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YouTube marketing communication demographic and usage variables influence on Gen Y's cognitive attitudes in South Africa and Romania

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Abstract

The primary purposes of this study are to consider the influence of YouTube marketing communication (YMC) on awareness and knowledge among Generation (Gen) Y cohort respondents in South Africa (SA) and Romania (RO) and to establish if country, demographic, and usage (independent) variables have an effect on this cognitive attitudinal association. Multistage sampling was employed, and a survey was conducted among 400 respondents in SA and 400 respondents in RO. Structural equation modelling was used to investigate the hypothesized associations. The findings confirm that awareness had a favorable influence on knowledge for the total sample, SA and RO. The results also show that awareness displayed a significantly larger positive effect on knowledge among Romanian Gen Y in comparison with South African Gen Y. This study confirms that age (demographic variable) and access, usage length, log-on frequency, log-on duration, and advertisement viewership numbers (usage variables) have a significant effect on cognitive attitudinal responses due to YMC among Gen Y in SA and RO. Organizations should consider adapting YMC strategies to stimulate awareness, which will stimulate favorable knowledge attitudinal responses, as well as consider the aforementioned demographic and usage variables when targeting the infamously unpredictable Gen Y due to the positive cognitive attitudinal association in developing countries.

KEYWORDS

cognitive attitudes, Gen Y, Romania, South Africa, structural equation modelling, YouTube marketing communication

1 | INTRODUCTION

YouTube is the largest global online video information system (OVIS) with 1.9 billion active global users and reaches 80% of the Gen Y (also known as Millennials) cohort; over 24 thousand hours of video content are uploaded on to YouTube every hour; 70% of content is viewed via mobile devices; and 7 billion hours of video content are watched on a weekly basis (Smith, 2019; Stokes, 2017; YouTube, 2019). This OVIS features a wide variety of user-generated content that includes how-to-do videos; educational content; music videos; and a broad range of organizational and brand content, such as channels, news, and marketing communication (MC) (eg, promotions, advertising, celebrity endorsers, testimonials, influencers, and product placement). MC spending on OVIS platforms is expected to double to \$37 billion over the next 5 years and will have over 4 billion users worldwide. Billions of hours of video are viewed on YouTube every day, particularly among Gen Y (18- to 32-year-olds), who are spending increasing periods of time viewing video content on their mobile devices in comparison with television (Foye, 2018; YouTube, 2019).

The Gen Y cohort are the heaviest users of YouTube, and of particular interest to organizations owing to rapidly growing discretionary income group and an imminent inheritance of \$5 trillion from their aging parents (Kim, 2018; YouTube, 2019). Therefore, Gen Y's attitudes towards YouTube marketing communication (YMC) are of great importance to organizations, as they may provide an enhanced comprehension of future cognitive and behavioral propensities.

The primary MC objective for a number of organizations is to generate positive attitude-to-advertising, which increases behavioral responses; therefore, favorable cognitive attitudinal responses (awareness and knowledge) to MC are an apt gauge of effective advertising (Barry, 1987; Belch & Belch, 2018; Yoo, Kim, & Stout, 2010). Consequently, various studies have examined different aspects of consumer attitudes and YMC-related elements (Araújo et al., 2017; Baramidze, 2018; Bartozik-Purgat & Filimon, 2017; Bi, Zhang, & Ha, 2018; Chiang & Hsiao, 2015; Duffett, Petroșanu, Negricea, & Edu, 2019; Evans, Hoy, & Childers, 2019; Hansson & Stanic, 2017; Li & Lo, 2014; Rasmussen, 2018; Rodriguez, 2017; Roma & Aloini, 2019; Tan, Hoe Ng, Omar, & Karupaiah, 2018; Viertola, 2018; Wang, 2015; Westenberg, 2016), and several studies have also investigated different aspects of cognitive attitudinal responses (Chungviwatanant, Prasongsukarn, & Chungviwatanant, 2016; Dehghani, Niaki, Ramezani, & Sali, 2016; Feng & Xie, 2018; Hor'akov'a, 2018; Mansour, 2016; Marthinus, Sobotker, & Duffett, 2014; Yang, Huang, Yang, & Yang, 2017; Zaitceva, 2018; Zhang & Mao, 2016). However, a majority of the abovementioned studies used demographic and usage variables to describe the sample but did not consider the aforementioned independent variables influence on the cognitive attitudinal relationship. Additionally, a several research gaps were identified by previous studies.

Balakrishnan and Manickavasagam (2016) infer that many studies have considered YMC in developed markets, viz, United States and Western Europe, whereas similar studies need to be conducted in developing countries, due to the fast penetration of social media in these countries. This study is in agreement with Balakrishnan and Manickavasagam (2016), since a majority of the research discussed in aforementioned text occurred in developed markets, where the Gen Y cohort has superior information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure in comparison with developing countries. Moreover, the social media growth rate has started to wane in several developed markets, whereas a number of developing markets are still growing a healthy rate. The poor Internet connection speed and inferior ICT infrastructure in developing countries (particularly in Africa) may result in different cultural and usage characteristics versus developed markets. Additionally, there is also inadequate research inquiry in developing economies, particularly regarding cross-continental studies, and few have investigated demographic and usage variables influence on YMC (Balakrishnan & Manickavasagam, 2016; Duh & Struwig, 2015; Lesame, 2013; Petzer & De Meyer, 2013). Therefore, the main aims of this paper are to consider the influence of YMC on awareness and knowledge among Gen Y in South Africa (SA) and Romania (RO) and to ascertain whether country, demographic, and usage variables have an effect on the cognitive attitudinal relationship, which will show if heterogeneity occurs within this generational cohort, as mandated by Bolton et al. (2013), Duh and Struwig (2015), Zhang, Omran, and Cobanoglu (2017), and Zambodla (2018).

