

# [Shock advertising: effects on students](https://assignbuster.com/shock-advertising-effects-on-students/)

Consumers can be exposed to over 3000 advertisements per day (Lasn, 1999). So marketers constantly look for a way to be recognised ahead of their competitors and break through the clutter (dahl et al 2003)

One of the ways in which marketers do this is through shock advertising. A technique that has caused some controversy in recent years. Dahl 2003 states ‘ Shock messages are used in a bid to draw attention to an advertisement with the expectation that further processing will take place’.

It has been heavily adapted by charities and the government who promote anti-drink driving, and anti-drug campaigns. It is used it order to shock and scare the public creating surprise. It is this surprise that enables the individual to want to process the given information more clearly, in order to make a decision, resulting in action. (Dahl 2003)

The aim of shock advertising is to influence peoples attitudes and behaviour. However this might always be the case when exposed to shock advertising. Some people have lower expectations of social norms, and may process shock advertising in a more negative way than people with higher expectations of social norms. This is known as ‘ the process of norm violation’ Dahl, 2003, p268)

The main goals of this dissertation are to evaluate these norms and how they are processed by students in relation to attitudes and behaviour through being exposed to shock advertising. Previous research has shown that advert using shock are more effective at creating attention than other tatics (fear, information). It is this that has driven me to conduct this dissertation to conclude if that given attention actually results in a change in attitude or behavioural. This is something that has always been critiqued.

Literature review

‘ A crucial element of all research degrees is the review of relevant literature. So important is this chapter that its omission represents a void or absence of all major elements in research’

(Afolabi 1992, 59-66)

The use of Shock advertising has been used in order to create a change in a consumer’s attitude or behaviour. The purpose of this literature review is to process and evaluate previous academic journals, literature and media to elaborate upon and facilitate that statement. The literature review consists of models evaluating how attitudes can be formed, using the Hierarchy of effects AIDA model to define the attitude forming process, then using this process to determine how these attitudes are then changed.

Attitudes

An attitude is a lasting, general evaluation of people (including one self) objects, advertisements or issues. We call anything toward which one has an attitude an attitude object’

(Solomon et al 2006, p234)

Ones attitude can affect their perception of different brands, products or advertisements. Bohner 2002 p5 states ‘ Attitudes may emphasise affective, behavioural and cognitive responses’. This is something that advertisers may take into account as they can manipulate people’s emotions and reactions through the use of fear in advertising.

Solomon 2006 p288 ‘ Fear appeals emphasize the negative consequences that can occur unless the consumer changes a behaviour or an attitude’ this thought process can give advertisers a way in which to target different demographics with chosen shock tactics. Tactics which must be relevant to the product. This can be seen to be used in many different ways as advertisers will use this process to aim at getting a consumer to make a purchase or identify a brand which creates an emotion whereas the government will use techniques of warning the public about the harms of smoking etc.

Bohner 2002 p123 describes their message, learning approach to persuasion. Bohner continues ‘ to describe this approach as an approach that does not represent a unitary theory; rather it can be understood as an eclectic set of working assumptions, influenced by learning theory and other contemporary theoretical perspectives’. The components of this theory evaluated the learning and recall of message content mediating attitude change.

This persuasion process is one heavily taken upon the use of shock in advertising. Attitudes are an important factor and advertisers must first be able to evaluate and identify an attitude components before attempting to influence one (Kotler 1996 p721)

Attitudes and components models.

Most researchers agree that an attitude has three components; affect, behaviour and cognition (Solomon 2008, p237). Also referred to as the ABC model of attitudes;

Affect refers to the way a consumer feels about an attitude object. Behaviour which involves the persons intentions to o something with regard to an attitude object which may not result in actual behaviour and Cognition; Refers to the beliefs a consumers has about an attitude object.

