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**Exploring the moderating role of demographics in consumer responses to advertising: evidence from family business brands in Kosovo**

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## Exploring the moderating role of demographics in consumer responses to advertising: evidence from family business brands in Kosovo

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**Abstract:** This study investigates how demographic factors moderate consumer responses to advertising within Kosovo's family-owned businesses. Using advertising expenditure data across multiple media channels and survey responses from 417 participants, we analyse the effects on brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image, and purchase intention. The demographic variables examined include age, gender, education level, marital status, employment status, and geographical location. The findings reveal that younger, urban, and highly educated consumers exhibit higher levels of brand awareness, while older, rural, and less-educated groups respond more strongly in terms of perceived quality and purchase intention. These results offer valuable implications not only for family businesses brands in Kosovo but also for firms in other emerging economies with comparable demographic dynamics. The study also emphasises the importance of adapting advertising strategies to global trends such as digitalisation, youth urban migration, and globalisation, which increasingly influence media consumption habits and consumer expectations across generations.

**Keywords:** advertising; consumer response; consumer behaviour; demographic factors; family business brands; brand awareness; perceived quality; brand image; purchase intention.

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**Biographical notes:** Donjeta Zejnullahu Pllana is a Kosovo-based researcher with a PhD in Marketing from the University of Tetova. She has taught at several higher education institutions in Kosovo, including Universum International College, where she also served as Assistant Professor and Head of the Quality Assurance Unit. In these roles, she led key initiatives in accreditation, curriculum development, and institutional rankings. Her teaching portfolio spans undergraduate and graduate courses in Marketing, Strategic Management, and Consumer Behaviour, with a strong emphasis on student engagement and applied learning. In addition to her academic work, she is actively engaged in the industry, where she continues to apply her research expertise to real-world marketing challenges. Her current role bridges academic insight with market practice, allowing her to contribute meaningfully to both domains. Her research interests include consumer psychology, advertising strategy, and brand equity, particularly in the context of transitional economies.

Shqipe Gërguri-Rashiti currently serves as the Provost at the American University of the Middle East (AUM). Previously, she held the position of Rector at Universum College in Kosovo. Before that, she was Dean of the College of Business Administration at AUM in Kuwait, where she led the institution through AACSB accreditation. Her academic journey spans international institutions, exposing her to diverse frameworks, pedagogies, and cultures. Her Doctoral research focused on integrating innovation into the strategic planning of Macedonian companies, highlighting the role of IT. She has taught at various levels and published on entrepreneurship, innovation, and strategic management.

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## 1 Introduction

In today's competitive market, advertising is a fundamental tool used by family business brands to influence consumer decisions. However, responses to advertisements vary across demographic segments, including age, gender, income, and education level. Understanding these variations is essential for marketers seeking to maximise advertising effectiveness.

Numerous studies have explored how demographic characteristics shape consumer behaviour. For instance, Schiffman and Kanuk (2000) analysed consumer segmentation, while Percy and Rossiter (1992) developed a model linking demographic traits to brand attitudes. Rai (2013) found that advertising effectiveness significantly differs across demographic groups.

In the context of family business brands, demographics play an even more critical role. Jaufenthaler et al. (2025) found that consumers associate family-owned brands with local identity, which increases purchase intent – especially when those brands emphasise domestic production and regional presence. Nesterenko (2023) further showed that

family size and age shape advertising preferences and trust levels, highlighting the importance of targeted advertising. Similarly, Schellong et al. (2019) concluded that consumers view family business brands as integral parts of the community and perceive them as socially responsible, enhancing emotional connection and support.

Ahluwalia and Singh (2020) revealed that age, gender, and income influence how consumers perceive online advertising, while Hadi and Aslam (2023) identified similar variations in attitudes toward mobile-based marketing. Other studies reinforce that sociodemographic characteristics impact how, when, and why consumers engage with marketing messages. For example, Generation Z shows a strong preference for digital experiences and premium offerings (Vogue Business, 2024), while authentic portrayals of older adults in advertising increase brand trust among that demographic (MarketWatch, 2024).

Family business brands dominate Kosovo's economic landscape. Unlike corporate brands, they often foster strong consumer relationships through legacy, values, and reputation (Ramadani and Hoy, 2015). The effectiveness of their advertising depends not only on strategy but also on how different demographic groups perceive brand messages (Palalić et al., 2024).

Although previous research has addressed the relationship between demographics and advertising response, few studies have examined how these dynamics operate specifically within the context of family business brands. These brands typically emphasise trust, heritage, and authenticity – elements that may resonate differently across demographic groups. Understanding this interaction can provide deeper insights into how such brands can segment and tailor their advertising to increase relevance and engagement across diverse audiences.

This study builds on consumer behaviour theories and family business branding literature to examine how demographic factors shape advertising responses in Kosovo. It explores the role of these variables in influencing brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image, and purchase intention, based on survey data collected from 24 family-owned brands across various industries.

The research seeks to answer the following question:

- How do specific demographic factors – namely age, gender, education level, employment status, marital status, and geographic location – moderate consumer responses to advertising in family business brands in Kosovo?

The aim is not only to measure these relationships but also to guide family-owned firms in designing demographically targeted advertising strategies that foster trust and engagement.

To guide the reader through this analysis, the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews existing literature; Section 3 outlines the methodology and conceptual framework; Section 4 presents results and analysis; and the final section discusses conclusions, practical implications, and directions for future research.

## **2 Literature review**

Family business brands occupy a central role in Kosovo's economy, blending commercial objectives with family values, legacy, and personal reputation (Ramadani and Hoy, 2015). They distinguish themselves from corporate brands by emphasising heritage, trust,

and long-term consumer commitment (Ramadani et al., 2013, 2018), contributing to perceptions of ethical and socially responsible business conduct.

One defining feature of family brand marketing is storytelling, where firms embed heritage and values into brand narratives (Canziani et al., 2019). Research on USA wineries illustrates how digital storytelling builds trust and engagement, a strategy highly relevant for Kosovar brands aiming to connect with consumers through cultural identity (Ramadani et al., 2020).

Emotional branding elements like trust and authenticity are central to family business marketing strategies (Ramadani and Hoy, 2015). However, consumer responses to emotional appeals vary by age, education, and location (Ahluwalia and Singh, 2020; Hadi and Aslam, 2023). Younger consumers, particularly Gen Z, value authenticity and social consciousness, while older consumers respond more to family legacy and tradition (Vogue Business, 2024; Kotler and Keller, 2019). Aligning emotional branding with demographic preferences enhances brand image and purchase intention (Binz et al., 2013).

Advertising remains a key driver of brand awareness and loyalty. Kazmi et al. (2016) found that utilitarian and hedonistic attitudes influence brand equity, with utilitarian perspectives more strongly affecting awareness and loyalty in e-business settings. Similarly, Brick and Fournier (2017) highlighted that promoting self-association in ads builds positive attitudes and purchase intent.

The role of digital marketing is critical. Jaitly and Gautam (2021) and Efendioğlu and Durmaz (2022) emphasised the power of social media influencers in enhancing brand engagement, especially among Generation Y. Agarwal and Alami (2024) found social media ads positively influence brand association and loyalty. These findings underscore the impact of both traditional and digital advertising on brand equity.

