; Tsai & Men, 2013), the findings demonstrated that consumers who had stronger information-seeking motivation to use social media were more likely to show positive attitude toward native advertising and

higher intention to share it. As information seeking is a more goal-oriented behavior than socializing with others, native advertising that does not interfere with users' information-seeking goals seems to be more appreciated. When consumers use social media to fulfill their socializing motivation, however, the primary benefit of native advertising (i.e., nonintrusiveness) does not seem to contribute to their positive reactions to it.

Interestingly, our results revealed that more skeptical consumers consistently showed more negative toward attitude toward native advertising and were less likely to share it no matter if they perceived native advertising as nonintrusive and/or manipulative. However, the negative association between persuasion knowledge and attitudinal and behavioral responses disappeared when native ad nonintrusiveness and manipulateness were included in regression models (see Table 2). As mentioned earlier, ad skepticism is characterized as consumers' negative reactions to advertising, whereas persuasion knowledge is consumers' general and neutral knowledge about the persuasion process. The findings seem to indicate that ad skepticism is consistently and negatively associated with attitudinal and behavioral responses, yet persuasion knowledge does not always produce negative consumer responses (Nelson & Ham, 2012).

Consistent with prior research (Cho & Cheon, 2004; Edwards et al., 2002; McCoy et al., 2008), this study showed that consumers who found native advertising to be nonintrusive were more likely to show positive attitude toward native advertising and higher intention to share it. As the concept of ad intrusiveness was developed to examine the degree to which ads interfered with consumers' cognitive activities, it has been extensively tested in the context of consumers' resistance to ads (Cho & Cheon, 2004; Edwards et al., 2002). Shifting the focus from ad intrusiveness to nonintrusiveness, the findings of this study suggest that ads that do not interfere with consumers' social media use could actually achieve advertiser-intended desirable outcomes.

Conversely, native ad manipulateness did not play an important role in influencing consumers' attitudinal and behavioral responses to native advertising. Although this study found significant correlations between native ad manipulateness and attitude toward native advertising and between native ad manipulateness and sharing intention, these significant relationships disappeared in the hierarchical regression analyses. The findings are inconsistent with existing industry data (eMarketer, 2012, 2013), which have suggested that native ads on social media could mislead consumers, and brands advertised in such ads could be evaluated negatively. The findings of this study suggest that advertisers should not necessarily be concerned about the possibility of native advertising misleading consumers, and they should instead pay more attention to the positive effects of native advertising.

This study provides meaningful theoretical and practical implications. It categorized the definitions of native advertising into two types: narrow and broad definitions of it. Unlike previous studies focusing on format similarity in terms of ad-editorial content only based on a narrow perspective, this study adopted the broad definition of native advertising and focused on (a) the role of format similarity between native advertising on social media and surrounding media content and (b) consumers'

interactions with native advertising (i.e., sharing intention). Particularly, this study's examination of the sharing intention related to native advertising makes it unique, as such consumer response can only be examined in the social media context based on the broad definition of native advertising.

The significant predictive roles of information-seeking motivation and native ad nonintrusiveness on attitude toward native advertising and sharing intention provide theoretical implications. Guided by the psychological reactance theory (Brehm & Brehm, 1981), ad intrusiveness has been considered an important negative determinant of consumer responses to Internet ads because consumers tend to be in an information-seeking mode on the Internet (Ha & McCann, 2008). According to the equity theory (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978), consumers who search for information on social media would compare their inputs (i.e., effort and time spent in searching for information on social media) with outcomes (i.e., the degree to which information searching is successful in relation to the interference of ads). This comparison would ultimately influence their reactions to ads. By incorporating prior research employing the psychological reactance theory (Brehm & Brehm, 1981) with the notion of the equity theory (Walster et al., 1978), consumers who search for information on social media and find native advertising to be nonintrusive are likely to respond to native advertising positively.

The findings of this study also imply that skeptical consumers would inherently exhibit negative attitude toward native advertising and be less likely to share it. However, this would not be the case for consumers with high persuasion knowledge. That is, as long as consumers find native advertising to be nonintrusive, even if they have high persuasion knowledge, they would not necessarily show negative attitude toward native advertising and low intention to share it. The results emphasize the idea that persuasion knowledge is individuals' self-confidence in effectively coping with persuasion tactics and that it does not always generate negative responses to persuasion tactics, including native advertising (Nelson & Ham, 2012).