All three components of an attitude are important, but their relative importance will vary depending on a consumer’s level of motivation with regard to the attitude object (Solomon). Neal states ‘ these objects to which consumers react, are evaluated in context of a specific situation, a consumers reaction to an object may change as the situation changed’. A key component in this process as we can see clearly is Attitude change. Without a consistency in attitude towards an object a marketer can find it difficult to clearly target a certain demographic so the using attitudes to predict behaviour must be exercised a clear message is being presented to the consumer. Marketers do this through the use of Multiattribute models which i will discuss further in this chapter.

These three components must be taken into account in regards to advertising. Solomon 2006 p240 ‘ Our evaluation of a product can be determined solely by our appraisal of how its depicted in marketing communications.’

Fish bein model

Gordon Allport ‘ Attitudes are learned predispositions to respond to an object’

The fishbein model can be considered as very important when considering attitude. Fish beins model measures three components of attitude (Solomon 2008, p250);

Salient beliefs people have about an object

Object-attribute linkages or the possibility that a particular object has an important attribute.

Evaluation of each of the important attributes.,

The consumer will rate each attribute for all brands involved, evaluating the importance of the rating for that attribute (Schiffman 2008)

Marketing can take advantages from this model as when firms launch or re-launch products ., adverts can be used as a platform to depict new attributes or re-invented attributes held by a product to appeal to consumers as their attitudes are evaluated on such attributes (Solomon, 2008)

Hierarchy of effects.

The hierarchy of effects models has become the foundation for objective setting and measurement of advertising effects in many companies. (Belch and Belch p148). Solomon’s critique of this model is seen as she states ‘ a person’s attitude doesn’t predict their behaviour’ (Solomon, 2008 p300).

The model shows the process by which advertising works; It assumes a consumer passes through steps in a sequential order from initial awareness of a product to actual purchase. Components of the hierarchy of effects framework show how consumers respond to advertising in a set and preconcepted manner. Cognitively first (thinking) affectively secondly (feeling) and cognitively thirdly (doing) (Solomon 2008)

as seen in the AIDA model (figurehttp://139. 132. 1. 7/ausweb02/Figure\_1. gif 1)

The most well known model is AIDA (attention-interest-desire-action) MORE INFO QUOTES. In this model it is theorized that advertisers must attract attention (cognition) maintain interest and create desire (affect) which will all result in an action (conation) . (Fill 2005). Understanding the hierarchy of effects in relation to product and audience will give advertisers information on which level of shock to incorporate in their campaign.

Through studying literature, The hierarchy of effects can e seen to be important to advertisers as it is consistently used by theorists as an effective and appropriate way of identifying concepts which need to be addressed. However an issue with this model can be seen in the difficulty of deciding where a stage ends and where another begins. Peterson et al (1986)

1. 5 Fear appeals and their effectiveness.

Fear appeals emphasize the negative consequences that can occur unless the consumer changes a behaviour or an attitude (Solomon p288)

Does it work?

Fear can cause tension within people which in return causes people to reduce this tension. Since the way people respond to fear is learned, marketers often rely on such appeals to stimulate interest in products or services. In its simplest form, the process consists of three steps. The first involves the creation of a fearful situation designed to activate a

person’s sense of risk and vulnerability. Marketers have been quite inventive in using the fear appeal. Examples include anti smoking EXAMPLES OF ADVERTS, MORE EXAMPLES ETC.

in this regard

Fear is a primitive instinct which can occasionally

guide and activate human behavior. It

creates anxiety and tension, causing people to

seek ways to reduce these feelings. Since the way

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in this regard. Examples include attempts at

inducing people to buy insurance policies of different

types, travelers checks, and birth control

products, as illustrated in Table 1.

In politics, the fear motive has been widely

used to persuade the undecided by depicting

“ abuse” by other parties or candidates and the

danger associated with their views or policies. It

has also been used to marshal public support for

efforts to curtail communism. More recently in

the United States, Canada, and Europe, the fear

appeal has been stressed as a focal point in

educating the public concerning preventive

measures to combat the AIDS epidemic. Despite

differences in the objectives behind each message,

these appeals highlight a fearful situation that is

likely to affect the recipients’ physical or social

self.