Consumer trust is central to advertising effectiveness in family brands. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) explains that consumers process advertising through either central or peripheral routes depending on their motivation and ability. In the family business context, cues like heritage or familiarity often serve as peripheral influencers, particularly for low-involvement audiences. The Consumer Information Processing Theory (Bettman, 1979) reinforces that attention and recall vary by age and education. Psychological Reactance Theory (Brehm, 1966) suggests that directive or emotionally charged ads may trigger resistance, especially among educated or younger groups.

These theories collectively support the hypothesis:

***H1: Advertising positively influences brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image, and purchase intention in the context of family business brands.***

Eshra and Beshir (2019) examined consumer attitudes toward SMS advertising and the moderating role of demographic characteristics in Egypt. Their study showed that entertainment, informativeness, and credibility positively influenced attitudes toward mobile advertising, while irritation negatively impacted them. Notably, they found an overall negative relationship between attitudes toward mobile advertising and purchase decisions. Age, income, and gender significantly moderated these effects, with age being the most influential factor. These insights are particularly relevant for Kosovo's family business brands, where similar demographic dynamics are expected to influence consumer responses. As Kosovo shares many of Egypt's transitional market

characteristics, brands in Kosovo can benefit by designing advertising that is informative and credible while avoiding elements that could provoke irritation.

Relationship marketing strategies are also central to family business brand advertising. Unlike transactional marketing, family firms prioritise long-term customer relationships by emphasising personalised communication (Ramadani et al., 2018). This approach is particularly effective in transitional economies such as Kosovo and Bosnia, where trust and relational values strongly influence consumer behaviour.

Another emerging focus in family business brand marketing is the integration of sustainability and social responsibility. Palalic et al. (2024) propose expanding the marketing mix to include 'People' and 'Passion,' highlighting the importance of employee and community engagement. This emphasis on ethical behaviour, transparency, and community ties boosts advertising credibility and appeals to socially conscious consumers across all demographic groups.

Demographic factors are key drivers of consumer attitudes toward marketing communications. Studies by Brackett and Carr (2001), Gao and Zang (2016), and Martínez-Ruiz et al. (2017) demonstrate that age, gender, education, and profession affect how consumers interpret and respond to marketing. In green marketing specifically, understanding these nuances is crucial to ensure advertising strategies resonate with distinct demographic segments. Moreover, Psychological Reactance Theory (Brehm, 1966) highlights that overly persuasive or coercive messages can trigger resistance, especially among educated or autonomy-valuing consumers. Ethical marketing that respects consumer privacy and transparently communicates sustainability claim, supported by De Reyck and Degraeve (2003) is vital for maintaining trust and loyalty.

Demographics also shape responses to advertising formats and content strategies. Deng and Mela (2018) found that characteristics such as age and viewing habits predict advertising avoidance more effectively than content features like brand or genre. Goldfarb and Tucker (2015) showed that overly standardised online ad formats may fail to engage different demographic segments, reinforcing the need for customised strategies. These studies underline that considering demographic differences is essential when crafting responsive advertising.

This study's conceptual framework links demographic characteristics, including age, gender, education, employment status, marital status, and geographic location- to consumer responses to advertising by family business brands. It focuses on four key response variables: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image, and purchase intention. The framework is grounded in several behavioural theories. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) explains variations in information processing based on motivation and cognitive ability, which differ across demographic lines. Consumer Information Processing Theory (Bettman, 1979) emphasises cognitive constraints and attention span, especially relevant when comparing younger and older audiences. Psychological Reactance Theory (Brehm, 1966) accounts for defensive reactions to perceived manipulation, particularly among younger, educated, or autonomy-seeking consumers. Together with demographic segmentation principles (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000), these theories support the development of nuanced advertising strategies.

Family business brands in emerging economies like Kosovo blend economic goals with family values, legacy, and trust (Ramadani and Hoy, 2015). These elements enable them to cultivate long-term relationships and build reputations as ethical and community-oriented enterprises (Ramadani et al., 2018). Their emphasis on personal narratives and

social trust allows them to stand out from more transactional, corporate competitors (Canziani et al., 2019).

Despite extensive research on family business branding, few studies address how demographic factors affect advertising outcomes within these firms. Given the centrality of advertising to brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image, and purchase intention – this study’s focal constructs – understanding demographic dynamics in this specific context is critical. This literature review synthesises existing studies that explore how demographic factors influence advertising effectiveness in family business brands.

## *2.1 Advertising effectiveness across demographics: theoretical models shaping advertising response*

Advertising effectiveness is strongly shaped by demographic characteristics, which influence how consumers perceive and engage with marketing messages. Schiffman and Kanuk (2000) identified age, gender, education, employment, marital status, and residential area as key factors affecting the reception and impact of advertising. Percy and Rossiter (1992) developed a model of brand awareness and attitude formation, emphasising how demographic characteristics shape marketing outcomes. Similarly, Rai (2013) found that advertising responses vary across consumer segments, reinforcing the importance of demographic-based targeting.

To explain these variations, several theoretical models have been developed. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) outlines two persuasion routes: central and peripheral. Consumers with higher motivation and ability to process information often those with higher education levels respond better to detailed, message-rich content via the central route. In contrast, those with lower involvement or less cognitive capacity are influenced more by superficial cues like aesthetics or celebrity endorsements via the peripheral route.

The Consumer Information Processing Theory (Bettman, 1979) focuses on attention and recall differences across consumer groups. Younger consumers, who engage heavily with digital media, may exhibit shorter attention spans and lower sensitivity to complex advertisements compared to older consumers, who often engage more deeply with content deemed personally relevant (MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989). These cognitive differences suggest that advertising should be tailored to consumers’ cognitive styles and demographic profiles to increase effectiveness.

Psychological Reactance Theory (Brehm, 1966; Quick et al., 2012) adds another dimension, proposing that advertisements perceived as coercive or overly directive can provoke resistance. This effect is especially pronounced when ads rely on outdated stereotypes or push prescriptive messaging. Understanding the psychological profiles of different demographic groups is thus essential for creating persuasive, non-intrusive campaigns.

Ultimately, people from different age groups, education levels, and cultural backgrounds process and interpret advertisements differently. The combined insights from elaboration likelihood model (ELM), information processing, and reactance theories help explain this diversity in response.

Demographic segmentation continues to be a cornerstone of modern advertising strategies. Marketers strategically tailor content and channel choices according to age, gender, income, and education to maximise relevance and effectiveness (Kotler and Keller, 2019). Empirical evidence consistently supports the conclusion that consumer

responses to advertising vary significantly across demographic groups with distinct needs and preferences (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000).

## *2.2 Age and advertising perception*

The older consumers are likely to engage more with the digital and interactive advertisements than they are with the traditional media such as television and newspapers (Vogue Business, 2024). The study by (Vogue Business, 2024) reveals that Generation Z is most likely to engage with social media advertising, influencer marketing, and digital experiences. On the other hand, the older generation tends to respond positively to the more organised form of advertisements that are in sync with their buying behaviour (Kotler and Keller, 2019).

