

Article

Awareness advertising influence on consumers buying intention: Exploring attitude as a mediating factor

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Abstract: This study investigates the intricate relationship between awareness advertising and buying intention among Iraqi grocery shoppers, exploring the mediating role of consumer attitude. Employing a quantitative approach, the authors surveyed 300 shoppers. Using a random sampling technique. To ensure rigor and validity, the authors rigorously analyzed the relationships using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) based on 288 valid responses. The findings reveal that awareness advertising significantly impacts buying intention, mediated by consumer attitude. These insights offer valuable management implications for product marketers. Sufficient brand awareness attracts consumer attention, shapes positive attitudes, and ultimately drives purchase decisions. This study further validates the theoretical model of consumer response by empirically establishing consumer attitude as a central intermediary between awareness advertising and buying intention within the Iraqi market context.

Keywords: awareness advertising; consumer attitude; Iraqi consumers; buying intention

1. Introduction

The concept of buying intention refers to the likelihood of a buyer acquiring a specific product after numerous inducements from the consumer (Alqaysi and Zahari, 2022). As per Peña-García et al. (2020), the buying intent is a condition between the shopper and the vendor; this condition is triggered when the buyer is prepared to accept the offer from the vendor. Factors such as price, perceived quality, and perceived value can significantly influence purchase intention. The purchasing process is influenced by both internal and external factors for buyers (Kim, 2020).

Buying intention, recognized as a crucial factor in diverse markets, has been rigorously explored in cross-cultural contexts. Various influences have been identified, including perceived control, social pressure, perceived value, and product fit (Peña-García et al., 2020). In today's internet-driven world, online reviews wield immense power, shaping consumer decisions and influencing countless purchases (Thomas et al., 2020). Furthermore, the extent of consumer engagement with a brand on social media plays a role in determining their buying intentions (McClure and Seock, 2020). Consequently, the authors assert that consumer buying intention is influenced by awareness advertising.

Awareness advertising is a strategic marketing approach designed to enhance consumers' familiarity with a company's products or services. This tactic is employed to boost visibility and engage potential leads, as noted by Carpena (2023). Unlike short-term profit generation, the primary goal of awareness advertising is to cultivate

brand recognition among consumers. The heightened awareness contributes to building trust, establishing a solid foundation for attracting potential customers, nurturing relationships, and ultimately converting them into loyal patrons. Brand awareness, in contrast, represents the depth of consumer recognition and memory associated with a particular brand's offerings or overall identity. It's like forming a mental picture of a brand, pieced together from its logo, advertisements, products, and customer experiences. The buying decisions of consumers are influenced by their level of brand awareness, with those possessing higher awareness more inclined towards making purchases. Brand awareness not only impacts consumer brand preferences but also influences their intentions to spend on brands they are familiar with. Furthermore, Brand awareness acts as a powerful filter, influencing how consumers perceive and respond to a brand in its wake (Alqaysi and Zahari, 2022; Ahmad and Hadi, 2020).

The relationship between awareness advertising and buying intention is intricate, involving a causal mechanism. Ahmed and Taha (2023) reveal a fascinating dynamic: the impact of brand awareness on purchase intention isn't direct, but it's significantly amplified by factors like perceived quality and brand loyalty, acting as crucial mediators in this relationship. Likewise, other studies, such as Azzari and Pelissari (2020), suggest that it's the invisible bridges built through positive associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty that ultimately lead to purchase intention in essence, the connection between awareness advertising and buying intention is not a straightforward one, and various factors contribute to shaping this relationship.

In the era of digital marketing, the mediating role of brand image is of significant importance, as highlighted by Taqi and Muhammad (2020). While brand awareness remains a crucial foundation, relying solely on it can be insufficient in the digitally complex landscape. Building positive brand associations, fostering trust through perceived quality, and cultivating loyalty are key enablers for translating awareness into purchase intent. The question of how brand awareness magic transforms into purchase decisions is a captivating one, and it takes on even more fascinating layers in the specific context of a country like Iraq. In this digital age, with its intricate blend of cultural nuances and evolving consumer behavior, understanding the "when" and "how" of awareness-to-action becomes even more crucial.

This study endeavors to address this question by proposing that awareness advertising can impact consumers' attitudes, thereby influencing their buying intentions. However, consumer attitudes, comprising both thinking and feeling components, can vary significantly among consumers. Moving beyond established models, this study proposes a nuanced perspective on brand influence. It suggests a moderated-mediation relationship where celebrity endorsements amplify the connection between awareness and attitude, paving the way for stronger purchase intentions.

Prior studies by Hien et al. (2020) and Taqi and Muhammad (2020) indicated the role played by brand image as a mediator is of utmost significance. Consequently, relying solely on brand awareness may prove insufficient to enhance consumers' buying intentions in this digital age. To gain a more nuanced understanding of this complex interplay, a fundamental question emerges: How and when does awareness advertising translate into buying intention within the country of Iraq? This study aims to tackle this inquiry by proposing that awareness advertising can influence consumers'

attitudes, thereby shaping their buying intentions. However, attitudes, encompassing both cognitive and affective components, exhibit significant variation among consumers (Zeng et al., 2023).