After all predictors were entered in hierarchical regression analyses, the explained variances ( $R^2$ ) for attitude toward native advertising and for consumers' intention to share native advertising were, respectively, .70 and .31. The difference in terms of explained variance between these two models could be explained by the fact that a majority of predictors used in this study were mainly cognitive factors (Edwards et al., 2002; Friestad & Wright, 1994; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1988), and native ad manipulativeness was the only attitudinal predictor (Ham et al., 2015). It is reasonable to expect that behavioral responses would be better predicted by attitudinal or affective factors based on a cognition-affect-behavior approach (Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999). Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to pay more attention to other relevant attitudinal or emotional predictors (e.g., ad entertainment and ad irritation; Ducoffe, 1996) to better explain consumers' behavioral responses to native advertising.

The fact that information-seeking motivation and native ad nonintrusiveness are significant predictors, whereas native ad manipulativeness is a nonsignificant predictor, provides meaningful practical implications for advertisers. The findings seem to suggest that when advertisers implement native ads in social media, it would be more

effective to place them in social media vehicles where consumers would visit to learn something or search for information, such as Yelp and SlideShare, instead of social networking sites (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). Additionally, consumers would be more likely to appreciate content-congruent (e.g., contextual targeting) or user-tailored (e.g., personalized) native advertising, since they do not necessarily interfere with their social media activities (eMarketer, 2015b).

### *Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research*

This study has some limitations. First, as this study conducted a survey, it is necessary to be cautious about making causal claims. Second, despite the advantage of using nonstudent samples, the generalizability of the findings is limited due to the use of convenience sampling. Additionally, the findings of this study are limited to a particular type of native advertising on social media, which is in-feed social media advertising.

Future studies need to examine the effects of native ad nonintrusiveness and manipulativeness on consumer responses in an experimental setting. Experimental research can specify the boundary conditions under which ad perception is a stronger predictor of consumer responses to native advertising. For instance, a fruitful avenue for future research is to test if native ad nonintrusiveness is a stronger predictor when consumers are in an information-seeking mode. Future researchers can also manipulate the degree or types of nativity in ad messages to better understand the effects of native advertising on consumer responses. By focusing on both format and context similarity between native advertising and surrounding media content, future studies can empirically test whether nativity, in terms of both format and context, would generate the most desirable consumer responses.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **Funding**

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **References**

- Aguirre-Rodriguez, A. (2013). The effect of consumer persuasion knowledge on scarcity appeal persuasiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, *42*, 371-379. doi:10.1080/00913367.2013.803186
- Baek, T. H., & Morimoto, M. (2012). Stay away from me: Examining the determinants of consumer avoidance of personalized advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, *41*(1), 59-76. doi:10.2753/JOA0091-3367410105
- Bardeen, W. O., Hardesty, D. M., & Rose, R. L. (2001). Consumer self-confidence: Refinements in conceptualization and measurement. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *28*, 121-134. doi:10.1086/321951
- Brehm, S. S., & Brehm, J. W. (1981). *Psychological reactance: A theory of freedom and control*. New York, NY: Academic Press.

