

ADVERTISING STRATEGY AND COGNITIONS

Advertising strategy refers to executional elements in the content and form of an *advertisement* that are aspects of the *advertisement* itself. These are different from *advertising* effects, which are the responses elicited in persons as a result of exposure to the *advertisement* (i.e., affective and analytic cognition). However, the executional elements may be expected to relate to affective and analytic responses. For example, Preston (1968) differentiated between "sign-relevant" *advertisements*, which rely on tangible, inherent aspects of the product, and "arbitrary" *advertisements*, which depend on other factors such as the aspects of the celebrity used in the *advertisement*. Preston found arbitrary *advertisements* to be rated lower in rational appeal than sign-relevant *advertisements*, but higher in emotional appeal. Thus, in general, *advertisements* using product information *strategies* should induce analytic cognition, whereas *advertisements* using arbitrary *strategies* should elicit affective cognition. Accordingly, both product information *strategies* and arbitrary *strategies* were operationalized in this study and their relationships to affective and analytic cognition were examined. Additionally, arbitrary *strategies* were operationalized in terms of three different *strategies*: spokesperson *strategies*, mood arousal *strategies*, and status appeals.^[sup 2] This is discussed below.

Product Information Strategies

Product information *strategies* adhere to systematic learning theories that view the consumer as an active processor of information (Bettman, 1979; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). This is consistent with the central route to attitude change, described by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) and the systematic process of Chaiken (1980). The recipient of a persuasive message goes through the process of attention, comprehension of the message, then rehearsal of the message, which produces a suitable conclusion (yielding) and finally retention of the message in memory. This process of the creation of beliefs and judgments about *brands* on the basis of product information produces sequential and analytic cognition. Moreover, product information *strategies*, which often take a problem solution approach, may intentionally avoid emotion that distracts from the rational "meaning" of the message. Product information *strategies* may thus be expected to relate to analytic cognition and not to affective cognition. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is posited:

H1 : Product information *strategies* are positively related to analytic cognition.

Spokesperson Strategies

Advertisers often use spokesperson *strategies* in their *advertisements* by showing typical consumers, celebrities, and so on who recount their satisfaction with the *advertised brand* and advocate the use of the *brand*. Audiences may use such cues as heuristics in their decision making, because, according to Chaiken (1980), persons process information in both systematic and heuristic ways. Although systematic processing involves thoughtful, mindful analysis of the content of the *advertisement*, heuristic processing involves the use of simple heuristic cues, such as spokesperson aspects, in order to arrive at a conclusion (*brand* preferences, etc.). Such cues may generate affective cognition as a result of liking or being attracted to the spokesperson. Moreover, heuristic cues may discourage analytic cognition, because this process is used when consumers wish to avoid detailed consideration of the merits of a *brand*. Thus *advertising strategies* using spokespersons may be expected to relate to affective cognition and not to analytic cognition. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H2: Spokesperson *strategies* are positively related to affective cognition.

Mood Arousal Strategies

Mood arousal *strategies* derive from theories of classical conditioning. Pavlov (1927) and others (Watson & Rayner, 1920) in classic experiments demonstrated that if two dissimilar objects are repetitively associated together in close contiguity to each other, the emotional response originally elicited by the unconditioned stimulus can, over time, be elicited by the conditioned stimulus alone.

This is relevant to the process of emotional communication in *advertising*, which can result in affective cognition through the use of mood arousal *strategies*. For instance, a particular mood is aroused through the use of executional elements such as special family occasions, sexual themes, and so on. Repeated pairings of a *brand* with a mood transfers the affect generated by the mood to the *brand* itself. The use of "Joe Camel" in cigarette *advertising*, for example, has recently drawn strong protests from antismoking groups. The assumption has been that certain nonverbal, mood-arousing cues in *advertisements*, such as the presence of animals, can produce positive affective responses that, in turn, are transferred to a favorable image for the *advertised brand*. This transfer of affect has also been demonstrated to occur in the relative absence of analytic cognition (Gorn, 1982). The foregoing discussion leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: Mood arousal *strategies* are positively related to affective cognition.

Status Appeals

Pechmann and Stewart (1989) describe the process of vicarious learning that is generated through status and social appeals in *advertising*. *Advertisements* that portray reward or punishment for an actor due to use or nonuse of a particular *brand* arouse identification and vicarious emotion. The point is that consumers construct beliefs, rules about which *brands*/products to use, based on emotional communication. The rewards/punishments meted out to the model in the *advertisement* are exemplified in the model's expressive behavior, such as facial expressions, and so on. The process of observing (decoding) such emotional expression results in arousal and a vicarious sharing of the same subjective experience as undergone by the model in the *advertisement*. The consumer comes to associate the *brand* with the emotion generated (happiness, or relief from fear and anxiety) and sees the *brand* as a status instrument that obtains rewards and stays punishment.

Additionally, Buck (1984) suggests that humans are biologically constructed or preattuned to receive certain emotional displays and to understand their meanings directly and without the need for analytic cognitive processing. Status appeals that use emotional displays may, thus, be expected to relate positively to affective cognition and not to analytic cognition, hypothesized as follows:

H4: Status appeals are positively related to affective cognition.