This study shines a light on the often-murky connection between brand awareness and consumer purchase decisions. Traditionally, awareness has been seen as the first step on the purchase journey, but its true impact has remained obscure. This study delves into uncharted territory by exploring the mediation role of consumer attitude. While the link between brand awareness and purchase intention has been studied extensively, the indirect effects mediated by consumer attitude remain relatively unexplored, particularly in the context of the Middle East and Iraq specifically. A thorough understanding of this relationship is crucial for comprehending the effects on buying intention. Finally, this study takes a bold step forward by enlarging the canvas of both planned behaviour and social influence theories within the context of digital marketing. Rather than viewing these perspectives in isolation, it braids them together to create a richer, more intricate tapestry of consumer behaviour in the digital age.

2. Review of literature

The conceptual model of this study draws upon Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This model delves into individuals' intentions and behaviours, incorporating attitudes, perceived behaviour control, and anticipated behaviour outcomes to anticipate the complexities of human decision-making. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) suggests that consumer engagement in a specific behaviour, like purchasing a brand's product, is influenced by a strong intention to do so. This intention, in turn, stems from favourable attitudes towards the behaviour, subjective norms (perceived social pressure), and perceived behavioural control (one's belief in their ability to perform the behaviour). Consequently, information about brands significantly influences the formation of attitudes, which, in turn, shapes purchase intentions.

TPB offers a powerful lens for understanding what drives our urge to buy. It proposes that three key factors—our mindset, external influences, and perceived control—collectively sculpt our purchase intentions. At the heart of this framework lies personal attitude. Think of it as our internal compass, guiding our thoughts and feelings towards a brand or behaviour (Mehta et al., 2020). Positive experiences, compelling advertising, and strong brand values all contribute to building a favourable attitude, nudging us closer to that “buy” button. But TPB acknowledges that we're not isolated decision-makers. External factors like perceived social pressure (subjective norm) also play a significant role. Seeing friends or family endorsing a brand can subtly influence our own choices, adding a layer of social approval to the mix (Sharma et al., 2021). Finally, TPB recognizes our sense of perceived behavioural control. This refers to our belief in our ability to perform the desired behaviour, in this case, making the purchase. When we feel confident and empowered, taking that final step becomes much easier.

2.1. Awareness advertising and buying intention

Awareness advertising acts as a powerful driver of shopper decisions, and an increase in brand and product awareness enhances the likelihood of consumers choosing a particular brand or service (Soti, 2022). Exposure to a brand lead to increased recognition, simplifying the identification and recall of the brand in specific situations. Moreover, brand awareness is pivotal as it substantially influences consumers' decisions and intentions to make purchases (Haron et al., 2023). Consumers often prefer to buy from companies that are well-known and familiar to them. In the digital age, building awareness isn't just about recognition; it's about planting the seeds of desire. As Sharma et al. (2021) reveal, the higher the awareness, the more fertile the ground for purchase consideration and ultimately action.

In a market saturated with various brands and products, consumers favour brands they know, admire, and remember when it comes to purchasing decisions (Srivastava et al., 2023). In the context of advancing technology, Onofrei et al. (2022) shed light on the intricate dance between social media interactions, content quality, and consumer behaviour.

Awareness advertising not only influences consumers' associations with a brand but also builds and optimizes brand image associations. For brands seeking to forge deep connections with customers, ensuring a consistent and meaningful presence in their perceptions is the essential first step. Consequently, consumers tend to consider purchasing from well-known brands due to their familiarity (Khan, 2019). Based on the literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- H1: Awareness advertising has a positive and significant relationship with buying intention among Iraqi consumers.

2.2. Awareness advertising and attitude

Awareness refers to the level of understanding or knowledge individuals possess regarding a specific topic or issue. This encompasses their recognition and comprehension of relevant information, such as facts, opinions, or experiences related to the subject matter under investigation. Awareness advertising aims to create visibility and familiarity for a brand, product, or cause among the target audience. It involves strategically promoting messages to generate recognition and recall. The primary objective is to establish and enhance brand awareness (Desai et al., 2021). Brand awareness is described as the shopper capacity to recognize the brand with enough detail to form an opinion towards buying the brand. To ensure effective recall and product recognition, companies need to target consumers in a manner that facilitates easy recall and memorization, based on the awareness they provide (Bernarto et al., 2020). Furthermore, advertising efforts must persuade individuals to make product purchases. Launching multiple campaigns at different times aims to elevate brand awareness, potentially influencing consumer attitudes—a crucial aspect for a brand's main objective of retaining and acquiring customers (Massoudi et al., 2023).

