

Ad avoidance in the digital context: A systematic literature review and research agenda

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Abstract

The recent growth in digital marketing investments and revenues has attracted the attention of both marketing practitioners and scholars. However, this growth has dramatically increased users' exposure to ad messages, encouraging consumers to avoid them. Therefore, ad avoidance has become a major problem for marketing practitioners. Although researchers have become much more interested in this subject over the past two decades, the body of knowledge on ad avoidance in the digital environment remains fragmented due to the lack of a comprehensive review. Therefore, a holistic overview study is needed that focuses on the big picture and can help researchers to understand the literature comprehensively. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic using a systematic literature review approach on digital ad avoidance. To this end, we provide an in-depth content analysis of 56 relevant articles published in 31 peer-reviewed scientific journals up to December 31, 2021. Based on a theories, contexts, characteristics, and methods (TCCM) framework, the study results shed light on 'what do we know, how do we know, and where should research about digital ad avoidance research be heading?' Additionally, drawing on the content analysis, we have presented an integrative framework that considers antecedents, outcomes, mediators, and moderators, which can help develop the field systematically and guide future research. By doing so, we think this review meets the need to give an overview of the state-of-the-art scientific body of knowledge on digital ad avoidance and makes important and solid contributions to the literature, practical implications, and future research directions based on the findings.

KEYWORDS

ad avoidance, digital advertising, framework-based review, research agenda, systematic literature review, TCCM framework

1 | INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, advertising has transformed into a digital market driven by digital technologies (Sharma et al., 2022). This new ad method continues to develop rapidly as a prevalent advertising strategy (Dodoo & Wen, 2019). Because of being the fastest-growing type of media, digital advertising has become a major source of

income for streaming media websites (Li & Yin, 2021). Compared with more conventional media platforms, digital environments have offered marketers a new venue to reach their customers quickly and directly (Koshksaray et al., 2015). Since the number of people using the Internet is increasing worldwide, the amount of advertising investment in this environment is increasing daily. According to Statista (2022a), the total number of Internet users globally reached 5 billion as of April

2022. In addition, global digital advertising spending amounted to US \$521.2 billion in 2021, estimated to reach US\$876 billion by 2026 (Statista, 2022b). Similarly, a recent survey of 18,100 companies in over 200 countries found that many organizations will cut their marketing budgets in 2022, but more than half of marketers are likely to keep investing in digital advertising channels (Hootsuite, 2022). These indicators show that firms are making substantial expenditures on digital advertising, encouraging scholars to study the impact of these digital advertising efforts (Jebarajakirthy et al., 2021). However, due to this increasing use of digital advertising, users are exposed to excessive ads that can irritate them and have negative attitudes toward these messages, like avoiding them (Ferreira & Barbosa, 2017; Sharma et al., 2022).

In the digital context, ad avoidance is defined as ‘any action that reduces exposure, or the “turning off,” to [digital] advertising’ (Kelly et al., 2020, p. 488). In the digital setting, users have been changing their media habits, using ad-blocking technologies such as Adblock or paying for platform services such as YouTube Premium to avoid or see fewer ads (Edelman, 2020). Accordingly, users who do not want to see ads, that is, people who avoid them, have attracted the attention of marketers in recent years (Singaraju et al., 2022). According to a recent survey, approximately 7 out of 10 people worldwide avoid ads (Edelman, 2020). Furthermore, by early 2021, the average ad-blocking rate all over the world was estimated at 37% (Statista, 2022c). As a result, digital media environments are overloaded with advertising messages, but consumers only recognize a small part of them (Jung, 2017). This has become particularly detrimental for digital advertising, which is the fastest-growing form of media and the primary source of revenue for streaming media websites (Li & Yin, 2021). According to recent Adobe research, ad blockers cost digital publishers approximately US\$40 billion in losses yearly, increasing the rate (Rua, 2021). In addition, ad avoidance is a prominent marketing phenomenon and is a considerable problem for marketers because it harms the advertising industry by hampering the target of brands to affect consumers (Baek & Morimoto, 2012; Mpinganjira & Maduku, 2019; Youn & Kim, 2019a).

Although the phenomenon of ad avoidance, such as zapping and leaving the room, occurs in traditional media (Huh et al., 2015; Speck & Elliott, 1997b), people are more resistant to ads in the digital environment, believing that their access to online content is free (Frade et al., 2021; Logan, 2013). Therefore, with increasing digital ad spending, the issue of ad avoidance in the digital context has attracted more attention from both practitioners and scholars. Although there have been many empirical studies on digital ad avoidance, these studies have not been well put together, and there is not much evidence that they lead to a clear understanding and implications. It is somewhat surprising that a phenomenon that is so mature for scholars and so important for practitioners, such as digital ad avoidance, has not been examined in a holistic overview. The increasing number of research articles on this topic shows that literature reviews are needed to follow how the field has developed (Maseda et al., 2021).

Moreover, several factors influencing digital ad avoidance, such as ad irritation, ad intrusiveness, and ad scepticism, have been

addressed in previous empirical research, but the antecedents of this phenomenon are unclear, and a ‘bird's-eye view’ is needed. Due to the lack of systematic review studies on digital ad avoidance, it can be argued that this need has not been met, and the research field has not yet been unstructured (Acampora et al., 2022). Furthermore, a recent literature review was conducted on ad avoidance, but it was not a systematic and comprehensive study (Ho, 2021). Besides, it focused more on general ad avoidance than digital context. Some scholars claim that pointing out the limitations of the prior reviews could motivate and justify the need for a new one (Lim, Rasul, Kumar, & Ala, 2022; Paul et al., 2021). Accordingly, it remains unclear what we know and do not know from a holistic perspective on the topic in the digital context, which points out a significant gap in the body of knowledge. The current study aims to present a holistic perspective on digital ad avoidance by applying a systematic literature review method to fill this gap. Accordingly, we aim to answer the following questions: (RQ1) *what do we know about digital ad avoidance?* (RQ2) *how do we know about digital ad avoidance?* and (RQ3) *where should research on digital ad avoidance be heading?* To answer these questions, we used the framework-focused approach, a subtype of domain-based systematic literature review (Lim & Rasul, 2022; Paul & Criado, 2020). Then, we adopted the TCCM framework (Theory, Context, Characteristics, and Methodology) (Paul & Criado, 2020; Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019).

As Palmatier et al. (2018) suggested, this review contributes to the digital ad avoidance literature in several ways. First, this study provides a comprehensive overview of the current knowledge related to RQ1. In addition, the current review identifies inconsistencies in previous results and discusses the constructs, such as antecedents, outcomes, mediators, and moderators. It also develops an integrative framework to give a comprehensive overview of these constructs that have emerged in previous studies. Second, in response to RQ2, this review assesses existing theories, contexts, and methodological approaches used in the field of digital ad avoidance. Third, by explaining new research insights, current gaps, and future research paths in this article (RQ3), this study intends to reveal a general overview of the subject for future research and help scholars find topical areas worth investigation (Palmatier et al., 2018; Shi et al., 2021). Finally, this review is expected to provide important contributions to practitioners trying to understand more about digital ad avoidance. Consequently, given the increment in digital advertising spending, scholars and practitioners need to understand the mechanism and integrative framework of digital ad avoidance (Li et al., 2020).

The remainder of this study is organized as follows. First, we introduce a conceptual background of digital ad avoidance. Second, we elaborately describe the research methodology used in this study. Third, we discuss the results, such as publication year, thematic evolution, productive journals and prominent fields, most influential articles, and widespread constructs. Fourth, we explain the most commonly used theories, contexts, and methodologies related to the research field. Then, we present a future research agenda on digital ad avoidance. Finally, we provide this review's limitations and its contributions to the field and practitioners.

2 | CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

With the rapid advent of digitalization, the advertising industry has improved its strength in achieving marketing goals targeting potential consumers (Estrada-Jiménez et al., 2017). This has led to an unprecedented increase in the average consumer's exposure to brand messages (Cho & Cheon, 2004; Lee & Cho, 2020; Tudoran, 2019), and as a result, brands have come to consider digital advertising as a reliable way to engage with their audiences and strengthen their brand communications.

Despite the enthusiasm to use digital advertising opportunities, which means increased profitability for the advertising industry, it should be noted that consumer responses are becoming an issue of concern for marketers (Kelly et al., 2020). The fact that modern humans live under a massive message bombardment has become far more tragic with the advancement of digital media. That is, users are growingly exposed to an 'advertising fog' when using online platforms, where they feel surrounded and attacked by their senses by uninvited ads and commercial messages (Bang et al., 2018). Therefore, the feeling of being overwhelmed by the ubiquity of online ads makes consumers avoid them (Baek & Morimoto, 2012; Seyedghorban et al., 2016; Wei et al., 2019).

2.1 | Ad avoidance from the past to the present

Avoidance is defined as 'the energization of behaviour or the 'spring to action' caused by negative stimuli' (Kelly et al., 2021, p. 346), while ad avoidance behaviour is 'all actions by media users that differentially reduce their exposure to ad content' (Speck & Elliott, 1997b, p. 61). Ad avoidance is considered among the most serious threats to brands' ability to reach their audiences (Baek & Morimoto, 2012; Cho & Cheon, 2004; Kelly et al., 2021; Tuan et al., 2022). In the early studies, a conceptualization of ad avoidance behaviour has been revealed in terms of traditional media. For instance, Zufryden et al. (1993) focused on the role of zapping behaviour on advertising effectiveness, while Clancey (1994) questioned the associations between being in the room with a tuned television set, exposure to advertisements, and abandoning the channel. On the other hand, Speck and Elliott (1997b) developed a holistic perspective on ad avoidance, including the concepts of zapping and exposure. They defined different avoidance strategies (cognitive, behavioural, and mechanical) by addressing traditional media ad exposure.

Moreover, exploring the antecedents of digital ad avoidance is of great importance for gaining insights into the core of the phenomenon (Edwards et al., 2002; Kelly et al., 2021). Following the studies that revealed inspiring results on the axis of traditional media, much research has been seeking to understand the avoidance dynamics of digital media. When consumers face any type of digital ads, they generally develop negative attitudes such as scepticism toward ads, intrusiveness perception, the sense of ad clutter, privacy concerns, goal impediment, and ad irritation (Baek & Morimoto, 2012; Chung &

Kim, 2021; Lin et al., 2021; Morimoto, 2021; Rejón-Guardia & Martínez-López, 2014; Seyedghorban et al., 2016).

2.2 | Understanding digital ad avoidance and its components

As seminal research, Cho and Cheon (2004) conducted a study to gain insights into reasons for avoidance and constructed a comprehensive model detailing the motives behind ad avoidance behaviour on the Internet. They explored that perceived goal impediment, perceived ad clutter, and prior negative experience could predict avoiding ads in terms of cognitive, affective, and behavioural ways. The cognitive component involves the consumer's trust in the message stimuli, such as ignoring the ad in the case of a negative evaluation (Prendergast et al., 2014). Thus, cognitive avoidance might be considered as 'the psychological defense mechanism' (Seyedghorban et al., 2016, p. 121) that reveals an 'intentional lack of attendance' (Cho & Cheon, 2004, p. 91) to Internet ad messages. The affective dimension of ad avoidance covers consumers' emotional responses to branding messages. Unlike cognitive avoidance, affectivity involves feelings such as antipathy and hate rather than a specific and physically avoiding activity (Youn & Kim, 2019b). Therefore, consumers are prompted to eliminate this source of annoyance when they face the ad message (Cho & Cheon, 2004). Finally, behavioural avoidance consists of clicking the ad-free content, scrolling down the pages, removing the display ads and pop-ups, using ad-blockers, and so on (Baek & Morimoto, 2012; Cho & Cheon, 2004; Seyedghorban et al., 2016; Tudoran, 2019). Consumers often dislike or feel irritated against ad messages and come up with an end by behaviourally avoiding the ad as they were repeatedly exposed to ad clutter which distracts the aim of Internet use (Elliott & Speck, 1998; Prendergast et al., 2014; Seyedghorban et al., 2016). Therefore, the sequence of forming such attitudes may encourage a rational inference that consumers' reactions against online ads lead to these commercial messages being deactivated in concrete ways in digital media.

Accordingly, as Cho and Cheon (2004) have stated, one should keep in mind that behavioural avoidance activities are more than just a 'lack of participation' (p. 91). As might be suggested, there is a clear distinction between active and concrete behavioural avoidance and a cognitive reaction such as ignoring the ads in online settings. For instance, Youn and Kim (2019b) differentiated ad avoidance strategies based on antecedent-output continuity when a particular behaviour occurs. That is, behavioural avoidance arises from a more rigorous and devoted effort, while cognitive avoidance uses conditioned learning to avoid ads without significant cognitive thought (Youn & Kim, 2019b). Given that consumers are highly exposed to the ubiquity of online messages, they might demonstrate higher reactance to regain their control of online ads through tangible, demanding, and offensive reactions in terms of behavioural avoidance, such as using ad-blockers (Youn & Kim, 2019b). So, behavioural avoidance differs from cognitive avoidance because it does not require much thinking. Instead, it is

a learned behaviour that makes people react quickly and strongly to brand messages.

2.3 | Users' avoidance of ads in digital environment

In more recent studies, the ad avoidance phenomenon in digital media has been discussed in various aspects. For instance, Kelly et al. (2020) suggested the approach–avoid framework (Elliot, 2006) to elucidate the antecedents of approaching or avoiding ads on Facebook, highlighting that consumer responses have polar ends that lead to engaging in pleasant content or avoiding those that are irritating. In doing so, they described both terms as ‘active/passive engagement’ and ‘active/passive avoidance’ on an interactive continuum level. Following introducing a typology of incentives in engaging and avoiding ads on social networking sites, they adopted the approach-and-avoidance framework as the polar ends ‘on a continuum of consumer interaction that goes from active engagement to passive engagement, to passive avoidance to active avoidance’ (Kelly et al., 2020, p. 501). The seven components they put together were relevance, cut through, authenticity, reward, time, social outcomes, and referral (Kelly et al., 2020). As the authors stated, interrupting a task stimulates passive avoidance, like ignoring the messages—previously defined as cognitive avoidance by Cho and Cheon (2004)—while remaining time triggers passive engagement.

In addition to research on the antecedents of digital ad avoidance, several studies have addressed practical tools and techniques to avoid online advertising messages. Verlegh et al. (2015) argued that online advertising is growingly perceived as expansive and irritating, motivating users to avoid it through concrete means such as installing ad-blocker software. Unfavourable beliefs, perceptions, and emotions toward online and mobile ads play a significant role in adopting ad blocking behaviour (Brinson & Britt, 2021; Graham, 2021; Tudoran, 2019). These negative feelings and beliefs certainly stem from the fact that online ads impose some limitations, from memory overhead on mobile devices with small data caps (Tudoran, 2019) to impeding users from achieving their goals such as socializing, browsing, or information-seeking (Söllner & Dost, 2019). Since consumers are often forcibly exposed to unwelcoming ads in the online environment, they exhibit a significant psychological reactance response, along with a state of irritation against the hindrance to achieving their personal online goals (Brinson & Britt, 2021; Seyedghorban et al., 2016). Redondo and Aznar (2018) stated that users' ad-free browsing and goal-oriented Internet usage experiences have become more accessible with ad-blocking software. Therefore, their promise of absolute dominance over online advertisements, as well as being user-friendly such as ease of installation and usage, has allowed ad blockers to become a popular means of avoiding advertisements in online environments.

