



ELSEVIER

Intern. J. of Research in Marketing 23 (2006) 187–198

International Journal of

**Research in  
Marketing**

www.elsevier.com/locate/ijresmar

## Two-sided advertising: A meta-analysis

Martin Eisend \*

*Marketing Department, Freie Universität Berlin, Otto-von-Simson-Str. 19, 14195 Berlin, Germany*

### Abstract

A meta-analysis is conducted that integrates empirical findings from the two-sided advertising literature. First, the study provides a summary of findings of the persuasive impact of two-sided advertising. Secondly, using regression analysis, the influence of message structure, marketer, and receiver variables on the persuasive impact of two-sided messages is tested. Finally, the crucial problem of the net-effect of source credibility and the amount of negative information on attitudes toward the brand is investigated. The results confirm that the persuasive impact of message sidedness depends on suggested variables (amount of negative information, attribute quality, placement of negative information, correlation between negative and positive attributes and marketers' voluntariness). Also the curvilinear relationship between the amount of negative information and brand attitude is supported.

© 2006 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Two-sided messages; Two-sided advertising; Meta-analysis

### 1. Introduction

Marketers traditionally present their products to consumers in a favorable light. However, sometimes marketers disclaim particular characteristics of their products in conjunction with asserting positive claims, thereby providing consumers with a two-sided argument in the advertising message. At first glance, mentioning negative aspects in an advertisement goes against common intuition, as the advertised product seems to be presented in an unfavorable light. However, there are situations when two-sided advertising can be applied as a useful advertising technique; this is particularly true when consumers already hold negative beliefs or attitudes about a brand, when they are exposed to attacking ads that comprise negative counterclaims about the brand provided by competitors, or when they receive unfavorable information provided by negative publicity. Given today's competitive communication environment, where advertisers are attacked by competitors or governmental authorities, there is an apparent need to understand the effectiveness of two-sided advertising more thoroughly. A variety of marketing studies suggest that product-related messages can indeed include some negative information and still be more effective than if no negative information is

included, especially in terms of enhancing credibility. Unfortunately, previous results of two-sided advertising studies (with respect to other key dependent variables such as attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, or purchase intention) deliver rather ambiguous findings and indicate a rather complex relationship between message sidedness and communication effects in marketing. Hence, profound knowledge on the effectiveness of two-sided advertising and influences of potential moderating and mediating variables is valuable to marketers in showing how communication strategies aimed at consumers can best be optimized. Furthermore, according to Crowley and Hoyer (1994), the research topic is also of theoretical interest, as the persuasive mechanisms of two-sided communication increase our knowledge of the basic communication and persuasion processes between marketers or policy makers and consumers.

In light of these issues, a meta-analysis is applied to previous results in order to provide an empirical generalization of two-sided advertising effects. Furthermore, we investigate the impact of several variables on the effectiveness of two-sided advertising that are derived from theoretical and empirical research. Message structure variables and marketers' and receivers' characteristics should resolve ambiguous previous results, and by this, contribute to a more detailed and refined knowledge of the underlying persuasive mechanisms of two-sided advertising. Finally, we focus on the crucial problem of

\* Tel.: +49 30 838 54460; fax: +49 30 838 54557.

E-mail address: [eisend@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:eisend@zedat.fu-berlin.de).

the net-effect of source credibility and the quantity of negative information on attitudes toward the brand.

## 2. Theoretical background

Three theoretical approaches are applied in order to explain the effects of two-sided messages. Attribution theory, particularly correspondence theory, describes the processes an individual goes through in assigning causes to events (Jones & Davis, 1965; Jones & McGillis, 1976; Kelley, 1972, 1973). Consumers can attribute claims either to the advertiser's desire to sell the product or to actual characteristics of the product. The inclusion of negative information leads a consumer to conclude that the advertiser is telling the truth. This enhances the perception of advertiser credibility. However, the message is not necessarily more effective in terms of persuasiveness, since negative information about a brand may also have a direct negative effect on attitudes toward the brand. Attribution theory has guided the majority of the existing two-sided advertising studies (Anderson & Golden, 1984; Easley, Bearden, & Teel, 1995; Eisend, Hahn, & Schuchert-Güler, 2004; Golden & Alpert, 1987; Hunt, Domzal, & Kernan, 1982; Hunt & Kernan, 1984; Kamins, 1989; Kamins & Assael, 1987b; Kamins, Brand, Hoeke, & Moe, 1989; Kamins & Marks, 1987; Settle & Golden, 1974; Smith & Hunt, 1978; Stayman, Hoyer, & Leon, 1987; Swinyard, 1981).