There are two levels of brand awareness: the first is organizational, focusing on how a business establishes a distinctive, enduring corporate identity. This study employs the second method, investigating individual opinions about the brand and

examining how attitudes are formed based on brand awareness (Marhareita et al., 2022). The awareness customers have of a brand enhances the likelihood of purchasing its products. Brand awareness is the brand's ability to achieve deliberate recognition; individuals can identify brands, contributing to the formation of their attitudes (Taqi and Muhammad (2020). While customers' familiarity with the brand can't be considered a decisive factor affecting purchase intention, it still has the potential to influence attitude (Azzari and Pellissari, 2020). The relationship between awareness advertising and consumer attitude is complex and multifaceted. Awareness advertising serves as a catalyst for shaping consumer attitudes by influencing their perceptions, beliefs, and emotions about a brand or product (Aomari and Nafaa, 2023). Linhart (2023) stated that through consistent exposure to advertising messages, consumers may develop positive associations with the advertised brand or product, leading to favorable attitudes and preferences.

Additionally, awareness advertising can contribute to brand awareness and familiarity, which are often precursors to building trust and credibility with consumers. As consumers become more familiar with a brand or product through advertising efforts, they may develop stronger positive attitudes towards it, leading to increased likelihood of purchase or brand loyalty. Conversely, ineffective or negative awareness advertising campaigns may have adverse effects on consumer attitudes, leading to skepticism, distrust, or avoidance of the brand or product (Zhang, 2020). Therefore, the success of awareness advertising in shaping consumer attitudes depends on factors such as message clarity, relevance, consistency, and alignment with consumer needs and preferences. According to the above, the authors proposed the following hypothesis:

- H2: Awareness advertising has a positive relationship with attitude among Iraqi consumers.

2.3. Attitude and buying intention

Attitude is an individual's evaluative judgments, feelings, or predispositions towards a particular object, concept, or phenomenon (Albarracin and Shavitt, 2018). This encompasses their overall stance, perspective, or emotional response concerning the subject matter being studied. It includes elements such as favorability, positivity, negativity, or neutrality towards the issue at hand. Purchase intention, as defined by Zhao et al. (2020) are characterized by the willingness to make a purchase. Lestari et al. (2020) highlight the interplay between attitude, product consumption, and purchase intention. This form of decision-making explores consumers' motivations behind selecting a particular brand. Furthermore, Venkateswara et al. (2022) depict intention as a scenario in which a buyer is predisposed to acquire a specific product under particular circumstances. Research suggests that consumers are inclined to pay a premium for products with unique selling points, and cultivating a favourable attitude towards brands can result in positive purchase intentions. Advertising campaigns play a role in increasing product demand by shaping individuals' attitudes, consequently influencing purchase intentions (Li et al., 2022).

Engagement in social networking site (SNS) brand communities has the potential to foster a positive brand attitude and drive purchase decisions. It is crucial to

underscore that the development of a positive brand attitude is pivotal for the creation of buying intentions (Ajmal et al., 2023). This viewpoint is reinforced by Ghosh et al. (2021), asserting that attitude can predict of buying intent, besides an encouraging attitude result in positive behaviours and intentions. The relationship between attitude formation, message effectiveness, and repetition is critical, as highlighted by Hassan and Barber (2021), who demonstrated that a heightened level of repetition weakens the influence of communication.

Consumer purchasing behavior simplifies into a binary choice, entailing the decision to either make the purchase or abstain from it (Zhao et al., 2021). To gain a deeper understanding of the factors shaping consumers' inclination to engage in online shopping, this study directs its focus towards online purchase intention rather than user behaviour in the era of digital communication. In this context, behavioural intention denotes the consumer's resolve to initiate an online purchase. The subsequent hypothesis is formulated on the foundation of existing literature:

- H3: Consumer attitude has a positive relationship with buying intention among Iraqi consumers.

2.4. Attitude as mediator

A study by Fishman et al. (2022) claimed that attitude is characterized as an individual's favourable or unfavourable perspective on a specific behaviour. Consequently, individual attitudes act as a crucial lens through which to understand the interplay between personal moods, emotions, perceptions, brand awareness, and the subsequent evolution of behaviours and intentions. While research suggests that attitudes towards social media can effectively predict general preferences (Hadi and Aslam, 2023; Irshad and Ahmad, 2019), its direct link to specific behavioural outcomes remains an area of ongoing investigation, with inconclusive evidence to date (Corneille et al., 2019).

A study by Bondarenko and Vyshnivska (2023) indicated that promotions, including sales incentives, discounts, and special offers, interact with awareness advertising efforts in various ways, ultimately influencing consumer perceptions and behaviors. Awareness advertising for example, plays a crucial role in introducing consumers to a product or service. It creates brand awareness and communicates key messages about the product's features, benefits, and value proposition. This initial exposure piques consumer interest and prompts them to consider the product. Once consumers are aware of the product, promotions serve to reinforce their interest and incentivize them to take action (Massoudi, 2020). Promotions such as discounts or special offers provide tangible benefits that encourage consumers to engage with the product or make a purchase. For example, a consumer who sees an advertisement for a new smartphone may be more inclined to purchase it if there's a limited-time discount or a buy-one-get-one-free offer. Finally, Promotions can influence consumers' perceptions of value. A discount or special offer may make the product seem more affordable or provide greater value for money, thereby increasing its appeal. This perceived value can override any initial concerns consumers may have had about the product's price or features.