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 | YouTube marketing communication

YouTube was originally developed as an information and entertainment digital ICT conduit but has subsequently become a massive MC revenue generating conduit. YouTube content is freely available but generates its revenue via on-site MC; and the proliferation of mobile devices, such as smartphones, has resulted in the incremental growth of this ICT OVIS. YouTube offers a broad array of MC options and formats for organizations, which include standard, overlay, in-search discovery, sponsored cards, bumper, and video MC options (Stokes, 2017; Vingilisa et al., 2018; YouTube, 2019). YMC has become an essential promotional tool among organizations, with nearly 80% of marketers opining that YouTube was an effective online digital video platform (OVIS) MC tool. Hence, it comes as no surprise that YMC is accounting for a larger share of promotion budgets, which currently stands at 25% of all OVIS MC (Chadha, 2018; Foye, 2018). Many organizations have spent significant portions of their MC budgets on social media, such as YouTube, but without actually knowing the true attitudinal effect on their consumers. The final outcome, namely, purchase, is easily measurable in terms of online metrics and analytics (YouTube, 2018), but not the stages leading up to the purchase, nor in terms of Gen Y consumers' attitude responses towards social media MC. Hence, a number of the aforementioned studies have investigated YMC effectiveness through qualitative (focus groups and in-depth interviews) and quantitative (content analysis and attitudinal cross-sectional surveys) approaches. Consequently, this study has adopted the second approach, namely, a cross-sectional attitudinal survey to ascertain Gen Y's attitudinal responses to YMC in SA (an African developing country) and RO (an Eastern European developing country), which will bridge the gap regarding the cognitive attitude stages that transpire before purchase.

2.2 | Gen Y cohort theory

Cohort or generation theory posits that individuals' behavior and traits are shaped by the different external events (for example, changes in technology, social, cultural, political, and economic milieus) over a specific time period during which these individuals were born and lived.

Therefore, it is theorized that every cohort displays similar needs; values; desires; attitudes; psychographic attributes; interests; lifestyles; shopping behavior; media consumption tendencies; and ICT usage patterns owing to their experiences as a result of the associated events and technological advancements, which transpired over the specific epoch (Duh & Struwig, 2015; Moore, 2012; Schewe & Meredith, 2004; Zhang et al., 2017). Barry et al. (2014) suggest that 70% of the Generation Y cohort access YouTube at least once a month, whereas Smith (2019) reveals that the percentage increased to 80% in 2018. Hence, cohort analysis is significant to organizations, since it affords them the opportunity to develop specific MC strategies for their brands, which are tailored to meet each generation's particular desires, values, needs, and wants. As mentioned in prior text, Gen Y is of huge interest to organizations due to their massive spending growth and potential (Kim, 2018; McCrindle, 2003).

Approximately a third of the world's population is classified as Gen Y, and developing countries are characterized by young populations, with over half of the African continent under the age of 20 years old (Internet World Stats, 2018; Utermark, 2015). There is some disparity concerning the exact range of years, but many state that they were born from 1982 to 2002 (Bolton et al., 2013; Duh & Struwig, 2015; McCrindle, 2003; Thomson, 2018; Zhang et al., 2017). It is posited that Gen Y is heterogeneous comprising of three distinct groups based on birth patterns (Foscht, Schloffer, Maloles, & Chia, 2009; Zambodla, 2018). Young Gen Y cohort members (characteristically live with their parents; are single; university students; and/or starting new jobs or seeking employment) are in divergent life stages in comparison with older Gen Y cohort members (commonly own property; are married; some have children; and established in their careers), which results in a divergent life stages and viewpoints. Hence, the present study assumes that individuals between 18 and 32 years old are Gen Y members and takes into consideration the heterogeneity of this cohort by using three age intervals, namely, 18 to 22, 23 to 27, and 28 to 32 years.

Gen Y will compose of 75% of the work force by 2025; has a global purchase power of over \$600 per annum; have a majority control of Africa's R180 trillion of consumer spending by 2020; will account for over a third of consumer spending in the next decade; and as mentioned in prior text, stand to inherit \$5 trillion (Bolton et al., 2013; Kim, 2018; Smith, 2019; Thomson, 2018; Utermark, 2015). Therefore, organizations cannot disregard YMC, since eight out of 10 Gen Y cohort members watch YouTube, which could be hugely profitable as an effective MC conduit. Additionally, Araújo et al. (2017) state that there is a lack of inquiry that quantitatively investigates OVIS MC among Gen Y; therefore, additional research is required to attain a more complete understanding of this generation's cognitive attitudinal responses and the influence of demographic and usages variables on YMC.

2.3 | Attitudes and YouTube cognitive attitude hypotheses

Lutz (1985) and Botha, Brink, Machado, and Rudansky (1997) propose that attitudes, from a marketing perspective, are a lasting learned orientation to evaluate and behave in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner towards a product or brand in response to MC. The cognitive attitudinal phase occurs when a consumer becomes aware of a brand's or product's existence and then seeks for additional information about brand- or product-related information to acquire greater knowledge. However, the hierarchy response models generally postulate that the influence of MC happens over an extended time period and, therefore, the immediate influence of MC on the ultimate purchase is nominal (Aaker & Carman, 1982; Barry, 1987; Safko, 2010; Tellis, 1988; Yoo et al., 2010). Hence, organizations often use the hierarchical attitudinal phases as the basis for medium and long-term MC objectives and to assess the effectiveness of MC.