Moreover, personalized ads, which are designed and targeted to pursue users' data and online traces, have become increasingly widespread due to technological advances (Brinson et al., 2018; Brinson &

Britt, 2021). Despite certain consumer benefits, personalized messages are also on the radar of ad blockers. Brinson et al. (2018) reported that consumers who are concerned about their control over access to online content show a reactance to personalized advertising, thus deciding to avoid them through ad-blockers. Similarly, Brinson and Britt (2021) asserted that scepticism and irritation responses to ads significantly impact their preference for using ad-blockers over customized brand messages.

To summarize, this study addresses digital ad avoidance as an emotional, cognitive, and behavioural response predicted by the characteristics of ads, users' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs toward online advertising and disruption to consumers' online usage goals. The methodological construction of this review draws on the rationale that inquires how and why users avoid digital ads by listing and categorizing the key drivers that have been addressed in the avoidance literature for a few decades.

3 | METHODOLOGY

A study that presents a systematic review of the literature on a particular topic, theory, or method builds on previous research to provide a solid foundation for future research (Paul & Criado, 2020). The systematic literature review is defined as ‘a comprehensive, synthesizing, and integrated research procedure that uses a set of replicable methods to locate, search for, and review research or related literature’ (Tang et al., 2021, p. 2). This review is an important resource as it provides an up-to-date and systematic summary of the available evidence on specific topics (Mackenzie et al., 2012).

There are three types of systematic literature reviews: domain-based analysis, theory-based analysis, and method-based review (Paul & Barari, 2022). Besides, the domain-based review is divided into five: structured review, framework-based review, bibliometric review, review aiming for theory development, and hybrid review (Paul & Criado, 2020). We chose a framework-based review in this study because we aimed to answer questions like ‘what do we know, how do we know, and where should we be going?’ about digital ad avoidance (Lim & Rasul, 2022). Such frameworks ‘facilitate the combining and synthesizing research in a domain’ (Paul & Barari, 2022, p. 3). Among framework-based reviews, we adopted the TCCM framework (Paul & Criado, 2020; Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019). It may assist others in gaining a clear one-stop grasp of the breadth and scope of theories, contexts, characteristics, and methodologies necessary to justify and conduct empirical research, resulting in a greater effect in the field (Paul et al., 2021). It has a four-phase review of the topic: ‘theoretical background, the main variables explored in the article, the characteristics of the study, and the main methods used’ (Loose et al., 2022, p. 2). We preferred TCCM for several reasons: (1) Systematic reviews that examine a specific field or topic with the TCCM framework are likely to have a robust structure (Khatri & Duggal, 2022; Paul & Criado, 2020), and recent studies have shown that it is also more acceptable and produces more comprehensive and useful results (De Keyser & Kunz, 2022; Hassan et al., 2022; S. Wang,

Cheah, & Lim, 2022). (2) It helps in the theoretical and empirical investigation of a research topic (Ghorbani et al., 2022; Hassan et al., 2022). (3) It is often used to identify the key variables and relationships of a field of interest by performing an analysis of its characteristics. This allows for a deeper examination of the key dimensions, antecedents, consequences, mediators, and moderators of the topic under review to provide an integrative framework (Bhattacharjee et al., 2022; Ghorbani et al., 2022). (4) It is a good way to write a future research agenda, which is an essential part of review studies (e.g., Jebarajakirthy et al., 2021; Kalia et al., 2022; S. Wang, Cheah, & Lim, 2022). (5) The TCMM framework has recently been favoured in studies that address the digital context of a topic (e.g., Ghorbani et al., 2022; S. Wang, Cheah, & Lim, 2022).

Designing a protocol is an important part of systematic literature reviews because it ensures rigorous planning, consistency in practice, and transparency so that other people can replicate it (Paul et al., 2021). The transparency and reproducibility of research methodologies are the most important aspects of such reviews (Chandler & Hopewell, 2013). We adopted and practised our dataset in this review by following the Scientific Procedures and Rationales for Systematic Literature Reviews (SPAR-4-SLR) protocol (Paul et al., 2021) for searching, selecting, and evaluating publications. Such protocols explain why the review is being done, how it will be done, and how it will be evaluated (Moher et al., 2015). Despite the preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol, which originates from the health sciences and is also frequently used in the social sciences, the SPAR-4-SLR protocol is the most up-to-date and rigorous review procedure in the social sciences, especially in the marketing field (Lim, Kumar, Verma, & Chaturvedi, 2022; Paul et al., 2021). This protocol (see Figure 1), which comes from the marketing field, consists of three main stages: *assembling*, *arranging*, and *assessing* (Lim, Kumar, Verma, & Chaturvedi, 2022; Paul et al., 2021).

3.1 | Assembling

The initial stage of the SPAR-4-SLR protocol is assembling (Figure 1), which entails the identification and acquisition of papers for review. We determined the domain (digital ad avoidance), research questions (RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3), source type, and source quality during the *identification* stage. In this review, we only chose articles (including in press) published in academic journals as the *source type*. Since academic journals support scientific advances and are subject to rigorous peer review, they are the most popular in review studies (Paul et al., 2021). In addition, we considered the Australian Business Dean's Council (ABDC) Journal Quality List and the SCImago Journal Rank to evaluate *source quality*. In business and marketing, the ABDC list is a comprehensive and widely used journal categorization system (Grossmann et al., 2019; Hollebeek et al., 2022). It focuses on business and marketing journals, and because review articles are multidisciplinary, many publications may not be included. To avoid this limitation, the SCImago list, which covers a wider range of disciplines, was chosen as a second list for judging quality in this review

(Lee et al., 2021). As a result, we only included articles from academic journals in at least one of the latest 2019 ABDC lists or SCImago rankings (Lee et al., 2021). These are the most popular journal quality lists that have often been used in previous marketing reviews (Bhattacharjee et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2021; Paul et al., 2021).

To acquire the data we needed (*acquisition* stage), we used a variety of approaches. First, we decided to search using two electronic databases. It is generally a good idea to search at least two relevant databases to get enough breadth and depth on a reviewed topic (Green et al., 2006; Martín-Martín et al., 2021). These databases were Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus, often preferred in previous systematic literature reviews (Cavalinhos et al., 2021; Tanrikulu, 2021). Scholars assume that WoS is one of the most important academic databases for examining research contributions, and the content contained in this database is regarded to be of the highest quality standards (Merigó et al., 2015). There are also more than 15,000 journals and over 90 million documents in the WoS (Forliano et al., 2021). On the other hand, Scopus has a broader range of journals and publications than WoS (Falagas et al., 2008). It includes 36,377 journals and 11,678 publishers such as Elsevier, Wiley, Sage, Emerald, and Taylor worldwide (Tang et al., 2021). Also, its coverage of research areas and journals is growing steadily and is almost 60% bigger than WoS (Zhao & Strotmann, 2015). Moreover, it is beneficial for covering smaller research fields in more depth, such as digital ad avoidance, and provides a good balance between quality and coverage (Cruz-Cárdenas et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2020). In conclusion, WoS and Scopus databases used in this review are valuable data sources of proven quality. Both are the most common databases for searching the body of knowledge (Ruiz-Real et al., 2020). In addition, using both together leads to a complete review (Sánchez et al., 2017), and as stated by Ali et al. (2022), 'it covers maximum relevant articles and retains content/face validity' (p. 3).

Second, we identified relevant keywords for searching the electronic databases mentioned above. In review studies, it is important to consider all keywords relevant to the review topic to identify a comprehensive body of literature and ensure the content validity of the research (Aveyard, 2014; Koseoglu, 2020). One of the most common ways to detect related keywords is to check previous reviews on the subject (Koseoglu, 2020). However, there was no prior review on the topic. Thus, we attempted to determine a keyword formation model to ensure content validity based on our experience and examining the articles in the literature to select the most pertinent search terms (Vrontis et al., 2021). As a result, we followed the search formula using the Boolean OR operator on an article's title, abstract, and author keywords: 'ad avoid' OR 'ad avoidance' OR 'advertis* avoid' OR 'advertis* avoidance' OR 'avoid ad' OR 'avoid advertis*' OR 'avoidance ad' OR 'avoidance advertis*' OR 'ad-avoid' OR 'ad-avoidance' OR 'avoid-ad' OR 'avoid-advertis*' OR 'advertis* evasi*' OR 'advertis* evasi*' OR 'ad evasi*' OR 'ad evasi*' OR 'resistant to advertis*' OR 'ignor* ad' OR 'ignor* advertis*' OR 'ad ignor*' OR 'advertis* ignor*' OR 'avoid* of personalized ad*' OR 'avoid* personalized ad*' OR 'behaviour of avoid* ad*' OR 'block* advertis*' OR 'advertis* block*' OR 'ad-block*' OR 'skip* ad*' OR 'skip-ad' OR 'ad-skip*' OR 'skip* video ad*' OR 'nonskip* ad*' OR

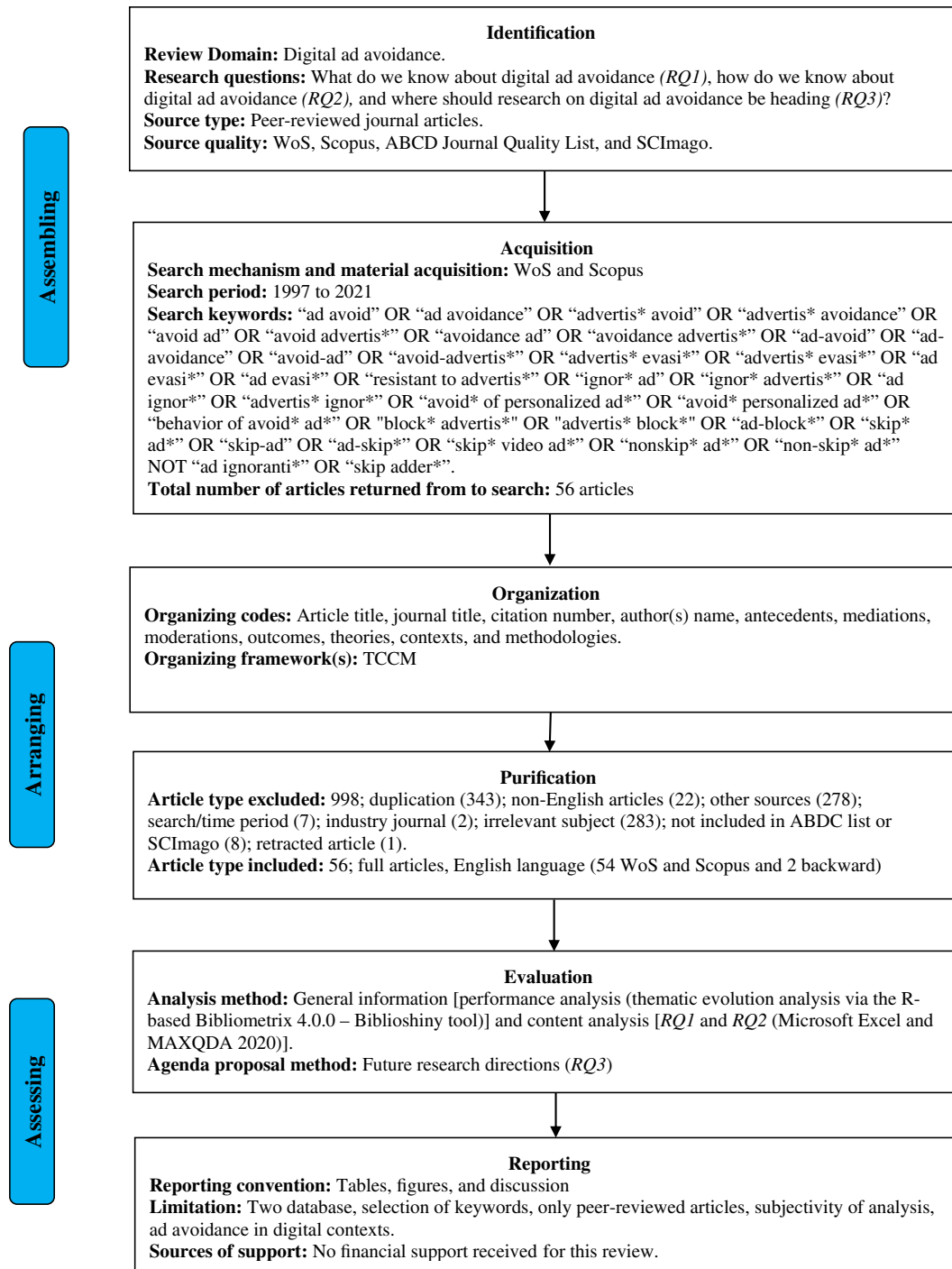


FIGURE 1 Review procedure using the SPAR-4-SLR protocol.

‘non-skip* ad*’. On the other hand, the keywords ‘ad ignoranti*’ OR ‘skip adder*’, which are concepts related to health and science fields, were excluded with the Boolean NOT operator.

At the end of this phase, we collected the published or in-print research articles from 1998, when the first article was published, to December 31, 2021, in the WoS and Scopus databases on February 8, 2022, using keywords for titles, abstracts, and keywords.

3.2 | Arranging

The arranging stage of the SPAR-4-SLR protocol (Figure 1) comprises the organization and purification of items retrieved from the search (Lim et al., 2021). The *organization* stage was followed: First, the publications obtained from the WoS and Scopus databases were combined into a single dataset, and duplicate publications were removed.

Second, we checked the publications in the dataset for exclusion criteria such as language, document type, publication date, and source type. Third, for the subject relevance, the remaining articles in the dataset were coded separately as 'relevant/irrelevant' by the first and second authors. At this point, some papers' titles, abstracts, and keywords were enough to rule out a possible publication, while for others, the whole article had to be read (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). In addition, Cohen's kappa coefficient formula (Cohen, 1960) for intercoder reliability was calculated. Next, we checked the remaining articles in the dataset for source quality in the ABDC and SCImago lists of the journals in which they were published. Finally, following the research protocol, the snowball sampling method was used to see if new articles could be added to the dataset (Wohlin, 2014).

In terms of *purification*, we adopted a five-step approach consistent with the organization process in this study (Kumar et al., 2022). In the first step of the purification, a total of 998 publications, 449 WoS and 549 Scopus, were combined into a single dataset. Then 343 *duplicated* publications were removed from the dataset, leaving 655 publications. In the second step, initially, to deal with the language issue and minimize the impact of translation on meaning, we included only English (*language*) articles (Tang et al., 2021). English is widely accepted as the standard language for scientific research (Pertusa-Ortega et al., 2021). This led to the exclusion of 22 publications. Then, we selected only peer-review empirical, conceptual, and review journal articles as the *document type* in this review. They are regarded as 'verified knowledge' and are expected to have the greatest influence in the field (Keupp & Gassmann, 2009).

On the contrary, we excluded other sources such as books, book chapters, book reviews, editorials, conference papers, thesis/dissertations, industry reports, working papers, and commentaries, as they might lack peer review and academic rigour (Lim et al., 2021). As a result of these processes, 278 publications were removed from the dataset, the remaining 355 articles. Due to the scope of the current review, articles published up to December 31, 2021, were evaluated, and thus seven articles were excluded from the dataset as they were published in 2022. Additionally, in line with the protocol of this study, we excluded two articles as they were published in industry journals rather than academic journals. As a result, 346 peer-reviewed articles remained in the dataset.

In the third step, the first and second authors independently coded the remaining articles in a 'relevant/irrelevant' manner about subject relevancy. For the relevant articles, only the directly relevant ones were considered, but the indirectly relevant ones were excluded. The directly relevant criterion was that the articles had to investigate digital ad avoidance as an exogenous or endogenous variable in the research design (Bolt et al., 2022). We calculated the intercoder reliability using Cohen's kappa coefficient formula (Cohen, 1960). The results showed that the average reliability coefficient was $K = (.64)$, indicating significant intercoder reliability (Cohen, 1960; Landis & Koch, 1977). As a result of this process, to ensure complete agreement between the internal coders, the authors discussed and reached a consensus on the inconsistent codes (Behera et al., 2019; Zheng & Ling, 2021). After consensus, a total of 283 publications not directly

related to the research topic were removed from the dataset, leaving only 63 relevant articles.