The intricate dance between customer opinions and purchase decisions is

constantly swayed by a dynamic flow of information. As Sabirov et al. (2021) point out, opinions about specific products can turn on a dime thanks to the omnipresent reach of online and offline advertisements. This fluidity in opinion is further fueled by our inherent tendency to evaluate potential outcomes whenever facing a choice, a notion Schafer (2019) eloquently expands upon. Ultimately, this interplay of opinions, evaluations, and information culminates in a myriad of decisions that mold our behavior. Interestingly, brand awareness emerges as a distinct influencer, with Ferdous et al. (2020) demonstrating how higher awareness translates directly into stronger purchase intentions. This highlights the crucial role of perception and information in shaping the landscape of customer choices.

People who weigh information thoroughly tend to adopt positive views of brands based on their exposure through various channels, particularly social media, as Abima et al. (2021) suggest. These positive thoughts become the cornerstone of their attitudes and buying intentions (Thomas et al., 2020). This can manifest in different ways: for example, pleasure-seekers might focus on emotional qualities like enjoyment and excitement when buying something (Amaliah et al., 2020), while customers driven by social values might prioritize products that resonate with their cultural background or desired social image (Yang and Chee, 2020).

In the age of digital savvy consumers, where brands vie for recognition and prestige, fostering a positive attitude towards purchase decisions is key. This favourable outlook, fueled by well-crafted brand awareness and image, leads to rewarding product experiences. Dwivedi et al. (2021) emphasize the crucial role of a positive social media attitude for both individual change and brand exposure. As Ostic et al. (2021) argue, this social media-mindset acts as a lens through which we assess our online actions and their potential consequences, ultimately shaping the myriad of choices that culminate in our observed behaviors.

Social media significantly shapes attitudes, influencing opinions about promoted products through brand awareness (Marhareita et al., 2022; Zafar et al., 2021). Hameed et al. (2023) link brand awareness to purchase intent mediated by attitude. Aligned with TPB and the notion of attitude as a key driver of behaviour, the authors propose:

- H4: Awareness of advertising and buying intention among Iraqi consumers is mediated by consumer attitude.

The conceptual framework of this study is based on a contemporary literature review. The framework illustrates the main hypotheses as shown in **Figure 1**.

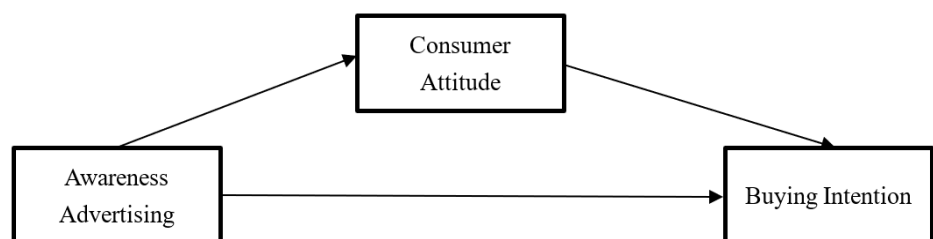


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

3. Methodology and data source

3.1. Sample and data collection

This study aims to assess the influence of awareness advertising on customer buying intention among grocery shoppers in Iraq.

The researchers employed a combination of methods, including qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative approach applied focus group consist of 10 experts in the field of marketing from Cihan University-Erbil department of business administration and marketing managers of 3 food companies in the area. Organize focus groups with participants was created to gain deeper insights into their attitudes towards awareness advertising and purchase decisions. This can be particularly valuable in the Iraqi context to understand cultural nuances. Also, a quantitative approached used a questionnaire. The purpose was to measure consumer attitude. Measuring consumer attitudes poses several methodological challenges due to the complex and subjective nature of attitudes. Attitudes are inherently subjective and can vary greatly among individuals. What one person perceives positively; another might view negatively (Nystrand and Olsen, 2020). This subjectivity makes it difficult to develop standardized measures that accurately capture the nuances of consumer attitudes.

Data were gathered through a questionnaire distributed to 300 grocery shoppers at the Carrefour supper store in Erbil, Iraq. Employing a random sampling technique resulted in 288 valid questionnaire responses. To warrant simplicity and participation, the questionnaire was translated into Kurdish and Arabic language, with simple instructions and appropriate content.

To ensure a focused and relevant sample for the Iraqi context, the study included participants who meet the following criteria: 18 years or older (legal age of majority in Iraq), Iraqi citizen, able to fluently understand and complete the survey in Kurdish (dominant language in Erbil, Iraq) and individuals who have some influence on purchasing decisions within a household. Some criteria were excluded including Non-Iraqi Citizens: The study focuses on understanding Iraqi consumer behavior, so participants who are not Iraqi citizens were be excluded. Also, Individuals under 18 years old were excluded due to ethical considerations. Finally, surveys with missing or incomplete data were excluded from the analysis to ensure data quality.