This paper finds that generational differences in media usage and preferences affect advertising effectiveness. The current generation of consumers, including Gen Z and Millennials, are very digital-oriented and spend a lot of time on social media, streaming services, and mobile applications (Dwivedi et al., 2021). In particular, Gen Z is said to have a short attention span, and, as reported by (Craftsman+, 2023), this generation can only pay attention to an ad for 1.3 s. Hence, ads that are directed towards the younger generation must grab the audience's attention within a short time, and this is done through the use of graphics, comedy, or interaction (Vogue Business, 2024). Fromm and Read (2018) also pointed out that the younger generations like Gen Z and Millennials prefer real and relevant content and have no patience for anything that looks fake.

On the other hand, Generation X and Baby Boomers were exposed to traditional media and are more likely to engage with television, radio, and print media (Krasniqi and Ramadani, 2022). These audiences often have a preference for the direct, concrete message and can be reached through the strategy of appealing to their generation's nostalgia (Pascal et al., 2002). In addition, older consumers are more likely to engage with advertisements that appear on traditional media than on other channels because they are less likely to multitask (Kotler and Keller, 2019).

The age element of demographics was the focus of Wu (2020); the study focused on the Chinese social media landscape, and the findings support that the aged 16–25 as young and digitally engaged consumers were highly responsive towards influencer marketing. These are the relevant groups that create a relationship with the opinion leaders, which increases awareness that demographics such as age play a vital role in deciding the impact of social media advertising. Together, these studies underscore that demographics significantly mediate advertising effectiveness and should be considered in traditional and digital marketing strategies.

Moreover, the effectiveness of the media channel differs depending on the age of the consumer. According to Nielsen (2022), older consumers are most likely to recall advertisements from television media. On the other hand, Dwivedi et al. (2021) argued that Millennials and Gen Z are most likely to react to campaign that are launched first on digital platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. This difference shows that it is necessary to develop specific creative strategies and media plans that are appropriate for each generation.



### 2.3 *Gender differences in advertising response*

Advertising messages are interpreted differently by men and women. According to Darley and Smith (1995), men tend to prefer advertisements that highlight a product's functionality and rational benefits, while women are more responsive to emotionally driven messages. These psychological differences are often leveraged in industries such as cosmetics, household goods, and automobiles through gender-targeted advertising strategies (Meyers-Levy and Sternthal, 1991).

The use of gender targeting reveals distinct preferences in how advertising messages are received and interpreted. Studies consistently show that women are typically more detail-oriented in decision-making and often require extensive information before making a purchase (Moss, 2009). They are also more likely to be influenced by social proof and emotional content in ads that emphasise relationships, practicality, and lifestyle enhancement (Darley and Smith, 1995).

Conversely, men are generally more interested in features, performance, and status, and they are more influenced by ads that promise efficiency and convenience (Meyers-Levy and Sternthal, 1991). Gender-based creative preferences also differ: women often prefer brighter colours and relatable scenarios, while men are drawn to darker tones and sleek, technical aesthetics (Moss, 2009).

Advertisers must also consider gender sensitivity to avoid perpetuating stereotypes. Modern advertising increasingly embraces diverse and inclusive representations to reflect evolving gender roles and appeal to a broader audience (American Marketing Association [AMA], 2023). Brands that strike the right balance between gender-specific and inclusive messaging tend to foster stronger consumer relationships and brand loyalty (AMA, 2023).

### 2.4 *Socioeconomic status and advertising influence*

The effects of socioeconomic factors like income and education are also seen in advertising responses. Higher-income consumers, who often subscribe to ad-free platforms like YouTube and Facebook, are typically more averse to advertising and prefer premium, personalised, and non-intrusive messaging that respects their time (Marketing Sherpa, 2023; De Mooij, 2018).

Demographic characteristics significantly influence how marketing strategies perform. For instance, Kazmi et al. (2016) found that age affects how consumers respond to utilitarian vs. hedonistic advertising, with adolescents and adults differing in their brand equity responses. This supports the continued relevance of demographic segmentation.

Meanwhile, online marketing has shown that segmenting based on consumer attitudes – rather than demographics, can lead to more precise targeting. Scheuffelen et al. (2019), emphasise that values and attitudes are stronger predictors of brand responsiveness and purchase behaviour than demographics alone.

Nevertheless, income and education still play a vital role in ad receptivity. High-income consumers tend to be brand-conscious and favour value-driven, quality-based advertising (Rai, 2013), while lower-income consumers are more responsive to discounts and price-based messages. Education levels influence advertising skepticism, with more educated individuals preferring evidence-based claims and distrusting general advertising assertions (Jefkins and Yadin, 2000).

For lower-income and less-educated audiences, traditional channels like television and radio remain effective, especially when paired with price promotions (Hisrich and Ramadani, 2018). In contrast, higher-educated consumers prefer logical, reasoned ads featuring expert endorsements, while those with lower educational levels respond better to emotionally resonant content and testimonials (Friestad and Wright, 1994; Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998).

Psychological Reactance Theory (Brehm, 1966) supports the view that consumers who value autonomy – often younger and more educated individuals – may resist ads that feel emotionally manipulative or overly directive (Quick et al., 2012). This dynamic aligns with Bettman's (1979) Information Processing Theory and Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) Elaboration Likelihood Model, both of which emphasise tailoring persuasive content to the cognitive and motivational profiles of diverse audiences.

*H2: The impact of advertising on consumer responses varies across demographic groups (age, gender, income, marital status, employment, education, geographical location), indicating that demographic characteristics moderate the effectiveness of advertising.*

## 2.5 Media channel preferences and consumer behaviour

Different age groups exhibit distinct media preferences that shape the effectiveness of advertising channels. Younger consumers, particularly Generation Z and Millennials, tend to engage with social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. These channels are effective for reaching this demographic, especially through short videos and influencer promotions that offer authentic, relatable content (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Fromm and Read, 2018; McKinsey and Company, 2022; Vogue Business, 2024).

In contrast, Generation X and Baby Boomers often favour more traditional media forms such as television and radio, especially in areas with limited online access. Television remains a trusted medium for these cohorts, reflecting its long-standing presence and perceived reliability.

Socioeconomic status also influences media engagement. High-income consumers tend to prefer on-demand digital content and often opt for ad-free subscriptions, while lower-income and rural consumers rely more on traditional, freely accessible media like television and radio. Cultural background adds another layer, with collectivist societies showing a preference for media and advertising that reinforce family and community values (Han and Shavitt, 1994; Ramadani and Hoy, 2015).

Effective advertising strategies require a tailored blend of media channels that align with the audience's demographic profile. Digital-first strategies work well in urban settings, while traditional media remains effective for reaching older and rural populations.

## 2.6 Influence of local and cultural elements, on the effectiveness of advertising, in Kosovo

Advertising effectiveness in Kosovo and the broader Balkan region is influenced by historical, economic, and cultural factors unique to its transitional context. Kosovo's economy is still developing, marked by high unemployment and a strong prevalence of family-owned businesses (Ramadani and Hoy, 2015). These conditions shape how

consumers interpret and respond to advertisements compared to those in more mature markets.

