

Attitude toward advertising through sport: A theoretical framework

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ABSTRACT

An important goal of advertising is designing effective campaigns that foster favorable attitudes toward a product. Attitude toward a product is influenced by one's attitude toward an advertisement. Previous research examining attitude toward advertising in general and in specific mediums (e.g., TV and online) has found that consumers' attitudes toward advertising have become increasingly negative. The researchers propose that sport is one advertising platform that may be utilized to foster positive attitudes toward advertising. A conceptual framework of attitude toward advertising through sport derived from the phenomenon of attitude toward advertising in general and in specific mediums is introduced. The proposed model includes antecedents (beliefs), a consequence (attitude toward the ad), and attitude toward sport as a moderator of the relationship between beliefs about and attitude toward advertising through sport.

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1. Introduction

With the use of personal video recorders (PVR) and digital video recorders (DVR), consumers are able to skip advertisements when watching television shows. Accenture (2005) reported that eight percent of U.S. households have PVR or DVR devices, and consumers in those households have already skipped approximately 70% of the TV commercials aired. Accenture also predicted that by 2009, 40% of U.S. households will have PVR or DVR devices. Accenture also reported, however, that ad skipping behaviors using the devices occurred less frequently during live TV programs such as sporting events.

Sport has become an important advertising platform for many corporations because of the "flexibility, broader reach, and higher levels of brand or corporate exposure" that sport platforms afford (Kropp, Lavack, Holden, & Dalakas, 1999, p. 49). When attending or watching sporting events, amateur or professional, people are exposed to a variety of advertisements. Unlike other mediums such as television commercials or online advertising, people involuntarily receive these advertisements because they watch the game for the sporting action rather than the advertisements (Harshaw & Turner, 1999). Research has demonstrated that people form attitudes toward products and/or brands based on their attitudes toward advertisements; in the same manner, attitudes are formed based on specific advertisements through sport, and those attitudes are believed to influence decisions to purchase a particular advertiser's products (Bush, Smith, & Martin, 1999; Lutz, 1985; Muehling, 1987).

Of particular interest is evaluation of the effectiveness of advertising through sport (Lyberger & McCarthy, 2001). The effectiveness of particular formats of advertising through sport in terms of recall and recognition has been examined

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(Crimmins & Horn, 1996; Cuneen & Hannan, 1993; Harshaw & Turner, 1999; Stotlar & Bennett, 2000; Turley & Shannon, 2000). Measures of recall or recognition provide information about awareness of companies advertising through sport, but they fail to yield crucial knowledge about consumers' cognitive structures that may be employed in determining consumers' decision-making processes (Lyberger & McCarthy, 2001). Meenaghan (2001) suggested that "...awareness and association tests are merely first-line measures..." (p. 97), providing assessment of impact, but they do not offer a more complete understanding of consumer engagement.

The use of advertising through sport has led to concerns about consumer "identification" and "differentiation" (Lyberger & McCarthy, 2001, p. 431). Are consumers able to identify organizations that advertise through sport? Are consumers able to differentiate organizations that advertise through sport, or is there too much clutter? The perceived lack of consumer differentiation and identification may be due to a failure by researchers to understand consumer perceptions of, and information about, advertising through sport (Lyberger & McCarthy, 2001, p. 431). Perceptions of, and information about, advertising through sport are elements of a consumer's cognitive structure, or beliefs, about advertising in general. Consistent with Meenaghan's (2001) statement, the dearth of understanding regarding consumers' cognitive structures with respect to advertising through sport suggests the need for researchers to better understand consumers' belief and attitude concepts surrounding advertising through sport. However, a review of literature revealed that no research has examined consumer beliefs underlying attitudes toward advertising through sport, which is also considered a predictor of attitude toward individual advertisements (Lutz, 1985; Muehling, 1987).

In an effort to provide a foundation for the study of advertising through sport, the purpose of this study is to develop a conceptual framework and theoretical model. Specifically, the framework will provide an explanation of: (a) multiple belief constructs about advertising through sport; (b) the relationships among those beliefs and attitude toward advertising through sport; (c) the relationship between attitude toward advertising through sport and attitude toward the ad (A_{Ad}); and (d) the potential moderating effect of attitude toward sport on the beliefs-to-attitude relationship (Fig. 1). For the development of the conceptual framework, the authors incorporated the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein, 1963), the hypothesized primary structure of beliefs and attitudes about advertising (Pollay & Mittal, 1993), the conceptual framework of A_{Ad} (Lutz, 1985), and categorization theory (Mervis & Rosch, 1981; Rosch & Mervis, 1975).

First, a key component of Fishbein's (1963) theory is that beliefs and attitudes are distinct, and beliefs usually function as indicants of attitudes. Second, the authors identified seven belief constructs which are expected to influence attitude toward

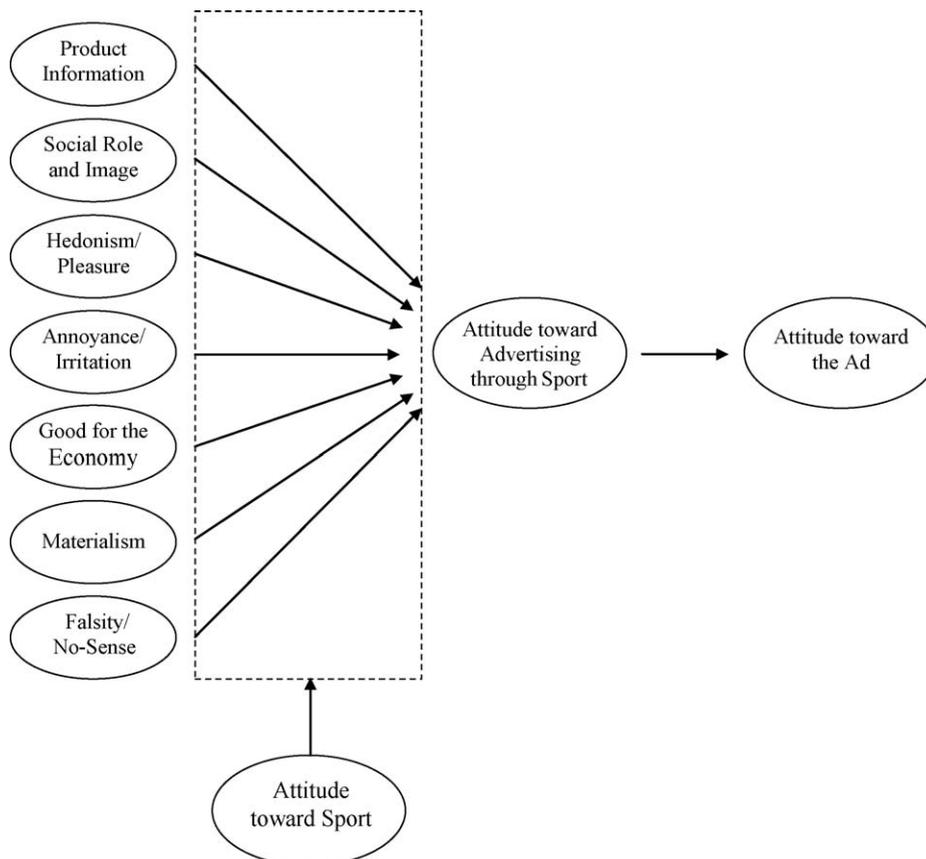


Fig. 1. A proposed model of attitude toward advertising through sport.

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