3.2. Measures

A pilot test with 5 specialists in the field of marketing to detect and address any problem associated with ambiguity, grammar, and functionality. The questionnaire was divided into five sections, including demographic variables. In addition to dependent variable awareness advertising with 5 items adapted from Nguyen and Huynh (2022), consumer's attitude as a mediator with 5 items adapted from Li et al. (2021), and purchase intention as an independent variable with 5 items was adapted and modified from Nguyen et al. (2022). Respondents indicated their level of agreement on a five-point scale, with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree". Data collection spanned 60 days in April and May 2023.

Statistical analysis of the data was performed by PLS-SEM and SPSS 19 software. The first stage tested the reliability and validity assessments of the measurement model. Subsequently, the relationships among variables in the structural model were examined.

Table 1 presents demographic variables, offering insights into sample features such as gender, age and frequency of purchase.

The analysis of respondents shows the majority of shoppers were women 62% and 38% were males. A 37.51% of respondents were between the ages of 31–40 and 27.08% were below the age of 30.35% of respondents have a high school diploma and 31% have an undergraduate degree. 42% of respondents shop once a week and 34% shop twice a week. When it comes to income, 46% of respondents make less than \$1000, 33% make between \$1000–\$2000 and the rest make more than \$2000.

Table 1. Demographic variables.

Variable	Label	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	109	37.84%
	Female	179	62.16%
Age	19–30 years old	78	27.08%
	31–40 years old	108	37.51%
	41–50 years old	55	19.09%
	Above 50 years	47	16.32%
Education	Elementary	52	18.05%
	High school	99	34.38%
	Under graduate	89	30.91%
	Master degree	31	10.76%
	PhD.	17	05.90%
Frequency of shopping	Once a week	121	42.01%
	Once every 2 weeks	99	34.38%
	Once every 3 weeks	53	18.41%
	Once every month	15	05.20%
	Less than \$1000	132	45.83%
Income	Between \$1000 and \$2000	96	33.33%
	More than \$2000	60	20.84%

4. Empirical analysis and results discussion

4.1. Measurement model

To assess the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the authors conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using SPSS software. Subsequently, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using PLS-SEM software. To gauge the internal consistency or construct reliability of the questionnaire items, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient (CA) was utilized. The results presented in **Table 2** indicate that all construct alphas (CAs) fall within the range of 0.858 to 0.871, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). This suggests a high level of construct reliability, indicating that the measurement items within each construct serve as reliable indicators of the underlying constructs.

To explore the theoretical correlations among the items within each construct and evaluate convergent validity, we employed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). High

convergent validity is signified by items with factor loadings surpassing 0.7 (Nassoura, 2020). As depicted in **Table 2**, all factor loadings meet this criterion, affirming the convergent validity of the measurement model.

For a comprehensive assessment of convergent validity, the authors evaluated the internal consistency and discriminant validity of the constructs using two key criteria: composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), a CR value of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable, while an AVE value greater than 0.5 is recommended. **Table 2** indicates that all constructs exhibit satisfactory CR values, ranging from 0.839 to 0.884. Additionally, the AVE values for all constructs fall within the range of 0.654 to 0.686. These findings offer additional support for the convergent validity of the measurement model.

Table 2. Reliability and factor loading.

Variables	Items	Loading	CA	CR	AVE
Awareness Advertising (AA)	AA1	0.842	0.871	0.839	0.654
	AA2	0.821			
	AA3	0.775			
	AA4	0.762			
	AA5	0.761			
Consumer Attitude (CAT)	CAT1	0.814	0.863	0.884	0.684
	CAT2	0.826			
	CAT3	0.792			
	CAT4	0.773			
	CAT5	0.795			
Buying Intention (BI)	BI1	0.812	0.858	0.879	0.686
	BI2	0.822			
	BI3	0.824			
	BI4	0.748			
	BI5	0.811			

In conclusion, the CFA analysis affirms the convergent validity of the measurement model, with all factor loadings meeting the established threshold. Both CR and AVE values indicate acceptable levels of convergent validity, providing robust evidence for the model’s reliability and validity.

Discriminant validity examines the distinctiveness of different constructs in the model. Hair et al. (2019) define it as the extent to which a construct is distinct from other constructs. Two criteria were used to evaluate discriminant validity: The Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. This study focused on the HTMT criterion, where Hair et al. (2019) suggests that HTMT values for each construct should be below 0.90. As shown in **Table 3**, all HTMT values were below 0.90, confirming adequate discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant validity (HTMT ratio).

	CAT	BI	AA
Consumer attitude	-	-	-
Buying intention	0.757	-	-
Awareness advertising	0.634	0.688	-

Note: CAT-Consumer attitude, BI-Buying Intention, AA-Awareness Advertising.

With both convergent and discriminant validity established; the proposed model demonstrates satisfactory measurement properties. We can therefore proceed to the analysis of the structural model in the next section.

