

ADVERTISEMENT: A GAME OF EMOTIONS & PERSUASION

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ABSTRACT

Emotion and persuasion is an old topic in psychology and a difficult one to apply to advertising. Affect appears to have four possible effects on "learning" from advertising and a direct effect on advertising effectiveness in low depth-of-processing situations. But understanding and measurement of the cognitive neuropsychological underpinnings of the effect of affect is incomplete and often applied in an over simplistic way.

KEYWORDS: Advertisement, Percentage contribution, Memorability, Vividness, Unidimensional, Discriminant, Tricomponent,

Introduction

An inadequate understanding of the role of affect in advertising has probably been the cause of more wasted advertising money than any other single reason. Today, after years of advertising research, we still do not adequately understand if advertising must entertain in order to sell or whether, like the headache ads that seem to sell through their very irritation, pleasantness is irrelevant to considerations of advertising effectiveness. One could easily modify John Wanamaker's complaint: we know that half of our advertising is wasted, but we don't know if it's the "affective" half or the "rational" half.

Things seem to be changing, though. Recently, cracks seem to have developed in the edifice of the Fishbeinian "attitudes are based on attributes" school of brand superiority. We academic researchers may yet understand why advertising personnel have for long intuitively suspected that consumers develop a liking for brands based at least partly, and at least in some situations, on how affective that brand's advertising is (Vaughn 1980; Berger 1980).

In this review paper, we first examine the various reasons why, according to the literature, we need to study affect at all, and why affect is important for advertising theory and practice. In doing so, we first consider the role of affect in advertising as a mediating, instrumental factor in advertising success; we then look at reasons why the creation of affect may be important as an end in itself. Next, we discuss ways in which advertising-induced affect may be studied, and in order to do this we attempt to understand what the sources of affect are, and what it really means for people to experience affect. This section is heavily psycho physiological in tone. Finally, we raise questions on where we go from here, summarizing what we do know, and some urgent questions, about affect in advertising.

The Role of Affect in Advertising Affect as a Means to an End

There are at least four reasons why affective advertising may prove to be more effective advertising, no matter what the content or situation (subject to a few caveats in each case). We discuss these below.

People may pay greater attention to affective advertising. Affect tends to play a prominent role in models of attention and perception. Ittelson (1973, p. 16) asserts that "the first level of response to the environment is affective. The direct emotional impact of the situation, perhaps largely a global response to the ambiance, very generally governs the directions taken by subsequent relations with the environment". Posner and Snyder (1975) quote work by Erdelyi and Applebaum on the priority of emotional identification over semantic identification in the formation of perceptual context.

Broadbent (1977), too, finds an "emotionality effect" in his hierarchical model of information handling: words that have emotional content are perceived more readily than those which don't. And, most recently, Bower and Cohen (1982) present evidence that a person's feelings act like a selective filter that is tuned to incoming material that supports or justifies those feelings; the filter lets in material congruent with the mood of the perceiver, but ignores or casts aside incongruent material.

People must pay at least minimal (attention to advertising for it to have any effect, no matter what the relevant hierarchy of effects. And affective advertising should prove to be more effective in getting such attention (e.g. Ray 1977, 374).

Affect may enhance the degree of processing. Kroeber-Riel (1979) argues that the degree of information processing for a message is a function of the degree to which the message evokes arousal, or phasic activation. His experiments showed higher levels of information acquisition and information retention for messages evoking higher activation levels but were criticized on conceptual and methodological grounds by Ryan (1980).

Kahneman (1973) similarly argued for a relationship between activation (= "effort") and performance; all such relationships have a well-known inverted-U shaped relationship, however, since performance becomes impaired at excessively high levels of arousal. Evidence of such relationships is also found in the fear literature (Ray and Wilkie 1970).

Arguing from a learning theory perspective, Ray (1973, 1982, Ch. 10) argues that advertising should use affective executions in those situations where the level of "natural drive" in the situation is otherwise low, to add to such drive to facilitate learning.

And from yet another perspective, one could argue that since affective advertising executions are more likely to use visual imagery than less affective executions, such affective executions will evoke greater processing because of the use of the visual sensory stores and image processing channels in addition to the verbal channels (Paivio 1978).

Affective executions may lead to more positive judgments of the advertised message. Bower and Cohen (1982) report that people's judgments are (automatically, and without awareness) influenced by how people are feeling at the moment, because such emotions and moods

differentially prime and "make available" inference rules and concepts that favor such positive appraisals. Affective ad executions should thus favor recipients' evaluations of the assertions in the ad.

Again, if the ad execution is affective because it is "vivid" and "concrete" rather than "abstract," the ad should have a greater impact on the people's inferences and behavior, even via processes other than greater impact on memory (Nisbett and Ross 1980).