- Campbell, M. C. (1995). When attention-getting advertising tactics elicit consumer inferences of manipulative intent: The importance of balancing benefits and investments. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 4*, 225-254. doi:10.1207/s15327663jcp0403-02
- Campbell, C., & Marks, L. J. (2015). Good native advertising isn't a secret. *Business Horizons, 58*, 599-606. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2015.06.003
- Cho, C.-H., & Cheon, H. J. (2004). Why do people avoid advertising on the Internet? *Journal of Advertising, 33*(4), 89-97. doi:10.1080/00913367.2004.10639175
- Dix, S., & Phau, I. (2009). Spotting the disguises and masquerades: Revisiting the boundary between editorial and advertising. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 27*, 413-427. doi:10.1108/02634500910955263
- Dobos, J. (1992). Gratification models of satisfaction and choice of communication channels in organizations. *Communication Research, 19*, 29-51. doi:10.1177/009365092019001002
- Ducoffe, R. H. (1996). Advertising value and advertising the web. *Journal of Advertising Research, 36*(5), 21-35.
- Edwards, S. M., Li, H., & Lee, J.-H. (2002). Forced exposure and psychological reactance: Antecedents and consequences of the perceived intrusiveness of pop-up ads. *Journal of Advertising, 31*(3), 83-95. doi:10.1080/00913367.2002.10673678
- eMarketer. (2012). *Ads disguised as content mislead, annoy: Sponsored stories, promoted tweets found misleading by many*. Retrieved from <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Ads-Disguised-Content-Mislead-Annoy/1009478>
- eMarketer. (2013). *All eyes on native advertising, despite uncertainties: Some publishers, consumers are wary*. Retrieved from <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/All-Eyes-on-Native-Advertising-Despite-Uncertainties/1009895>
- eMarketer. (2014). *Native advertising roundup*. Retrieved from [https://www.emarketer.com/public\\_media/docs/eMarketer\\_Native\\_Advertising\\_Roundup.pdf](https://www.emarketer.com/public_media/docs/eMarketer_Native_Advertising_Roundup.pdf)
- eMarketer. (2015a). *What's the future of Facebook native video ads?* Retrieved from <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Whats-Future-of-Facebook-Native-Video-Ads/1011894>
- eMarketer. (2015b). *What's the must-have component of native advertising?* Retrieved from <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Whats-Must-Have-Component-of-Native-Advertising/1012059>
- Friestad, M., & Wright, P. (1994). The persuasion knowledge model: How people cope with persuasion attempts. *Journal of Consumer Research, 21*, 1-31. doi:10.1086/209380
- Ha, L., & McCann, K. (2008). An integrated model of advertising clutter in offline and online media. *International Journal of Advertising, 27*, 569-592. doi:10.2501/S0265048708080153
- Ham, C. D., Nelson, M. R., & Das, S. (2015). How to measure persuasion knowledge. *International Journal of Advertising, 34*, 17-53. doi:10.1080/02650487.2014.994730
- IAB. (2013). *The native advertising playbook*. Retrieved from <http://www.iab.net/media/file/IAB-Native-Advertising-Playbook2.pdf>
- Kim, S. (2015). *Effects of ad-video similarity, ad location, and user control option on ad avoidance and advertiser-intended outcomes of online video ads* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/175210/Kim-umn-0130E-16154.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Kim, S., Lee, J., & Yoon, D. (2015). Norms in social media: The application of theory of reasoned action and personal norms in predicting interactions with Facebook page like ads. *Communication Research Reports, 32*, 322-331. doi:10.1080/08824096.2015.1089851
- Kutner, M. H., Nachtsheim, C. J., Neter, W., & Li, W. (2004). *Applied linear statistical models*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Lee, I. A., & Preacher, K. J. (2013). Calculation for the test of the difference between two dependent correlations with one variable in common [Computer software]. Retrieved from <http://quantpsy.org>