Kosovo's population is notably young, with over half under the age of 30 (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2023). This demographic actively engages with social media and digital platforms, making channels like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook central to media consumption. Studies have shown that social media significantly shapes urban consumers' perceptions of business and brand trust (Krasniqi and Ramadani, 2022).

This media-savvy audience prefers authentic, socially conscious content that emphasises innovation, personalisation, and corporate responsibility. Family businesses in Kosovo have begun incorporating storytelling and digital engagement into their advertising to meet these evolving expectations (Saura et al., 2022).

In transitional contexts like Kosovo, institutional trust is low, and personal reputation often carries greater weight. Family-owned brands leverage heritage and community involvement to build consumer trust, aligning their advertising with ethical behaviour and shared values (Ramadani et al., 2018).

Research suggests that trust-based advertising resonates particularly with older, married, and rural consumers who prioritise consistency and reputational assurance (Ramadani and Hoy, 2015). In cities such as Pristina, Gjakova, and Peja, internet penetration and digital media access have increased consumer awareness and brand discernment (Krasniqi, 2012). However, in more remote areas, traditional media like TV, radio, and physical advertising remain dominant (Ramadani et al., 2013).

Urban consumers are increasingly drawn to Western-style marketing, while rural audiences prefer campaigns emphasising community ties and family-oriented values. Advertising effectiveness is also shaped by income and education. Higher-income and more educated individuals tend to be skeptical of emotional appeals and favour fact-based, quality-focused messaging (Krasniqi, 2012). Conversely, those with lower education or income levels respond more positively to discount-oriented and straightforward messaging (Palalić et al., 2024).

Kosovo's collectivist culture places high value on family and community, with marketing strategies that emphasise these themes proving particularly effective. Storytelling that incorporates family traditions and collective identity fosters deep consumer loyalty (Han and Shavitt, 1994; Ramadani and Hoy, 2015).

While gender norms in Kosovo are evolving due to urbanisation and cultural shifts, traditional gender roles still influence advertising. In rural areas, women increasingly make household purchasing decisions, especially in sectors like healthcare and FMCGs (Krasniqi and Ramadani, 2022). Ads reflecting modern gender dynamics are gaining popularity, though legacy stereotypes remain prevalent in campaigns targeting conservative audiences.

### **3 Research methodology**

This study adopts a positivist research philosophy, which assumes that consumer behaviour and advertising effectiveness can be objectively measured and analysed using systematic, scientific methods (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996; Saunders et al., 2019). A deductive approach was employed, whereby existing theories on advertising effectiveness, consumer behaviour, and demographic segmentation were tested in the context of family business brands in Kosovo (Saunders et al., 2019).

### 3.1 Research design

A multi-purpose research design was applied, incorporating descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory elements, to provide a comprehensive understanding of how advertising influences consumer behaviour across demographic groups (Robson, 2002; Saunders et al., 2019).

The descriptive component identifies and presents advertising exposure patterns across demographic segments. The explanatory element investigates the relationships between demographic characteristics and consumer responses to advertising. The exploratory aspect identifies emerging trends and patterns in advertising perception, particularly within the unique context of family business brands in Kosovo.

### 3.2 Conceptual framework and hypotheses

The study's conceptual framework builds upon established theories in advertising effectiveness and consumer behaviour, particularly models that link advertising exposure to brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image, and purchase intention (Percy and Rossiter, 1992; Rai, 2013). These constructs are analysed within the context of family business brands, which have distinctive branding dynamics shaped by legacy, trust, and reputation (Chrisman et al., 2005; Ramírez-Pasillas et al., 2017).

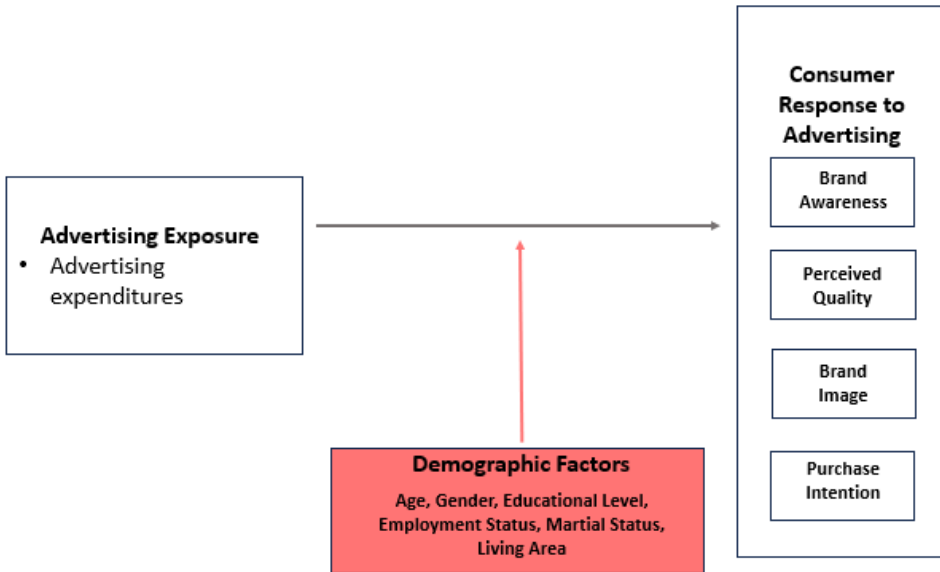
As explained in the literature review section this study's framework is grounded in three key theoretical models that explain individual differences in processing advertising: the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), which distinguishes between central and peripheral routes of persuasion based on motivation and ability; the Consumer Information Processing Theory (Bettman, 1979), which emphasises variations in attention and memory across demographic groups; and the Psychological Reactance Theory (Brehm, 1966), which describes consumer resistance to persuasive messages that threaten perceived autonomy. These models together justify both the direct effect of advertising on consumer responses and the moderating role of demographics.

The conceptual framework for this study identifies *Advertising Exposure* as the independent variable, measured through advertising spending and the extent of consumer exposure to brand advertising across different channels. The *Consumer Responses to Advertising* represent the dependent variables, which include brand awareness, perceived brand quality, brand image, and purchase intention. The framework also includes *Demographic factors*, such as age, gender, income level, marital status, employment status, education level, and geographical location – as moderating variables. These factors are expected to shape how strongly advertising exposure influences consumer responses, highlighting differences between demographic groups in how they perceive and react to advertising. This relationship is visually represented in Figure 1.

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the analysis:

- *H1*: Advertising positively influences brand awareness, perceived brand quality, brand image, and purchase intention.
- *H2*: The impact of advertising on consumer responses varies across demographic groups (age, gender, income, marital status, employment, education, geographical location), indicating that demographic characteristics moderate the effectiveness of advertising.

**Figure 1** Conceptual framework (see online version for colours)



### 3.3 Data collection method

Primary data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire, a widely used instrument for gathering consumer behaviour data (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Saunders et al., 2019). The questionnaire was divided into sections that measured: Demographic characteristics (age, gender, income, education, employment, marital status, geographical location); Consumer responses to advertising (brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image, and purchase intention).