In the fourth step, we checked the articles remaining in the dataset for *source quality* in the ABDC and SCImago lists of the journals in which they were published. A total of eight articles not included in both lists were removed. We also removed one article because the journal's editorial board retracted it, and 54 articles were retained. In the final step of purification, based on the review protocol, the remaining 54 peer-reviewed articles in the dataset were analysed using the snowball sampling technique (Wohlin, 2014). The term 'snowball' indicates searching the bibliographies of already recognized publications for other potentially relevant articles (Hiebl, 2021).

Although scholars may choose to review only articles published in specific journals and available through keyword searches of databases, it is claimed that searches using keywords in databases could still miss relevant publications (Hiebl, 2021). Therefore, we considered this snowball sampling technique in two phases to identify articles that meet all review criteria and contain potential answers to research questions (Cavalinhos et al., 2021; Webster & Watson, 2002). First, we backwards reviewed the citations of the articles in the dataset to identify previous articles (if any) that were missed in a keyword search of the databases (Valinatajbahnamiri & Siahtiri, 2021). Second, we forward reviewed using Google Scholar to identify articles that cite articles from the dataset identified in the previous stages (Loose et al., 2022; Wohlin, 2014). As a result of these reviews, we added two articles to the dataset using the backward method. However, any articles were not added forward because the publications we found did not meet our protocol criteria. A total of 56 peer-reviewed articles remained in the dataset.

Before proceeding to the assessing stage, we developed a data extraction form to transparently reduce human error and bias, ensure the procedure's reproducibility, and record the necessary information for review for the *organization* stage (Tranfield et al., 2003; Vrontis et al., 2021). Researchers use this form to code and record each article, called the organization's sublevel (Paul et al., 2021). In accordance with this form, the authors independently coded in an Excel sheet according to the TCCM framework (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019) along with the bibliometric data such as citation number, author(s) name, article title, journal title of the articles. The coding results from two coders (first and second authors) were cross-checked to ensure a reliable/trusted, accurate, robust, and unbiased sample.

3.3 | Assessing

Evaluation and reporting are the two sub-stages of the stage of *assessing* (Figure 1) (Paul et al., 2021). Regarding the *evaluation*, we performed a content analysis of peer-reviewed papers, which were included in the dataset of this study because of the framework-based approach like TCCM (Ghorbani et al., 2022; Paul et al., 2021). The review findings tend to be more reliable when the TCCM framework is used to evaluate and analyse the content of the body of knowledge (Ameen et al., 2022). In addition, content analysis is suitable for

systematic literature reviews and synthesizing research in a field and is widely used by researchers (Wei et al., 2022). This content analytical approach was applied to the coding form created by the authors in the previous stage (organization). Additionally, we imported the articles into the data analysis software MAXQDA 2020 (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2021) so that it would be easier to organize and analyse them in a structured way (Bolt et al., 2022). On the other hand, we used the R-based Bibliometrix 4.0.0-Biblioshiny tool to examine the thematic evolution of the digital ad avoidance domain (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

The final stage, called *reporting*, involved the development of tables and figures based on the comprehensive content analysis of the evaluation stage (Ghorbani et al., 2022). This included findings such as publication year, journal of publication, the most cited articles, widely used constructs, theories, contexts, and methodologies.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | General information

4.1.1 | Year of publication

Since there are separate data collections or multiple studies within an article, 56 articles contained 62 studies. A total of 62 empirical studies from the years 1998–2021 on digital ad avoidance were published. Since the first article on digital ad avoidance was published in WoS or Scopus in 1998, the research period began in 1998. This article was published in the context of e-mail ads (Elliott & Speck, 1998). As shown in Figure 2, after 2017, except for 2020, there was a growing trend of digital ad avoidance publications. Two-thirds of the articles (66%) were published after this date. This trend underlines the need for an overview of the current status of this research issue (Bornhausen, 2022).

On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic may have led to a drop in publications in 2020. It is claimed that, particularly at the beginning of the pandemic, there was a decrease in the number of published works and a reduction in the rate of published articles with international teams (Cai et al., 2021; Giustini et al., 2021). However, 2021 saw the largest increase in the number of articles on the topic compared with the previous year, and this year was the most productive, with 17 articles (27%).

Figure 3 shows the thematic evolution in the digital ad avoidance phenomenon over the last two decades. To create this figure, we used the abstracts of the articles and performed the analysis through the R-based Bibliometrix 4.0.0-Biblioshiny tool (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Similar to a recent review (Xu et al., 2022), we splinted 23 years, that is, the main period, into three sub-periods: 1998–2010, 2011–2017, and 2018–2021. Figure 3 indicates that there is a marked shift in research themes across these three sub-periods. For example, the dominance of studies focusing on the ‘advertising medium’ as well as ‘ad avoidance’ between 1998 and 2010 shifted to ‘ad avoidance’, especially on ‘social media’, ‘privacy concern’, ‘perceived ad’, ‘goal impediment’, and ‘regression analysis’ between 2011 and 2017. In

addition, although the main dominant topic in the last sub-period is still ‘ad avoidance’, ‘Facebook users’ and ‘structural equation modeling (SEM)’ themes draw attention in this sub-period. Some of the themes that emerged during this period were continuations of previous themes, and there was a connection in their content. For instance, the ‘Facebook users’ theme is an evolution of ‘goal impediment’, ‘privacy concern’, and ‘perceived personalization’ themes. On the other hand, the ‘regression analysis’ theme that dominated the 2011–2017 period evolved into ‘SEM’ in the 2018–2021 period. This shows that SEM has recently been frequently preferred as an analysis technique in digital ad avoidance research.

4.1.2 | Journal of publication

Table 1 shows the journals published on digital ad avoidance and their number of articles. Some journals with the most articles are: International Journal of Advertising ($n = 9$), Journal of Advertising ($n = 6$), Journal of Marketing Communications ($n = 4$), Computers in Human Behaviour ($n = 4$), and Journal of Interactive Advertising ($n = 3$). Although 31 different journals published articles on this topic, the vast majority had three or fewer articles (88%), so their number seemed limited.

Unsurprisingly, about half of the papers (52%) that focused on digital ad avoidance appeared in the marketing field (Table 1). At the same time, the field of information systems covers a quarter of the articles reviewed (25%), followed by social psychology journals with three articles (9.67%). Apart from the importance of marketing and information systems journals, few articles on this topic have been published in other fields, such as communication, business and management, and economics. Furthermore, 35% of the journals in the dataset were published in ABDC A, while the vast majority of them were published in SCImago Q1 journals. This means that studies on digital ad avoidance have not been published in premier journals, like ABDC A*, and that future research can fill this gap (Bornhausen, 2022).

4.1.3 | The most cited articles

As with previous systematic literature review studies (Cavalinhos et al., 2021; Jebarajakirthy et al., 2021; Vrontis et al., 2021), Table 2 presents the 10 most cited papers on digital ad avoidance. These articles accounted for the large majority (83%) of all citations of all articles in the dataset. The article with the most citations was Edwards et al. (2002), with 1320 citations, followed by Cho and Cheon (2004), with 1119 citations. These two articles can be considered seminal works on digital ad avoidance as they were the first articles on ad avoidance conducted solely in the context of the Internet and empirically expounded why people avoid advertising on the Internet (antecedents). Also, Kelly et al. (2010) and Baek and Morimoto (2012) were the third and fourth most cited articles, with 750 and 564 citations, respectively. While the former was the first empirical article examining ad avoidance related to social networking sites, the latter was the first to address the issue related to

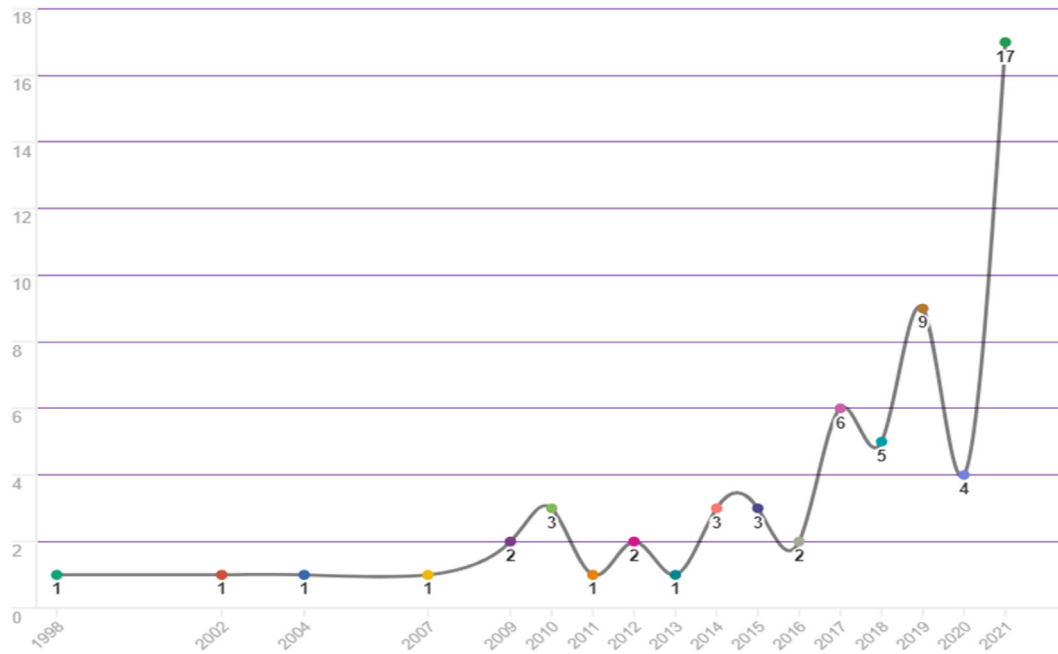


FIGURE 2 Articles across year of publication note: as of December 31, 2021.

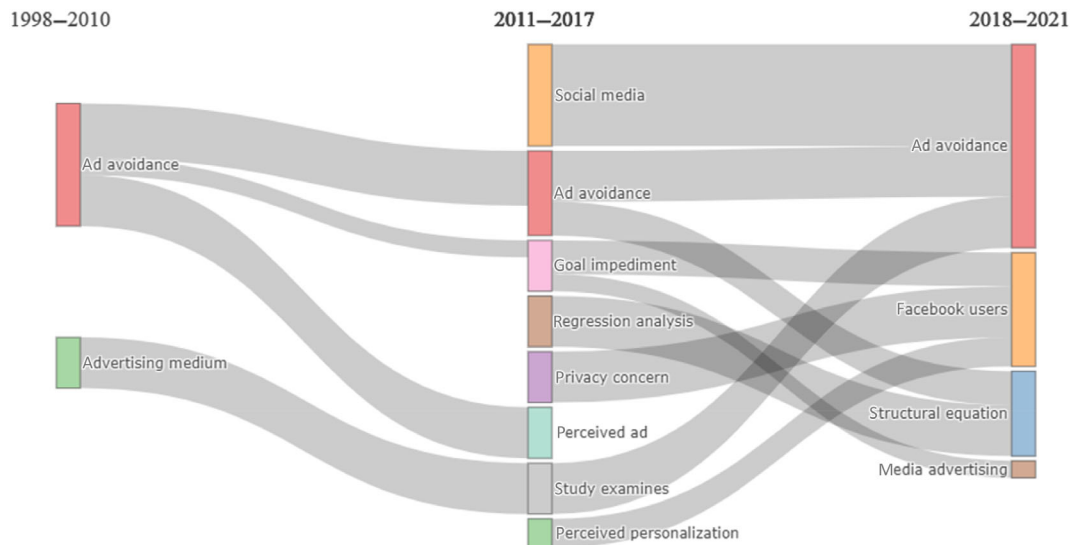


FIGURE 3 Thematic evolution of digital ad avoidance research (R-based Bibliometrix 4.0.0–Biblioshiny tool).

personalized advertising. According to Table 2, on the other hand, slightly less than half (40%) of the 10 articles with the most citation influence were published in the Journal of Advertising.

4.2 | What do we know about digital ad avoidance?

To answer RQ1 in this study, we examined the widespread constructs (characteristics). Based on Ghorbani et al. (2022) and

Jebarajakirthy et al. (2021), we formed and discussed the constructs of the articles according to the frequently preferred antecedents, outcomes, mediators, and moderators and then proposed a conceptual framework (see Figure 4). In addition, Table 3 summarizes the key constructs and theories most commonly used in digital ad avoidance research. Furthermore, based on prior studies (e.g., Bang et al., 2018; Jebarajakirthy et al., 2021), we have classified some of those constructs into three major categories: ad-related factors, user factors, and platform-based factors.

TABLE 1 Journals and number of articles

Research field	Journal	No. of articles	ABDC	SCImago
Marketing	International Journal of Advertising	9	A	Q1
Marketing	Journal of Advertising	6	A	Q1
Marketing	Journal of Marketing Communications	4	B	Q1
Information Systems	Computers in Human Behaviour	4	A	Q1
Marketing	Journal of Interactive Advertising	3	B	Q1
Social Psychology	Social Behaviour and Personality	2	Not listed	Q3
Communication	Chinese Journal of Communication	2	Not listed	Q1
Marketing	Journal of Promotion Management	2	B	Q1
Marketing	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	2	A	Q1
Marketing	International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising	2	C	Q4
Information Systems	Telematics and Informatics	2	C	Q1
Information Systems	Behaviour & Information Technology	2	A	Q1
Marketing	Journal of Business Research	2	A	Q1
Marketing	Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising	2	B	Q3
Social Psychology	Cyberpsychology, Behaviour, and Social Networking	2	Not listed	Q1
Marketing	Journal of Advertising Research	1	A	Q1
Business and Management	Journal of Applied Business Research	1	Not listed	Q4
Clinical Psychology	Journal of Behavioural Addictions	1	Not listed	Q1
Economics	Journal of Business Economics and Management	1	B	Q2
Information Systems	Information	1	Not listed	Q2
Social Psychology	Journal of Community Psychology	1	Not listed	Q1
Marketing	Journal of Consumer Marketing	1	A	Q2
Marketing	Australasian Marketing Journal	1	A	Q1
Marketing	Journal of Global Fashion Marketing	1	B	Q1
Information Systems	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology	1	B	Q1
Marketing	International Journal of Electronic Marketing and Retailing	1	C	Q3
Information Systems	Electron Markets	1	A	Q1
Marketing	International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management	1	Not listed	Q1
Marketing	Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	1	B	Q1
Information Systems	Internet Research	1	A	Q1
Information Systems	Electronic Commerce Research and Applications	1	C	Q1

TABLE 2 Ten most cited articles

Rank	Article	Journal title	Citations ^a	Average citations per year ^b
1	Edwards et al. (2002)	Journal of Advertising	1320	66
2	Cho and Cheon (2004)	Journal of Advertising	1119	62.17
3	Kelly et al. (2010)	Journal of Interactive Advertising	750	62.50
4	Baek and Morimoto (2012)	Journal of Advertising	564	56.40
5	Elliott and Speck (1998)	Journal of Advertising Research	437	18.21
6	Jung (2017)	Computers in Human Behaviour	199	39.80
7	Tran (2017)	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	142	28.40
8	Seyedghorban et al. (2016)	Journal of Advertising	112	18.67
9	Ham (2017)	International Journal of Advertising	101	20.20
10	Jin and Villegas (2007)	Cyberpsychology, Behaviour, and Social Networking	94	6.27

^aBased on Google Scholar (May 26, 2022).