4.2. Bootstrapping and evaluation of model fit

Following Hair et al. (2019), bootstrapping with 5000 subsamples was applied to assess the robustness of the model's estimates and test its hypotheses. This involved calculating the coefficient of determination (R^2) for both endogenous constructs (consumer attitude and buying behaviour). R^2 measures the proportion of variance in the endogenous variables explained by the exogenous variables.

The R^2 range of <0.19 is considered low or trivial explanatory power, range from $0.19-0.33$ is considered weak but acceptable explanatory power. The R^2 range of $0.33-0.67$ is considered a moderate explanatory power and a range of > 0.67 is considered a strong explanatory power. As shown in **Table 4**, R^2 values were 0.358 and 0.579 for consumer attitude and buying intention, respectively. These values indicate moderate explanatory power for both constructs.

The authors further assessed the model's predictive capability using Stone-Geisser's Q^2 criterion. In SmartPLS, Q^2 is calculated through blindfolding, a technique that randomly replaces observed values with missing values and estimates those values based on the model. As per Sarstedt et al. (2022), Q^2 should be greater than zero for a satisfactory predictive model. **Table 4** shows a Q^2 value of 0.355 , exceeding the minimum threshold. This suggests that the proposed model exhibits acceptable predictive capability.

Table 4. R^2 and Q^2 .

	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Q^2
Consumer attitude	0.358	0.343	0.272
Buying Intention	0.579	0.544	0.355

4.3. Testing hypotheses and model results

Table 5 presents the direct and indirect effects of the proposed model, allowing us to test the four study hypotheses.

- H1: Awareness advertising (AA) \rightarrow Consumer attitude (CAT): The results support H1, demonstrating a significant positive influence of AA on CAT. This is indicated by a p -value of 0.00 (well below the threshold of 0.05). $\beta = 0.517$, and a t -value exceeding 1.96 (9.633).
- H2: AA \rightarrow buying intention (BI): Similarly, H2 is supported. AA exhibits a significant positive influence on BI, with a p -value of 0.00 and $\beta = 0.639$ a t -value

of 8.648.

- H3: CAT → BI: The findings further reveal a significant positive effect of CAT on BI among shopping customers. This is confirmed by a *p*-value less than 0.05 and $\beta = 0.488$ with a *t*-value of 5.922. Therefore, H3 is supported.
- H4: Indirect Effect of AA on BI via CAT: Finally, the proposed model shows a significant indirect effect of AA on BI through the mediating role of CAT. This is evidenced by a *p*-value of 0.00 and $\beta = 0.476$ with a *t*-value of 4.951, both exceeding their respective thresholds. Thus, H4 is supported.

The analysis not only confirmed the expected influence of awareness advertising on both attitude and intention but also unveiled a key mechanism: consumer attitude acts as a mediator, bridging the gap between awareness and purchase decision. **Figure 2** illustrates the structural model.

Table 5. Model result.

Proposed path	Path coefficient	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
AA → CAT	0.517	0.598	0.071	9.633	0.000	Supported
AA → BI	0.639	0.658	0.072	8.648	0.000	Supported
CAT → BI	0.488	0.453	0.084	5.922	0.000	Supported
Specific indirect effects						
AA → CAT → BI	0.476	0.275	0.065	4.951	0.000	Supported

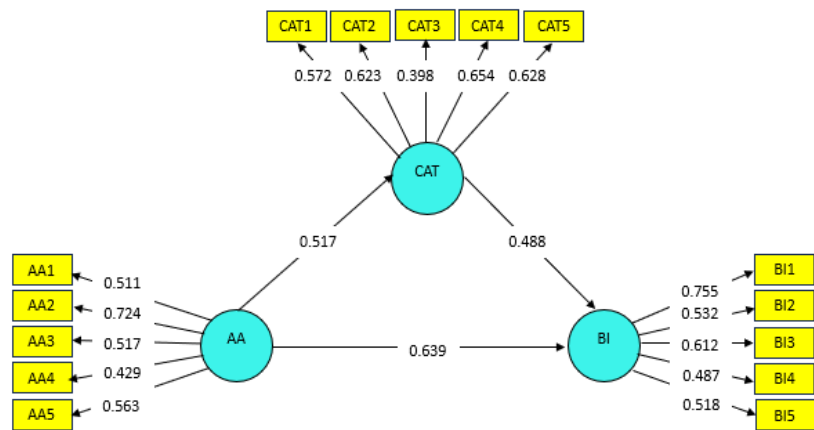


Figure 2. Structural model.

4.4. Results discussion

Hypothesis 1 suggested that Awareness advertising has a positive and significant relationship with buying intention among Iraqi consumers. The notion that awareness advertising influences buying intention suggests that the mere exposure to a brand through advertising can positively impact consumers' likelihood to purchase products or services from that brand. This outcome aligns with Hameed et al. (2023) which posits that familiarity breeds liking and preference. In the case of Iraqi consumers, who might be exposed to a variety of brands and products, awareness advertising could serve as a key tool for brands to differentiate themselves and stay top-of-mind among potential buyers.

