

# Advertisements concerning attention, cognitive learning and motivation



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## **1. 0 Executive Summary**

This proposal examines broad areas of issues in advertisements concerning attention, cognitive learning and motivation in messages as problem in the communication field. The first section elaborates about that background of advertising, followed by the definitions of problems. In the later section, an integrated oriented literature review of previous research conducted will give a short insight of the methods and social research that were carried out. In section 4. 0, the objectives of the proposed study will give the highlights what the study can obtain and follow by the methods of research, data collection and analysis. The summary of the proposal is included in the section 6. 0, which is the conclusion.

## **2. 0 Background To The Problem**

### **2. 01 Advertising**

Belch and Belch (2004) defined advertising as space or time that is bought by an identified sponsor to use any form of nonpersonal communication elements (e. g., television, radio, magazines, or newspapers) to deliver messages to a large number of individuals of potential consumers, frequently at the same time about an organisation, product or service (Belch & Belch, 2004, pp16).

Wells, et al (2003) alleged that advertisements strive to satisfy consumers' objectives by engaging them and delivering a relevant message. Hence, the consumer may remember the advertisement if it is sufficiently entertaining and possibly learn to relate the advertisement to personal needs.

Furthermore, the information extracted from the advertisement may provide incentive and reinforce the consumer's decision. Whilst from the advertiser's

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perspective, the definitive objective of placing an advertisement is to persuade or influence consumers to do something. The advertiser aims to move consumers to action by attaining the consumers' attention, seizing their interests for a period of time to convince the consumers' to change their behaviours, try the advertiser's product or build brand loyalty (Wells, et al at 2003, pp. 5).

According to Wells, et al (2003) people are concerned about the society being overrun by advertisements, thus many aspects of ethical advertising issues such as advocacy, accuracy and acquisitiveness are being investigated. Hence, advertisers must make mindful decisions to either adhere or breach the codes of ethics (Wells, et al at 2003, pp. 30 - 33).

## **2. 02 Problem Definitions**

Wells, et al (2003) articulate puffery as one of the key issues in advertising, which is defined as ' advertising or other sales representation, which praise the item to be sold with subjective opinions and superlatives or exaggerations, vaguely and generally stating no specific proofs', the empirical evidence on the effectiveness of puffery indicated that reasonable people do not believe such claims whilst there are public who expects the advertisers to prove the truth of their superlative messages. Ergo, advertisers are advised to conduct necessary research that verifies facts about ethical messages for effective advertising. Advertisers and advertising agencies that have insights into the minds of the potential consumers' views and evidences on their perceptions will prove to be helpful in assessing what are ethical conducts (Wells, et al at 2003, pp. 33 - 34).

Wells, et al (2003) elucidate 'subliminal messages is transmitted below the threshold of normal perception, where the receiver is not consciously aware of receiving', the embedment of messages are placed to manipulate.

Research has yet to prove subliminal messages can affect behaviours due to physiological limitations, while the results in different research has shown indications that subliminal stimuli can cause some types of minor reactions (Wells, et al 2003, pp. 42).

This proposed research aims to examine the hierarchy of issues in advertising from the consumers' perspectives, hence the research process is designated to investigate the important levels of attention, cognitive learning and motivational messages in advertising.

### **3.0 Literature Review**

The evidence from studies on advertising overwhelming indicates that additional studies are needed to cover the broad spectrum of issues concerning advertising practice.

Rosbergen, et al (1997) adduce a methodology to examine the effects of physical ads of consumers' attention to visuals elements on the accounts of heterogeneity, to inquire when and how consumers devote their attention to commercial stimuli and what determines the consumers' attentional strategies and patterns. The proposed methodology was driven by the lack of research conducted on consumer attention, even though the importance of attention has been acknowledged (Rosbergen, et al 1997, pp. 305).

A growing body of research indicates that exposures to ubiquitous advertisements over a period of time have lead to increased physical  
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dissatisfaction amongst a large proportion of women (Halliwell, et al 2005, pp. 408).

Other research findings proved that women portrayed in the advertisements do not control for attractiveness. For example, Posavac, et al (1998) compared viewing fashion models with realistically-sized women 'you might meet in everyday life'. Although they do not report attractiveness ratings, they note that the attractiveness of models is accentuated by artificial means. (Halliwell, et al 2005, pp. 408)

There are many theoretical reasons to expect that consumer reactions to advertising are affected by their response to the program or print material in which the advertising is inserted. Indeed many studies have looked at the impact of media context on the effectiveness of advertising. At present, however, two major issues arise with this literature. One concerns the need for more specific theories about how media context can affect advertising as well as the other relates to when context affects advertising positively and when it affects it negatively. (Halliwell, et al 2005, pp. 408)