In the second phase of employing the fear

appeal, the danger is depicted to be serious enough

to warrant attention. Politicians, for example,

warn repeatedly against the rise of neo-Nazi

groups, comparing their ideology to that of the

fascists who committed crimes against humanity

during the Second World War. In a like fashion,

marketers appeal to their potential targets by suggesting

their vulnerability to the risk emphasized

in the message. Such is often the case with life

insurance ads that stress the traumatic consequences

of the “ breadwinner’s” death. Of course,

one’s response depends on his or her subjective

assessments of the risk and its consequences.

In the third phase, a solution is provided as a

means of fear reduction. The appeal is often

coupled with assurances of “ security from fear”

in order to entice potential customers to pursue

the suggested action. For example, buying a

life insurance policy may be depicted as providing

a relief of worry about financially destitute

survivors.

Two questions deserve attention before the

practical ramifications of using fear appeals are

appraised. First, how do models of the fear appeal

process work? Second, are fear appeals effective?

In the following sections we shall address these

Belief that fear appeals create anxiety and tension, thus stimulating certain defensive mechanisms. Interest is reaching customers and increasing their demand for the product may justify using fear appeals.

1. 6 Cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance is predicated upon that each individual strives towards consistency amongst his opinions, attitudes and values (Makin, 1974 p143) Additionally, we all strive towards a consistency amongst our psychological attributes and behaviour that stems from them (Solomon REF).

This need for consistency can create conflict when choosing between two alternatives. However Solomon states ‘ this conflict may be resolved through a process of cognitive dissonance reduction, where people are motivated to reduce this inconsistency (or dissonance) and thus eliminate unpleasant tension. Festinger (1957) suggests that people’s motivation to reduce the unpleasant side effects of inconsistency often produces attitude change’.

Festinger l 1957 a theory of cog diss’ Stanford university press; Stanford.

This dissonance in question can be created through shock advertising in surprise or fear appeals which in turn can create ‘ cognitive activity’. Makin p504 states ‘ Cognitive activity relates to a knowledge and awareness dimension of consumer behaviour’ again resulting in dissonance if the opinions or vales clash.’

1. 7 Persuasion

The ultimate goal of persuasive communication is to change a receivers behaviour (Bettinghaus and Cody p7 YEAR)

Changing these behaviours is a very difficult task as some have become habits, such as smoking which the government has tried to change perception of through shock advertising which i will discuss in this section.

Marketers employ many different techniques in the use of persuasion in adverts including different mechanisms of delivering content, messages, the source/media its delivered by and the way it is perceived by the recipient.

One approach to utilise these elements has been developed by petty and caioppo (1983) in the ELM MODEL,

The elm model explains how cognitive processing persuasion and attitude can occur when different levels of involvement are present.

Elaboration Likelihood model;

The elm addresses the attitudes of individuals. Attitudes are considered to be enduring evaluations of objects, issues or persons that often guide behaviour ( Petty et al 1991)

Marketers have looked to theories for decades to predict how to effect attitude change. The most influential of these theories is the Elaboration Likelihood model, which is bases on assumptions that people will consider, or process persuasive communications. Marketing practitioners have treated the theory of “ positive attitudes” leading to “ positive behaviour” as a marker of how to advertise. A persuasive communication is one that aims to change individuals attitudes towards an object in the view to forming ‘ useful attitudes’

Attitudes are useful when they improve an individuals ability to function in his or her environment (Petty et al 91).

The ELM considers two routes in which individuals process persuasive communication. The 1st in central processing route. This route requires a high level of motivation from the individual. For the central route to be processed in an individual, the actual ability to process core elements of the persuasive message is needed. An individual that uses this central route will consider the information in the message to a higher and clearer degree whilst attempting to form a ‘ useful attitude’ (Petty and Cappioppo 1986).