However, it's essential to recognize that the relationship between awareness advertising and buying intention may not be straightforward or universally applicable across all consumer segments or product categories. Cultural factors, economic conditions, and individual preferences can all influence how consumers respond to advertising messages (Cassar et al., 2021). In the case of Iraq, where cultural norms and societal values may differ from those in other regions, the effectiveness of awareness advertising might vary significantly. Moreover, while awareness advertising can indeed create brand awareness and recognition, it may not necessarily translate directly into purchase behavior. Other factors such as product quality, pricing, availability, and peer recommendations can also play significant roles in shaping consumers' buying decisions (Dewi et al., 2020; Tsai, 2020). Therefore, while awareness advertising may positively influence buying intention, it's just one of many factors that marketers need to consider in their overall marketing strategy.

The second hypothesis suggested that awareness advertising has a positive relationship with attitude among Iraqi consumers raises interesting points for discussion, particularly regarding the impact of advertising on consumer perceptions and preferences in the Iraqi market. This outcome is in line with Ramesh et al. (2019) who argued that increasing consumers' awareness of a brand or product could potentially lead to more favorable attitudes toward it. Attitude refers to the overall evaluation or predisposition that consumers have toward a brand, product, or service. It encompasses their feelings, beliefs, and behavioral intentions in relation to the advertised entity.

In the case of Iraqi consumers, who may be exposed to a diverse range of products and brands, awareness advertising could play a critical role in shaping their attitudes. By increasing familiarity and exposure to a brand through advertising, consumers may develop more positive perceptions of the brand, viewing it as reputable, trustworthy, or desirable. This aligns with theories in advertising and consumer psychology, which suggest that repeated exposure to positive brand messages can influence attitudes and preferences over time.

Furthermore, awareness advertising can contribute to shaping consumers' attitudes by conveying information about a brand's values, attributes, and benefits (Nafees et al., 2021). Through strategic messaging and imagery, advertisers can influence how consumers perceive a brand and its offerings, thereby shaping their attitudes toward it. This is particularly relevant in markets like Iraq, where cultural norms and societal values may play a significant role in shaping consumer preferences. Additionally, while awareness advertising may contribute to shaping positive attitudes toward a brand, it may not be the sole determinant of consumer attitudes (Zhang, 2020). Other factors such as personal experiences, word-of-mouth recommendations, and competitive offerings can also influence how consumers perceive and evaluate brands and products (Issa, 2021).

The third hypothesis proposed a positive relationship between consumer attitude and buying intention among Iraqi consumers. This finding corresponds with Khan et al. (2022) and Nazir and Tian (2022). Understanding how attitudes influence purchasing decisions can provide valuable insights for businesses seeking to effectively target and engage with Iraqi consumers. Consumer attitude refers to the overall evaluation or disposition that individuals hold toward a particular brand,

product, or service (Ajzen, 1991). This evaluation can be influenced by a variety of factors, including personal experiences, beliefs, values, and perceptions of the brand's attributes. In the context of Iraqi consumers, whose preferences and behaviors may be shaped by cultural, social, and economic factors, understanding the drivers of consumer attitude is crucial for marketers.

The hypothesis suggests that a more positive attitude toward a brand or product is associated with a higher likelihood of purchase intention among Iraqi consumers. This aligns with theories in consumer behavior, such as the Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behavior, which posit that attitudes toward a behavior significantly influence behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1991).

Several factors could contribute to the positive relationship between consumer attitude and buying intention among Iraqi consumers. For instance, a favorable attitude toward a brand or product may stem from perceptions of quality, reliability, trustworthiness, or cultural resonance. This discussion is in line with Lili et al. (2022) where positive experiences with the brand or product, as well as positive word-of-mouth recommendations from peers or influencers, could also shape consumer attitudes and enhance purchase intention. Moreover, in a market like Iraq where consumer choices may be influenced by cultural norms, social dynamics, and religious values, the alignment of a brand's messaging and values with those of the target audience can be particularly impactful in shaping consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Brands that understand and cater to the unique needs and preferences of Iraqi consumers are likely to foster more positive attitudes and, consequently, higher buying intentions among this demographic.

The final hypothesis suggested that the relationship between awareness of advertising and buying intention among Iraqi consumers is mediated by consumer attitude introduces a nuanced perspective into the understanding of consumer behavior in the Iraqi market. This hypothesis implies that while awareness of advertising may influence buying intention, its impact is mediated by consumers' attitudes towards the advertised products or brands. These findings are in line with (Coursaris et al., 2016; Kwon and Ahn, 2020). To begin with, it's crucial to understand the concept of mediation in this context. Mediation refers to the process by which the effect of one variable (in this case, awareness of advertising) on another variable (buying intention) is influenced by the presence of a third variable (consumer attitude). Essentially, consumer attitude acts as an intermediary factor that explains the relationship between awareness of advertising and buying intention.

