



The impact of advertising on patrons' emotional responses, perceived value, and behavioral intentions in the chain restaurant industry: The moderating role of advertising-induced arousal[☆]

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was twofold: to investigate the structural relationships between patrons' emotional responses induced by advertising, their perceived value, and their behavioral intentions in the chain restaurant industry; and to investigate which attributes of advertising bear the strongest impact on behavioral intentions. Based on the literature review, six evaluative dimensions of advertising were derived: relevant news, brand reinforcement, stimulation, empathy, familiarity, and confusion. Theoretical relationships between these six evaluative dimensions and patrons' emotional responses, perceived value, and behavioral intentions were derived based on the literature review. Following the collection and analysis of data obtained from chain restaurant patrons, it was found that four dimensions of advertising in particular (relevant news, stimulation, empathy, and familiarity) have a significant impact on inducing emotional responses in patrons. Among the four dimensions, stimulation was found to bear the most significant effect on patrons' emotional responses. It can thus be stated that advertising-induced emotional responses positively influence patrons' perceived value. During this study, it was found that the level of arousal induced by advertising plays a moderating function in the relationship between patrons' emotional responses and hedonic value. The possible interpretations of these findings and their managerial implications are discussed in the latter part of this article.

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1. Introduction

Historically, it has been strongly believed that advertising influences customers' behavioral intentions (Lewis, 1981). For this reason, chain restaurant companies invest tremendous amount of expenditure on advertising. For example, T.G.I. Friday invests \$71 million in advertising annually, Red Lobster spends \$90 million, and Applebee's invests \$126 million (Advertising Age, 2006). As the chain restaurant business environment becomes ever more competitive, advertising expenditures are increasing correspondingly. In this competitive climate, it is critical to understand the ways in which advertising effectiveness can be maximized in order to induce patrons' positive behavioral intentions. Chain

restaurant marketers therefore require a practical model for linking successful advertising attributes and patrons' behavioral intentions.

However, our understanding of how advertising influences patrons' behavioral intentions is relatively weak within the chain restaurant industry. A major stream of marketing studies exists that has postulated that advertising induces emotional responses in customers and impacts their behavioral intentions (e.g. Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy, 1984; Olney et al., 1991; Lazarus, 1982; Stout and Leckenby, 1986; Stout and Rust, 1993; Chang, 2006; Geuens and De Pelsmacker, 1998; Duncan and Nelson, 1985; Stern, 1992; Zajonc et al., 1974; Macinnis and Park, 1991; Ellsworth, 2003). However, advertising is composed of a variety of complex dimensions and attributes, such as information regarding a product, entertainment factors, and elements that induce emotional involvement (Schlinger, 1979a). It is therefore critical to assess which specific attributes of advertising bear the strongest impact on chain restaurant customers' emotional responses and behaviors, and to maximize advertising effectiveness accordingly. Moreover, it is widely accepted that the impact of emotional responses on behavioral intention is mediated by customers' perceived value (Finucane

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et al., 2000; Schwarz, 1990; Bruner, 1957; Johns and Saks, 2005). Emotional response, then, is the factor that modifies the customer's perceived value, and behavior is largely influenced by the perceived value (Schwarz and Clore, 1988; Zajonc, 1980).

By combining the theoretical background, three hypotheses can be formulated: advertising induces emotional responses in chain restaurant patrons; patrons' emotional responses influence perceived value; and the perceived value influences behavioral intentions. Consequently, the purposes of this study are to investigate the structural relationships between patrons' emotional responses induced by advertising, their perceived value, and their behavioral intentions in the chain restaurant industry; and to investigate which attributes of advertising bear the strongest impact on behavioral intentions.

2. Literature review

2.1. Evaluative dimensions of advertising

Advertising is composed of complex dimensions and attributes (Schlinger, 1979a). Researchers have proposed various evaluative dimensions of advertising as well as measures to explain those dimensions (Leavitt, 1970; Schlinger, 1979a; Wells, 1964; Wells et al., 1971). Among them, Schlinger's (1979a) viewer response profile (VRP) has been in the spotlight of advertising research for many years. Schlinger quantified the consumer's subjective feelings after viewing advertising and proposed six evaluative dimensions of advertising: relevant news, brand reinforcement, stimulation, empathy, familiarity, and confusion. These six dimensions were empirically tested and the reliability of the testing was verified in later studies (e.g. Stout and Rust, 1993; Strasheim et al., 2007; Lipstein and Neelankavil, 1982). Currently, these six dimensions are widely accepted by academic researchers and advertising agencies (e.g. Chen and Wells, 1999; Strasheim et al., 2007).