Researchers increasingly recognise the interest in on the psychology of consumers has been steadily on the rise. Much of this research has focused on changes in information processing (e. g., Roedder-John and Cole 1986). The research indicates that, consumers of different ages have different level of susceptibility to misleading advertising (Gaeth and Heath 1987) and the truth-inflating effects of repetition (Law, Hawkins, and Craik 1998; Skurnik et al. 2005). The research has shown evidences that consumers of younger age rely more on schema-based whilst older consumers adopt detailed

processing strategies. However, aging also has important effects on motivational processes that can significantly affect information processing. In particular, aging is associated with an increase in the motivation to attend to emotional versus factual information (e. g., Labouvie-Vief and Blanchard-Fields 1982; Williams & Drolet, 2005, pp. 343)

Williams and Drolet (2005) conducted their first study on how time horizon perspective affects older and young adult consumers' attitudes toward and recall of emotional (vs. rational) appeals. The experiment 1 design was a 2 (age group: older vs. young) x 2 (appeal type: emotional vs. rational) x 3 (time horizon perspective: limited vs. expansive vs. control). In control conditions, where the researchers were expecting age to interact with appeal type that: (1) older participants will have more favourable attitudes toward and better recall of emotional (vs. rational) appeals and (2) young participants will have more favourable attitudes toward and better recall of rational (vs. emotional) appeals (Williams & Drolet, 2005, pp. 345).

Additionally to expectation time horizon perspective to moderate the above effects such that in limited time horizon conditions, where researchers anticipate young participants will show increased attitudes toward and recall of emotional (vs. rational) appeals. In expansive time horizon conditions, Williams and Drolet (2005) look at the prospect of older participants showing increased attitudes toward and recall of rational (vs. emotional) appeals (Williams & Drolet, 2005, pp. 346)

From the analysis tested for potential differences due to the use of two different products (coffee and film), the results indicated no significant

differences in results (all  $p$ 's  $\leq .30$ ), and analysis are collapsed across the two products. The product categories were tested to use as a potential covariate in the analysis. No effects were significant ( $p$ 's  $\leq .30$ ) and were not discussed further.

As expected by Williams and Drolet (2005) the findings from Experiment 1 indicated that in the control time horizon conditions, older participants had greater liking and recall of the emotional appeals whilst the younger participants had greater liking and recall of the rational appeals.

Whilst in limited time horizon conditions, both older and young participants' attitudinal and memory responses were higher for the emotional appeals. In contrast, in the expansive time horizon conditions, the attitudinal and memory responses were higher for the rational appeals for both groups.

As an afterword for Experiment 1, which have proven that age and time horizon perspective moderate responses to emotional and rational appeals to older and young adults. The results compiled from Experiment 1 differ from results of previous research (e. g. Fung and Carstensen 2003), which had inadequate evidence. (Williams & Drolet, 2005, pp. 345)

In Experiment 2, Williams and Drolet (2005) examine how differences in age and time horizon perspective influence consumers' attitudes toward and recall of emotional appeals that focus on the avoidance of negative emotional experiences. Participants were instructed to read either a positively framed or negatively framed emotional appeal of one of two emotional products. After reading the appeal, participants were required to answer questions about their attitudes toward products. After that,  
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participants were required to do manipulation checks and answered product use and demographic questions. Lastly, participants were asked to recall all they could about the appeal that they have read earlier (Williams & Drolet, 2005, pp. 349 - 50).

Williams and Drolet (2005) tested for differences by using two emotional products (greeting cards and flowers). The analysis found no significant differences in results ( $p$ 's  $> .30$ ). Hence, Experiment 2 have shown indications that aging and time horizon perspective impact and preferences for emotional versus rational appeals, but also preferences for different types of emotional appeals. Specifically, that avoidance of negative emotional outcomes is more preferable and has higher memory retention among both groups of older and younger participants in limited time horizon view. On the contrary, younger and older participants who had an expansive time horizon view generated were preferably higher on positive emotions and are more memorable (Williams & Drolet, 2005, pp. 351).

Gunter, et al (2005) have preliminary evidence that can lead advertisers to believe that effectiveness of advertisements on consumers' retention and comprehension of messages relies on the placement of television programs, positioning of ads in print materials or radio airtime.

The nature of the advertising environment can affect memory for embedded advertising as a result of cognitive interference effects when and where the advertisement formats are congruent semantically (Furnham, Bergland, & Gunter, 2002; Furnham, Gunter, & Richardson, 1999) or in terms of format (Gunter, Baluch,



Duffy, & Furnham, 2001); or as a function of program-induced moods (Goldberg & Corn, 1987; Kamins, Marks & Skinner, 1991; Schumann, 1986).

Arousal

(Mundorf, Zillman, & Drew, 1991; Pavelchak, Antil, & Munch, 1988), or excitement

(Singh, Churchill, & Hitchon, 1987). While unpleasant arousal or interference can impede memory for embedded advertisements, the degree to which any advertisement format involves or appeals also can affect memory (Gunter, et al 2005, pp. 1680)

#### **4.0 Objective of Proposed Research**

The objective of the research is to provide advertisers and advertising agencies to have insights to create ethical, effective and efficient advertisements to publics. The collection and analysis of consumers' personal information from various electronic media and tools with the advancements and improvements in the new age of technologies and research methods, advertisers are able to analyse consumers' information, perception and behaviours.