Ma and Liu (2010) establish that suitable online MC strategies result in enhanced cognitive attitudinal responses and have a positive influence on consumer behavior. Yang et al. (2017) assert that informativeness (a cognitive attitudinal response, which is equivalent to the knowledge hierarchical phase) has a positive influence on attitudes to purchase among Taiwanese students, while viewing YMC. Mansour (2016), Chungviwatanant et al. (2016), Dehghani et al. (2016), Zhang and Mao (2016), Feng and Xie (2018), and Zaitceva (2018) confirm that informativeness influences consumer attitudes in terms of various OVIS and social media platforms. Although the above-mentioned research investigated YMC in terms of informativeness, this study intends to ascertain the degree that awareness can explain knowledge due to YMC. The rapid growth of OVIS such as YouTube has begun to wane in several developed markets, whereas many developing countries are still experiencing steady growth owing to the development and upgrading of ICT infrastructure, and this is coupled with the phenomenal growth and usage of mobile devices (Smith, 2019; Stokes, 2017; YouTube, 2019). Balakrishnan and Manickavasagam (2016) confirm that a majority of social media research was conducted in developed markets, whereas comparable research should be implemented in developing countries. Therefore, the first hypothesis examines the following:

H1a. Awareness has a favorable influence on knowledge among Gen Y due to YMC in SA and RO.

This study used two developing countries, viz, SA and RO, and Edu, Lotter, Negricea, and Avram (2014) ascertained that these African and Eastern European Gen Y cohort members displayed comparable behavior in terms of voice and data communication. However, Duffett et al. (2019) established that Romanian Millennials displayed more positive affective attitudinal associations owing to YMC than South African Millennials. Accordingly, the divergent discourse results in the following hypothesis:

H1b. Awareness has a greater favorable influence on knowledge on Romanian Gen Y than South African Gen Y owing to YMC.

2.4 | YouTube demographic variables' hypotheses

As previously discussed, a number of inquiries used YouTube demographic variables to describe the sample, but not to conduct cross-analysis in terms of the attitudinal constructs. Boateng and Okoe (2015), Chiang and Hsiao (2015), Wang (2015), Dehghani et al. (2016), Westenberg (2016), Zhang and Mao (2016), Hansson and Stanic (2017), Rodriguez (2017), Bi et al. (2018), and Evans et al. (2019) used age, income, gender, education, and ethnic group to describe their samples but did not consider these as independent variables. Several researchers found differing outcomes regarding the influence of gender on different YMC types (Araújo et al., 2017; Chungviwatanant et al., 2016; Rodriguez, 2017; Todd & Melancon, 2018). Therefore, the following hypothesis is considered by this study (refer to Figure 1):

H2. The influence of awareness on knowledge due to YMC differs because of Gen Y's gender in SA and RO.

Bolton et al. (2013), Duh and Struwig (2015), Zhang et al. (2017), and Zambodla (2018) opine that Gen Y is a heterogeneous cohort and should not be considered as a distinct target audience, since older Gen Y affiliates (28–32 y) are most likely to have dissimilar life phases, attitudes, interests, lifestyles, and opinions in comparison with their younger counterparts (18–22 y). Balakrishnan and Manickavasagam (2016) also suggest that there is not sufficient empirical evidence regarding the influence demographic variables on attitudes towards YMC. Chungviwatanant et al. (2016) and Balakrishnan and Manickavasagam (2016) found divergent attitudes towards different forms of YMC due to the respondents age. Hence, the following hypothesis is investigated by this study (refer to Figure 1):

H3. The influence of awareness on knowledge owing to YMC differs due to Gen Y's age in SA and RO.

2.5 | YouTube usage variables' hypotheses

As discussed in prior text, a majority of studies only consider YouTube usage variables to describe the sample, but not to conduct cross-analysis in terms of attitudinal constructs. Chiang and Hsiao (2015), Balakrishnan and Manickavasagam (2016), Chungviwatanant et al. (2016), Hansson and Stanic (2017), Yang et al. (2017), and Roma and Aloini (2019) considered the following YouTube usage variables: frequency of online video viewership; devices used to access; length of online video viewership; number of subscriptions; and sharing of YouTube video content. Bolton et al. (2013) and Zambodla (2018) asserted that differences existed in the Gen Y cohort and that additional empirical inquiry was necessary to ascertain if there significant differences among the different usage variables. This study investigates several usage variables' influence awareness on knowledge owing to the dearth of academic inquiry. Hence, the research considers usage variables of Gen Y YouTube users as independent variables to explain cognitive attitudinal relationship due YMC, which expands on Duffett's (2015b, 2016b) research among this cohort. The huge growth of mobile devices has contributed to the growth of YouTube (Smith, 2019; Stokes, 2017; YouTube, 2019), especially in developing countries. Therefore, the following hypothesis is investigated by this study (refer to Figure 1):

H4. The influence of awareness on knowledge differs based on how Gen Y access YouTube in SA and RO.