2.1.1. Relevant news

Relevant news indicates that advertising provides relevant information regarding a product (Schlinger, 1979b). The fundamental role of advertising is information delivery (Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy, 1984), through which customers receive relevant news about a product/service prior to deciding whether or not to consume it (Anderson and Renault, 2006). This prior information influences customers' product selections and behavioral intentions (Schlinger, 1979a). For this reason, the question of what content should be included in advertising has been a key one in research addressed by previous studies (Resnik and Stern, 1977). Researchers (e.g. Schlinger, 1979a; Stout and Rust, 1993) have proposed that the following content must be included for effective advertising: the advantage of the product/service; product information that is not known by current consumers; the product's impact on consumers' everyday lives; and the uniqueness of the product.

Relevant news in advertising induces emotional responses in consumers (Stout and Leckenby, 1986). The theoretical background of this relationship is the model of the emotional process proposed by Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy (1984). According to this model, consumers' emotional responses occur when some message, information, or relevant news triggers a cognitive appraisal in consumers' minds. In this sense, the cognitive appraisal of the information/message is a key antecedent of emotional responses (Lazarus, 1982). Similarly, Holbrook and Batra's (1987) communication model further supports this relationship. In this model, when consumers view advertising, the information contained in the advertising induces emotional responses, thus creating an attitude towards the brand. This model was empirically tested

by conducting content-analytic rating tasks. Based on selected informed judges' ratings of advertising content and their emotional responses, it was concluded that advertising content induces emotional responses, thus causing viewers to form an attitude towards the brand.

Later studies have empirically supported this theoretical relationship. For example, Olney et al. (1991) examined the relationships between advertising content, consumers' emotional responses, and consumers' attitudes towards a brand by analyzing selected informed judges' evaluations of advertising content and their emotional responses. Based on hierarchical regression analysis, they found that advertising content significantly influences two dimensions of emotional responses: 'pleasure' and 'arousal'. Based on the theoretical and empirical background, the first hypothesis is derived:

Hypothesis 1. Relevant news in advertising influences patrons' emotional responses.

2.1.2. Brand reinforcement

Brand reinforcement refers to the reinforcement of existing customers' positive attitudes towards a brand (Schlinger, 1979b). Keller (1999) stated that the aim of brand reinforcement is to strengthen existing customers' favorable attitudes towards a brand, thus creating strong, positive, and unique brand associations in their minds. The role of brand reinforcement has been emphasized by previous branding studies since in many cases increased sales result in many cases from strengthening the brand association and brand loyalty of existing customers (Joyce, 1967). Brand reinforcement via advertising can be achieved when consumers view advertising as representative of the ways in which they actually experience the brand (Schlinger, 1979b). In contrast, advertising does not reinforce customers' positive attitudes if the advertising is perceived as remote from customers' actual experiences with the brand. Negative reinforcement may even occur when customers feel that advertising is exaggerated or dishonest.

During the process of viewing advertising, emotional responses occur as reactions to the advertising (Stout and Leckenby, 1986), which in turn influence customers' attitudes towards a brand (Aaker et al., 1986). This theoretical relationship between brand reinforcement and emotional response was further tested by later empirical studies. For example, Stout and Rust (1993) examined the relationship between brand enforcement and consumers' emotional responses. They analyzed responses provided by 208 consumers towards seven advertisements and found significant correlation between the dimension of brand reinforcement and consumers' emotional responses. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed regarding the relationship between brand reinforcement and consumers' emotional responses:

Hypothesis 2. Brand reinforcement in advertising influences patrons' emotional responses.

2.1.3. Stimulation (entertainment)

Stimulation (or entertainment) in the advertising context indicates that the advertising is pleasurable, enjoyable, and fun to watch (Schlinger, 1979b). It is commonly argued that entertaining and/or humorous advertisements attract consumers' attention, therefore increasing the effectiveness of the advertisement (e.g. Sternthal and Craig, 1973). Moreover, interesting advertising tends to be remembered more vividly and longer in consumers' memories (Spotts et al., 1997). Everyday, many consumers are exposed to hundreds of advertisements, the majority of which are quickly forgotten. For this reason, entertainment has long been considered an important advertising strategy in maximizing advertising effectiveness (Madden and Weinberger, 1982). The amount of money that is spent every year by companies in order to develop humor-

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