

The effects of incidental exposure marketing essay



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Even if people are not aware that they have been exposed to brands, these brands may still be processed and have effects on subsequent attitudes and behaviors. In fact, human beings can acquire information without full conscious awareness, but there are real constraints to this. We have only certain amount of mental processing capacity at one time. Some stimuli get only empty mental processing, while others receive deep processing. The last two decades of research on the influence of incidental stimulus exposures has proved that preferences can be formed without an accompanying awareness of the preference formation process (Sutherland and Sylvester, 2000).

Interest in showing the effects of incidental exposure to brands has been ongoing since the 1950 when Vicary pretended to have successfully used subliminal exposure. Subliminal perception needs an alteration in attitudes or behavior but incidental brand exposure, by contrast, may modify behaviour through a much simpler, more direct route when the brands are familiar to the consumer. Like research on preconscious processing, our research deals with situations in which consumers are unaware of the nonattended information. In other words, consumers are not conscious of ads or ad information because they are paying attention to something else, not because advertisers control the nature of the exposure (Yoo, 2005). Given the enormity of advertising clutter and the fact that consumers are often comprised in tasks that occupy attention and limit ad processing, it is quite likely that the majority of advertisements do not receive any active processing. Interestingly, however, recent research has indicated that

incidental exposure to advertisements can have an effect on subsequent judgments (Shapiro, McInnis and Heckler, 1997, Adams, 2007)

Firms have converted to the method of incidental advertising because its secrecy nature permits it to be more controllable than traditional print and television advertising, and can thus potentially influence observers without their efforts to escape or counterargue the message. But, some researchers have argued that these demonstrations are not as strong as they could be because it is not completely clear if the experimental exposures were really non-focal (Janiszewski, 1997; Vanhuele et al., 2005; Adams, 2005). What we can notice from previous research is that there is a disagreement among the measures of implicit memory (Janiszewski, 1997; Vanhuele et al., 2005). In fact, Vanhuele et al. (2005) make a lot of criticism about the efficacy of such advertising. They argue that the demonstrations of researchers are not robust as they could be because it is not obvious 3if the experimental exposures were really non-focal. Ferraro, Chartrand and Fitzsimons (2006) wonder: Is this type of incidental exposure worth the expense? In other words: does it work?

Despite the continued effort to theorize how incidental advertising works, little has been known about how incidental advertising may affect consumer's responses when the advertisements are outside of consumer's attentional focus. In fact, the debate surrounding the effects of incidental advertising has intrigued academician's attention to this medium and in spite of its importance, a majority of the prior researches done in the context of advertising has concentrated on a cognitive process involving conscious attention to advertisements and less researches attention has been paid to

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incidental processing of advertisements. Increasingly, however, research has shown that a large part of consumer decision making occurs outside of conscious awareness or is influenced by factors unrecognized by the decision maker (Janiszewski, 1997, Adams, 2007, Droulers, 2004). One chief issue of importance is to develop an accurate methodology to investigate preattentive processing of incidental advertising exposure and its effects. One of the disadvantages of prior research on preattentive processing in the advertising context is that the existence of processing is decided by attitude toward the brand (Janiszewski, 1993). However, using attitude change as an indicator of preattentive processing is problematic because attitudes can be influenced by multiple factors such as advertisement placement and advertisement content. Therefore, independent proof for the existence of such processing is essential to evince the preattentive processing-attitudes relationships.

Further, there are four emerging issues when it comes to investigate preattentive processing of incidental advertising exposure: (1) revealing the existence of preattentive processing of incidental advertisements (2) specifying the factors affecting such processing (3) making clear the relationships between preattentive processing and attitude formation ; and conceiving an appropriate methodology to examine unconscious processing of incidental advertising exposure (4). By unifying the measure of preattentive processing from the measure of attitude changes, it becomes possible to directly prove that preattentive processing of incidental advertising exposure influences the attitude formation process through cognitive and affective responses.

The present research will contribute to the advertising research and practice in several ways. In fact, an empirical examination of unconscious processing of incidental advertising would make theoretical, methodological and practical contributions. From a theoretical perspective, the objective of this study is to prove that consumers memorize information from incidental advertisement message in two ways: implicitly and explicitly and that those types of memorization are influenced simultaneously by cognitive and affective reactions. We want to discover how cognitive treatment of advertisement cue conducts to an implicit/explicit memorization. We want to know how emotion influences those types of memorization, too.

Because inclusion of product in consideration set is often a chief condition for choice, we try to inspect how an incidental exposure to brand names can influence consequential brand choices even when the consumer is not aware of the effect of prior exposure, often referred to as an 'implicit memory' paradigm, and demonstrate how this framework can offer an insight for examining brand choices made. In this work, we wonder under what conditions, incidental advertising exposure affects the formation of consideration sets? The answer to this question would be an important contribution to the understanding of the effect of low-involvement processing on advertising effectiveness. This study is the first to consider the moderating role of characteristics of the person: gender and the dimensions of visualizer / verbalizer of cognitive style in studying the effects of incidental advertising in the formation of consumer consideration set. In fact, one of the aims of our study is to investigate the studies developed in the field of

neuroscience to better understand the effect of the gender and cognitive style of consumers in their memorization of the incidental advertised brand.

Methodologically, the dissertation will suggest the appropriate measure (i. e., implicit memory) to detect the existence of preattentive processing and we will use a new self report instrument assessing the individual differences in object imagery, spatial imagery and verbal cognitive style: the Object-Spatial Imagery and Verbal Questionnaire of Blazhenkova and Kohzevnikov (2009). Stemming from social and cognitive psychology research, the most recent implicit and explicit memory theories and attitude theoretical backgrounds are used in this study. The analysis of incidental advertising can offer enormous help to practioners and academicians who are interested in the impact of this communication on end users. As there is only limited empirical evidence that unconscious process can influence a consumer's response to a marketing communication, our managerial aim is to demonstrate for managers how to conceive an advertisement cue that causes those types of memorization. Familiarity conceived by incidental advertising has the potential to be a versatile managerial tool. Brand managers that take on in event sponsorship, licensing and promotion should maximize consumer exposure to their brand name. Incidental exposure to a brand is adequate. The results of this study carry distinguishing interest for marketing incidental advertising practioners, because the methodology permits for the investigation of the effects of gender and cognitive style of consumers, which previously have not been studied.

The research questions proposed to achieve the objectives of this research are: Does incidental advertising exposure affect the implicit memorization of
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the brand? How does product involvement affect the implicit memory performances? Do males and females think in the same way in the case of incidental advertising exposure? Does gender and cognitive style affect implicit memorization of the brand name in the case of incidental advertising exposure? Does cognitive style of consumer affect the implicit memorization of the brand name in the case of incidental advertising? Does implicit memories and emotional responses generated by incidental advertising affect positively attitude toward the advertised brand? Up to what point can one affirm that the implicit memorization of the brand name in the case of incidental advertising exposure increases likelihood that a product depicted in the ad will be included in consideration set? .

The dissertation is organised in eight chapters. Chapter 1 provides prior literature treating the history of development of the unconscious cognition concept. Chapter 2 presents a meta-analysis of prior studies studying the concept of incidental advertising. Chapter 3 reviews emerging research and develops a conceptual model of how incidental advertising works.

Furthermore eight hypotheses as to factors that may incidental processing and effects are given. Chapter 4 provides the research methods and results of three pretests. The research design of the main study is presented in the fifth chapter followed by the results in chapter 6. Implications for both advertising theory and practice, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are discussed in chapter 7.