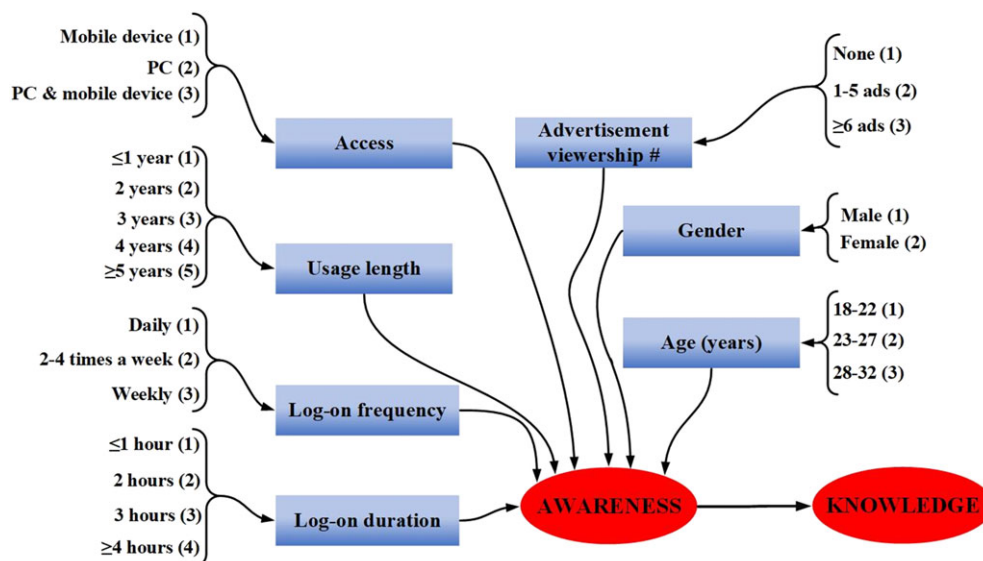


FIGURE 1 Conceptual model of demographic and usage variables influence on the cognitive attitudinal association

Several other studies established that the number of years' experience have an impact Gen Y and Z's attitudes, but the findings differed these inquiries considered different social network sites (SNS) and younger cohorts, viz, Gen Z (Duffett, 2015a, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b, 2017). Hence, this research considers that following hypothesis (refer to Figure 1):

H5. The influence of awareness on knowledge varies according to the number of years that Gen Y utilizes YouTube in SA and RO.

YouTube users who logged-on more frequently showed favorable behavior attitudes due celebrity influencers (Baramidze, 2018; Westenberg, 2016), whereas Wang (2015) reported that active YouTube consumers displayed positive attitudes. Therefore, the following hypothesis is investigated by this study (refer to Figure 1):

H6. The influence of awareness on knowledge varies owing to Gen Y's YouTube log-on frequency in SA and RO.

Other inquiries found reported varied findings in terms of the period of time spent viewing social media MC on different SNS channels and cohorts (Duffett, 2015a, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b, 2017). Li and Lo (2014), Balakrishnan and Manickavasagam (2016), and Chungviwatanant et al. (2016) also reported divergent results regarding YouTube users log-on duration and attitudes towards YMC. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is examined by this research (refer to Figure 1):

H7. The influence of awareness on knowledge varies according to Gen Y's YouTube log-on duration in SA and RO.

One other study considered the number of YouTube advertisements viewed by Generation Z consumers and their attitudes, which found no significant differences (Marthinus et al., 2014). Hence, this study considers the following hypothesis (refer to Figure 1):

H8. The influence of awareness on knowledge differs based on Gen Y's YouTube advertisement viewership numbers in SA and RO.

3 | METHODOLOGY

3.1 | Sampling and data collection

The research population composed of respondents from SA and RO developing countries, and who had viewed YMC. Multistage sampling, which composed of several different sample stages (Du Plooy, 2009), was utilized to survey 800 Gen Y respondents (400 in RO and 400 in SA). The first step in attaining a representative sample was achieved via a quota sampling technique, which used gender and age among young adults in SA and RO (National Institute of Statistics, 2016; Statistics SA, 2016). Next, only Gen Y respondents were invited to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. The questionnaires were self-administered, which enabled Gen Y respondents to participate without assistance. The questionnaires were disseminated on a face-to-face basis in the SA, using a snowball sampling technique (referrals), due to low response rates of online research in SA and other emerging economies (du Toit, Kraak, Favish, & Fletcher, 2014), whereas an online data collection approach was utilized in RO (Bartozik-Purgat & Filimon, 2017). In this manner, a diverse range of Gen Y, which included employed, self-employed, unemployed, and students (aged 18-32 years old), participated in the study. The respondents' responses were viewed as confidential and the research was anonymous, since no contact or personal details were collected in the survey. All Gen Y respondents gave informed consent prior to participating in the study.

3.2 | Research measures

The self-administered survey instrument was taken from Duffett's (2015b, 2016b) study, which composed of three main sections. The first section collected data on South African and Romanian Gen Y respondents' demographic variables via two multiple-choice questions, viz, gender and age. The next section gathered data regarding Gen Y's YouTube usage variables through five multiple-choice questions, namely, how YouTube was accessed; how long YouTube was used; how often YouTube was logged-on; how many hours was spent on YouTube per log-in; and how many YouTube ads were viewed per log-on. The final section included the two cognitive attitude measures, viz, the five-item construct for "awareness" and eight-item construct for "knowledge." These cognitive attitudinal response measures were assessed through a 5-point Likert scale, which ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" (refer to Table 1 for summary of construct items).

3.3 | Data analysis

IBM SPSS and Amos were used to perform confirmatory factor analysis to determine the reliability and validity of the above-mentioned research measures. The YMC cognitive attitudinal responses cognitive attitudinal response measures' factor loadings, Cronbach alpha (α), composite

TABLE 1 YouTube marketing communication cognitive attitudinal response measures (factor loadings, Cronbach α , CR, and AVE)

Cognitive Attitude Responses	Factor Loadings			Cronbach α			CR			AVE		
	Total	SA	RO	Total	SA	RO	Total	SA	RO	Total	SA	RO
Awareness												
Aware of new ads	0.809	0.755	0.982	.894	.877	.879	0.913	0.907	0.898	0.680	0.664	0.643
Get brands' attention	0.669	0.634	0.723									
Notice new ads	0.936	0.904	0.874									
Recall ads	0.828	0.876	0.607									
Remember ads	0.858	0.873	0.772									
Knowledge												
Convenient information source	0.794	0.784	0.655	.948	.929	.950	0.953	0.942	0.931	0.719	0.668	0.639
New product knowledge	0.830	0.856	0.608									
Brand information	0.767	0.812	0.519									
Useful company data	0.888	0.847	0.765									
Effective brand information	0.917	0.863	0.833									
Good source of knowledge	0.900	0.805	0.973									
New product information	0.821	0.774	0.966									
Valuable product knowledge	0.855	0.793	0.940									

Abbreviations: CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted; RO, Romania; SA, South Africa.

reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE), are exhibited in Table 1. The Cronbach α and CR reliability measurement values for the total, SA, and RO samples all exceeded 0.8, respectively, which is indicative of robust reliability (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). The awareness and knowledge attitude factor loadings varied from 0.519 to 0.982, and AVE values varied from 0.639 to 0.719 for the total, SA, and RO samples, which is suggestive of convergent validity, since all of the values are over 0.5 (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). The square root of the total (0.825 and 0.848), SA (0.815 and 0.818), and RO (0.802 and 0.799) samples' AVE values for awareness and knowledge attitude constructs were greater than the correlation between the constructs for the total (0.615), SA (0.344), and RO (0.705) samples, which is suggestive of discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

A configural invariance test resulted in acceptable goodness-of-fit measures, according to Hooper, Coughlan, and Mullen's (2008) thresholds, for the total ($\chi^2/df = 1.703$; Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.030; Normed-fit index (NFI) = 0.985; Tucker Lewis index (TLI) = 0.987; Comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.994; Goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.975; and Standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.020); SA ($\chi^2/df = 1.539$; RMSEA = 0.037; NFI = 0.965; TLI = 0.975; CFI = 0.987; GFI = 0.955; and SRMR = 0.060); and RO ($\chi^2/df = 2.523$; RMSEA = 0.062; NFI = 0.980; TLI = 0.951; CFI = 0.987; GFI = 0.964; and SRMR = 0.023) samples when assessing freely estimated multigroups models. A metric invariance measure was utilized to constrain the models for the total, SA, and RO samples to be equal. Hence, the chi-square difference measure concerning the constrained and unconstrained models indicated them to be invariant for the total ($P = .519$), SA ($P = .875$), and RO ($P = .558$) samples. The data were collected via the self-reported answers; therefore, a common method bias test was implemented to compare the unconstrained and fully constrained common method factor models. The chi-square test revealed that there was significant differences at $P < .05$ for the total, SA, and RO samples. Therefore, the unconstrained common method factor models were retained as there was significant shared variance. A Cook's Distance test was utilized to assess if there were any outliers in terms of the samples' cognitive attitudinal responses, but no responses were found to display abnormal Cook's Distance; thus, all responses were retained. The hypothesized relationship between the awareness and knowledge measures was assessed via structural equation modelling (SEM) for the total, SA, and RO samples, whereas multigroup SEM was utilized to assess the influence of the country, demographic, and usage variables of the aforementioned hypothesized relationships. The path coefficients for awareness and knowledge attitudinal responses; and country, demographic and usage variables, owing to YMC, were used to determine if there were significant differences for the total, SA, and RO samples.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Demographic and usage variables

The total sample composed of 800 Gen Y residing in SA and RO, which represented the age and gender of this generational cohort in the cross-continental developing countries (National Institute of Statistics, 2016; Statistics SA, 2016). Table 2 provides a full summary of the demographic and usage variables of Gen Y respondents for the total, SA, and RO samples.

TABLE 2 YouTube demographic and usage variables' descriptive statistics

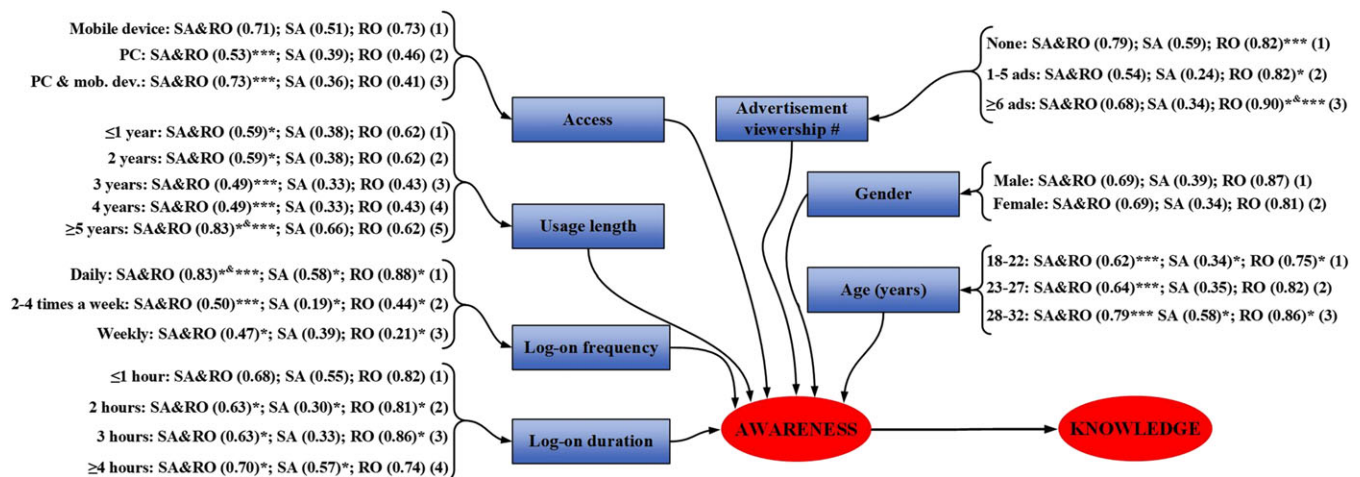
Independent Variables		Total (n = 800)		SA (n = 400)		RO (n = 400)	
Usage Characteristics		n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender	Male	340	42.5	167	41.8	173	43.3
	Female	460	57.5	233	58.3	227	56.8
Age, y	18-22	249	31.1	149	37.3	100	25.0
	23-27	316	39.5	169	42.3	147	36.8
	28-32	235	29.4	82	20.5	153	38.3
Access	PC	212	26.5	184	46.0	28	7.0
	Mobile device	70	8.8	34	8.5	36	9.0
	PC and mobile device	518	64.8	182	45.5	336	84.0
Usage length, y	≤1	74	9.3	54	13.5	20	5.0
	2	141	17.6	127	31.8	14	3.5
	3	130	16.3	110	27.5	20	5.0
	4	93	11.6	74	18.5	19	4.8
	≥5	362	45.3	35	8.8	327	81.8
Log-on frequency	Daily	375	46.9	93	23.3	282	70.5
	2-4 times a week	268	33.5	185	46.3	83	20.8
	Weekly	157	19.6	122	30.4	35	8.7
Log-on duration, h	≤1	251	31.4	78	19.5	173	43.3
	2	296	37.0	164	41.0	132	33.0
	3	156	19.5	104	26.0	52	13.0
	≥4	97	12.1	54	13.5	43	10.7
Advertisement viewership no.	None	272	34.0	63	15.8	209	52.3
	1-5	330	41.3	206	51.5	124	31.0
	≥6	198	24.7	131	32.7	67	16.7

4.2 | Hypothesis testing

The standardized beta coefficients (β) and significance (P), in the testing of the hypotheses, are assessed below (refer to Figure 2).

H1: Awareness $\rightarrow$ knowledge

The path coefficients revealed that awareness had a significant favorable effect on knowledge due to YMC among Gen Y for the abovementioned hypotheses, viz, the total sample ($\beta = .69$, $P < .001$), SA ($\beta = .38$, $P < .001$), and RO ($\beta = .81$, $P < .001$). The multigroup SEM goodness-of-fit measures were also acceptable in terms of the relationship between SA and RO ($\chi^2/df = 2.769$; RMSEA = 0.047;

**FIGURE 2** Standardized beta coefficients and significance of demographic and usage variables influence on the cognitive attitudinal association

NFI = 0.973; TLI = 0.965 CFI = 0.982; GFI = 0.960; and SRMR = 0.049). The comparison between African and Eastern European developing countries displayed a significantly larger favorable influence on knowledge among Romanian Gen Y ($\beta = .82, P < .001$) than South African Gen Y ($\beta = .39, P < .001$). Therefore, H1a and H1b were supported. Furthermore, the knowledge variance was explained by awareness among Gen Y due to YMC in a large proportion in a majority of scenarios, viz, 48% for the total sample ($R^2 = 0.48$); 71% for RO ($R^2 = 0.71$); 14% for SA ($R^2 = 0.14$); and 68% for RO ($R^2 = 0.68$) versus 15% for SA ($R^2 = 0.15$) in the comparison between the two developing countries.

H2: Gender—Awareness → knowledge

The path coefficient revealed that awareness did not have a significant influence on knowledge on gender due to YMC for the total, South African, and Romanian samples. Consequently, H2 was not supported.

H3: Age—Awareness → knowledge

The path coefficient showed that awareness had a significantly greater positive influence on knowledge by Gen Y respondents who were aged 28 to 32 years (total sample $\beta = .79, P < .001$; SA $\beta = .58, P < .05$; and RO $\beta = .86, P < .05$) compared with Gen Y respondents aged 18 to 22 years (total sample $\beta = .62, P < .001$; SA sample $\beta = .34, P < .05$; and RO $\beta = .75, P < .05$) and 23 to 27 years (total sample $\beta = .64, P < .001$), which supported H3.

H4: Access—Awareness → knowledge

The path coefficients revealed that awareness had a significantly more positive influence on knowledge for the total cross-continental developing country sample when YouTube was accessed via PC and mobile devices ($\beta = .73, P < .05$) versus only PC ($\beta = .53, P < .05$). However, the individual country samples' path coefficient showed that awareness did not have a significant influence on knowledge as a result of how Gen Y accessed YouTube. Hence, H4 was partially supported.

H5: Usage length—Awareness → knowledge

The path coefficient showed that awareness had a significantly less favorable influence on knowledge for the total sample (regarding usage length) for Gen Y respondents who used YouTube for ≤ 1 to 2 years ($\beta = .59, P < .05$) and 3 to 4 years ($\beta = .49, P < .001$) in comparison with those who used YouTube for ≥ 5 years ($\beta = .83, P < .05$, and $P < .001$). However, the individual country samples' path coefficient indicated that awareness did not have a significant influence on knowledge owing to usage length. Hence, H5 was partially supported.

H6: Log-on frequency—Awareness → knowledge

The path coefficient showed that awareness had a significantly greater positive influence on knowledge by Gen Y respondents who logged-on to YouTube daily (total sample $\beta = .83, P < .001$, and $P < .05$; SA $\beta = .58, P < .05$; and RO $\beta = .88, P < .05$) compared with those who logged-on to YouTube 2 to 4 times a week (total sample $\beta = .50, P < .001$; SA $\beta = .19, P < .05$; and RO $\beta = .44, P < .05$) and weekly (total sample $\beta = .47, P < .05$; and RO $\beta = .21, P < .05$), which supported H6.