The 2nd route is the peripheral route. Which was described by Petty as a route in which individuals using cues imbedded in the message as input for simple heuristic decision rules. Counter to the central route, individuals involved in the peripheral route will not consider the core message as deeply. They will also form an attitude bases on the contextual elements based within the message. Attitudes that are formed within this route tend to be less resistant and less predictive of behaviour than their centrally processed counterparts ( Hangtvedt and petty, 1992, petty et al 1991).

As the central route is associated worth being more positive it can be seen to be in a marketers interests to use the ELM model in order to firstly identify the factors that in turn can determine the route of an individual when forming attitudes in relation to message. This is done so a marketer can then predict what message to incorporate into their campaign, creating interest and action. There are two factors that can influence an individual’s processing route; Motivation; Individuals ability to process core messages of persuasive communication deeply. In this section i will focus on the motivational charges towards peoples communication routes

http://kaiwright. typepad. com/. a/6a0115705777c6970b01156ff4724a970c-800wi

Motivation has two main drivers;

Personnel relevance PR of the attitude object to the individual;

An individual will be more motivated to use central route if attitude object is important and thereby will have personnel relevance. (Cacioppo et al., 1984)

For example here, a person may be highly encouraged to stop smoking when an anti-smoking campaign shows a family without a mother, father, sister, brother due to illness caused solely by smoking. This is because adverts which display facts and rational arguments can be more highly processed by a consumer rather than an advert exposing emotional appeals. Rational Vrs Emotional appeals (see section 4)

Intrinsic; Individuals inherent tendency to process the core message and person’s ‘ enjoyment of cognitive processing is known as individuals need for cognition (nc) Cacioppo et al 1984)

These two factors can determine whether an individual will rely on central o periphal routes.

Personal relevance determines whether the consumer

perceives the object to be instrumental in realizing goals and fulfilling values

(Petty et al., 1981)

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Source Credibility; Solomon refers to the perceived expertise, objectivity, or trustworthiness of a souce.

Acoording to Solomon, source credibility

Rational Verus emotional

Shock Advertising

Venkat and abi-hanna (1955; 22)’ shock advertising is generally regarded as one that deliberately rather than inadvertently, startles and offends its audience’.

Consumers can be exposed to over 3000 advertisements per day (Lasn, 1999). So how do marketers get their advertisements noticed within this advertising clutter? The answer for many is shock. Dahl points out that many opinions vary over whether shock advertising is useful, a legitimate creative technique (Shannon 1995) or a ‘ gratuitous attention-grabbing gimmick’ (Horovitz 1992). The main theory behind shock advertising is that these shock messages will be used in a bid to draw attention to an advertisement with the expectation that further processing will take place. (Solomon 2003: 268)

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It is these tactics which are used to gain attention from the public, encouraging cognitive processing, resulting in a change of behaviour. This is particularly used in public service announcements which sees the government offer a stern and rational approach to shock adveritisng aiming towards this mentioned change of behaviour e. g. drinking and driving EXAMPLES HERE. These campaigns have also been the subject of public scrutiny (Eisner, 2001)

A recent adverts for………………………..

Was critizied for its shocking nature. However a spokesman for defended the advert, arguing that without the shock tatics used within the advertisements people would ‘ lapse into acceptence’ of abuse.

The level of shock derives from the ‘ range of acceptable behaviours defined by norms, which is then used to evaluate objects, persons, actions, and ideas’ (Sherif Sherif, 1969) Advertising can be evaluated by ‘ norms’. It can then be considered ‘ shocking’ or ‘ offensive’ when it’s content breaches these norms: decency, good taste, aesthetic propriety, and/or personal moral standards (Day 1991).

EXAMPLES; BENNETON?

As Vagnoni, 1999 states ‘ Advertisers typically justify shock appeals in advertising for their ability to appeal in advertising for their ability to (break) through the clutter’

Solomon 2002 p269 ‘ After attention, according to information processing models, shocking stimuli should facilitate message comprehension and elaboration, enhancing message retention, and influence behaviour.