^bWe created it by calculating the current year minus the publication year.

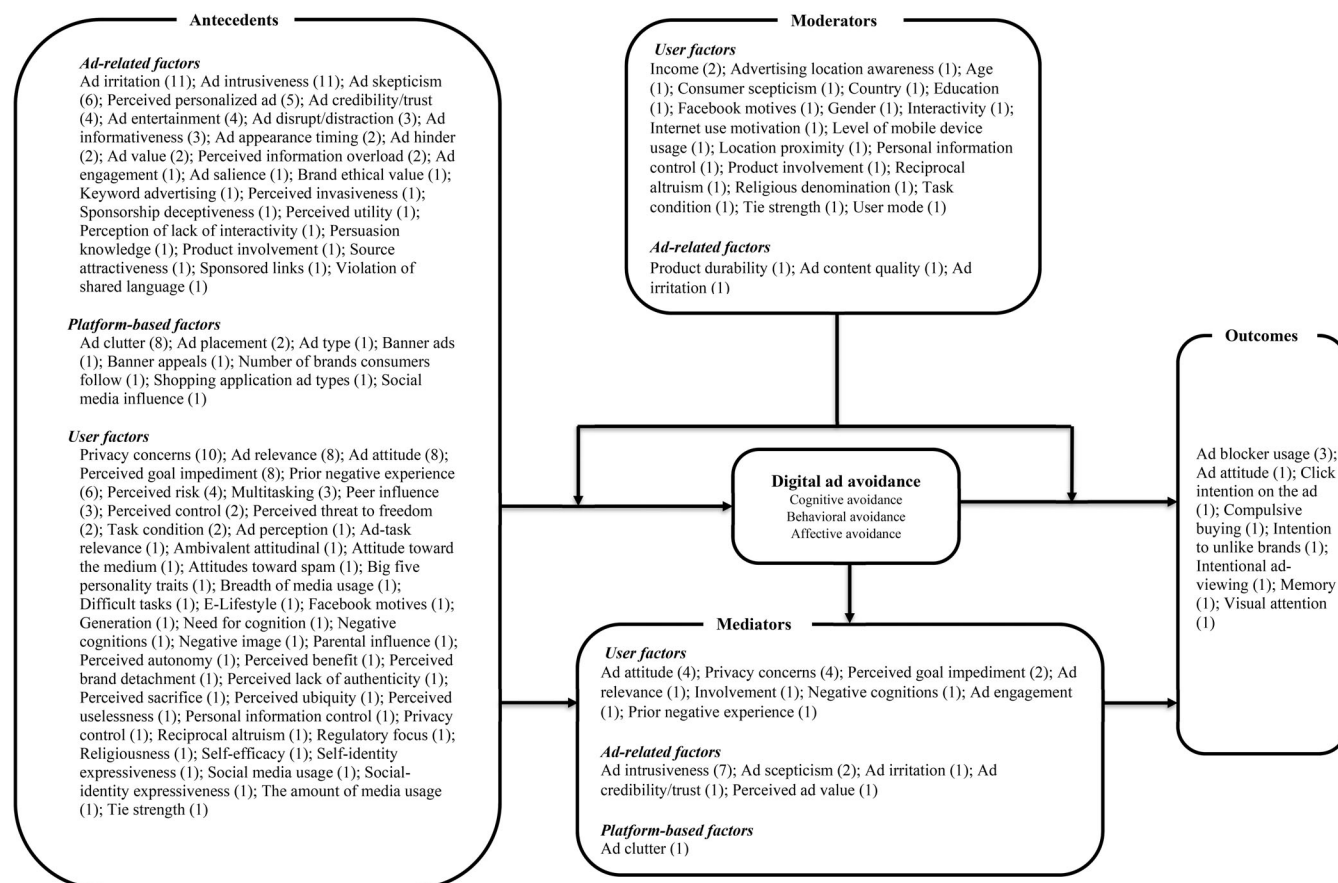


FIGURE 4 Integrative/conceptual framework of digital ad avoidance.

4.2.1 | Antecedents

Antecedents reveal the factors that influence individuals' digital ad avoidance. We have divided them into three main categories and discussed them in detail below.

Ad-related antecedent factors

Ad-related antecedent factors include the characteristics of advertising that could influence digital ad avoidance. A total of 25 ad-related antecedents were revealed. Among them, the most used ones as follows: ad irritation ($n = 11$), ad intrusiveness ($n = 11$), ad scepticism ($n = 6$), personalized ads ($n = 5$), ad credibility/trust ($n = 4$), ad entertainment ($n = 4$), ad disrupt/distraction (3), ad informativeness ($n = 3$), ad appearance timing ($n = 2$), ad hinder ($n = 2$), ad value ($n = 2$), and perceived information overload ($n = 2$). We briefly discussed some of them below.

Ad irritation occurs when consumers find advertising messages scattered and irritating (Kim & Han, 2014), which equals annoyance (Huo et al., 2021). It is an important factor in attitudes toward digital ads (Raines, 2013) and can reduce advertising effectiveness and purchase intention (Ducoffe, 1995; Luo, 2002; Sharma et al., 2022). A recent meta-analytic review claimed that mobile advertising could irritate consumers, leading to negative attitudes and a decreased desire to receive mobile advertising (Maseeh et al., 2021). Moreover,

previous studies have shown that ad irritation has increased digital ad avoidance (Cho & Cheon, 2004; Edwards et al., 2002; Niu et al., 2021).

Ad intrusiveness is defined as 'the degree to which advertisements in a media vehicle interrupt the flow of an editorial unit' (Ha, 1996, p. 77). Consumers perceive ad content as intrusive when they are unfamiliar with them or do not expect to receive them (Rejón-Guardia & Martínez-López, 2014). Consumers who find advertising intrusive tend to avoid digital ads, ignore them or conceal them from their screens (Dodoo & Wen, 2021). Additionally, consumers may not remember the information they are exposed to in intrusive ads, resulting in lower ad effectiveness and reduced purchase intention (Riedel et al., 2018; van Doorn & Hoekstra, 2013). Previous studies in the literature suggested that ad intrusiveness is one of the most important factors in predicting digital ad avoidance and that there is a positive relationship between the two concepts (Chung & Kim, 2021; Dodoo & Wen, 2019; Li et al., 2002; Li & Yin, 2021). The more intrusive an ad is judged to be, the more likely the consumer will avoid ads, such as affective, behavioural, and cognitive responses (Riedel et al., 2018). Contrary to this, consumers who see ads may have more positive attitudes toward the ad and the brands advertised if they find it less intrusive (Kim & Huh, 2021).

Ad scepticism is defined 'as the tendency toward disbelief of advertising claims' (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998, p. 160).

TABLE 3 Key constructs and theories most used in digital ad avoidance research^a

Key constructs and theories	Definition	Citation
Constructs		
Digital ad avoidance	'Any action that reduces exposure, or the "turning off", to [digital] advertising'.	Kelly et al. (2020, p. 488)
Ad irritation	It occurs when consumers find advertising messages scattered and irritating.	Kim and Han (2014)
Ad intrusiveness	It is defined as 'the degree to which advertisements in a media vehicle interrupt the flow of an editorial unit'.	Ha (1996, p. 77)
Ad scepticism	It is defined 'as the tendency toward disbelief of advertising claims'.	Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998, p. 160)
Personalized ad	It is the advertising technique whereby a marketer creates tailored content for a product or service based on past customer activity online.	Tran (2017)
Privacy concerns	It is related to how concerned a consumer is about a possible interference with their right to prevent personal information from being shared with others.	Baek and Morimoto (2012)
Ad relevance	It is a mental process stimulated by external sources in which customers evaluate how well an ad message enables them to meet their needs, goals, and values.	Celsi and Olson (1988), Jung (2017)
Ad attitude	It is a mental state and inner feeling reflected in customers' positive or negative ad-related behaviour.	Sharma et al. (2022)
Perceived goal impediment	It refers to the perception that digital ads are making it difficult for people to accomplish their goals when doing things like web surfing and content searching.	Shan et al. (2020)
Prior negative experience	It relates to a user's prior experience of receiving results that lack usefulness, satisfaction, or incentive for clicking on Internet ads.	Cho and Cheon (2004), Li et al. (2017)
Ad clutter	It refers to a user's assessment of the quantity of advertising on a platform and is defined 'as one's belief that the amount of advertising in a medium is excessive'.	Speck and Elliott (1997a, p. 40)
Ad credibility/trust	It is a consumer's a positive view of the truthful and believable of the content of an ad.	Tran (2017)
Ad entertainment	It is the 'ability to fulfil audience needs for escapism, diversion, aesthetic enjoyment, or emotional release' through ad.	Ducoffe (1996, p. 23)
Ad disrupt/distraction	It refers to 'advertising in a medium that distracts a person from consuming the media content'.	Walsh (2010)
Ad informativeness	It can be defined as "the ability of advertising to inform consumers of product alternatives so that purchases yielding the greatest possible satisfaction can be made"	Ducoffe (1996, p. 22)
Ad blocker usage	It is the use of small and easy-to-install technology-driven applications by users to block ads online.	Mattke et al. (2017)
Theories		
Psychological reactance theory	It highlights a set of motivational effects that are likely to occur when people's freedoms are lost or threatened. This theory reveals the motivations of the individual to restore their lost freedom.	Brehm and Brehm (2014)
Approach-avoidance theory	It proposes two functions: in approach motivation, positive/desirable events or possibilities trigger an action, while in avoidance motivation, negative/undesirable events or possibilities do.	Elliot (1999)
Persuasion knowledge model	It helps explain to consumers by building knowledge of its marketers' motives and tactics, allowing them to accept or reject persuasive attempts.	Friestad and Wright (1994), Youn and Kim (2019a)
Limited capacity model	It posits that interactions with media messages are continuous and that information is simultaneously encoding, storage, and retrieval.	Lang (2000), Read et al. (2022)

^aWe presented in the table the key constructs and theories that were processed at least three times in our dataset.

Customers who are sceptical about the message in the ads are more likely to ignore the messages and possibly other ads in the advertising medium (Kelly et al., 2010). Several studies have examined the effects of ad scepticism on digital ad avoidance. Their results have shown that

while some studies have found a positive relationship between them (Baek & Morimoto, 2012; Brinson & Britt, 2021; Kelly et al., 2010), other studies have uncovered an insignificant relationship (Loureiro, 2018; McCreery & Krugman, 2017; Tran, 2017).

Personalized ad is the advertising technique whereby a marketer creates tailored content for a product or service based on past customer activity online (Tran, 2017). Personalization is a term that is often used interchangeably with terms such as customization, segmentation, individualization, and one-to-one marketing (Chandra et al., 2022). A personalized digital ad is claimed to be well-received by customers (Maseeh et al., 2021). Although there is evidence that it gets higher response rates, many people still use ad-blocking software to avoid this (Brinson & Britt, 2021). Baek and Morimoto (2012) revealed that consumers could avoid personalized ads if the advertising message is not relevant to their needs and interests and if there are privacy concerns. Some previous studies have claimed that personalized digital ads negatively affect digital ad avoidance (Ham, 2017; Nyheim et al., 2015; Youn & Kim, 2019a), while one study suggested that there is no significant relationship between them (Tran, 2017). Additionally, a recent meta-analytic study revealed that personalization has little impact on people's positive attitudes toward receiving mobile ads (Maseeh et al., 2021).

Antecedent-related user factors

User antecedent factors are user attributes that may impact digital ad avoidance. As shown in Figure 4, 44 user factor antecedents were discovered. The most commonly used are as follows: privacy concerns ($n = 10$), ad relevance ($n = 8$), ad attitude ($n = 8$), perceived goal impediment ($n = 8$), prior negative experience ($n = 6$), perceived risk ($n = 4$), multitasking ($n = 3$), peer influence ($n = 2$), perceived control ($n = 2$), perceived threat to freedom ($n = 2$), task condition ($n = 2$).

Privacy concerns are related to how concerned a consumer is about a possible interference with their right to prevent personal information from being shared with others (Baek & Morimoto, 2012). Privacy concerns could threaten the freedom of the digital environment (Kelly et al., 2021), and Internet users who view or click on ads might fear losing their personal information. However, if they feel safe about their privacy, they have good feelings and attitudes toward digital ads (Celebi, 2015). It has also been suggested that privacy concerns are among the top user motivations for installing ad blockers (Brinson & Britt, 2021; Söllner & Dost, 2019). Furthermore, prior literature established that privacy concerns positively impact digital ad avoidance (Aiolfi et al., 2021; Dodoo & Wen, 2021; Morimoto, 2021; Youn & Shin, 2019). However, few studies suggested there was no significant relationship between them (Jung, 2017; Nyheim et al., 2015).

Ad relevance is a mental process stimulated by external sources in which customers evaluate how well an ad message enables them to meet their needs, goals, and values (Celsi & Olson, 1988; Jung, 2017). According to Li et al. (2020), since ad relevance reflects users' perceptions of utility and usefulness, this is a suitable variable to represent ad perception in advertising. On the other hand, if the ads in the digital environment are irrelevant to the consumer, the consumer may experience a lack of attention toward ads (Riedel et al., 2018). Furthermore, in the literature on digital ad avoidance, ad relevance is one of the most important antecedents (Dodoo & Wen, 2019; Kelly et al., 2020). Prior literature extensively found that as ad relevance

increases, digital ad avoidance decreases (Brinson & Britt, 2021; Dodoo & Wen, 2021; Jung, 2017; Kelly et al., 2010; Li et al., 2020). However, one study claimed that ad relevance had no significant effect on digital ad avoidance (Youn & Shin, 2019).

Ad attitude is a mental state, and inner feeling reflected in customers' positive or negative ad-related behaviour (Sharma et al., 2022). Prior research has shown that consumer attitudes affect their intentions (Maseeh et al., 2021; Xu, 2006). Personalization is also one of the most important factors that affect users' attitudes toward digital ads (Xu, 2006). On the other hand, most previous studies found a negative relationship between having a positive attitude toward ads and digital ad avoidance (Chinchanachokchai & de Gregorio, 2020; Kelly et al., 2021; Mikołajczak-Degrauwe & Brengman, 2014; Okazaki et al., 2012), whereas one study claimed that there was no significant relationship between them (Loureiro, 2018).

The term *perceived goal impediment* refers to the perception that digital ads make it difficult for people to accomplish their online goals, like web surfing and content searching (Shan et al., 2020). Compared with traditional media, since the Internet is believed to be a more targeted task, perceived goal impediment is more encountered (Cho & Cheon, 2004). If consumers find that a digital ad is impeding their goals, they will have a negative attitude toward the digital ad and will avoid it (Cho & Cheon, 2004; Li, 2019). The established literature suggests that perceived goal impediment positively influences digital ad avoidance (Bang et al., 2018; Chinchanachokchai & de Gregorio, 2020; Seyedghorban et al., 2016; Youn & Shin, 2019).

Prior negative experiences relate to a user's prior experience of receiving results that lack usefulness, satisfaction, or incentive for clicking on Internet ads (Cho & Cheon, 2004; Li et al., 2017). According to the learning from experience theory, people make decisions based on past experiences (Kolb, 1984). Prior negative experiences can influence perceptions and intentions, especially in the digital environment (Lee & Ma, 2012; Li & Yin, 2021). If users have plenty of negative experiences with ads, they may install an ad blocker and avoid future ads (Van den Broeck et al., 2018). Past studies suggest that prior negative experience positively affects digital ad avoidance (Cho & Cheon, 2004; Kelly et al., 2010; Li, 2019; Seyedghorban et al., 2016).