H7: Log-on duration—Awareness → knowledge

The path coefficient indicated that awareness had a significantly more positive influence on knowledge among Gen Y respondents who spent ≥ 4 hours ($\beta = .70, P < .05$) logged-on to YouTube versus those who spent 2 ($\beta = .63, P < .05$) and 3 hours ($\beta = .63, P < .05$) for the total cross-continental developing country sample; ≥ 4 hours ($\beta = .57, P < .05$) versus 2 hours ($\beta = .30, P < .05$) for South African Gen Y; and 3 hours ($\beta = .86, P < .05$) versus 2 hours ($\beta = .81, P < .05$) for Romanian Gen Y, which supported H7.

H8: Advertisement viewership numbers—Awareness → knowledge

The path coefficient revealed that awareness had a significantly more favorable influence on knowledge by Romanian Gen Y respondents who viewed ≥ 6 YouTube adverts ($\beta = .90, P < .001$, and $P < .05$) in comparison with those who viewed none ($\beta = .82, P < .001$) and 1 to 5 ($\beta = .82, P < .05$). However, the path coefficient indicated that awareness did not have an influence on knowledge due to the number of adverts viewed on YouTube for the total cross-continental and SA developing country samples. Therefore, H8 was partially supported.

5 | DISCUSSION

The results show that awareness had a positive influence on knowledge for the total, SA, and RO samples owing to YMC, thereby affirming the cognitive attitudinal relationship, which was postulated in terms of the hierarchy-of-effects model and traditional ATL advertising. The study ascertained that Gen Y in the Eastern European developing country exhibited a more favorable predisposition to the cognitive attitudinal relationship in comparison to Gen Y in the African developing country, which supports the notion of heterogeneous perspectives among Gen Y in cross-continental developing countries. A plausible explanation could be as a result of the major development and improvement of ICT infrastructure in RO over the past 12 years. Consequently, RO has the fourth fastest Internet speed across the globe; this is in comparison with SA's ICT poor Internet connection speed and inferior ICT infrastructure, which has begun to fall behind a number of other African developing countries (Duh & Struwig, 2015; Lesame, 2013; Petzer & De Meyer, 2013; Speedtest, 2019; Stokes, 2017). As discussed in prior text, Chungviwatanant et al. (2016), Dehghani et al. (2016), Mansour (2016), Zhang and Mao (2016), Yang et al. (2017), and Zaitceva (2018) reported that informativeness had a positive influence on various attitudes due to several different YMC types. This study established that a positive relationship exists between awareness and knowledge as a result of YMC among Gen Y, and therefore has contributed to the attitude-to-advertising and cohort analysis theoretical frameworks.

The older Gen Y age group (28–32 y) exhibited a more positive influence on the cognitive attitudinal relationship versus the younger Gen Y counterparts (18–22 y) due to YMC for the total, SA, and RO samples. So, as posited by Foscht et al. (2009), Bolton et al. (2013), Duh and Struwig (2015), Zhang et al. (2017), and Zambodla (2018), this study confirms that Gen Y displayed heterogeneous attitudes owing to divergent life phases (eg, education, career development, and discretionary income). Chungviwatanant et al. (2016) established that older respondents (Gen X) showed more favorable consumer attitudes to skippable in-stream YMC, whereas younger respondents (Gen Z) showed higher irritation to the YMC. Balakrishnan and Manickavasagam (2016) found that Gen Y displayed positive attitudes towards YMC, while those younger (Gen Z) and older (Gen X) showed a negative predisposition. Nevertheless, the aforementioned studies considered multiple generations in a single country, whereas this inquiry affirms that the Gen Y cohort was not homogenous in terms of the influence of YMC on the cognitive attitudinal relationship among three different age groups in a cross-continental study.

This investigation ascertained that PC and mobile devices showed a more favorable cognitive attitudinal response owing to YMC in comparison with when YouTube was only accessed via PC among the total sample. The major growth and usage of the omnipresent mobile devices among Gen Y has added to the growth of this OVIS, with 70% of YouTube content viewed via mobile devices, particularly in developing countries (Duh & Struwig, 2015; Foye, 2018; Smith, 2019; Stokes, 2017; YouTube, 2019). Hence, it is a reasonable supposition that the ever-present mobile devices have a favorable positive influence on the cognitive attitudinal relationship due to YMC. The research determined that Gen Y respondents with less experience (in using YouTube) displayed less favorable cognitive attitudinal responses to YMC compared with those with a higher number of years of experience in the total sample. Therefore, it can be posited that Gen Y cohort members who have utilized the OVIS for a protracted number of years have accepted YMC in comparison with newer users who were averse to organizations' brand commercial content. Several other studies ascertained that the number of years' experience had an influence on young consumers attitudes, but these inquire considered different SNS and younger cohorts, viz, Gen Z (Duffett, 2016a, 2017). Gen Y cohort members with higher log-on rates displayed more favorable cognitive attitudinal responses owing to YMC for the total, SA, and RO samples, which is in consensus with Duffett's (2016a) research on different SNS among Gen Z consumers. Wang (2015) confirmed that active YouTube consumers displayed more favorable attitudes in comparison with passive consumers. Westenberg (2016) and Baramidze (2018) also established that YouTube users that logged-on every day displayed positive behavior attitudinal responses owing to their affiliation with celebrity endorsers. Gen Y cohort members who spent longer time periods logged-on to the OVIS showed more positive cognitive attitudinal responses for the total, SA, and RO samples. This result is in agreement with Duffett's (2016a, 2017) research on different SNS and a younger generation (Gen Z). Li and Lo (2014) reported that the message effectiveness and recognition of brand improved with the quantity of time spent viewing OVIS MC. Balakrishnan and Manickavasagam (2016) found that OVIS users who spent longer than 3 hours and less than 1 hour exhibited the most unfavorable attitudes towards YMC. Chungviwatanant et al. (2016) assert that OVIS users who spent less time on a weekly basis viewing YouTube skippable in-stream advertising exhibited more favorable attitudes. The results showed that Romanian Gen Y respondents display the greatest positive cognitive attitudinal responses when viewing higher numbers of YouTube adverts. This is a reasonable supposition, since a greater number advertisements viewed would be suggestive of a favorable demeanor to the brands presented on YouTube. Marthinus et al. (2014) conducted research among Gen Z, but no significant differences were found regarding number of YouTube adverts viewed. Therefore, this research confirms that age, access, usage length, log-on frequency, log-on duration, and advertisement viewership numbers have a significant influence on the cognitive attitudinal relationship due to YMC among Gen Y, which is indicative of heterogeneity within this cohort in SA and RO.