In the context of Iraqi consumers, who may be exposed to various advertising messages across different channels and platforms, the mediation effect of consumer attitude could provide valuable insights into how advertising influences purchasing decisions (Wang et al., 2023). For instance, while awareness advertising may create initial interest or consideration for a product or brand, consumers' attitudes towards the brand, shaped by factors such as perceived quality, trustworthiness, relevance, and cultural alignment, may ultimately determine whether this interest translates into actual purchase intention.

Moreover, the mediation effect of consumer attitude suggests that the impact of awareness advertising on buying intention may vary depending on the nature and strength of consumers' attitudes towards the advertised products or brands (Dwivedi,

2021). For example, if consumers have a strongly positive attitude towards a brand as a result of previous experiences, word-of-mouth recommendations, or perceived alignment with their values, they may be more inclined to convert their awareness into purchase intention.

5. Conclusion

While awareness advertising is undoubtedly crucial in introducing consumers to brands and products, this study delves deeper, unveiling the vital role of consumer attitude as a bridge between awareness and purchase intention. It underscores that simply being recognized isn't enough; brands must actively cultivate positive attitudes through their advertising strategies. This understanding has significant implications for marketers. Gone are the days of solely focusing on reach and recall. Now, crafting campaigns that resonate with target audiences on an emotional level and shape favourable perceptions is essential for driving purchase decisions. By carefully considering factors like brand image, product type, and consumer values, awareness campaigns can be tailored to foster positive attitudes and ultimately pave the way for increased buying intention.

However, the journey from awareness to purchase is complex and multifaceted. This conclusion serves as a springboard for further research, encouraging the exploration of additional mediating and moderating variables that influence consumer behaviour. By continually refining our understanding of these intricate relationships, we can craft ever-more effective advertising strategies that navigate the path from awareness to purchase with greater precision and success. Ultimately, the finding reminds us that the true power of awareness advertising lies not just in making brands known, but in making them loved. By prioritizing the cultivation of positive consumer attitudes, brands can unlock the true potential of awareness campaigns and build lasting connections that drive sustained purchase intention and brand loyalty.

5.1. Theoretical and managerial implications

This study highlights the importance of positive attitude formation as a key driver of purchase behaviour. This supports the cognitive-affective model of persuasion and emphasizes the need to understand how awareness campaigns influence consumer evaluations and emotions. Also, the outcome of this study opens up avenues for exploring variables like brand image, product type, individual characteristics, and other mediating factors like perceived value or trust that might influence the relationships between awareness, attitude, and intention. Also, by highlighting the mediating role of attitude, the article emphasizes the need to move beyond simple recall or recognition metrics. Measuring changes in consumer attitudes can provide a deeper understanding of how awareness campaigns influence potential purchase behaviour.

By focusing on attitude-building strategies, awareness campaigns by managers and marketers should go beyond simply increasing brand familiarity and actively aim to shape positive consumer attitudes through relevant messaging, emotional appeals, and storytelling. Similarly, managers should tailor awareness campaigns to specific audiences and their values, needs, and preferences can be more effective in influencing

attitudes and driving purchase intent. Integrated campaigns across various channels can maximize awareness reach and reinforce positive attitudes towards the brand. Overall, the study highlights the importance of understanding the complex relationship between awareness, attitude, and buying intention. By focusing on building positive consumer attitudes through well-targeted and strategically crafted awareness campaigns, brands can drive purchase decisions and achieve marketing goals more effectively.

5.2. Limitations and avenues for further research

The study on “Awareness Advertising Influence on Consumers Buying Intention: Exploring Attitude as A Mediating Factor” offers valuable insights, but its generalizability to broader contexts might be limited. Here’s a breakdown of the limitations and suggestions for future research: The research likely focused on a specific product category such as fast-moving consumer goods. The impact of awareness advertising on purchase intention might differ for products with varying functionalities, complexities, or decision-making processes. Also, the study targeted a particular demographic which was Iraqi consumers lives in Erbil which mean the majority were Iraqi Kurds. Consumer behavior related to awareness advertising can be influenced by other factors like personality, income, and lifestyle. Results may not translate directly to other audience segments. Finally, the research was conducted in a specific cultural setting which was Kurdish culture. Cultural values and norms significantly impact how people perceive advertising and make purchasing decisions. Findings might not hold true across diverse cultures. To assess the transferability of the findings, researchers could replicate the study with distinct product categories. This would reveal if awareness advertising’s influence on purchase intention varies based on product type.

Future studies could involve participants from more varied demographic and psychographic backgrounds. This would help understand how factors like income and personality influence the relationship between awareness advertising, attitude, and purchase intention. Also, Researchers could replicate the study in different cultural contexts. This would provide insights into how cultural values and norms moderate the effects observed in the original study. By comparing results across cultures, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

Integrate variables like brand image, product type, and individual characteristics could create a more comprehensive research model. For example, a Positive brand image can strengthen the connection between awareness advertising and purchase intention. The study could explore how a strong brand image moderates the mediating effect of attitude. For example, with a strong brand image, even neutral awareness advertising might lead to a more positive attitude and higher purchase intention compared to a brand with a weak image.

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