Optimal arousal theory (Berlyne, 1971) suggests that two-sided messages are novel and thereby have a tendency to engender positive affect, motivating consumers to pay attention to and process the message which, in turn, increases the probability of favorable changes in attitude. The theory has not yet been applied in a two-sided persuasion context, but is recommended by Crowley and Hoyer (1994) as a plausible explanation to conflicting findings of previous studies (e.g., findings that vary in the proportion of negative information included, which may cause varying levels of discrepancies from an adaptation level). For low to moderate discrepancies, arousal is probably most effective, whereas too strong of discrepancies may have rather negative effects.

Inoculation theory (McGuire, 1964) uses a physiological analogy and states that using mild attacking arguments and then countering or refuting them strengthens cognitions, reduces counterarguments, and as a consequence, enhances attitudes. This theory refers to a special type of two-sided messages, namely refutational appeals. Similar to two-sided messages, advertisers present positive and negative information but then attempt to refute or discount the negative information, attempting to inoculate the audience against possible counterclaims or opposing messages provided by competitors. So far, only a few studies in two-sided advertising research incorporate refutational appeals based on inoculation theory (Etgar & Goodwin, 1982; Kamins & Assael, 1987b; Sawyer, 1973; Szybillo & Heslin, 1973).

Based on these theories, on previous research, and on knowledge of general advertising effects, Crowley and Hoyer (1994) developed an integrative framework and suggest a variety of propositions to explain the persuasive mechanisms of two-sided messages. In accordance with inferences also made

by other authors (e.g., O'Keefe, 1994; Pechmann, 1990), a variety of variables moderating and mediating the impact of message sidedness in marketing communication can be assumed.

- Source credibility increases with the *amount of negative information* contained in the two-sided message. However, negative information has a contrary effect on attitudes. Taking these effects together, a trade-off occurs if the proportion of negative information exceeds a certain level and the gain in credibility has a detrimental effect on attitudes. It is not unlikely that extreme amounts of negative information could also lead to low credibility. However, it is unlikely that an advertiser would include more negative information than was absolutely necessary; it is improbable that the advertiser would face the problem of losses in credibility caused by the amount of negative information mentioned in two-sided advertising. It should also be noted that the linkage between the amount of negative information and source credibility may be more complex and depends on further message structure variables. For instance, inclusion of a refutation statement may reduce the credibility, since the advertiser has chosen to refute the negative aspect introduced in the context of the present ad. Furthermore, the optimal amount of negative information in order to benefit from two-sided advertising may also depend on the importance of the negative information. Given a strong relationship between attitude toward the brand and purchase intention, amount of negative information should affect purchase intention in a similar way.
- If the *undesirable attribute is perceived to be important*, the message source is seen as more credible and truthful. Similar to the amount of negative information, the importance of the negative information also has a contrary effect on attitude measures and purchase intention. Therefore, the message is not necessarily more effective and can even be less effective than a one-sided message, especially if the undesirable attribute is very important (Pechmann, 1990).
- The *presence of a refutation statement* can bolster positive cognitive responses and reduce counterarguments. Since the receiver is stimulated to take the message more seriously, it may be an additional attention-enhancer and provide more motivation to process the message (McGuire, 1985).
- *Discounting experience and/or credence attributes* (which can be evaluated only after purchase, such as durability of a product, or the fact that the product can never be accurately evaluated as in the ecological treatment of fruits and vegetables) is more effective than discounting search attributes (which can be accurately evaluated prior to purchase, such as price or the number of sizes available) in enhancing credibility. Consumers assess whether or not they can obtain knowledge of the negative attribute prior to purchase and attribute greater honesty to an advertiser who reveals negative attributes that can be evaluated only after purchase (Pechmann, 1992).
- Due to primacy or recency effects, *negative information placed first* or last in the message may be less effective in terms of prompting evaluation of the source and changing

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات