

“Understanding the Impact of Social Marketing Campaigns on Reproductive Health Behavior of Women in Pakistan” - Faria Shaikh, PhD Candidate, University of Oregon

Research Proposal

As a fourth-year PhD candidate in Communication and Media Studies at the University of Oregon, my research proposal, also a part of my doctoral dissertation, examines the influence of culturally sensitive advertising on women's reproductive health and rights in Karachi, Pakistan. This interdisciplinary study, leveraging theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior originally proposed by Ajzen & Fishbein (1985), Goal Systems Theory to study the motivation behind consumer goals (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007), and finally Hall's (1973) Encoding/Decoding Model seeks to understand how family planning advertising narratives affect women's contraceptive use decisions. The challenge of overpopulation is acute in the Global South, particularly in South Asia (French, 2017), where Pakistan stands as one of the most densely populated countries with significant implications for its stability, climate, economy, and education (Ataullahjan et al., 2019). Despite being the pioneer in South Asia for initiating family planning programs in the 1960s, efforts by the government, NGOs, and international organizations like USAID to alter reproductive health behaviors through social marketing campaigns have seen limited success (Asif & Pervaiz, 2019).

The study aims to answer questions like: How do different advertising styles, especially those that are culturally sensitive compared to those focusing on female desire, influence women's attitudes and decisions regarding contraceptive use? How women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds interpret these ads? What implications this might have on their behavioral responses towards family planning?

Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research manipulates various types of ads—including those from government organizations, those emphasizing female sexual pleasure, and neutral ads—as independent variables to assess their influence on women's perceptions and intentions regarding contraceptive use. This design aims to capture the interaction effects between different advertisement types and participant responses (Shadish et al., 2002). Complementing this, qualitative interviews with a diverse group of women will explore the nuanced perceptions and lived experiences related to family planning and contraceptive use, offering depth to the quantitative data. With a target sample size of 385 married women aged 20-45, this approach aims to provide a comprehensive and representative analysis of advertising's impact on reproductive health decisions in Karachi, enhancing the foundation for developing culturally resonant health communication strategies.

This methodology is meticulously designed to capture a comprehensive understanding of the local context, facilitated by collaborations with local NGOs and health professionals. This research focuses on in-person data collection, to ensure inclusivity across Karachi's diverse socio-economic spectrum, particularly addressing the digital divide (Ataullahjan et al., 2019). While formal collaborations with the School of Economics and Social Science at the Institute of Business Administration are in the process, the intention is to engage with relevant entities immediately following the application submission.

Finally, the support from the AIPS Short-Term Research Grant would be instrumental in extending my fieldwork in Karachi in summer 2024, ensuring that the research is both thorough and representative of diverse experiences across socio-economic strata. This financial support will cover airfare, local travel, and operational costs, facilitating a deeper engagement with the subject matter and enhancing the robustness of the findings.

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