Platform-based antecedent factors

Platform-based factors contain the impact of the platform on which the ad is placed on digital ad avoidance. We found a total of eight platform-related antecedents. The most notable of them is ad clutter ($n = 8$).

Ad clutter refers to a user's assessment of the quantity of advertising on a platform and is defined 'as one's belief that the amount of advertising in a medium is excessive' (Speck & Elliott, 1997a, p. 40). To Speck and Elliott (1997a), ad clutter might influence 'attitude toward advertising in the medium, attitude toward the medium, ad avoidance, and use of the medium' (p. 39). It is also critical in determining advertising efficacy and effectiveness (Rejón-Guardia & Martínez-López, 2014). Ad clutter can be a threat to users' freedom or

get in the way of their search goals, which can lead them to dislike and avoid ads, in turn, reducing purchase intention and, ultimately, sales (Kelly et al., 2021; Li, 2019; Rejón-Guardia & Martínez-López, 2014). In summary, the established literature indicates that ad clutter positively impacts digital ad avoidance (Cho & Cheon, 2004; Elliott & Speck, 1998; Hong & Chang, 2013; Li, 2019; Seyedghorban et al., 2016).

4.2.2 | Outcomes

Outcomes show the factors influenced by digital ad avoidance. As Li et al. (2020) noted, the outcomes of digital ad avoidance have been little examined in the literature. According to Figure 4, the most commonly used outcome variables were ad blocker usage ($n = 3$), compulsive buying ($n = 1$), and intent-driven factors ($n = 2$). The desire to avoid ads on the Internet has increased the use of ad-blocking applications such as ad-blockers (Tefertiller, 2020). Digital ad avoidance positively impacts the currently used ad blocker while negatively impacting the previously used ad blocker. However, it does not significantly affect the use of ad blockers (Brinson & Britt, 2021). Additionally, compulsive buying is an uncontrollable urge to buy that occurs repeatedly and is usually caused by negative events or feelings (Sharif et al., 2022). A former study suggested that digital ad avoidance has no significant impact on compulsive buying (Mikołajczak-Degrauwe & Brengman, 2014). Finally, intent-driven factors such as click intention on the ad ($n = 1$) and intention to unlike brands ($n = 1$) were favoured as outcome variables in past digital ad avoidance studies, albeit very few. While a prior study found that digital ad avoidance had no impact on click intention on the ad (Aiolfi et al., 2021), another study showed a positive effect of ad avoidance on intention to unlike brands (Kwon et al., 2020).

4.2.3 | Mediators

According to Figure 4, we have categorized similar to antecedents in uncovering mediation variables for digital ad avoidance research, and we have discussed them in detail below.

Ad-related mediation factors

Ad-related mediation factors include the characteristics that can be influenced by antecedents and affect digital ad avoidance. We revealed a total of five ad-related mediators, such as ad intrusiveness ($n = 7$), ad scepticism ($n = 2$), and ad irritation ($n = 1$).

As previously mentioned, one of the most critical predictors of digital ad avoidance is ad intrusiveness (Chung & Kim, 2021; Dodoo & Wen, 2019; Li & Yin, 2021). The mediating role of ad intrusiveness has also been tested frequently in digital ad avoidance studies ($n = 7$). For example, while some studies have found that ad intrusiveness mediates the negative effect of ad relevance on digital ad avoidance (Dodoo & Wen, 2019, 2021), one experimental study revealed that it mediates the positive effect of multitasking on digital ad avoidance (Choi et al., 2021). In addition, a recent cross-sectional survey showed

that perceived control indirectly affects digital ad avoidance through ad intrusiveness (Li & Yin, 2021). Additionally, ad intrusiveness mediates the effect of personality traits such as neuroticism, openness to experience, and conscientiousness on digital ad avoidance (Dodoo & Wen, 2021).

Moreover, prior work found that ad scepticism has a mediating role in the effect of perceived personalization, privacy concern, and irritation on digital ad avoidance (Baek & Morimoto, 2012). However, another study revealed that the indirect effect of ad irritation on digital ad avoidance via ad scepticism is insignificant (Loureiro, 2018). Furthermore, one study found that ad irritation indirectly affects ad avoidance through ad scepticism (Baek & Morimoto, 2012).

Mediation-related user factors

Mediation variables on user factors include structures that may be influenced by antecedents and may impact the avoidance of digital ads. There are eight mediator variables that focus on user characteristics, such as ad attitude ($n = 4$), privacy concerns ($n = 4$), perceived goal impediment ($n = 2$), and perceived ad relevance ($n = 1$).

Previous literature has revealed that susceptibility to peer influence, social media influence, and social media platform usage indirectly affect digital advertising avoidance via ad attitude (Chinchanachokchai & Gregorio, 2020). Another recent study attempted to examine whether ad attitude mediated the negative effect of ad relevance on digital ad avoidance and found a significant indirect effect (Brinson & Britt, 2021). However, some prior studies have found that ad attitude does not mediate the relationship between ad irritation and digital ad avoidance (Brinson & Britt, 2021; Loureiro, 2018). Brinson and Britt (2021) similarly suggested that ad scepticism has no indirect effect on digital ad avoidance through ad attitude.

Moreover, previous studies have shown that perceived risk, self-efficacy, ad relevance, and information control indirectly affect digital ad avoidance through privacy concerns (Ham, 2017; Jung, 2017; Morimoto, 2021). In addition, the effect of personality traits such as neuroticism, openness to experience, and conscientiousness on digital ad avoidance is mediated by privacy concerns (Dodoo & Wen, 2021). On the contrary, Ham (2017) found that privacy concerns do not mediate the effects of perceived benefit, reactance, and perceived personalization on digital ad avoidance. Furthermore, perceived goal impediment has a mediating role in the impact of regulatory focus and ad-task relevance on digital ad avoidance (Bang et al., 2018; Li et al., 2017). In addition, Bang et al. (2018) found that the effect of ad-task relevance on digital ad avoidance was serially mediated by perceived goal impediment and ad engagement. Finally, a prior study indicated that perceived ad relevance had a mediating role in the effect of ad intrusiveness on digital ad avoidance (Dodoo & Wen, 2019).

4.2.4 | Moderators

Conditional effects (moderator variables) moderate the direction and strength of relationships between phenomena and provide a more comprehensive understanding of causal consequences (Vrontis

et al., 2021). According to Figure 4, we have detailed the moderator variables in the digital ad avoidance literature into two subheadings: ad-related moderator factors and moderation-related user factors.

Ad-related moderator factors

Ad-related moderator factors include the characteristics of advertising that can influence the direction and strength of relationships between digital ad avoidance and various variables. We have identified three ad-related moderators, named ad irritation ($n = 1$), product durability ($n = 1$), and ad content quality ($n = 1$).

The most recent study revealed that ad irritation negatively moderates the indirect effect of perceived ad intrusiveness on digital ad avoidance through perceived ad informativeness (Munawar et al., 2021). In addition, a recent experimental study examined the conditional effect of product durability on the relationship between multitasking and digital ad avoidance. As a result of this study, it was revealed that multitasking consumers showed more avoidance when they received the digital ad for durable goods than when they received the digital ad for non-durable goods (Choi et al., 2021). Finally, another study examined the conditional effect of ad content quality and found that when ad content quality is lower, the indirect effect of perceived control on digital ad avoidance via perceived intrusiveness is relatively stronger (Li & Yin, 2021).

Moderation-related user factors

Moderation variables about user factors include the traits of users that may influence the direction and strength of relationships between different variables and digital ad avoidance. We have confirmed 19 moderators such as demographic variables ($n = 6$), user mode ($n = 1$), tie strength ($n = 1$), and consumer scepticism ($n = 1$).

A study revealed that a higher monthly income reduces the effect of ad clutter and prior negative experience on digital ad avoidance (Li, 2019). Additionally, Seyedghorban et al. (2016) investigated whether the effects of perceived goal impediment and prior negative experiences on digital ad avoidance can be mitigated by telic and paratelic user modes. Their findings showed that perceived goal impediment positively impacts digital ad avoidance among telic users. In contrast, prior negative experience influences digital ad avoidance among paratelic users. Another research examined tie strength as a moderator variable. It demonstrated that when tie strength was high, while the effect of violation of shared language on digital ad avoidance was weaker, the effect of ad relevance and digital ad avoidance was stronger (Li et al., 2020). Finally, a recent cross-sectional survey examined the conditional effects of consumer scepticism and found that consumers who are highly sceptical about digital ads are more sensitive to the perceived intrusiveness on digital ad avoidance than less sceptical consumers. In addition, highly sceptical consumers are more likely than less sceptical consumers to avoid digital advertising when the ad is perceived as having low entertainment value (Chung & Kim, 2021).

4.2.5 | Integrative framework

Integrative/conceptual frameworks provide a guideline for future studies that might expand previous research to assist scholars in systematically understanding the knowledge (Hulland & Houston, 2020). In addition, similar to what Vrontis et al. (2021) have stated, marketers may benefit greatly from a framework like this because it provides a clear view of digital ad avoidance as a marketing issue. This framework may also warn marketers to consider various challenges before establishing their digital ad strategy (Vrontis et al., 2021). A synthesis of the findings of this study resulted in the integrative framework shown in Figure 4.

On the other hand, only six articles focus on cognitive, affective, and behavioural avoidance as sub-dimensions of ad avoidance. The main findings of these articles are presented in Table 4. For example, Ferreira and Barbosa (2017) found that informativeness and entertainment positively influence cognitive, emotional, and behavioural ad avoidance, while irritation negatively influences all three. In addition, Dadoo and Wen (2021) revealed that there is a negative relationship between perceived relevance and the three sub-dimensions of digital ad avoidance and that perceived intrusiveness mediates these relationships.

4.3 | How do we know about digital ad avoidance?

To answer RQ2 in this review, we elaborated on the theory, context, and methodology related to digital advertising avoidance, using the TCCM framework favoured by recent systematic literature reviews on digital marketing (Ghorbani et al., 2022).

4.3.1 | Theory (T)

A set of ideas that may be utilized to create a more fundamental explanation for a certain phenomenon is represented as a theory (Lim, Kumar, & Ali, 2022). Since the theory provides a basis to support the propositions put forward in research, theory-based research is undoubtedly more robust than research without a theory (Lim & Rasul, 2022). This systematic literature review uncovers some prominent theories underpinning digital ad avoidance studies. Table 5 shows the theories used in digital ad avoidance research. About half of the studies (48.4%) have at least one theoretical foundation. As multiple theories were used in some research (e.g., Niu et al., 2021; Youn & Kim, 2019a), this rate increased to 74.9%. The vast majority of these articles (88.7%) employed quantitative research methods, followed by qualitative research methods with 11.3%.

According to Table 5, a total of 24 different theories have been applied in prior studies on digital ad avoidance. The most widely accepted theory is the psychological reactance theory (PRT), with nine studies (14.5%), followed by the approach-avoidance theory and persuasion knowledge model (PKM), with 6.5% each. First, PRT highlights a set of motivational effects that are likely to occur when people's

TABLE 4 Main findings on the sub-dimensions of digital ad avoidance

Article	Sub-dimensions of digital ad avoidance	Independent variables	Dependent variables	Mediation variables	Main findings
Koshksaray et al. (2015)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive ad avoidance Affective ad avoidance Behavioural ad avoidance 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> E-lifestyle Need driven e-lifestyle Interest driven e-lifestyle Entertainment driven e-lifestyle Sociability driven e-lifestyle Importance driven e-lifestyle Uninterested driven e-lifestyle Novelty driven e-lifestyle 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ad avoidance Cognitive ad avoidance Affective ad avoidance Behavioural ad avoidance 	N/A	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> E-lifestyle → ad avoidance (+) Need driven e-lifestyle → cognitive ad avoidance (+) Interest driven e-lifestyle → cognitive ad avoidance (+) Entertainment driven e-lifestyle → cognitive ad avoidance (+) Sociability driven e-lifestyle → cognitive ad avoidance (+) Importance driven e-lifestyle → cognitive ad avoidance (+) Uninterested driven e-lifestyle → cognitive ad avoidance (no effect) Novelty driven e-lifestyle → cognitive ad avoidance (+) Need driven e-lifestyle → affective ad avoidance (–) Interest driven e-lifestyle → affective ad avoidance (+) Entertainment driven e-lifestyle → affective ad avoidance (+) Sociability driven e-lifestyle → affective ad avoidance (+) Importance driven e-lifestyle → affective ad avoidance (+) Uninterested driven e-lifestyle → affective ad avoidance (+) Novelty driven e-lifestyle → affective ad avoidance (+) Need driven e-lifestyle → behavioural ad avoidance (+) Interest driven e-lifestyle → behavioural ad avoidance (+) Entertainment driven e-lifestyle → behavioural ad avoidance (+) Sociability driven e-lifestyle → behavioural ad avoidance (+) Importance driven e-lifestyle → behavioural ad avoidance (+) Uninterested driven e-lifestyle → behavioural ad avoidance (+) Novelty driven e-lifestyle → behavioural ad avoidance (+)
Ferreira and Barbosa (2017)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive avoidance Affective avoidance Behavioural avoidance 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Informativeness Entertainment Irritation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Affective avoidance Cognitive avoidance Behavioural avoidance 	N/A	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Informativeness → cognitive ad avoidance (–) Informativeness → affective ad avoidance (–) Informativeness → behavioural ad avoidance (–) Entertainment → cognitive ad avoidance (–) Entertainment → affective ad avoidance (–) Entertainment → behavioural ad avoidance (–) Irritation → cognitive ad avoidance (+) Irritation → affective ad avoidance (+)

TABLE 4 (Continued)

Article	Sub-dimensions of digital ad avoidance	Independent variables	Dependent variables	Mediation variables	Main findings
					9. Irritation → behavioural ad avoidance (+)
Dodoo and Wen (2019)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive avoidance Affective avoidance Behavioural avoidance 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Big five personality traits Perceived relevance Perceived intrusiveness 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive avoidance Affective avoidance Behavioural avoidance 	Perceived intrusiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived relevance → cognitive ad avoidance (–) Perceived relevance → affective ad avoidance (–) Perceived relevance → behavioural ad avoidance (–) Perceived intrusiveness → cognitive ad avoidance (+) Perceived intrusiveness → affective ad avoidance (+) Perceived intrusiveness → behavioural ad avoidance (+) <p>Indirect</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived relevance → perceived intrusiveness → cognitive ad avoidance (–) Perceived relevance → perceived intrusiveness → affective ad avoidance (–) Perceived relevance → perceived intrusiveness → behavioural ad avoidance (–)
Youn and Kim (2019b)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive ad avoidance Behavioural ad avoidance 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived intrusiveness Perceived threat to freedom Negative cognitions Anger Perceived autonomy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive ad avoidance Behavioural ad avoidance 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Negative cognitions Anger 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived threat to freedom → cognitive ad avoidance (no effect) Perceived threat to freedom → behavioural ad avoidance (+) Perceived intrusiveness → cognitive ad avoidance (+) Perceived intrusiveness → behavioural ad avoidance (no effect) Negative cognitions → cognitive ad avoidance (+) Negative cognitions → behavioural ad avoidance (+) Anger → cognitive ad avoidance (no effect) Anger → behavioural ad avoidance (+) Perceived autonomy → cognitive ad avoidance (–) Cognitive ad avoidance → behavioural ad avoidance (+) <p>Indirect</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived threat → negative cognitions → cognitive ad avoidance (no indirect effect) Perceived threat → negative cognitions → behavioural ad avoidance (no indirect effect) Perceived threat → anger → cognitive ad avoidance (no indirect effect) Perceived threat → anger → behavioural ad avoidance (+)