This figure shows the reader how after exposure to an advertisement the individual will process the information involving a ‘ cognitive appraisal that determines whether the advert violates a social and/or personal norm’. Surprise is caused when this information contradicts an individual’s established expectations (Stienmeier, 1995). Dahl states that ‘ surprise encourages further cognitive activity as individuals seek to understand the source of their surprise’. Pyszczynski and Greenberg 1981, p37 ‘ Individuals engage in higher levels of attributional thought for unexpected surprise compared to expected events’.

It is then assumed that shocking advertising is more effective when promoting appropriate behaviour than more functional advertisements which have ‘ less success at moving people through the stages of information processing’. (Solomon 2003)

In order to test for effects on advertising attention, recall and recognition, Dahl conducted two experiments on students. The first deployed three different advertising appeals. Fear/Shock/information On a HIV/AIDS campaign. This campaign was chosen as health organisations have a history of using ‘ shock value’ messages to combat ambivalence towards this particular disease (Schlossberg, 1991).

The experiment was aimed at students as they were a realistic target market for HIV/AIDS prevention initiatives. One-hundred and five students participated. Subjects ages ranged from 18-27 and they were randomly assigned to one of the three experimental condition and run individually. The study focussed on recall, recognition, and the processing of three experimental advertisements. As expected from our previous research a higher percentage of participants using the shock advertisement chose the experimental advertisement. From data collected, the researcher was able to state that participants said the shock advertisement outdated social norms vacillating Dahl’s claims that ‘ shock advertising content is superior to non-shocking content in its ability to attract attention and facilitate memory for the advertisement’.

The 2nd experiment was aimed towards finding out how these shocking advertisements after attracting attention would impact on subsequent behaviour. The researcher directed subjects towards a table in the reception area on which were different items. These items were related to the 1st experiment and was various leaflets and objects relating to HIV/AIDS, MENTAL HEALTH, DRUGS. The participants were then told they could take some of the leaflets home and keep. The researcher then left the room in order to let the participants be alone. Then came back and counted what had been taken. Results showed

Dahl

Dichter (1996) talks about how shock advertising also benefits from word of mouth communication, as the adverts provoke advertisement related conversation.

4. 0 Methodology; Introduction

The analysis of shock advertising and its effects on attitudes, including the literature review, has given clear and precise factors which can affect individuals behaviour when exposed to shock advertising. The key factors including; shall now be the main elements in the empirical research.

‘ The methodology refers to the theory of how the research should be undertaken’ (Saunders et al 2007, p3)

This methodology evaluates the various stages of how the researcher gathered their data . The research methods that were used in this dissertation have been primary (focus groups) secondary (Literature review) and analysis.

4. 1 Aim

To prove whether shock advertising can change the attitudes of consumers towards brands or actions.

4. 1. 2 Objectives

To gain a clearer understanding of what shock advertising is.

To investigate how people form attitudes.

To explore how people use these attitudes in relation to brands and adverts.

To evaluate if shock advertising can alter these attitudes and behaviours.

4. 1. 3 Research onion

Saunders et al (2003) explained how to use the research ‘ onion’ to adapt to the different research methods that were available. Saunders explains that before coming to a central point of research we must first ‘ peel’ away’ important layers of the onion. Once you have peeled away these ‘ layers’ you will be able to determine which research methods are most suitable for your study.

http://www. ivoryresearch. com/images/figure61. jpg

4. 2 Research Philosophy;

According to Saunders et al 2006 p84 ‘ the research philosophy depends on the way that you think about the development of knowledge’. There are two philosophical views that can show the researcher how knowledge can be developed; Positivism and interpretivism as Jankowicz (20005, p106 ‘ an interrogation of this kind is very valuable, since it prompts you to think harder about where you are heading and how you intend to get there. It actually involves an examination of three fundamentals; your ontology, your epistemology, and your under lying vales’. By evaluating and understanding your research philosophy you can then choose informed and relative methodologies to use in your research ensuring results that will be valid and authentic.