Survey items were adapted from validated scales used in prior research (Clark et al., 2009; Honka et al., 2017; Kirmani and Wright, 1989; Yoo et al., 2000), with modifications to fit the family business brands context in Kosovo.

The measurement of variables was operationalised using items adapted from previously validated sources. Brand awareness was measured by asking respondents to rate their familiarity with each brand on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Never heard of it, 5 = Know it very well), based on Yoo et al. (2000). Perceived quality was assessed by asking respondents to evaluate the overall quality of the selected brands' products or services (1 = Very low quality, 5 = Very high quality), adapted from Clark et al. (2009). Brand image was measured through a single-item semantic scale, where respondents indicated whether their overall impression of each brand was negative, neutral, or positive, following Moorthy and Zhao (2000). Purchase intention was evaluated by asking respondents whether they intended to use the services or purchase the products of the selected brands in the future, using a dichotomous (Yes/No) response format, adapted from Cianfrone et al. (2006). Demographic characteristics included age, gender, marital status, educational attainment, employment status, income level, and geographic location, captured through categorical and ordinal items following formats used in prior market behaviour studies (Hanaysha and Hilman, 2015; Speech and Thao, 2016). The complete

list of items is provided in the structured questionnaire, which is attached as an appendix to this paper.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted with a small subset of respondents (Saunders et al., 2019). Based on feedback from the pilot, minor adjustments were made to improve question clarity and ensure cultural relevance to Kosovo consumers.

The study surveyed 417 respondents aged 16 to 65 across Kosovo. A non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling, was employed, given the practical constraints of accessing a diverse consumer base across both urban and rural areas (Saunders et al., 2019). Non-probability sampling is particularly suited to exploratory research in emerging markets, where obtaining representative probability samples can be difficult (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Although non-probability sampling has limitations regarding generalisability, steps were taken to minimise selection bias by ensuring balanced representation across key demographics such as age, gender, income, education, and geographic location (Saunders et al., 2019).

In addition to primary survey data, secondary data were collected to enrich the analysis of advertising strategies and brand performance in family business brands. This integration of primary and secondary data is a recognised approach in family business brands research, where understanding both consumer-side responses and firm-level strategies is essential (Zellweger, 2017; Ramírez-Pasillas et al., 2017).

The research focused on 24 family-owned brands in Kosovo, drawn from industries characterised by high advertising intensity. These industries were selected to ensure the analysis covered sectors where advertising is a critical driver of consumer engagement and brand development.

The secondary data sources included: Official company websites and marketing materials of family business brands; annual financial statements and industry reports; publicly available data required by the Financial Reporting Council in Kosovo, including: advertising expenditures over the past three years; sales performance data; net profit figures.

This multi-source data strategy ensured a robust understanding of both advertising effectiveness and the financial performance of family-owned brands, aligning with best practices in family business research (Chrisman et al., 2005; Zellweger, 2017).

The integration of primary survey data and secondary financial and advertising data provided a comprehensive basis for understanding how advertising influences consumer responses in family businesses, while accounting for demographic variations.

### *3.4 Data analysis method*

The study applied econometric modelling techniques, with a particular focus on ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, to examine the relationships between advertising expenditures and consumer responses. In addition, the analysis explored how demographic characteristics influence the effectiveness of advertising, providing insights into how consumer responses vary across different demographic groups.

OLS regression is widely recommended for analysing moderating effects and understanding how external factors (in this case, demographics) influence the strength and direction of key relationships (Hair et al., 2019). This technique was selected due to

its robustness and ease of interpretation in studies involving consumer responses to advertising (Hair et al., 2019).

### 3.5 *Econometric modelling approach*

This study applies an econometric modelling approach to examine the impact of advertising expenditures on consumer responses, with particular attention to the moderating effects of demographic characteristics. The analysis focuses on family-owned businesses in Kosovo, where advertising plays a critical role in shaping brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image, and purchase intention.

Econometrically modelling the relationship between advertising and consumer responses presents a potential endogeneity challenge, as advertising expenditures may be influenced by unobservable factors such as internal brand-level assessments of consumer sentiment or sales performance in specific regions (Clark et al., 2009; Honka et al., 2017). Since these internal assessments are unobservable to researchers but influence how brands allocate advertising budgets, failing to account for this could bias the estimated effects of advertising.

To mitigate this concern, the study follows the lagged advertising expenditure approach, which has been applied in previous research on advertising effectiveness (Clark et al., 2009; Honka et al., 2017). Specifically, the model uses advertising expenditures from the previous year rather than contemporaneous advertising spending. This reduces the risk of simultaneity bias, as current consumer perceptions and intentions could not have influenced advertising decisions made a year prior.

#### **Ordinary least squares (OLS) model**

To examine the impact of advertising expenditures on consumer responses across demographic groups, the following OLS regression model was applied:

$$\ln(Y_{ik}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SH_k^R + \sum_{i=1}^I \beta_i X_i + \sum_{k=1}^K \delta_k X_k + \varepsilon_{ik}$$

- $Y_{ik}$  represents the consumer response (brand awareness, perceived brand quality, brand image, or purchase intention) for individual  $i$  and brand  $k$ .
- $SH_k^R$  denotes the logarithm of the ratio of the brand's advertising expenditures to the average advertising expenditures of competitors within the same product category, capturing the brand's relative advertising intensity.
  - $X_i$  ( $i = 1, \dots, I$ ) is a vector of individual-level demographic characteristics.
  - $X_k$  ( $k = 1, \dots, K$ ) represents brand-level factors.
  - $\varepsilon_{ik}$  is the error term, capturing unobserved influences.

This model captures the direct effect of relative advertising expenditures on consumer responses while controlling for individual and brand-specific characteristics that could influence these responses. OLS regression was selected due to its suitability for modelling relationships between continuous outcomes and multiple explanatory variables in cross-sectional data (Hair et al., 2019).

OLS regression is a widely accepted technique for analysing relationships between continuous dependent variables and a combination of continuous and categorical predictors in cross-sectional survey research (Hair et al., 2019; Bryman and Bell, 2015). This technique is particularly suitable for:

- evaluating the direct effects of advertising expenditures on consumer responses
- assessing how demographic factors moderate the relationship between advertising and consumer responses.

By integrating individual-level demographic data with brand-level fixed effects, the model captures both consumer-side heterogeneity and brand-specific differences, ensuring that the results reflect both individual preferences and brand characteristics (Saunders et al., 2019).

## 4 Data analysis and interpretation

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the collected data, focusing on how demographic factors influence consumer responses to advertising in the context of family-owned businesses in Kosovo. Family business brands occupy a distinctive position in Kosovo's economy, often leveraging their heritage, personal values, and long-term relationships with customers as core elements of their brand identity (Ramadani and Hoy, 2015; Zellweger, 2017). These unique characteristics of family business brands may amplify or moderate the impact of advertising across different demographic segments, as family firms tend to rely more heavily on trust-building and community engagement than corporate brands (Ramadani et al., 2018).

### 4.1 Sample characteristics

Table 1 presents the key demographic characteristics of the sample, which consists of 417 respondents familiar with family-owned brands in Kosovo. The sample was purposefully designed to ensure broad representation across gender, age, education level, employment status, marital status, and geographic location.