And there are still other reasons to believe that affective executions may lead to more positive judgments of the ad. Such executions may be more distracting from the attribute assertions in the ad, reducing counter-arguing and facilitating persuasion (Festinger and Maccoby, 1964; Osterhouse and Brock, 1970). Such affect may cause the message recipient to process the message more "mindlessly", leading it to be uncritically accepted, such that when the same information is used on a subsequent occasion, it may be used without a fresh re-consideration of its validity or applicability (Chanowitz and Langer 1981).

Finally, depending on the nature of the message, message acceptance may be higher because people in positive affect states tend to reduce the complexity of the judgment task, and engage in speedy, simplified, non compensatory processing, wanting to avoid cognitive strain (Isen, Means, Patrick, Nowocki 1982).

Affective executions may be remembered better. The effect of affect on memory has perhaps been the most re-searched topic in this area. Since this topic is being discussed in depth by another paper in this session, we will just mention what seems to be the bare, basic finding: affective material, regardless of valence, seems to be remembered better (Dutta and Kanungo 1975), though this conclusion may hold more for delayed measurements than for immediate ones (Silk and Vavra 1974).

Furthermore, the effect of "vividness" on recall and subsequent "availability" is well known, though some recent studies have questioned the robustness of this effect (Taylor and Thompson 1982).

In summary, therefore, affective advertising may, in many situations, be more effective advertising because it is attended to more, processed more, evaluated, more favorably, and remembered more. All these should lead to a more favorable evaluation of the advertised brand.

Yet the real gains from affective advertising may be even more direct: the liking for the ad may get conditioned onto the brand itself and form an important component of the attitude to the advertised brand. We address this effect below.

Affect as an End in Itself

Academic research on attitude change through advertising has relied heavily in recent years on the Fishbein-Ajzen (1975) tripartite model of attitude change, which argues that attitudes can be changed only by changing underlying beliefs. This model, in turn, is based on the assumption that attitudes are unidimensional, consisting purely of affect, which is based on beliefs and leads to behavioral intentions.

Recent research has indicated, first, that attitudes may not possess this unidimensional structure, and next, that attitude change may not be mediated purely through changes in underlying beliefs.

Empirical support for the Fishbein-Ajzen formulation re-ried heavily on studies of the convergent and discriminant validity of the tricomponent model which used the criteria of Campbell and Fiske (1959), including studies by Ostrom (1969) and Kothandapani (1971). Recent studies by Bagozzi and colleagues (Bagozzi and Burnkrant 1979; Bagozzi, Tybout, Craig, Sternthal 1979; Bagozzi 1980) have applied the more powerful (Kenny 1975) Confirmatory Factor Analysis technique to reassess the convergent and discriminant validity for the tricomponent and unidimensional models, on the same data sets, and have reached dramatically different conclusions.

Their re-analysis suggests quite clearly that attitudes are not unidimensional, but instead have two distinct components, an "affective" and a "cognitive" one, and this conclusion is replicated by analysis on new data as well (Bagozzi 1981). We thus seem to be returning to a conception of attitudes similar to the multi-component one of Rosenberg and Hovland (1960). Note, also, that Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum did not find their "evaluative" factor to be unidimensional (1957, p. 62; p. 70), a fact glossed over by those who use Osgood et al's re-search as reason to argue for the affective nature of attitudes.

At the same time, evidence is mounting that the attitude to the advertised brand is formed not only on the basis of the evaluation of the advertised brand's attributes, but may also be based on the classically conditioned affect for the brand from the attitude to the ad itself, based on message execution effects. Recent evidence of this effect has been presented by Mitchell and Olson (1981) and MacKenzie and Lutz (1982). While such conditioned affect may theoretically be treated as just another "inferential belief" within the Fishbein-Ajzen framework, the amazing fact is that the attitude models used in the consumer preference literature have so far used only product attributes in their measurements of brand evaluation, and any conditioned affect arising from the ad execution has been totally ignored.

It has also been argued by many that the sheer frequency of ad repetition itself leads to an enhancement of liking for the advertised brand, via the well-known "mere expo-sure" effect (Zajonc 1968; Ray 1973; Sawyer 1977, 1981; Batra and Ray 1982a), subject to the caveats that usually accompany such effects (Harrison 1977).

We have therefore suggested elsewhere (Batra and Ray 1982b) that attitudes should be conceptualized as having two components: an "evaluation" component that is voluntarily developed in an expectancy-value manner, based on brand attributes, and a brand-specific "liking" component that is involuntary and non decomposable, based on attitude toward the ad as well as mere exposure effects. We have further suggested that the "percentage contribution" of "liking" to total affect (attitudes) is systematically higher in "low involvement" message reception conditions (defined as situations where the degree of processing for the brand attribute assertions in the ad is low) since such "liking" is relatively effortless.