(Continues)

TABLE 4 (Continued)

Article	Sub-dimensions of digital ad avoidance	Independent variables	Dependent variables	Mediation variables	Main findings
					5. Perceived intrusiveness → negative cognitions → cognitive avoidance (+) 6. Perceived intrusiveness → negative cognitions → behavioural avoidance (+) 7. Perceived intrusiveness → anger → cognitive ad avoidance (no indirect effect) 8. Perceived intrusiveness → anger → behavioural ad avoidance (+)
Dodoo and Wen (2021)	1. Cognitive avoidance 2. Affective avoidance 3. Behavioural avoidance	Perceived relevance	1. Cognitive avoidance 2. Affective avoidance 3. Behavioural avoidance	Perceived intrusiveness	1. Perceived relevance → cognitive ad avoidance (-) 2. Perceived relevance → affective ad avoidance (-) 3. Perceived relevance → behavioural ad avoidance (-) Indirect 1. Perceived relevance → perceived intrusiveness → cognitive ad avoidance (-) 2. Perceived relevance → perceived intrusiveness → affective ad avoidance (-) 3. Perceived relevance → perceived intrusiveness → behavioural ad avoidance (-)
Kelly et al. (2021)	1. Cognitive ad avoidance 2. Behavioural ad avoidance	1. Attitude to SNSs 2. Perceived clutter 3. Expectation of a negative experience owing to WOM 4. Privacy concerns 5. Privacy control	1. Cognitive ad avoidance 2. Behavioural ad avoidance	1. Affective ad response 2. Cognitive ad avoidance	1. Negative WOM → cognitive avoidance (+) 2. Advertising clutter → cognitive avoidance (-) 3. Privacy control → cognitive avoidance (-) 4. Privacy concerns → cognitive avoidance (-) 5. Advertising clutter → Behavioural avoidance (+) 6. Negative WOM → Behavioural avoidance (+) 7. Attitude to SNSs → Behavioural avoidance (-) 8. Privacy concerns → Behavioural avoidance (-) 9. Affective advertising response → cognitive avoidance (+) Indirect 1. Privacy control → affective ad response → behavioural ad avoidance (+) 2. Privacy concern → affective ad response → behavioural ad avoidance (+) 3. Negative attitude to Facebook → affective ad response → behavioural ad avoidance (-) 4. Perceived clutter → affective ad response → behavioural ad avoidance (+)

TABLE 4 (Continued)

Article	Sub-dimensions of digital ad avoidance	Independent variables	Dependent variables	Mediation variables	Main findings
					5. Negative WOM → affective ad response → behavioural ad avoidance (+) 6. Privacy control → affective ad response → cognitive ad avoidance (+) 7. Privacy concern → affective ad response → cognitive ad avoidance (+) 8. Negative attitude → affective ad response → cognitive ad avoidance (-) 9. Perceived clutter → affective ad response → cognitive ad avoidance (+) 10. Negative WOM → affective ad response → cognitive ad avoidance (+) 11. Affective ad response → cognitive ad avoidance → behavioural ad avoidance (+)

freedoms are lost or threatened. This theory reveals the motivations of the individual to restore their lost freedom (Brehm & Brehm, 2014). PRT provides important theoretical information to explain digital ad avoidance. It assumes that people will avoid ads when they perceive ads as threatening their freedom or autonomy to consume digital media content (Youn & Kim, 2019b). Prior literature suggested that several phenomena such as ad intrusiveness, ad irritation, and goal impediment threat to freedom can lead to psychological reactance as digital ad avoidance (Baek & Morimoto, 2012; Edwards et al., 2002; Nyheim et al., 2015; Shin & Lin, 2016; Youn & Kim, 2019b).

Second, approach-avoidance theory draws attention to digital ad avoidance studies. Approach-avoidance theory proposes two functions: in approach motivation, positive/desirable events or possibilities trigger an action, while in avoidance motivation, negative/undesirable events or possibilities do (Elliot, 1999). As for the ad context, if consumers find the ad funny or personally relevant, they like it, or else, if they find it disruptive, they dislike the ad and try to take some actions to avoid it. This situation can be explained by the approach-avoidance theory (Elliot, 2006; Kelly et al., 2020). Similarly, in the context of digital media, Kelly et al. (2020) emphasized that ‘if consumers do not ‘turn on’ or engage with the advertising, then they are ‘turning off’ or avoiding it. If they do not approach, they avoid [from it]’ (p. 501).

Third, PKM helps explain to consumers by building knowledge of marketers' motives and tactics, allowing them to accept or reject persuasive attempts (Friestad & Wright, 1994; Youn & Kim, 2019a). This theory examines how individuals assess benefits and risks when they lack knowledge and have conflicting attitudes about persuasion tactics (Ham, 2017). Morimoto (2021) argues that the PKM is an important theory for studying consumer responses to digital ad avoidance. A previous study also highlighted that persuasion knowledge

increases privacy concerns, triggering digital ad avoidance (Ham, 2017). Nevertheless, a recent study claimed persuasion knowledge does not impact digital ad avoidance (Morimoto, 2021).

Using multiple theories in studies would lead to richer insights (Lim & Rasul, 2022). In this review, the multiple theory rate was 21% (e.g., Lin et al., 2021; Niu et al., 2021; Youn & Shin, 2019). Therefore, there is a need to use multiple theories in the future. On the other hand, except for some theories such as PRT, approach-avoidance theory, PKM, and limited capacity, no theoretical approach has gained dominance over digital ad avoidance. This deficiency indicates that more theoretical perspectives on the subject are needed. Additionally, just over half of the articles reviewed in this study (51.6%) did not use a theoretical framework. Although it is possible to publish a work without using theories, it is certainly better to use theories as a guide for research, as their presence would reinforce the study's theoretical background (Lim & Rasul, 2022). As a result, the lack of reviews on the subject, in particular, may have hampered the discovery and development of given theoretical frameworks for the field (Acampora et al., 2022).

4.3.2 | Context (C)

The context describes the research and environmental conditions under which a study is conducted (Jebarajakirthy et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2021). Context can provide important benefits when the diverse conditions that define digital ad avoidance are specified (e.g., country, sample, gender distribution, and digital platform) and enhance representation (Lim & Rasul, 2022). Table 6 shows the research contexts for digital ad avoidance.

TABLE 5 Theories applied in digital ad avoidance studies^a

Theory	Original study	Number of studies	Total percentage	Citation
N/A	N/A	32	51.6%	Aiolfi et al. (2021), Hsieh et al. (2021), Söllner and Dost (2019)
Psychological reactance theory	Brehm (1966)	9	14.5%	Baek and Morimoto (2012), Brinson and Britt (2021), Chung and Kim, (2021), Edwards et al. (2002), Munawar et al. (2021), Shin and Lin (2016), Youn and Kim (2019a), Youn and Kim (2019b)
Approach-avoidance theory	Elliot and Thrash (2002)	4	6.5%	Kelly et al. (2020, 2021), Youn and Kim (2019a)
Persuasion knowledge model	Friestad and Wright (1994)	4	6.5%	Ham (2017), Youn and Kim (2019a), Morimoto (2021)
Limited capacity model	Lang (2000)	3	4.8%	Choi et al. (2021)
Communication privacy management theory	Petronio (2002)	2	3.2%	Brinson and Britt (2021), Mpinganjira and Maduku (2019)
Information theory	Shannon and Weaver (1949)	2	3.2%	Cho and Cheon (2004), Seyedghorban et al. (2016)
Consumer socialization theory	John (1999)	2	3.2%	Youn and Shin (2019), Chinchanchokchai and de Gregorio (2020)
Learning from experience theory	Kolb (1984)	2	3.2%	Cho and Cheon (2004), Seyedghorban et al. (2016)
Psychological resistance theory	Knowles and Linn (2004)	1	1.6%	Baek and Morimoto (2012)
Regulatory focus theory	Higgins (1997)	1	1.6%	Li et al. (2017)
Social influence theory	Deutsch and Gerard (1955)	1	1.6%	Niu et al. (2021)
Source-attractiveness theory	McCracken (1989)	1	1.6%	Lin et al. (2021)
Technology acceptance model	Davis (1989)	1	1.6%	Hong and Chang (2013)
Theory of psychological ownership	Pierce et al. (2003)	1	1.6%	Niu et al. (2021)
Big five personality	John and Srivastava (1999)	1	1.6%	Dodoo and Wen (2021)
Brand avoidance theory	Knittel et al. (2016)	1	1.6%	Niu et al. (2021)
Congruence theory	Heckler and Childers (1992)	1	1.6%	Dodoo and Wen (2019)
Cultivation theory	Gerbner and Gross (1976)	1	1.6%	Shin and Lin (2016)
General framework of avoidance behaviour	Speck and Elliott (1997b)	1	1.6%	Li et al. (2020)
Helping behaviour theory	Bendapudi et al. (1996)	1	1.6%	Kim and Huh (2021)
Innovation resistance theory	Ram and Sheth (1989)	1	1.6%	Hong and Chang (2013)
Privacy calculus theory	Culnan and Armstrong (1999)	1	1.6%	Youn and Shin (2019)
Protection motivation theory	Rogers (1975)	1	1.6%	Ham (2017)
Reciprocal altruism theory	Carter et al. (2021)	1	1.6%	Lin et al. (2021)

^aSince several research employed more than one data collection technique, the sum of the theories in the table may not equate to the total of the reviewed studies.

Concerning samples, this review revealed that while most studies (72.6%) prefer a general sample, about a quarter of studies (27.4%) choose a student sample. This suggests that researchers looked at various demographics when it came to avoiding digital ads (Jebarajakirthy et al., 2021). When examined in more detail, since students (young adults) are the largest and most active group of users on diverse digital platforms (Ham, 2017), it is not surprising that they are prominent in digital platform research. The consumer sample is the next most popular sample used in 17.7% of the studies. In addition, digital platform users such as Facebook users ($n = 11$), Internet users ($n = 8$), YouTube users ($n = 3$), and social

networking users in general ($n = 3$) attracted attention as a sample in empirical research. They were preferred as a sample by researchers, especially after 2017. Finally, with regard to gender distribution, Table 6 shows that this distribution is skewed. Only 22.5% of the articles in our dataset have a gender-balanced sample. Also, slightly less than half of the studies are female-dominated (46.8%), while only 22.5% of them are male-dominated.

Another context is the focus of the review on digital platforms. Table 6 shows the most commonly used digital platforms in digital ad avoidance studies. We find the Internet the most popular platform, with 32.3% of the articles in the dataset. This suggests that research on

TABLE 6 Research contexts in digital ad avoidance^a

Context	Number of studies	Total percentage	Context	Number of studies	Total percentage
Sample			Country		
Students	17	27.4%	United States	23	37.1%
Facebook users	11	17.7%	China	7	11.3%
Consumers	11	17.7%	N/A	5	8.1%
Internet users	8	12.9%	Germany	4	6.5%
Amazon Mturk	5	8.1%	South Korean	4	6.5%
YouTube users	3	4.8%	Multiple	3	4.8%
Social networking users	3	4.8%	Taiwan	3	4.8%
Adults	2	3.2%	France	3	4.8%
Teenagers	2	3.2%	Australia	2	3.2%
Mobile users	1	1.6%	Portugal	2	3.2%
WeChat users	1	1.6%	Iran	2	3.2%
Twitter users	1	1.6%	Spain	2	3.2%
Voters	1	1.6%	Japan	2	3.2%
Working professionals	1	1.6%	United Kingdom	2	3.2%
Citizens	1	1.6%	Belgium	2	3.2%
Instagram users	1	1.6%	Italy	1	1.6%
Platform			Romania	1	1.6%
Internet	20	32.3%	Singaporean	1	1.6%
Facebook	13	21%	South Africa	1	1.6%
Mobile	8	12.9%	Netherlands	1	1.6%
Social networking sites	6	9.7%	Pakistan	1	1.6%
E-mail	5	8.1%	Gender distribution		
YouTube	5	8.1%	Female	29	46.8%
Search engine	2	3.2%	Male	14	22.6%
Instagram	2	3.2%	Balanced	14	22.6%
Twitter	2	3.2%	N/A	5	8.1%
LINE	1	1.6%			
Online video ad	1	1.6%			
Podcast	1	1.6%			
WeChat	1	1.6%			

^aSince several research employed more than one data collection technique, the sum of the data in the table may not equate to the total of the reviewed studies.

digital ad avoidance is more focused on general Internet ads. In terms of social networking sites, 23 studies were conducted in the context of several types of social networking sites such as Facebook (Kelly et al., 2021), YouTube (Kim & Huh, 2021), Instagram (Chinchanachokchai & de Gregorio, 2020), Twitter (Morimoto, 2021), LINE (Morimoto, 2021), and WeChat (Li et al., 2020), while 11 studies considered social networking sites in general (Dodoo & Wen, 2021; Niu et al., 2021). These results are similar to a recent systematic review of customer engagement on social media (Lim & Rasul, 2022). Facebook is also the most popular, with 13 articles. This is not surprising given that Facebook is the world's most used online social networking site, with around 2.93 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2022d). It is an important channel for advertising campaigns, but additional research is

needed on other social networking sites, as user behaviour may differ from platform to platform (Vrontis et al., 2021).

The next most popular platform is mobile with 11.3% of papers ($n = 8$), followed by e-mail ($n = 5$). In particular, the increasing use of mobile devices and spending on mobile advertising (Statista, 2022e) may have made studies about advertising on this platform so important. While research on avoiding digital ads, particularly related to platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, increased after 2017, the e-mail platform has not been studied since 2013.

In terms of country, the results showed that while the vast majority of studies (87.1%) were based on a single country, only three articles examined digital ad avoidance across multiple countries simultaneously (see Table 6). This shows that important research

needs to discover cross-cultural factors (Busalim et al., 2022). On the other hand, empirical research on this topic was conducted in 19 different countries. About two-thirds of the studies were conducted in the United States ($n = 23$) and European countries ($n = 18$), such as Germany, France, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Belgium. In addition, 29% of the articles were carried out in Far Eastern countries ($n = 18$), such as China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. While studies on digital ad avoidance in the context of China and South Korea have attracted attention in recent years (e.g., Choi et al., 2021; Hsieh et al., 2021), the United States has shown a stable trend over the years.

In conclusion, it is not surprising that digital ad avoidance research is widespread in these countries. This may be due to the growth of the Internet and social networks in these countries and the increased digital marketing spending. However, little research has been conducted in the context of other regions or countries. Thus, studies in the context of different countries are required.

4.3.3 | Methodology (M)

Like Bolt et al. (2022), we assessed the methodology section of each article on the following four components: method, data collection technique, data analysis, and measurement of the focus variable. Table 7 shows the results for these components.

Regarding the research methods, our review shows that the vast majority of studies (88.7%) applied the quantitative method, but a tiny proportion of papers (11.3%) included the qualitative method. This is consistent with previous marketing reviews, which claimed that the studies lacked sufficient qualitative methods (Ghorbani et al., 2022; Lim & Rasul, 2022). While only one qualitative study on digital ad avoidance was conducted up to 2019 (Kelly et al., 2010), some researchers have since preferred this method relatively more frequently (Kelly et al., 2020; Kim & Huh, 2021; Söllner & Dost, 2019; Youn & Kim, 2019a).