**Table 1** Demographic characteristics of the sample

	<i>N</i>	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	159	38%
Female	258	62%
<b>Age</b>		
<25	92	0.22
25–45	300	0.72
46+	25	0.07
<b>Education</b>		
Undergraduate Studies	225	54%
Graduate Studies (MSc/PhD)	192	46%



**Table 1** Demographic characteristics of the sample (continued)

	<i>N</i>	%
<b>Living Area</b>		
Rural area	121	29%
Urban area	296	71%
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	125	37%
Married	263	63%
<b>Employment status</b>		
Employed	292	70%
Unemployed	125	30%

These demographic variables were incorporated into the econometric model as moderating factors, allowing the analysis to capture how advertising effectiveness varies across demographic segments for family-owned brands.

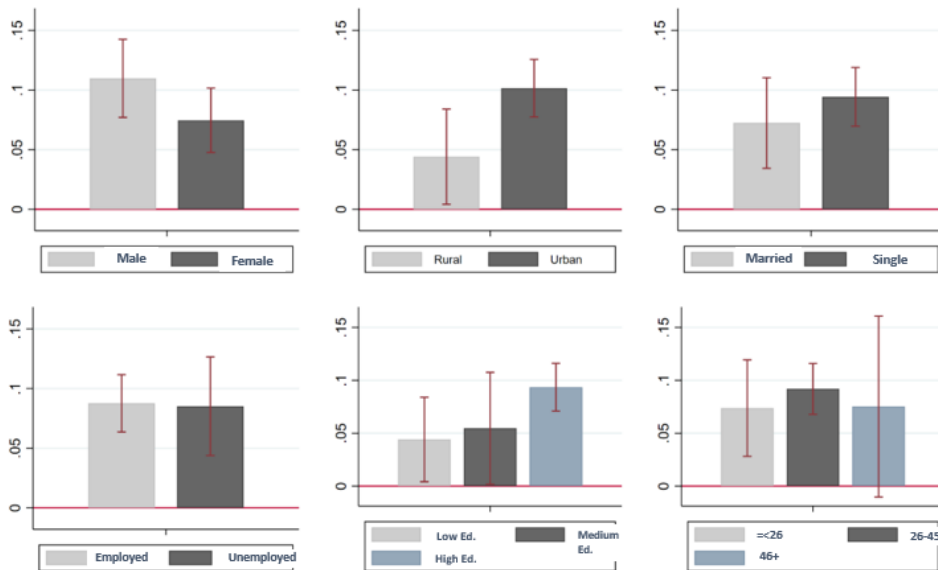
#### *4.2 Advertising influence on brand awareness across different demographic factors*

The results indicate that advertising expenditures have a significant positive effect on brand awareness across all demographic groups, confirming the importance of advertising for enhancing consumer familiarity with family-owned brands. However, the magnitude of the effect varies across demographic segments, reflecting different levels of advertising receptiveness.

- *Gender*: Advertising had a greater impact on men (11%) compared to women (7%). This may reflect men's tendency to engage more actively with product-related information, especially for categories such as technology, automotive, and financial services, where family business brands often operate.
- *Geographical location*: Urban residents showed a 10% increase in brand awareness, compared to slightly lower gains in rural areas. This underscores the need for family business brands to adapt their media strategies to account for differing access to media channels.
- *Marital status*: Single consumers showed a 2% higher awareness gain compared to married individuals, potentially because single consumers are more exposed to lifestyle-focused advertising.
- *Education level*: Advertising increased brand awareness by 9.3% among respondents with higher education, reflecting greater attentiveness to brand messaging in this segment.
- *Age group*: The 25–45 age group showed the strongest awareness response (9.2%), reinforcing the importance of targeting working-age consumers for family business brands.

These findings suggest that family business brands should segment their advertising campaigns to maximise reach and resonance across these groups, particularly targeting urban, educated, and working-age consumers, who are both more responsive to advertising and more likely to influence household purchasing decisions. The findings are illustrated in Figure 2.

**Figure 2** The impact of advertising on brand awareness across different demographic factors (see online version for colours)



#### 4.3 Advertising influence on perceived quality across different demographic factors

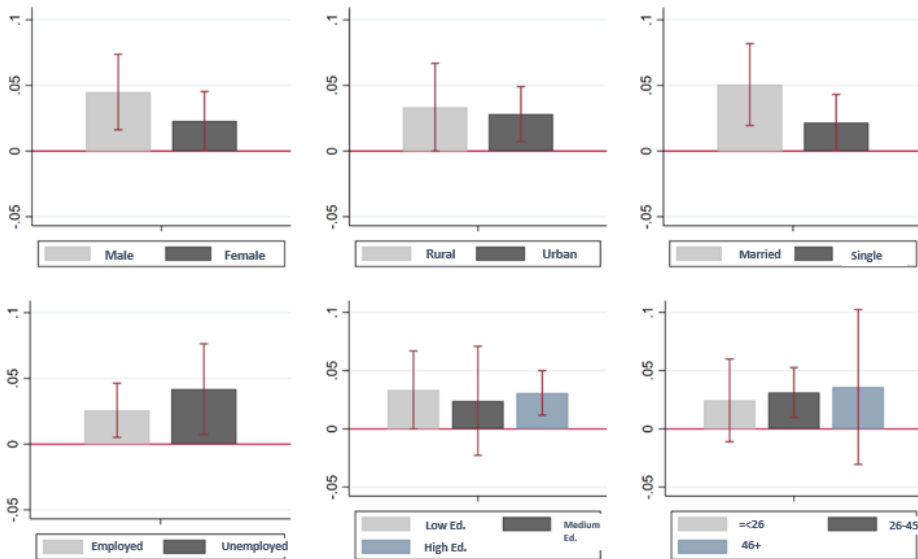
Advertising also has a positive effect on perceived brand quality, although the size of the effect varies substantially across demographic groups, indicating that different consumer segments interpret advertising messages about family business brands differently. These group-specific results are summarised in Figure 3.

- **Gender:** Men reported a 4.5% increase in perceived quality, compared to 2.3% among women. This could stem from men's tendency to emphasise product features and performance, which are often highlighted in family business brands advertising in Kosovo.
- **Marital status:** Married respondents showed a 5% increase in perceived quality, suggesting that family business brands advertising may resonate more with consumers who value stability and long-term trust – qualities often associated with family firms.
- **Employment status:** Unemployed consumers showed a 4% increase, possibly because family business brands messaging emphasising affordability, community involvement, and ethical practices appeals more strongly to financially cautious consumers.

- *Education level:* Both higher and lower education groups showed 3% increases in perceived quality, while the effect was not statistically significant for those with medium education levels.
- *Age group:* The strongest effect is observed in the 26–45 age group, while the results for younger (<25) and older (>45) age groups are not statistically significant.

These results suggest that family business brands should tailor quality-related advertising messages differently across demographic segments, emphasising heritage, craftsmanship, and ethical sourcing to married and unemployed consumers, while emphasising modernity and innovation to younger, urban consumers.