Such a "percentage contribution" model would explain the situational variations in correlations between affect (attitude) and evaluation (summed be) hitherto observed. These correlations appear to be higher for more "complex" products like cars, which have greater or more tangible attributes (Nakanishi and Bettman 1974; Mazis, Ahtola and Klippel 1975) than

for less complex ones, like toothpaste. It is also consistent with the frequent observation that people like/dislike stimuli even in the absence of cognitions, beliefs and detailed information (Zajonc 1980; Bagozzi 1980; Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum 1957).

Further, such a "percentage contribution" model would predict that in deeper processing situations persuasive communications would be more successful if the attempt to persuade was based on attribute arguments rather than feelings, with the opposite prediction for shallower processing situations. Such results have, in fact, been found by Petty and Cacioppo (1980); Petty, Cacioppo and Goldman (1981) and Gorn (1982).

The underlying variable, in our explanation of these results, becomes the "availability" of beliefs in attitude modification attempts. If the initial attitude is based largely on involuntary liking, fewer beliefs are retrievable in later attitude modification situations. New message beliefs thus fail to make contact with retrieved (old message) beliefs, and the attempt at attitude change fails. Effects due to liking can, and do, occur. Such an explanation handles not just the experiments just described but also the earlier results on "perseverance effects" (Ross, Lepper and Hubbard 1975). It also leads to the suggestion that, at least in some cases, it may pay advertisers to "inoculate" their brand franchises against competitive attribute superiority based advertising efforts by deliberately following a "global affect" strategy.

Most importantly, this line of argument suggests that in such "low involvement" message reception situations the creation of advertising—induced "liking" for the brand, via an affective execution, may be an important end in itself, no matter, what such affect does for attention, process in time, judgment favorability, and memorability.

Such an assertion is without prejudice to other theorizing on the relative importance of marketing mix elements in such situations; such "liking" affect, even if "lower order" (Smith and Swinyard 1982), may be crucial in getting initial brand trial, which may then become the more important influence on subsequent brand preferences. Further, such "lower order" affect may be of even greater importance in first phase, brand "elimination" decisions by the consumer, in making the decision on which brands to process deeply, or in final "tie breaking" situations, when the brands concerned are equivalent on product attributes. Such hypotheses obviously need further research.

Understanding Affect: Its Sources and Consequences

The discussion above has shown that we do know something about what variables affect has an impact on and about the situational contingencies that may moderate such impact. Where our knowledge is grossly inadequate, however, is in understanding where this affective impact really comes from, and therefore how we can best manipulate and measure it.

Such understanding is vital; yet it is also one that is going to be difficult to come by, since it involves delving into a level of analysis that is as potentially misleading as it is promising. This is, of course, the realm of psychophysiology (or psychobiology, or neuropsychology, or cognitive neuropsychology, or what you will).

Much has been made in recent years in our field of the "left brain, right brain" literature, and nothing could be a better example of the promise, and the potential pitfalls, of applying the knowledge of cognitive neuropsychology to consumer behavior. Many recent writers have

called for the study of "right brain" advertising, identifying attribute argumentation advertising with processing by the left brain hemisphere and emotional advertising with processing by the right brain hemisphere. Good examples of such literature are the recent pieces by Hansen (1981) and the identification of hemispheric differences with media mode effects by Weinstein, Appel, and Weinstein (1980).

The role of the right brain hemisphere in generating such • affective responses is well documented (Sperry 1973; Schwartz, Davidson, and Maer 1975; Dimond et al 1976). The identification of such affect with the right hemisphere of the neocortex may well be incomplete, however. Thus recent literature has examined differences in such hemispheric lateralization between men and women, left-handed versus right-handed people, and peoples in different cultures, and found such claims of hemispheric lateralization to be far from generalizable.

Perhaps the most exhaustive review of recent research in this area is provided by Bradshaw and Nettleton (1981). Their summary conclusion -- itself challenged and controversial -- is that the differences between the two hemispheres are of degree, rather than of kind; both hemispheres have some roles, perhaps different ones, in the processing of language and of music; and that the basic difference may be a more general one of an analytical/ holistic dichotomy, rather than one between verbal/nonverbal processing.

Furthermore, many other alternative dichotomies exist in the identification of those areas of the brain which may be responsible for "less effortful" processing. Thus Luria (1973) points out that the human brain has two distinct associative areas for stimuli from the external world: the posterior association cortex is used in the synthesis of incoming information, while the frontal association cortex (linked to the limbic system) is the center for the activating role of speech, which is used to formulate problems and to provide the special concentration necessary for some forms of intellectual activity. This "front-back" dichotomization has received much support from research by Pribram and colleagues (Pribram 1980b; 1978; Brody and Pribram 1978; Pribram and McGuiness 1975).

Yet another view of the origin and location of affect and emotion in the human brain would "locate" such affect in the "limbic" region, below the neocortex (Mac-lean 1976). In fact, the amygdala in the limbic region could be (speculatively) assigned a role in our understanding of the "mere exposure" effect, through the mediating role of the amygdala in the limbic region, which happens to be responsible for both the habituation to novel stimuli as well as the control of the endorphin neuhormones which give us our subjective feelings of pleasure and liking (Pribram 1978, and Luria 1973, quoting the work of Sokolov, Vinogradova and others).

Even more interestingly, this gives us an insight into the subjective nature of the experience of liking.

Pribram (1980), reviewing psychobiological theories of emotion, points out that feelings have two components: emotions (affect) and motivations (appetitive, readiness). We do not, however, experience our feelings as localized and fractionated, though our feelings at a point in time may be complex and multifaceted and there-fore labelled and verbalized distinctively. This unidimensionality of our hedonic experience is based on the fact that they are determined by neurohormones and neurochemicals, whose chemical concentrations are experienced as states, diffuse experiences.

According to Pribram, three separate core-brain control mechanisms determine the concentrations of the neuro hormones and neurochemicals, and thus how we feel. The amygdala (limbic basal ganglia of the forebrain), just discussed in connection with the (phasic) arousal response, regulates endorphin homeostasis; endorphins are morphine-like substances related to novelty, pain, and temperature, and link novelty to arousal. The nonlimbic basal ganglia of the forebrain control the (tonic) activation of motivational readiness through a system of dopamines, which determine our feelings of effectiveness (elation to depression). Finally, the hippocampus, which controls effort (or its inverse, comfort) makes us experience the degree of effort as a result of the level of the pituitary-adrenal hormones, ACH and ACTH.

One may, at this point, legitimately ask what all of this has to do with advertising or consumer behavior. We believe that our brief review of the psychobiological literature makes a few simple, but important, points.

First, we must, in trying to understand the nature and sources of affect, avoid simplistic, facile generalizations, such as "left brain, right brain," because the reality is a lot more complicated. Zajonc (1980), for example, is cautious enough to allow for multiple sources of affect.

Second, and on the other hand, we must feel free to learn, and speculate, for our knowledge in this important and fascinating area is admittedly abysmal. This very review has shown, for example, that researchers attempting to monitor affective activity via brain waves should tap not just left-right hemisphere differences, but front-back ones too, and that in gauging the affective impact of advertising one should tap not just the pleasantness dimension but also the ones relating to motivation (did the ad make you want the product?). In fact, in another paper (Batra and Ray 1983) we pre-sent some results of our attempts to capture these dimensions in tests of (verbal) cognitive response to advertising.

Issues For Future Research

Perhaps the most important research issue of all is the oldest one: identifying, and developing a theoretical understanding of, those situations where the use of affective executions adds to advertising effectiveness versus those where it merely entertains.

Such research should build on the far greater knowledge today of the mechanisms which underlie the impact of affective executions, and yet should continue to develop the kind of contingency frameworks that earlier research attempted (on, for instance, the fear appeal). Our own ideas on this question are found in Ray 1973, 1982 (Ch. 10), and Batra and Ray (1982b). The latter discusses the implications of the "percentage contribution" model (referred to briefly, above) for advertising strategy and new product development.

Another major research issue has to be the measurement of the affective impact of advertising. Physiological measures have for decades held great promise while, -at the same time, lacking support for reliability and validity. Despite recent advances in, for instance, the use of Event Response Potential (ERP) measures of brain activity (Galin 1976; Roy John 1977; Pritchard 1981), or even eye gaze measures (Schwartz et al 1975), such cautionary notes still hold good. Recent methodological reviews of this area can be found in Watson and

Gatchel (1979) and Stewart and Furse (1981). And physiological measurement instrumentation is often financially and technically infeasible.

It would therefore seem appropriate to begin developing verbal report methods which could reliably and validly measure differences in nuances of affective response in message reception situations. Our preliminary attempts in this area are reported in Batra and Ray (1983).

Finally, from an operational significance viewpoint, it becomes important to understand for how long message-induced affective responses can be expected to last. Does the effect of attitude-to-the-ad last as long as an effect on brand "evaluations"? Some recent work (Mitchell and Dasgupta 1982) seems to indicate that such affect lasts at least two weeks. And yet earlier re-search, reviewed by Cialdini, Petty, and Cacioppo (1981, pp. 364-366) finds that attitude change through such "peripheral routes to persuasion" tends to be rather short-lived. Further research on this question is warranted as well.

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