Another methodology is the data collection technique of the articles included in this review. Table 7 shows digital ad avoidance research's most commonly used data collection techniques. Since the quantitative method dominates in the review, more than half of the studies use a cross-sectional survey technique (58.1%), and more than a quarter use an experimental technique (29%). Cross-sectional surveys may have been overused in digital ad avoidance research due to the ease and convenience of finding large numbers of participants via online platforms (Roth-Cohen & Avidar, 2022). Additionally, it is not surprising that the experimental technique is often preferred because it provides causal evidence for the possible effects of antecedents on digital ad avoidance (Loose et al., 2022). In addition, as of 2021, the eye-tracking technique has started to attract attention as a modern data collection technique (Hsieh et al., 2021; Onișor & Ioniță, 2021). It allows researchers to examine visual attention more accurately than self-reported measures (Bol et al., 2016). On the other hand, due to the little qualitative research, data collection techniques such as

interviews (Kelly et al., 2020; Kim & Huh, 2021) and focus groups (Kelly et al., 2010; Youn & Shin, 2019) were employed in a small number of articles in this study.

In terms of data analysis techniques, Table 7 illustrates the types of analysis used in digital ad avoidance studies. As expected, due to the prevalence of the quantitative method, SEM (38.3%) and regression analysis (36.7%) were the most commonly used analysis techniques. These results are similar to a recent review (Khatri & Duggal, 2022). Another prominent data analysis technique was partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) (11.7%). PLS-SEM has recently emerged as a remarkable statistical technique in the social sciences and has gained popularity in marketing (Gaspar & Fernandes, 2022). Furthermore, some studies used different tests, such as analysis of variance (ANOVA) with eight articles (13.3%) and t-test with seven articles (11.7%). The abundance of experimental studies in the dataset may have led to the prominence of these analysis techniques. Researchers traditionally use them to analyse experimentally collected data (Breitsohl, 2019). Finally, very few qualitative studies have used thematic analysis and content analysis techniques in digital ad avoidance research (Kelly et al., 2020; Youn & Kim, 2019a).

The final methodological component is how studies measure digital ad avoidance. As shown in Table 7, the vast majority of studies have measured the structure as overall digital ad avoidance (82.3%). Other preferred measures by scholars were behavioural, cognitive, and affective, which are sub-dimensions of digital ad avoidance, with 10, 9, and 8 articles, respectively. Finally, 12.9% of the studies preferred more than one measure (multiple measures).

4.4 | Where should research on digital ad avoidance be heading?

To answer the RQ3 in this review, we identified a future research agenda on digital ad avoidance based on the TCCM framework (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019). Based on the data analysed in systematic reviews, researchers can present research gaps in terms of theories, contexts, characteristics/constructs, and methodologies (Paul & Criado, 2020). We summarized future directions for research in Table 8.

4.4.1 | Theory (T)

Future studies seeking to expound on digital ad avoidance from a theoretical viewpoint can expect to achieve deeper insights if they utilize multiple theoretical frameworks (Lim & Rasul, 2022). A limited number of studies conducted by some scholars at different times have examined the phenomenon of digital ad avoidance through multiple theoretical perspectives. To illustrate, Brinson and Britt (2021) reached comprehensive results by considering both the PRT and the communication privacy management theory (CPMT). Youn and Kim (2019a) also based their studies on the PKM, PRT,

TABLE 7 Research methodology in digital ad avoidance^a

Methodology	Number of studies	Total percentage
Method		
Quantitative	55	88.7%
Qualitative	7	11.3%
Data collection technique		
Cross-sectional survey	36	58.1%
Experimental	18	29%
Eye-tracking	4	6.5%
Interview	4	6.5%
Focus Group	2	3.2%
Open-text survey	1	1.6%
The measure of the digital ad avoidance		
Overall digital ad avoidance	51	82.3%
Behavioural digital ad avoidance	10	16.1%
Cognitive digital ad avoidance	9	14.5%
Affective digital ad avoidance	8	12.9%
Multiple	8	12.9%
N/A	1	1.6%
Data analysis		
SEM	23	38.3%
Regression analysis	22	36.7%
ANOVA	8	13.3%
PLS-SEM	7	11.7%
t-test	7	11.7%
Thematic analysis	2	3.3%
Chi-square test	2	3.3%
Content analysis	1	1.7%
Correlation analysis	1	1.7%
Inductive	1	1.7%
Interpretive	1	1.7%
Cluster analysis	1	1.7%

^aSince several research employed more than one data collection technique, the sum of the data in the table may not equate to the total of the reviewed studies.

and approach-avoidance coping model. However, more research is needed on this matter. More importantly, as a finding reached in this systematic review, it should be emphasized that a more specific, detailed, and devoted effort should be put forward to strengthen digital avoidance theoretically. Although digital ad avoidance is addressed by 24 different theories in the reviewed literature, the variety of theoretical foundations on the topic is relatively limited, apart from a few theories that comprehensively explain the phenomenon (see Table 5). That is because 16 theories were examined only once.

On the one hand, the dominant theoretical models underlying the avoidance attitude were built on resistance, action-reaction, and reactance theories. Thus, we envision theoretical reinforcement efforts

evolving in two obvious directions. First, the concept will become far more transparent to professionals who need practical implications for predicting consumer behaviour or overcoming avoidance in the case of addressing multiple models to explain digital ad avoidance. Secondly, the avoidance phenomenon has been investigated mainly through the context of cognitive theories in the studies. However, emotional motivations, a determinant of consumers' attitudes toward advertising, seem to have not been sufficiently processed. Further digital ad avoidance studies should apply ad exposure theories that involve consumer engagement (Duff & Faber, 2011), because it is difficult to fully elucidate subconscious effects without employing attitudinal or emotional theories (Lo et al., 2014). For example, the role of such emotional states as message transportation (Green & Brock, 2000), flow (Brechman, 2010; Csikszentmihalyi, 1998), being hooked (Escalas et al., 2004), character identification (Cohen, 2001), empathy and engagement (Escalas & Stern, 2003)—which are frequently mentioned within the scope of the narrative ads and that theorize the user involvement toward the digital ads—on digital avoidance can be assessed to deeply explore the user motivations. By doing so, different dimensions of digital ad avoidance could be elaborated through a more profound understanding in terms of ad format, emotional reactions, and message content. In this respect, elaborating the affective motivations in the theory development process might lead the digital avoidance perspective to evolve into a more detailed and concrete phenomenon.

On the other hand, as stated by Rokonuzzaman et al. (2022), research examining technology and digitization at the individual level is mainly based on innovation diffusion theory (Rogers, 1995), the technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989), the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), and theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Among these theories, only one study (Hong & Chang, 2013) used the technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989) in the reviewed literature. Because of the digital context of ad avoidance, there is a great need for research that uses these theoretical approaches. Furthermore, Guo et al. (2020) investigated attitudes toward information content in social networking sites using the stressor-strain-outcome (SSO) model (Koeske & Koeske, 1993), which is a comprehensive method for studying the consequences of stressful conditions concerning the use of technology (Ayyagari et al., 2011; Cao et al., 2018). They positioned the variables according to the model and found that information irrelevance and overload trigger social networking site fatigue. In addition, it was found that the feeling of fatigue leads users to avoid information content, and the time pressure experienced by social media users strengthens the motivation for avoidance behaviour. Based on the SSO model (Koeske & Koeske, 1993), irrelevance and overload are the key predictors of information avoidance behaviour. Similarly, on social platforms where users act under time pressure to reach the relevant information, sponsored content can turn into irrelevant information clusters, triggering fatigue, and avoiding the ads. These assumptions can be an encouraging starting point to evaluate the SSO model in future digital ad avoidance studies.

TABLE 8 Future directions for research (TCCM)

TCCM	Future directions
Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent, and how, can leveraging multiple theoretical models extend the literature of the digital ad avoidance phenomenon? How do the dimensions of emotional motivations (character identification, empathy, message appeals, humour, celebrity endorsement, narrative approach, and so on) contribute to further investigating digital ad avoidance in terms of ad exposure, engagement, and advertising format? Can considering the SSO model be an alternative way of investigating digital ad avoidance in terms of stressful conditions that emerge when using social media? What involvement-related factors and theories explain why consumer engagement can be related to digital ad avoidance? Is the Transportation-Imagery Model considered in the context of avoidance at the intersection of narrative ad format and emotional/cognitive involvement? Can systematic models such as FCB Grid related to product/category involvement that are able to deeper explain digital avoidance?
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the distinctive findings of additional research including different digital environments or social platforms, i.e., Instagram, Twitter, Tik-Tok, and YouTube? What results can be achieved by expanding the research sample in experimental studies on digital ad avoidance by reaching subjects from various demographic structures apart from youngs and college students? Can focusing on the distinctive and comparable aspects of digital ad avoidance among young people and adults offer ways to better understand the issue? To what extent can a gender-balanced research sample help to explore connections related to digital ad avoidance? Do cross-cultural comparisons and repeating studies in different countries lead to new and different findings to reveal consumer insights?
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do variables such as ad informativeness, multitasking, peer influence, social media usage, and source attractiveness ad disrupt/distraction have a mediating role in explaining 'how' and 'why' digital ad avoidance occurs? Can testing moderator variables, such as user involvement, gender, message design, user-related factors, digital ad format, branding name, product category, and so on, that have the potential to regulate individual avoidance offer deeper insights? What are the possible outcomes of digital ad avoidance? (e. g., ad blocker usage and compulsive buying) What kind of long-term results and economic damages do brands encounter due to digital ad avoidance? What are the roles of user factors such as demographics, socio-cultural, socio-economic, and personality traits on digital ad avoidance?
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What insights can experimenting with qualitative research methods provide? Does employing qualitative research methods provide in-depth findings toward the understanding of digital ad avoidance in terms of user insights? To what extent is it effective to conduct longitudinal studies on digital ad avoidance and to observe the sample within a certain period in terms of the generalizability of the results? How does combining the statements of participants in experimental studies with the results of new-generation technological research methods like eye-tracking devices shed light on the affective, cognitive, and behavioural aspects of avoiding digital ads? How would developing a digital ad avoidance measurement scale that represents the unique user experience-oriented nature of social media and digital platforms improve research results? Can meta-analytical evaluation of the factors influencing digital ad avoidance transform the diversity of concepts and findings in the literature into the context of an ultimate and collective outcome?

Moreover, we assume that illuminating results will be reached on digital ad avoidance using the consumer involvement theories, as involvement was associated with the 'perceived relevance based on inherent needs, values, and interests' (Zaichkowsky, 1985, p. 342). Only a few studies have addressed involvement in digital ad avoidance in the reviewed articles (Jung, 2017; Onişor & Ioniță, 2021; Van den Broeck et al., 2018). Therefore, more research needs to be conducted. Considering the relative importance, this review developed suggestions for using involvement theories in future studies.

First, studies should be conducted investigating the effects of consumer engagement with ads on digital ad avoidance. For instance, the transportation-imagery model (Green et al., 2004; Green & Brock, 2000) describes the individual's response to a narrative story with the concept of transportation, which means being immersed or

absorbed into the message. It is also a kind of information processing that includes emotions and cognitive elaboration. Additionally, transportation involves an experiential involvement state in the narrative message (Green et al., 2004). Thus, it can explain the ad avoidance attitude differently at the intersection of narrative focus, emotional impact, and involvement. Pioneering work on transportation and persuasion promises that the theory can also be applied to the digital ad avoidance field. To illustrate, transportation can reduce underlying cognitive and argumentative tasks that counteract persuasion (Appel & Richter, 2010; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010). Consumers experiencing transportation also feel strong emotional arousal and become identified with the story characters (Green, 2006; Ratcliff & Sun, 2020; Wang & Calder, 2006). Therefore, if users figure out that the message has a storyline until the skip button appears, they may

opt-out of the avoidance behaviour or decision. The potential output could indicate that being transported into the narrative message moderates the ad avoidance inclination. However, this prediction needs to be confirmed by future studies.

Secondly, it was found that product involvement has positive effects on ad avoidance behaviour. Van den Broeck et al. (2018) claimed that ad avoidance tendency would be stronger in cases where product involvement is low. However, in the aforementioned study, product involvement was evaluated depending on whether the participants were familiar with the product. Therefore, a theory related to product involvement may need to be considered to investigate the phenomenon systematically. Moreover, one study in the reviewed literature underlined the necessity of conducting category-based investigations (Choi et al., 2021). However, no guidance was given regarding the category selection or classification criteria. We foresee that the Foote, Cone, and Belding (FCB) grid (Vaughn, 1980, 1986), which models product involvement based on a low–high and thinking–feeling path, can be used as a systematic way of category selection in avoidance studies. The FCB matrix presents a planning model by flourishing the involvement level with the cognitive and emotional motivations that drive the purchasing decision. According to this planning model, product groups can be classified under four advertising strategies: informative, affective, habitual, and satisfaction (Vaughn, 1980, 1986). In the age of programmatic advertising that tracks user information, algorithms prepare customized ads, and these ads can be avoided. However, ‘models like the FCB grid can help us diagnose the why behind the behaviour. Understanding this motivation can help us develop more relevant messaging and media strategy’ (Haley & Pittman, 2022, p. 333). Therefore, future studies investigating product categories that will be selected on the axis of rational and emotional involvement may contribute in-depth knowledge to the literature.

4.4.2 | Context (C)

When the particular circumstances that make up ad avoidance in digital environments are clearly defined to enhance representation, context can make important potential contributions (Lim & Rasul, 2022). According to this review's results, research contexts are assorted in terms of digital platforms, research samples, countries, and gender distribution. The predominantly focused platform context in the papers was the Internet in general and Facebook as social media. In that regard, it is evident that the general digital ad attitude is primarily examined across the platforms. The insights regarding social platforms other than Facebook were insufficient. Supplemental studies would be essential in expanding the digital ad avoidance literature specifically on popular platforms, such as photo sharing platforms (e.g., Instagram or Flickr), social shopping platforms with the community, and live streaming functions (e.g., Lazada, Shopee), social world platforms (e.g., Metaverse), microblogging (e.g., Twitter), social feed platforms (e.g., Tik-Tok), and video sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube), as well (Lim & Rasul, 2022). In addition, ad avoidance has been a

prominent topic on the Internet and social media but has relatively received less attention in the mobile context (see Table 6). According to Bernritter et al. (2022), digital ad avoidance is particularly noticeable on mobile devices. One study found that 90% of mobile users find targeted ads annoying and intrusive, resulting in some US\$150 billion in wasted ad spending (Ogury, 2019). Also, recent experimental research on mobile ad avoidance suggested that ad avoidance may be a bigger issue for advertisers on mobile platforms than on desktop platforms due to lower ad recall (Schmidt & Maier, 2022). For all these reasons, further research on mobile ad avoidance is warranted.

Further studies can also be conducted by focusing on a targeted sample rather than simply specifying student participants. In this context, the unique dynamics of avoidance behaviour in digital environments can be explored, especially among young people and adults. A similar situation will arise in terms of gender distribution. Although the dominance of the female sample was felt in the articles, the studies focused on gender-balanced samples in certain ages and occupational groups might provide inspiring results for avoidance behaviour in digital environments. A recent study offered some opportunities for further research to test the variables across cultures and different age groups to achieve generalizability to the whole (Kelly et al., 2020). The studies consider that such a balance can significantly affect the reliability and generalizability of the findings.

