DIFFERENTIAL EFFECT OF CREATIVITY DIMENSIONS AND ROLE OF TRUST IN ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS

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ABSTRACT

Research proves that advertisements in any form irritate consumers. On internet, Ads are supposed to disturb and distract the users from original task. Ad blocking tools like the web-browser plugins, pop-up and java script blockers etc. have been designed to identify and avoid ads on internet. Yet marketers are looking for new ways to persuade consumers using new forms of advertising using this medium. Also the emergence of many new mediums and technology are making it possible to reach the consumer everywhere.

Consumers often discuss the advertisements they are exposed to through different media. Some advertisements leave an impact on the minds of consumers even if the product is not so relevant for them. Consumers who appreciate the creativity in advertisements share them on the social networking websites. Thus in a way, at times, consumers consider advertisement to be object of entertainment rather than just a message trying to sell products or services to them. When exposed to an advertisement consumers evaluate its creativity either knowingly or unknowingly. However creativity in advertisements is often not addressed in the academic research. This study tries to explore how the creativity in advertising is perceived by the consumers. How this consumer perceived creativity in advertising influences the effectiveness of the ads.

Advertising effectiveness is defined and measured in terms of the attitude towards advertising (ad attitude), attitude towards the brand (brand attitude) and purchase intentions.

Another phenomenon that this study explores is trust in an advertising medium, which is the consumers' confidence in the ad conveyed information and the willingness to rely on it. To understand how consumer processes creative or noncreative advertising information for attitude formation, concepts of Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and Ad processing model have been used.

Further in this study creativity in advertisements is conceptualized using two dimensions; Divergence and Relevance. Recent literature suggests that divergence and relevance capture ad creativity comprehensively. Divergence is the element in an ad responsible for its unusualness which invokes curiosity in the minds of the audience. Relevance at the same time refers to how meaningful and useful the product and brand shown in the ad are to the consumer.

The differential effect of these dimensions of creativity is probed in this study. In order to differentially vary the creativity dimensions and check their influence on the attitudes towards ad and brand, an experimental setup was designed. The experiment was typically a 2^2 factorial design in which the experimental groups were designed by manipulating the dimensions of creativity. Thus four experimental groups were designed, High Divergence High Relevance (DHRH), High Divergence Low Relevance (DHRL), Low Divergence High Relevance (DLRH) and the Low Divergence Low Relevance Group (DLRL). The first three of these groups contained the stimulus high either in both or at least any one dimension of creativity and the last group consisted of ads low in both dimensions. Thus first three were classified as the creative groups and the last group was called the low creativity group based on the divergence and relevance ratings of the member ads. Divergence and relevance ratings vary across all the four groups and thus the creativity levels.

The study was divided into study-1 and study-2, the purpose of study-1 was to identify the ads which will qualify for each of the experimental groups. Initially 40 ads were pooled in the study -1 and participants were asked to rate these ads for the creativity on the ad creativity scale developed by Smith, Mackenzie, Xiaojing Buchholz and Darley (2007) which consisted of 24 items; 15 for divergence and 9 for relevance. All these ads were video ads and were either TV commercials or TV and internet commercials. Based on the responses of study-1, 16 ads were shortlisted and categorized into four groups each containing four ads.

For the study-2 four HTML web pages were created resembling a page of YouTube on which the videos could be watched by clicking on the selected video. The videos on this YouTube like page were general interest videos; movie trailers and videos exhibiting animals and some scientific invention. All the four web pages were identical and contained the same four videos. Each of these videos had an ad embedded in it. As the user clicks a video, first the ad is displayed and the selected video plays later. The participants first responded for their trust in internet advertising in general, Ad-trust scale developed by Soh, Reid and King (2009) was used for this part. Later they were briefed a task of watching video on the video content delivering webpage already displayed on the computer screen in front of them. Once the participants completed the task they responded for the creativity of the ad and also for the attitudes and purchase intentions. They were also asked to recall the advertised product and brand. Throughout the exercise the participants were unaware of the real motive of the study.

In all 329 responses were collected of which 319 were valid. Thus the group-wise distribution of the responses was 75, 82, 82, and 80 for DHRH, DHRL, DLRH and

DLRL respectively. The results of the manipulation check confirmed that the groups were according to the manipulated creativity profile allotted to them.

The results prove that the ad creativity is positively related with the ad attitude and ad attitude was proved to be a strong mediator of influence of creativity on the brand attitude. Among the creativity dimensions, divergence was found to be motivating the consumer to process the ad information and pay attention to the ad. Divergent ads demanded more cognitive resources as there is a curiosity in consumers' mind for the unusual messages for what happens next in this ad. Thus the closure effect could be seen in consumers for divergent ads, which is desire for completion of a message because of curiosity.

Relevance at the same time was found to be effective in formation of the attitude towards advertising. Trust was not found to be influencing the attitude towards advertising. Thus it could be concluded that the level of trust in internet advertising medium was not found to affect the attitude towards ad shown on the same medium. Thus the ad creativity irrespective of trust or distrust in a medium influences the consumers' attitude towards ad and the advertised brand.

One more finding of this study is that the average level of trust in internet advertising was found to be on higher side, which contradicts the established belief that internet advertising is perceived to be not trustworthy. The responses were also found to be balanced on cognitive as well as emotional dimensions of the ad trust scale. Thus the usefulness and likeability of the internet ads was equally appealing to them. Some observations related to the product and brand recall were also made in the study based on how the brand and product information was exhibited in the study. An ad in the

low creativity group could yield hundred percent recalls because it reinforced the brand name by repeating it throughout the ad.

One of the important managerial implications of the research is that consumers' judge an ad based on their own perception of creativity thus an ad should be designed such that it should possess right balance of divergence and relevance based on the target audiences. This research focused only on video advertisements and that too placed before the videos on the video content delivering websites. Future researches can explore the unproven trust relationship, and also compare the other forms of advertisements on the internet.

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