- Lee, J., Ham, C. D., & Kim, M. (2013). Why people pass along online video advertising: From the perspectives of the Interpersonal Communication Motives scale and the theory of reasoned action. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 13*, 1-13. doi:10.1080/15252019.2013.768048
- Lee, J., & Lee, H. (2012). Canonical correlation analysis of online video advertising viewing motivations and access characteristics. *New Media & Society, 14*, 1358-1374. doi:10.1177/1461444812444708
- Leung, L. (2009). User-generated content on the Internet: An examination of gratifications, civic engagement and psychological empowerment. *New Media & Society, 11*, 1327-1347. doi:10.1177/1461444809341264
- Li, H., Edwards, S. M., & Lee, J.-H. (2002). Measuring the intrusiveness of advertisements: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Advertising, 31*(2), 37-47. doi: 10.1080/00913367.2002.10673665
- Lin, C. A. (1999). Uses and gratifications. In G. Stone, M. Singletary, & V. P. Richmond (Eds.), *Clarifying communication theories* (pp. 199-208). Ames: Iowa State University Press.
- Lin, K., & Lu, H. (2011). Why people use social networking site: An empirical study integrating networking externalities and motivation theory. *Computers in Human Behavior, 27*, 1152-1161. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2010.12.009
- Luchman, J. N., Bergstrom, J., & Krulikowski, C. (2014). A motives framework of social media website use: A survey of young Americans. *Computers in Human Behavior, 38*, 136-141. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2014.05.016
- Lunardo, R., & Mbengue, A. (2013). When atmospherics lead to inferences of manipulative intent: Its effects on trust and attitude. *Journal of Business Research, 66*, 823-830. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.06.007
- Matteo, S., & Zotto, C. D. (2015). Native advertising, or how to stretch editorial to sponsored content within a transmedia branding era. In G. Siegert, K. Förster, S. M. Chan-Olmsted, & M. Ots (Eds.), *Handbook of media branding* (pp. 169-185). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International.
- McCoy, S., Everard, A., Polak, P., & Galletta, D. F. (2008). An experimental study of antecedents and consequences of online ad intrusiveness. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction, 24*, 672-699. doi:10.1080/10447310802335664
- Morales, A. C. (2005). Giving firms an "E" for effort: Consumer responses to high-effort firms. *Journal of Consumer Research, 31*, 806-812. doi:10.1086/426615
- Nelson, M. R., & Ham, C. D. (2012). The reflexive game: How target and agent persuasion knowledge influence advertising persuasion. In S. Rodgers & E. Thorson (Eds.), *Advertising theory* (pp. 174-188). New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Obermiller, C., & Spangenberg, E. R. (1998). Development of a scale to measure consumer skepticism toward advertising. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 7*, 159-186. doi:10.1207/s15327663jcp0702-03
- Park, N., Kee, K. F., & Valenzuela, S. (2009). Being immersed in social networking environment: Facebook groups, uses and gratifications, and social outcomes. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 12*, 729-733. doi:10.1089/cpb.2009.0003
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1981). *Attitudes and persuasion: Classic and contemporary approaches*. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.
- Ritter, E. A., & Cho, C.-H. (2009). Effects of ad placement and type on consumer responses to podcast ads. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior, 12*, 533-537. doi:10.1089/cpb.2009.0074
- Truong, Y., McColl, R., & Kitchen, P. (2010). Practitioners' perceptions of advertising strategies for digital media. *International Journal of Advertising, 29*, 709-725. doi:10.2501/S0265048710201439



- Tsai, W. H. S., & Men, L. R. (2013). Motivations and antecedents of consumer engagement with brand pages on social networking sites. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 13*, 76-87. doi:10.1080/15252019.2013.826549
- Tutaj, K., & van Reijmersdal, E. A. (2012). Effects of online advertising format and persuasion knowledge on audience reactions. *Journal of Marketing Communications, 18*, 5-18. doi:10.1080/13527266.2011.620765
- Tuten, T. L., & Solomon, M. R. (2015). *Social media marketing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Vakratsas, D., & Ambler, T. (1999). How advertising works: What do we really know? *Journal of Marketing, 63*, 26-43. doi:10.2307/1251999
- van Reijmersdal, E. A., Neijens, P., & Smit, E. (2005). Readers' reactions to mixtures of advertising and editorial content in magazines. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising, 27*(2), 39-53. doi:10.1080/10641734.2005.10505180
- Walster, E., Walster, G. W., & Berscheid, E. (1978). *Equity: Theory and research*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Wojdyski, B. W., & Evans, N. J. (2016). Going native: Effects of disclosure position and language on the recognition and evaluation of online native advertising. *Journal of Advertising, 45*, 157-168. doi:10.1080/00913367.2015.1115380

### Author Biographies

**Joonghwa Lee** (PhD, University of Missouri) is an Assistant Professor in the Communication Program at the University of North Dakota. His research interests lie in interactive and non-traditional advertising as well as consumer behaviors. His research has been recognized in peer-reviewed journals, such as *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, New Media and Society, International Journal of Advertising, Communication Research Reports, and Journal of Interactive Advertising*.

**Soojung Kim** (PhD, University of Minnesota) is an Assistant Professor in the Communication Program at the University of North Dakota. Her research focuses on the strategic use of digital and social media in communication and international strategic communication. Her research has been published in peer-reviewed journals, including *Journal of Marketing Communications, International Journal of Mobile Communications, and Communication Research Reports*, among others.

**Chang-Dae Ham** (PhD, University of Missouri) is an Assistant Professor in the Charles H. Sandage Department of Advertising at the University of Illinois-Urbana. He has been interested in how consumers cope with hidden persuasion tactics including advergame, product placement, online behavioral advertising, online video advertising, corporate's crisis communication, and among others.