#### **4.01 Methods**

This study aims to investigate which element in advertising precedes primary in the minds of the consumers, by taking into account the possible role of attention, puffery and motivational messages in advertising.

The use of focus group interviews allows researchers to generate information that can be used to design effective, ethical and efficient messages in

advertising. Focus group interviews can provide researchers with relevant perceptions and attitudes of selected participants (Frey, et al 2000, pp. 221).

In addition for more insight and higher success of the interviews, four facilitators will be acquired to guide and lead the focus group interviews. The facilitators will introduce the topics; encourage participations and probes for more information.

The participants will be exposed to advertisements of different materials (e. g., television commercials, radio commercials, magazines ads, or newspapers ads).

The participants will be divided into four focus groups that will be videotaped and recorded with written consents given by the participants.

Every participant will be asked to provide demographic information including age, gender, race, ethnicity, marital status, and religion. The members of the research team were present to greet and support the focus group, by playing the roles of complete participant, participant - observer, observer participant and complete observer via listening to the discussions, and record field notes (Frey, et al 2000, pp. 269).

Male and female participants will be assigned randomly to 4 treatment conditions, ensuring equal numbers of 5 each gender per condition: Group 1- television commercials and magazine print ads; Group 2- radio commercials and newspaper ads; Group 3- television commercials and radio commercials; and Group 4 - magazine print ads and newspaper ads. Each group will spend 30 minutes on the different advertising formats that will be played in a small

theatre room that will be fully equipped with a large screen, enhanced audio systems, desks and refreshments.

After observing the different formats of advertising, each group will be lead into discussions by the facilitators, where participants will be encouraged to express themselves freely about their experiences, opinions and perceptions.

Before finalising the focus group sessions, participants will be given three set of questionnaires to answer.

### **Commercials rating questionnaire.**

On the program rating questionnaire, participants will use a 10-point scale to rate the advertisements, which they have watch, heard or seen in the focus group session on 12 evaluative scales (absorbing, hostile, arousing, disturbing, engaging, entertaining, enjoyable, exciting, happy, violent, interesting, and involving). Each scale ranged from 1 (not at an> to 10 (extremely).

### **Free-recall questionnaire.**

A free-recall questionnaire will ask participants to write everything they could remember about the advertisements that they saw. They will be required to write down the name of the product and the brand advertised, and any details of the advertising message. Such details could include specific product-related information, such as price, promotional appeals, specific strengths or benefits, presence of celebrity endorser, and other idiosyncratic features of the advertisement.

**Brand recognition questionnaire.**

A brand recognition questionnaire will test participants' memory for the brands advertised in the duration of the focus group.

Participants will be asked to indicate as many brands as they could remember that appeared during the focus group.

Each correct answer was scored 1 point, while incorrect choices were given 0 points.

**4. 02 Data Collection and Analysis**

All the members of the research team who will engage in a series of meetings to review and compare the four focus groups coding schemes

The meetings will audio-recorded, and then the selected portions of the recordings were transcribed to review dialogue through which concepts will be refined. Metaphor analysis and fantasy theme analysis can best complement the data collected from the focus groups interviews. Metaphor analysis will allow researchers to investigate into participants' figures of speech in a word or phrase that denotes one object to another, while fantasy theme analysis allows participants to interact between one another and share stories and experiences (Frey, et al 2000, pp. 285).

The questionnaires will be content-analysed and compared against a pretested list of salient points that had been identified for each advertisement.

The research will be compiled into an informal structure report written by the researchers in first-person singular voice, which signifies rhetorical assumption of naturalistic paradigm (Frey, et al 2000, pp. 20).

Every participant will be treated as a unit of analysis in analytic strategy to consider the participants' behaviours, attitudes, perception and cognitive process.

### **5. 0 Timeline**

The proposed timeline of research is as below:

Week 1

Selecting Respondents Or Target Participants

Week 2

Setting the environment for focus groups

Week 3

Conducting Focus Group Interviews

Week 4

Conducting Focus Group Interviews

Week 5

Collection of Data

Week 6

## Compiling Of Data and Transfer Data Into Transcripts

Week 7

Analysis Of Data

Week 8

Compilation of Report

Week 9

Compilation Of Report

### **6. 0 Conclusion**

The proposed study has important social implications that can provide advertisers and advertising agencies with more concrete and overwhelming findings to help overcome the issues that are threatening the effects and impacts of advertising on individuals. Hence, the study can result in advertisers creating ethical, efficient and effective advertisements that can influence and persuade individuals with motivational messages that affect emotional appeals positively.

### **7. 0 References**

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