



The Study of the Relationship Between Consumers' Advertising and Brand Attitude

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ABSTRACT

Industry experts argue that advertisements have to be more creative to break through the greater media clutter and develop an impression for the brand. After watching the advertisements, Subjects' tapped their responses about brand and advertisement recall, attitude and lastly purchase intent. Contrary to expectations, the finding of this study in single exposure does not verify the superior performance of creative advertising in terms of recall, brand and advertisement attitude and purchase intent. However, in three exposures, creative advertisements developed significantly more favorable brand and advertisement attitude and greater unaided brand recall than control advertisements. Creative advertisements developed greater mean purchase intent for the advertised brands than control group of advertisements; however, it just slipped from attaining significance.

Keywords :

• ADVERTISING AND BRAND ATTITUDE

According to Mitchell and Olson (1981), an attitude is the process of internal evaluation of an object by an individual. Wells et al. (2003) define attitude as "a learned predisposition, a feeling that an individual holds towards an object, a person, an idea that leads to a particular behavior" (p.112) . Thus, it can be positive or negative, reflecting the likes and dislikes or it can be neutral. According to Wells et al. (2003), attitude represents the image of a certain brand and it is an image in customers' minds that reflects what they think and feel about the brand. Perhaps, it is the importance of consumers' attitude that advertisers are so much concerned about the likeability of their commercials because emotions and feelings evoked by an advertisement carry over to the brands. It is due to this reason that attitude is considered an important determinant in consumers' actual behavior about certain brand (Batra & Ray, 1986; MacKenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1986; Bruner & Kumar, 2000). The next section provides an elaborate view of the relationship between consumers' advertising and brand-related attitude.

• RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONSUMERS' ADVERTISEMENT AND BRAND ATTITUDE

Many studies have found that the attitude a person holds about an object affects his / her consequent behavior about that particular object (Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Gresham & Shimp, 1985). As consumers first see an advertisement, it is believed that if this stimulus succeeds in building positive attitude, the favorable effects elicited by the advertisement will transfer towards the respective advertised brand in the form of favorable attitude about the brand which will ultimately affect the behavior of consumers in the market (Batra & Ray, 1986). It is due to this reason that besides the role of other marketing communications, advertisements play a vital role in building successful brands (Cathy, Ruble & Donthu, 1995; Farquhar, 1989). Hence, the following review discusses how consumers form attitude towards advertisement and how such attitude influences their evaluation of the advertised brand, in other words, their brand attitude.

One of the renowned and earlier behavioral researchers, Fishbein (1963) proposed that an individual adopts three steps in the formation of certain behavior. First of all, belief of an individual is affected, which then forms an individuals' attitude and finally he / she behaves according to the attitude

formed. In the context of advertising, an advertisement is supposed to influence viewers' beliefs which form their attitude towards the respective advertisement. The particular advertisement attitude (positive or negative) thus formed, affects the behavior of the viewers of the respective advertisement.

According to Fishbein (1963), consumers' beliefs are mainly affected due to consumers' processing of cognitive information, such as product characteristics. However, the proposition of Fishbein that beliefs are the only mediators of attitude formation and change was further examined by Mitchell and Olson (1981). Mitchell and Olson studied consumers' beliefs about product attributes and its association with their brand attitude in the context of advertising. The study found that besides product attributes, another variable, termed as consumers' attitude towards the advertisement, also influenced the change or formation of brand attitude and subsequent purchase intentions.

In order to further enhance the understanding of the relationship between consumers' attitude towards the advertisement and brand, Gardner (1985) studied the effects of product-related beliefs and advertisement attitude on the formation of consumers brand attitude under different processing sets termed as "brand and non-brand evaluation sets". Subjects in the brand evaluation set were instructed to see the advertisements and evaluate the brands, whereas subjects in the non brand set were instructed to assess the advertisements for other factors like fun and enjoyment. The study found that attitude towards the advertisement affects consumers' attitude towards the brand under both brand and non-brand evaluation sets. Moreover, under brand-related group, besides advertising attitude, consumers' belief about the brand was also found a major factor in the formation of consumers' brand attitude.