Epistemology Or Onology;

Epistemology approach has been conducted as it ‘ concerns what constitutes as acceptable knowledge in a field of study’ (Saunders, 2007 p108) The focus of epistemology is knowledge as Gray 2004: 16 states It provides a philosophical background for deciding what kinds of knowledge are legitimate and adequate’. This can be compared to Ontology which is involved in the ‘ nature of reality’ (Saunders et al 2007 p108). ANOTHER QOUTE ON ONOLOGY

As the research needs to gather evidence to evaluate throughout the investigation an epistemological philosophy have been adapted. The researcher also must record and examine data relating to the participants attitudes which will be allowed to gather in a more efficient form whilst using an epistemological philosophy. This philosophy is opposed to an ontology approach which can be seen to come secondary as it is more of an understanding of why things happen.

Ontology, epistemology and methodology

According to Remenyl et al (1998) Ontology, epistemology and methodology

Remenyi d Williams b 98, doing research in business and managemtn an introduction to process and method. London sage.

Can be defined as below;

Ontolgy; the reality.

1. Objectivism; bryman and bell

2. Constructionism;

Epistemology; the relationship between the reality and the researcher

Positivsm; Remenyi

The paradigm sees the researcher as an objective analyst and interptreter of a tangible society. Povitism is the assumption that the researcher is indepdent of and neither affects nor is affected by the subject of research. This leads to the fact that independant causes lead to observed effects. Remenyi 1998; 33) Positivism emphasises quantifiable observations that lend themselves to statistical analysis. The positivist researcher gains quantitative results in which they generalise and draw conclusions

A key tenet of the positivist is the reductionist approach that is taken. In order to gain an understanding in to how the variables concerned are behaving, simplifacations of the real world which may exist to the variable are stripped down, often leading to biasing factors being left out. This means the research has to be replicated a number of times in order to be accurately generalisable.

Phenomenology

In contrast to the posivist approach is the phenomenology approach to research. According to cohen and manion (1987) phenomenology is a theoretical point of view that advocates the study of direct experience rather than by external, objective and physically described reality. The researcher is not independent of what is being researched but a fundamental part of it, remenyi 98)

Primary research;

By relating back to my objectives via the research matrix, i was able to conclude that the use of focus groups would be the best way in which to gather the needed information. This primary research will be used throughout the dissertation validating and presenting the vital information I need in order to reach a fully informed and detailed conclusion.

Focus Groups;

According to Saunders et al (2003 p270) a focus group is a ‘ Group interview, composed of a small number of participants, facilitated by a ‘ moderator’, in which discussion is focused on aspects of a given theme or topic’. The focus group was time consuming and was difficult to annotate properly, however, the findings and data conceived and recorded within the focus group were vital towards the process of finding a conclusion.

Hussey and hussy (1997, p155) states ‘ Focus groups are primarily associated with phenomenological methodology and are used to gather data relating to the feelings and opinions of a group of people who are involved in a common situation’ This statement led me to use focus groups as the primary objective was to find out individuals feelings and opinions towards shock advertising. To fully research how shock advertising can alter an individual’s attitude i used two separate focus groups. The first focus group consisted of 4 males aged between 18 and 24. The second focus group consisted of 4 females aged between 18 and 24. These participants can be found in appendix along with other information including age, and educational status. Questions for the focus group were formulated by using the literature review. This qualative research will allow for increasing precision in the collection of data.(Saunders et al 2003)

Focus Group Structure

The groups were conducted in a quiet environment, and each participant was briefed clearly on the reasons behind the focus group. The use of focus groups are more efficient than questionnaires as in a focus group the participants can interact with each others statements, coming to conclusions and highlighting specific important outco