6 | CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As mentioned in prior text, a number of different hierarchical advertising models were postulated via traditional ATL advertising, which considered the different attitude phases that consumers' experienced until the ultimate decision to purchase. Consequently, the suitability of these

models vis-à-vis SNS and OVIS MC is questionable, and the current literature reveals a number of gaps in research that warrant further study. Bolton et al. (2013), Balakrishnan and Manickavasagam (2016), Chungviwatanant et al. (2016), Dehghani et al. (2016), Westenberg (2016), Araújo et al. (2017), and Rodriguez (2017) assert that large sample sizes, quantitative techniques, and different generations should be used to assess the influence of SNS and/or OVIS MC in terms of attitudes, demographic, and usage variables in developing countries to narrow the above-mentioned research gaps. Furthermore, digital interactive media has become of utmost importance to MC practitioners and in academic circles owing to the huge growth of the online ICT channels over the past 10 years (Smith, 2019; Stokes, 2017). Hence, this study quantitatively investigated the influence of awareness on knowledge among Gen Y in SA and RO, which verified a similar cognitive attitudinal relationship on the OVIS in comparison with the hierarchy advertising models. Furthermore, this research found that several demographic and usage variables, viz, country, age, access, usage length, log-on frequency, log-on duration, and advertisement viewership numbers, were found to have an influence Gen Y's cognitive attitudinal responses in cross-continental developing countries. Hence, these findings make a noteworthy addition to academic notions of cognitive attitudinal research regarding YMC owing to the dearth of inquiry that considers independent variables, such as demographic and usage variables, regarding response hierarchy model attitude phases.

This inquiry confirms that awareness has a positive influence on knowledge in SA and RO in terms of the Gen Y cohort. Hence, products and brands should continue to use YMC such as promotions, advertising, celebrity endorsers, testimonials, influencers, and product placement in bid to create awareness among Gen Y, which have a positive influence on the cognitive attitudinal relationship and will ultimately have an impact on the final purchase decision (due to the hierarchical nature of consumer responses). Dehghani et al. (2016), Chungviwatanant et al. (2016), Mansour (2016), Zhang and Mao (2016), Yang et al. (2017), Viertola (2018), and Vingilisa et al. (2018) assert that informativeness (knowledge) has a positive influence on consumer attitudes and behavior as a result of various forms of YMC; hence, organizations should ensure that they continually provide enlightening, engaging, instructive, entertaining and trustworthy content on the OVIS. A number of marketers use YouTubers (celebrity endorsers), testimonials, and influencers to provide information and recommend the organizations products and brands, in a bid to influence the different hierarchical attitude phases and eventually purchase, which is principally directed at the younger generations. Westenberg (2016) affirmed that YouTubers had a major influence on the awareness of brands and products. Baramidze (2018), Hor'akov'a (2018), and Rasmussen (2018) also report that a significant relationship exists between younger generations and YouTubers. These celebrity endorsers are viewed as a valuable source of information knowledgeable and exert a substantial influence purchase decisions in terms of brand and product recommendations. Therefore, marketers should consider employing YouTubers to create awareness and provide information about their products and brands, which would not only have a favorable influence on the cognitive attitudinal relationship but also realize the other above-mentioned benefits.

Furthermore, this inquiry found that older respondents; the use of mobile devices; inexperienced YouTube users; higher log-on frequencies; extended log-on duration; and higher numbers of YouTube advertisement viewership resulted in more favorable cognitive attitudinal responses among South African and Romanian Gen Y respondents. Therefore, organizations should contemplate the utilization of YouTube metrics to ascertain if their YMC were effectively reaching Gen Y cohort in terms demographic and usage variables, which resulted in the favorable cognitive attitudinal responses as demonstrated by this study (YouTube, 2018).

7 | LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The investigation was limited to one African and one Eastern European developing country, viz, SA and RO, whereas other developing countries warrant additional research to establish if similar attitudinal relationships occur. This study provides a cross section of the cognitive attitudinal relationship due to YMC, whereas future investigation should consider qualitative and longitudinal research approaches. Additional inquiry could ascertain if other socio-demographic variables, such as income, occupation, and education, have an influence on the attitudinal relationship (Baramidze, 2018; Chungviwatanant et al., 2016). The findings of this study cannot be generalized to the whole Gen Y population in SA and RO, since a nonprobability sampling technique was employed; hence, further research could employ probability sampling approaches.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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