**Figure 3** The impact of advertising on perceived quality across different demographic factors (see online version for colours)



#### 4.4 Advertising influence on brand image across different demographic factors

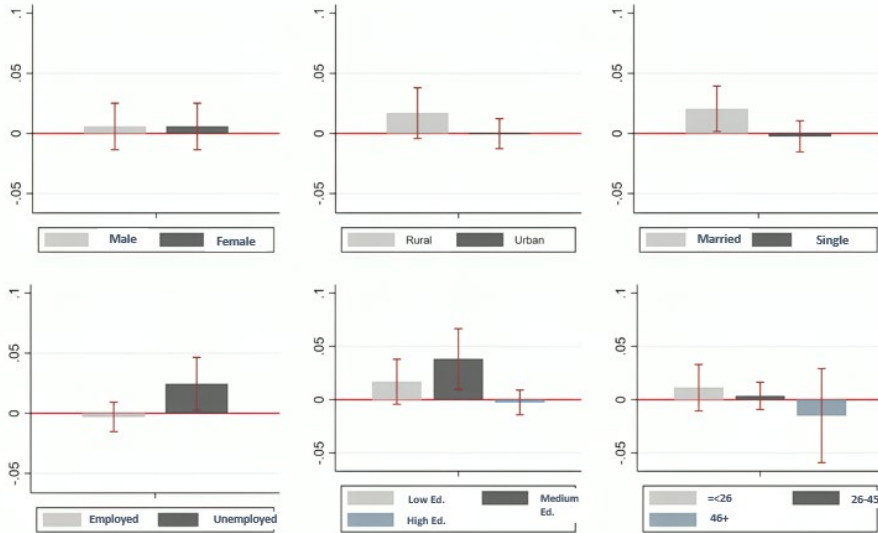
Interestingly, advertising had a weaker and less consistent effect on brand image across most demographic groups, with only a few statistically significant effects observed.

- *Education level:* Advertising increased positive brand image perceptions by 4% among respondents with medium education levels.
- *Employment status:* Unemployed consumers reported a 2.5% improvement in brand image, although this effect was only marginally significant.

These findings are summarised in Figure 4.

This limited impact may reflect the already established reputation and image advantages that family business brands enjoy in Kosovo, where trust and familiarity are often built through personal relationships and community ties (Ramadani et al., 2018). Advertising may therefore play a reinforcing rather than transformative role in shaping the image of well-known family brands.

**Figure 4** The impact of advertising on brand image across different demographic factors (see online version for colours)



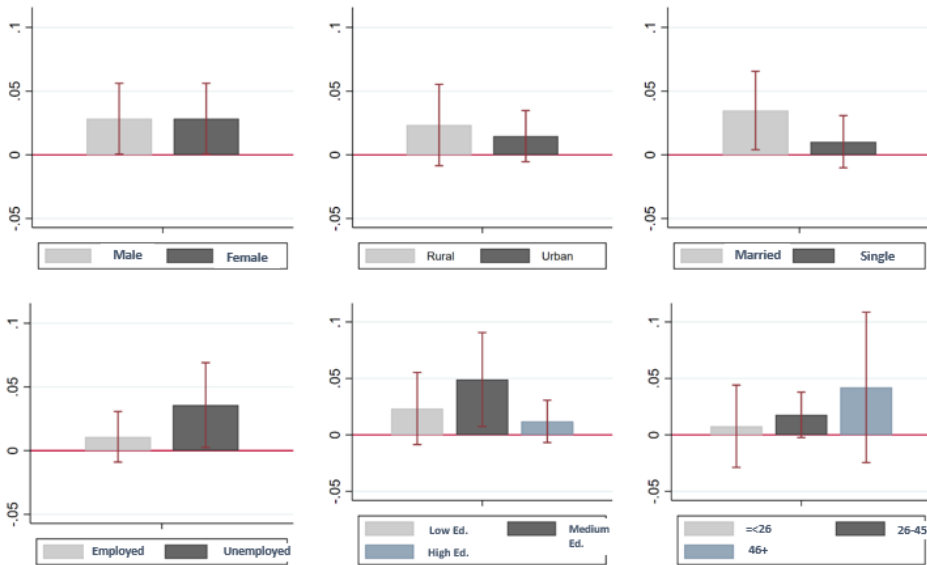
#### 4.5 Advertising influence on purchase intention across different demographic factors

Advertising expenditures had a moderate positive effect on purchase intention, with notable variations across demographic segments. This highlights the importance of aligning advertising content with the values and preferences of different consumer groups.

- *Gender*: Both men and women reported similar (3%) increases in purchase intention, suggesting that family business brands messaging appeals across gender lines.
- *Geographical location*: Rural consumers exhibited a slightly stronger (2.5%) increase in purchase intention, possibly reflecting greater loyalty to local family brands in rural areas.
- *Marital status*: Married consumers exhibited a 3.5% increase in purchase intention, compared to just 1% for single consumers, reinforcing the importance of trust and family legacy for married households.
- *Employment status*: Unemployed respondents showed the highest increase (4%) in purchase intention, further highlighting the appeal of family brands' reputation for affordability and ethical practices in economically constrained groups.
- *Education level*: Respondents with medium education levels were most responsive to advertising, with a 5% increase in purchase intention, while lower and higher education groups showed weaker responses.
- *Age group*: Older consumers (46+) showed the highest purchase intention increase (4%), suggesting that family legacy appeals strongly to older segments, who may value heritage and continuity more than younger consumers.

These differences in purchase intention across demographic groups are shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5** The impact of advertising on purchase intention across different demographic factors (see online version for colours)



The analysis confirms that advertising effectiveness varies significantly across demographic groups. Younger, urban, and higher-educated consumers show greater increases in brand awareness, while older, rural, and less-educated consumers respond more strongly in terms of perceived quality and purchase intention. These findings highlight the importance of demographic factors in shaping how consumers engage with advertising from family business brands in Kosovo.

## 5 Conclusions and recommendations

This study examined the impact of advertising on consumer responses, focusing on brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image, and purchase intention in the context of family business brands in Kosovo. The findings confirm Hypothesis 1, demonstrating that advertising has a positive influence on all four consumer response variables. Furthermore, Hypothesis 2 is supported, as the effectiveness of advertising was found to vary significantly across demographic segments, emphasising the importance of demographic factors in shaping consumer responses.

According to Sattar et al. (2023), Erkan et al. (2021), and Agarwal and Alami (2024), advertising significantly impacts brand awareness, especially through social media and traditional advertising channels. However, when combined with brand credibility and prestige, perceived quality is positively influenced (Baek et al., 2010). Creativity can also enhance consumer perceptions of product quality (Modig and Rosengren, 2014).

Advertising, especially on social media, significantly affects brand image. Positive advertising attitudes and high advertising intensity are strongly associated with a better

brand image (Wang et al., 2023; Damayanti et al., 2024). The use of influencers and targeted social media campaigns can enhance brand image by creating favourable consumer attitudes (Agarwal and Alami, 2024; Damayanti et al., 2024).

The majority of studies support the fact that advertising has a direct and significant impact on purchase intention. This effect is mediated by brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand image (Sattar et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023; Damayanti et al., 2024; Azzari and Pelissari, 2020).