Mackenzie et al. (1986) comprehensively investigated the attitude issue. They presented and tested four competing models of attitude which are known as "affect transfer model, dual mediation model, reciprocal mediation model and independent influence model". Among these models, the affect transfer and the dual mediation model of attitude are of particular interest in the current research due to the specific nature of this study. The Affect Transfer Model has received the greatest attention in the advertising literature (Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Gardner, 1985; Mac Kenzie et al., 1986).

This model states that there is a direct one way causal flow of effects flowing from advertisement attitude towards the brand attitude, that is, if viewers like an advertisement, these effects transfer to the brand advertised in the respective advertisement. Similarly, dual mediation model is basically the extension of affect transfer model. The dual mediation approach states that attitude towards the brand is affected by advertising attitude as well as consumers' brand cognition. In other words, according to dual mediation model of attitude, consumers' attitude towards an advertisement performs dual functions: First, it directly affects consumers' brand attitude (Affect Transfer model) and secondly, it influences consumers' propensity to accept the claims made in the advertisement on behalf of the brand (Jeong, 2004). This ultimately places consumers' attitude towards the advertisement at the central place of effects and suggests that consumers' overall advertisement attitude will affect consumers' attitude towards the advertised brand.

Furthermore, to find out which model among the four competing models of attitude more explicitly reflects the change or formation of attitude towards the brand, Mac Kenzie et al. (1986), after structural equation analysis of these models, found out that dual mediation model is superior to the other three models. In other words, it means that consumers' feelings evoked by an advertisement not only transfer towards consumers' brand attitude, but such feelings also affect the acceptability of the claims made in the advertisement on behalf of the respective brand. Consistent with these views, if consumers like an advertisement, such likeability effects will not only transfer towards consumers' favorable brand attitude, but it will also increase the acceptability of the product claims in the respective advertisement. As a result, positive attitude about the advertisement will synergize the favorability of consumers' brand attitude. It therefore implies that consumers' attitude towards the advertisement is of primary importance in the formation of consumers' brand attitude due to the fact that it can enhance or diminish the acceptability of the advertising message (Jeong, 2004).

In order to replicate the findings of Mac Kenzie et al. (1986), Homer (1990) further investigated these four alternative models of attitude under two different processing environments namely brand processing group and non-brand processing group. In the brand processing condition, participants were asked to pay close attention to the advertisement and the brand as they will be asked for purchase intention for the respective brands. In the non-brand processing condition, one group was instructed to watch television program including

the commercials, whereas the second group was asked to watch the program and evaluate the characters used in the television program as well as in the television commercials. Consistent with earlier empirical findings, Homer (1990) found that dual mediation model of attitude provided the best fit of the data in both experiments. Furthermore, consistent with the findings of Gardner (1985), brand versus non-brand processing environment did not produce a significant difference on the relationship between attitude towards the advertisement, brand cognition and attitude towards the brand.

To further investigate the validity of the dual mediation model of attitude formation or attitude change, Brown and Stayman (1992) conducted a meta analysis study on the antecedents of attitude towards the advertisement. Their study found that dual mediation model better predicts the attitude formation process.

In addition to the above studies, there are many other studies which state that consumers' likeability of advertisement (similar to Ad-Att) predicts their favorable attitude towards the advertised products. For instance, Haley and Baldinger (1991), in an advertising Research Foundation (ARF) copy research study, found that advertisement likeability is the major determinant of differences in sales. While investigating the relationship between consumers' perceptions of advertisements and the impact produced by the respective advertisements, Aaker and Stayman (1990) found that advertisement likeability is related to greater favorable impact and hence greater advertising effectiveness.

• CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the above discussion reveals that attitude towards the advertisement plays a vital role in the formation of consumers' brand attitude. Furthermore, whether attitude towards the advertisement influences consumers' brand attitude directly (Affect Transfer Model) or indirectly (Dual Mediation Model), the fact remains the same that consumers' attitude towards the advertisement is a primary and initial source through which consumers form their brand attitude (Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Gresham & Shimp, 1985).

In addition, to understand whether creative advertisements are relatively more effective in forming favorable advertisement and brand-related attitude, previous studies have provided some favorable indications about the relationship between creative advertisements and consumers' advertising and brand attitude (Kover et al., 1995; Ang & Low, 2000; Stone, Besser, & Lewis, 2000).

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