While a substantial portion of the studies are carried out in the United States, research in other cultures is scattered and includes several countries. However, these seem to be quite insufficient to make inferences regarding cross-cultural comparisons. Even though much of the research papers explored the various effects on digital avoidance based on the country of origin to some extent, we do not have enough evidence to question the role of cross-cultural differences on Internet usage habits, information seeking, and ad exposure in the context of avoidance. For this reason, it was highlighted in some articles (Brinson & Britt, 2021; Seyedghorban et al., 2016; van der Goot et al., 2018; Youn & Shin, 2019) that cross-cultural studies to be conducted in different countries would reveal important findings. Therefore, there is a need for more research on how the dynamics revealed by comparing the socio-cultural characteristics of consumers based on countries affect attitudes toward digital advertising avoidance. Furthermore, according to the findings of the latest report (Jangid, 2022), countries such as Japan, the United Kingdom, Australia, and France are among the top 10 in the world to invest the most in digital ad spending, but very few studies have been conducted on digital ad avoidance in the context of these cultures (e.g., Hussain & Lasage, 2014; Kelly et al., 2010; Morimoto, 2021; van der Goot et al., 2018). Therefore, we recommend that future research examine more digital ad avoidance in the context of these countries.

4.4.3 | Characteristic (C)

In respect of the characteristics of the review, the mediators and moderator constructs of digital ad avoidance were investigated in a few studies (e.g., Baek & Morimoto, 2012; Jin & Villegas, 2007; Li

et al., 2017) and were used to specify the facet of avoidance behaviour from a variety of perspectives. Therefore, it is clear that further indirect effect analysis is needed to understand and explain the concept's theoretical structure. For example, antecedent variables such as ad informativeness, multitasking, peer influence, social media usage, source attractiveness, and ad disruption/distraction can also be examined as mediating variables. This is because some other variables not only influence these variables but also can influence digital ad avoidance. In addition, more conditional effect analysis should be conducted to gain in-depth insights to understand 'when' and 'under what conditions' digital ad avoidance occurs. For example, variables such as user involvement, gender, message design, user-related factors, digital ad format, branding name, and product category can be applied as moderators. Additionally, studies investigating the possible outcomes of digital ad avoidance, such as ad-blocker usage (Söllner & Dost, 2019) or compulsive buying (Mikołajczak-Degrauwe & Brengman, 2014) were very limited, and these studies revealed inconsistent findings on these outcomes. Hence, further empirical studies are recommended. Also, the research on digital avoidance has largely considered the triggers of ad attitudes to predict behavioural avoidance as the primary outcomes. However, perspectives on the long-term effects and economic damage of digital ad avoidance on brand communication have been neglected to a large extent. Future studies can also investigate these factors. In addition, while some articles have mentioned certain user-oriented variables directly or as moderators, the reviewed studies did not delve into the role of user factors in digital ad avoidance. Further research should also investigate the influences of users' personality traits, demographics, and situational factors and test the impact of various demographic or socioeconomic factors on digital ad avoidance (Kim & Huh, 2021; Morimoto & Chang, 2009).

4.4.4 | Methodology (M)

There are some important issues that future work should consider regarding the methodological procedures used in the reviewed studies. Within the scope of the present review, methodological suggestions were developed under four titles. First, studies that addressed digital ad avoidance have largely taken a quantitative perspective design. Despite the difficulties in generalizing the findings in qualitative approaches, it would be pertinent to conduct qualitative inquiries to support empirical findings in depth (Harju, 2022). As recommended in the reviewed article (van der Goot et al., 2018), further studies conducted along a qualitative path can explore how generations appraise, comprehend, and react to various digital ad formats (van der Goot et al., 2018). In this regard, the existence of qualitative studies can raise consistency for future research. Additionally, further studies based on mixed methodologies can make important contributions to the digital ad avoidance literature. Considering the multi-dimension nature of digital ad avoidance, where even individual variables come into play, the mixed method can give us much insight into the issue.

Second, cross-sectional survey and experimental design were prominent in the reviewed literature as data collection techniques. Rather than a cross-sectional design that did not consider the time

factor, future research can follow a longitudinal path to augment the generalizability of the results on digital ad avoidance (Li & Yin, 2021). Additionally, it is not common to measure digital ad avoidance using new techniques such as the use of eye-tracking devices, although few studies have been conducted in recent years (Hsieh et al., 2021; Onişor & Ioniță, 2021). Recently, a systematic review suggested that eye-tracking methods might be used to measure how people respond to ads and what information they pay attention to (Loose et al., 2022). Employing an eye-tracking device empowers for unbiased and practical information on physiological responses connected to ad-viewing behaviours; therefore, further research might also assess performing eye-tracking devices to gain in-depth insights on digital ad avoidance (Hsieh et al., 2021). Also, it can open new gates regarding the feasibility of observing the reflexive behaviours that the users could not control, rather than the self-reported user data. Although a very early study on traditional media (television) suggested that self-reported scales provide acceptable estimates of ad avoidance (Ferguson, 1994), there may be more actual ad avoidance attitudes, intentions, or behaviours on digital platforms than the self-reported scales indicate (Chinchanachokchai & de Gregorio, 2020).

Third, many reviewed studies used overall digital ad avoidance measures followed by sub-dimensions of the phenomenon. Because much of the research adopted the measure from the study by Cho and Cheon (2004), which had been designed earlier than social media was launched, a comprehensive measurement scale of digital ad avoidance should be generated that will be congruent with the exclusive structure of social media in future studies (Youn & Kim, 2019b). In the reviewed studies, Youn and Kim (2019b) suggested that it can be beneficial to integrate new theories into the scale of digital ad avoidance to demonstrate wide-ranging reactions to ad avoidance in social media. Hence, future studies need to consider developing an up-to-date and inclusive measurement scale.

Finally, the results revealed that the data analysis showed dominance in SEM and regression models. It would not be surprising to use such analysis in empirical studies where data is tested in a cause-effect context. However, it should be considered that collective data that increase the generalization possibility will also increase the study's reputation. Okazaki et al. (2012) stated that using single-source techniques might affect the overall positive-negative response bias and suggested feeding on multi-source data in further research. In that way, it would be beneficial for future studies to develop a collective perspective on digital ad avoidance using the meta-analysis technique. For example, many studies have examined the effects of privacy concerns on digital ad avoidance, but inconsistent results. While some studies have found a positive relationship between them (Aiolfi et al., 2021; Dodoo & Wen, 2021; Morimoto, 2021; Youn & Shin, 2019), some research has uncovered an insignificant relationship (Jung, 2017; Nyheim et al., 2015). 'Reconciling the conflicting findings in a research domain' (Paul & Barari, 2022, p. 1113) and drawing more general and accurate conclusions from a macro perspective, as well as investigating the overall correlation between variables and possible moderating factors, are important starting points for a meta-analysis study (Zhang et al., 2021). Therefore, it is important to examine the

relationships between privacy concerns and digital ad avoidance through a meta-analysis study in the future.

5 | CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

To our knowledge, this study is the first to provide a comprehensive overview of the literature on digital ad avoidance. This framework-focused study (Paul & Criado, 2020) systematically reviewed and analysed literature to present a complete and up-to-date picture of the digital ad avoidance literature. The results of this study, derived from an analysis of 56 peer-reviewed journal articles indexed by either WoS or Scopus and published over the past 23 years based on the TCCM framework (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019), are expected to make important contributions to both the field and practitioners.

In terms of the body of knowledge, we firstly sought responses to the question, 'what do we know about digital ad avoidance? (RQ1)' To do this, we first analysed the number of publications per year to examine the development of digital ad avoidance research. There are 56 articles with 62 studies published from 1998 to 2021 on digital ad avoidance. The sharp increase in the number of publications in 2021 was particularly striking. This increase in empirical studies might provide important evidence that digital ad avoidance influences consumer behaviour and attitudes (Ghorbani et al., 2022). Additionally, while the earlier studies were based on Internet-based and e-mail-based ad avoidance, they have focused on social media-based ad avoidance over the last decade. On the other hand, when the thematic evolution of the digital ad avoidance field is analysed, the ad avoidance theme has unsurprisingly come to the fore in recent periods, while 'Facebook users' and 'SEM' have also attracted attention. Second, we investigated the publication performance of journals. The most prolific and influential journal on the subject was the International Journal of Advertising. The last published editorial claimed that this journal is particularly notable in the field of digital media advertising in terms of the citations it receives (Rodgers, 2022). Even though 31 different peer-reviewed journals published articles on this topic, most of them had three or fewer articles; thus, their number seemed limited. Also, almost half of these journals were in the field of marketing. Then, seminal papers about digital ad avoidance drew attention to the number of citations. These articles (Cho & Cheon, 2004; Edwards et al., 2002) provide important evidence for those who will research the topic. Finally, we have presented and discussed the antecedents, outcomes, mediators, and moderators of digital ad avoidance as an integrated framework by synthesizing the existing literature. We assume this well-constructed framework will provide an important contribution for researchers who want to get a bird's eye view of the topic.

Secondly, in response to RQ2 (how do we know about digital ad avoidance?), we explained the most and least used theories, contexts, and methodologies. In terms of theoretical perspective, about half of the studies had at least one theoretical foundation. PRT was the most frequently used in digital ad avoidance research, followed by approach-avoidance theory and PKM. In addition, the use of multiple theories was low, providing an opportunity for researchers who

wanted to gain richer insights (Lim & Rasul, 2022). On the other hand, about contexts in this review, most studies preferred a general sample, and the gender distribution was female-dominated. Additionally, we found that regarding the digital focus platform, the Internet was the most focused platform, while Facebook was the most commonly focused social networking site. Furthermore, research on digital ad avoidance was conducted in 19 countries, and many of the studies were conducted in the United States and European countries. Further, the vast majority of studies were based on a single country, and there was a lack of cross-cultural research on the subject. Finally, in terms of the methodology perspective, we revealed that the great majority of studies used the quantitative method, whereas the qualitative method was little used. As a data collection technique, more than half of the studies preferred cross-sectional surveys, and more than a quarter preferred experimental research. Furthermore, we found that SEM and regression analysis were the predominately used analysis techniques. Finally, a large majority of studies measured structure as overall digital ad avoidance.

Thirdly, in response to RQ3 (where should research on digital ad avoidance be heading?), we presented a research agenda in line with the TCCM framework. This agenda contains about 23 directions for future research (see Table 8). Review studies offer important contributions to future research when existing research gaps can be identified through synthesizing previous literature in the field (Chandra et al., 2022). Therefore, we hope that researchers working on digital ad avoidance will be inspired by the research directions presented in this review and make important contributions to developing future research questions.

Aside from its literature contributions, this review has several practical implications. The current systematic review encourages industry professionals to draw important conclusions about both consumer insights and advertising practices on digital ad avoidance. First, advertisers can take away several benefits from this review's current body of knowledge; that is, they can pursue this study to discover the factors underlying consumer responses to digital ads and avoidance behaviour. Second, the findings of this study spotlight clues that will enable marketers setting advertising budgets for digital platforms to see possible threats to brand strategies and take countermeasures. Advertising professionals will thus be aware of the most important threats to digital ads and will be able to seek alternative strategies in designing ads, targeting audiences, and reaching them. Third, we proposed an integrative framework for digital ad avoidance that will help digital marketers have a holistic view of the issue and understand its importance. Based on this, practitioners need to consider the factors in this framework when designing digital ad campaigns to reduce or prevent consumer ad avoidance. Also, seeking to figure out the nature of the several variables that have direct and indirect effects on ad avoidance behaviour can make this field, which is associated with company investments and marketing costs, highly engaging for practitioners. This can give industry professionals an appreciation of how they can leverage different factors to overcome ad avoidance. For example, as a continuation of their marketing communication strategies, brands can maximize user exposure to online ads by including

narrative appeals in their advertising structure. Also, they can benefit from native advertising applications that are compatible with the nature of social media to alleviate the feeling of ad clutter.

Fourth, this review indicates that ad appearance timing and perceived information overload make users avoid online ads. Hence, practitioners should focus on generating less intrusive and more entertaining content online based on user experiences, needs, and interests. It is a fact that repetitive and annoying ads do not affect consumers because consumers perceive them as intrusive, distracting, and irritating. Fifth, it is crucial for marketers to keep ad exposure in digital settings at a reasonable level (Sharma et al., 2022). This is because unreasonable ad exposure can cause consumers to be interrupted too often online, leading them to use more ad-blocking practices and ultimately avoid more ads. As a result, as Youn and Kim (2019a) mention, 'it is necessary to increase ad quality, not ad quantity' (p. 678). Sixth, marketers should also be aware that ads with skip-ad options can make consumers feel more autonomous. Such ads make them realize that they are respected, which can foster positive intentions and acceptance of the ad or its content (Li & Yin, 2021). In addition, practitioners can reduce digital ad avoidance if they use data analytics to figure out the emotional patterns behind a consumer's choice of brand or product rather than relying entirely on pop-up ads or algorithms. In this way, consumers can get the content message through digital ads, improving their long-term customer experience (Khan et al., 2022). Seventh, this review identified the most and least preferred digital ad avoidance research platforms. Given that digital ads are delivered to audiences on these platforms, practitioners need to consider the nature and characteristics of the platforms themselves when showing ads on them. Finally, this study showed that much research has been conducted on the impact of privacy concerns on digital ad avoidance (see Figure 4). Since privacy concerns are a big problem, especially on online platforms, governments must strengthen the laws they already have and audit platform companies often to ensure that consumers' personal information and private data are respected and protected (H. Wang, Yue, et al., 2022).

As in all previous studies, this review is not free from restrictions and has the following research limitations. First, in the sampling process, we focused only on peer-reviewed academic articles written in English and indexed in WoS and Scopus, excluding those written in other languages as well as databases and 'grey literature'. Additionally, due to our research protocol and quality control, we only considered articles published in journals listed on ABDC and SCImago. Therefore, the study selection may be biased when creating the dataset. Future research may consider these shortcomings and conduct a more comprehensive and enriching review to confirm this review's conclusions. Second, this review only focuses on research that has examined ad avoidance in digital contexts, such as social media, the Internet, e-mail, podcast, and mobile phones, as opposed to ad avoidance in conventional devices such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. There is a need for research that can provide a much more holistic overview by reviewing conventional and digital contexts. Third, we also carefully decided on keywords for the database searches, but there could have been a set of keywords that would have led to a more comprehensive dataset.

Fourth, in this study, we used a framework-based review as the type of review and preferred the TCCM framework (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019) to analyse the results. Future research could conduct new reviews using the ADO (antecedents, decisions, and outcomes), 6W (who, when, where, how, what, and why), and 7P (potential, path, process, pace, pattern, problems, and performance) frameworks (Paul & Benito, 2018; Paul & Mas, 2020; Xie et al., 2017). Additionally, similar studies can be conducted in the future using different integrative frameworks such as AMO (ability, motivation, and opportunity) (MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989) and S-O-R (stimulus-organism-response) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) to present findings that emerge as antecedent, outcome, mediator, and moderator variables in research on digital ad avoidance. Fifth, in recent years, in addition to ad avoidance, the phenomenon of brand avoidance has also been widely studied among researchers. According to Knittel et al. (2016), brand avoidance is a valuable and potential field for researchers because 'every consumer has a brand avoidance story to tell' (p. 39). Given the abundance of publications on this topic, we propose to carry out a systematic review on brand avoidance in the future and compare its results with those in this study. Finally, in this review, the research approach of all articles was classified as empirical; none of them had a theoretical approach that included conceptual or review articles. Thus, theoretical foundations and characteristics may be inconsistent due to a lack of conceptual or review research (Ghorbani et al., 2022).

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first attempt to conduct a systematic literature review on the phenomenon of digital ad avoidance, providing the latest overview of the topic and summarizing much of what is relevant. Thus, we hope that this review will be the first to be reviewed by both scholars and practitioners to provide an overview of the topic. Finally, the integrative framework and research agenda presented in this study may be helpful to guide further research and expand the body of knowledge in the field.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST


The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest regarding this paper.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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