Among the demographic factors examined, age emerged as particularly significant. Younger consumers (25–45) showed the strongest increases in brand awareness, while older consumers (46+) exhibited the highest purchase intention, highlighting the importance of targeted messaging that reflects the distinct preferences of these groups.

Yazdanparast et al. (2016) found that younger consumers, particularly college students, show a higher engagement with social media marketing activities, which positively influences their brand perceptions and purchase intentions. The same study highlights that higher education levels correlate with a more critical evaluation of advertising content, which can influence perceived quality and brand perception. Educated consumers are likely to engage more deeply with advertising content, leading to higher brand awareness and purchase intention.

Education level also moderated advertising effectiveness. Higher-educated consumers were more responsive to brand awareness, while consumers with medium education levels were more influenced in terms of perceived quality and purchase intention. This suggests that advertising serves different functions depending on consumers' prior knowledge and reliance on external information.

These findings can be further interpreted through the lens of the ELM. According to ELM, individuals with higher motivation and ability often associated with higher education and are more likely to process persuasive messages through the central route, carefully evaluating message content. This aligns with our results, where higher-educated consumers demonstrated greater responsiveness to brand awareness, a cognitively driven variable. In contrast, consumers with medium education levels appeared more influenced by perceived quality and purchase intention, suggesting more peripheral route processing based on cues like brand reputation or emotional appeal. Psychological Reactance Theory may also help explain the variation in advertising receptiveness across demographic groups. For example, older or rural consumers may respond more favourably to advertising that emphasises trust and authenticity, whereas highly educated or urban consumers may exhibit reactance when exposed to overtly persuasive or emotionally charged content, triggering resistance. This may account for the nuanced variation in how different groups engage with advertising elements such as influencer marketing, emotional tone, or perceived credibility.

The analysis also identified notable differences by geographic location. Urban consumers displayed greater brand awareness gains, while rural consumers showed higher purchase intention, reflecting the importance of community trust and local reputation for rural consumers.

Additional moderating effects were observed for gender, marital status, and employment status, confirming that family business brands must develop segmented advertising strategies tailored to specific demographic groups. By aligning their messaging with the values and preferences of these groups, family business brands can enhance the effectiveness of their advertising investments and strengthen their connection with diverse consumer segments.

According to Mukherjee and Jansen (2014), females are more responsive to branded terms in advertising, showing higher trust and loyalty, which influences their purchase behaviour more significantly than males. In addition, social media advertising tends to have a stronger impact on female consumers, particularly in terms of brand awareness and purchase intention (Khan et al., 2022).

These results reinforce the need for demographically customised advertising strategies that align with the cultural and economic realities in which family business brands operate in Kosovo.

This study contributes to the literature on advertising effectiveness in family business brands by demonstrating how advertising impacts consumer responses across different demographic groups, a topic that remains underexplored. While prior research highlights the importance of trust, heritage, and family reputation in family business branding (Zellweger, 2017; Ramírez-Pasillas et al., 2017), this study shows that demographic factors significantly moderate the effectiveness of advertising campaigns, particularly in transitional economies. The findings extend advertising segmentation theory (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000; Percy and Rossiter, 1992) by emphasising the importance of cultural, economic, and demographic contexts when designing advertising strategies for family business brand, offering a replicable framework for future research in similar markets.

While the findings offer general insights into advertising effectiveness, it is important to interpret them within Kosovo's unique context. Kosovo is a young and transitional economy where more than half of the population is under the age of 30 (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2023). This youthful demographic is highly active on digital platforms, spending significant time on social media and engaging with influencer content. These media habits likely contribute to the strong advertising responsiveness observed among younger, urban, and highly educated consumers in our study.

At the same time, Kosovo's economy remains deeply influenced by informal networks and the strong presence of family-owned businesses, particularly in rural areas. This context helps explain why older, unemployed, and rural consumers demonstrated greater sensitivity to reputation-based and trust-oriented advertising. Emini and Zeqiri (2021) found that in Kosovo, social media marketing has a significant effect on purchase intention, especially when mediated by trust and brand engagement, an effect that was particularly strong among older and more traditional consumers. Similarly, in North Macedonia, the OECD (2024) reported that small and family-owned businesses continue to rely heavily on personal relationships and community-based reputation to compete, particularly in rural and transitional economic zones.

Culturally, Kosovo scores high on collectivism (Hofstede Insights, 2023), placing strong value on family ties and community cohesion. This aligns with the stronger purchase intentions we observed among married and unemployed consumers, for whom relational trust and ethical branding may carry greater weight. Therefore, while some advertising response patterns such as digital engagement among urban youth, may reflect broader global trends, other dynamics are clearly context-bound to Kosovo's socio-economic and cultural environment.

### *5.1 Recommendations*

The findings suggest several practical recommendations for family business brands managers in Kosovo and similar emerging market economies. The results clearly show

that consumer responses to advertising differ significantly across demographic groups, indicating that a uniform advertising strategy is unlikely to be effective.

First, family business brands should adopt tailored advertising strategies that reflect demographic differences identified in the analysis. Advertising campaigns should target younger consumers aged 25–45 with content designed to raise brand awareness, while older consumers aged 46 and above should be exposed to messages that emphasise trust, long-term reputation, and product reliability, which are more likely to influence their purchase intentions. Similarly, higher-educated consumers are more responsive to awareness-focused messaging, while consumers with medium education levels respond more strongly to content that emphasises product quality and reliability.

Second, advertising campaigns targeting older, married, and rural consumers should emphasise trustworthiness, reliability, and product quality, as these demographic segments were shown to place greater importance on these factors when forming perceived quality and purchase intentions. The stronger response to advertising among these groups reflects a greater reliance on reputation and long-term brand credibility when evaluating family business brands. Ensuring that advertising content highlights the established presence and reliable reputation of the family business brands aligns directly with the preferences shown in the analysis.

Finally, family business brands should establish mechanisms to monitor the performance of their advertising efforts across key demographic segments, enabling continuous adjustments to message content and tone to ensure alignment with the specific values and expectations of different consumer groups. By measuring how different demographic segments respond to advertising over time, family business brands can refine their advertising strategies to improve overall effectiveness and return on investment.

## *5.2 Limitations and future research directions*

While this study provides valuable insights into how advertising influences consumer responses in family business brands in Kosovo, there are clear opportunities for future research. Since the focus was limited to Kosovo, comparative studies across other countries or industries could reveal whether these patterns hold in different cultural or economic contexts. While this study focuses exclusively on family business brands, future research could incorporate comparative analysis with non-family or corporate brands to better isolate the unique effects of family branding on consumer responses across demographic segments.

This study also captured consumer responses at a single point in time. Future research could track how advertising influences perceptions and loyalty over the long term, particularly in family business brands where trust and reputation are built gradually.

Finally, future research could explore how different advertising message strategies such as emotional storytelling, tradition-focused messaging, or product-centred promotions, resonate with different demographic groups, providing more tailored insights into effective advertising for family business brands.

## **Conflicts of interest**

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.



## Informed consent

All participants provided informed consent before participating in the study. The consent was obtained in written form.

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