

Effect of Consumers Mood on Advertising Effectiveness

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Abstract

It is a fact that mood-state knowledge is of particular relevance for the understanding of consumer behavior. The belief that it may be affected by the content of marketing communication and the context in which these communications appear was the basis upon which this research was conducted. This study is essentially an experimental study where a between-subject design was employed. A total of three hundred and twenty subjects were used in the experiment. Unlike some previous advertising research (e.g. Kim and Biocca, 1997) utilizing existing adverts, specifically design adverts were made for the study. Standardized 10 minute film clips were used to induce a negative or positive mood. Two scales - attitude towards using advertised products and intention to try advertised products - were employed to measure advertising effectiveness. The result revealed that subjects in the induced positive mood group have a more positive attitude and greater intention to try advertised products when compared with subjects in the induced negative mood group. This suggests that advertisers should present adverts in a context that elicits happiness'.

Key Words: induced affect; consumer attitude; intention; positive affect; negative affect

Introduction

Individuals often try to anticipate each other's mood prior to interactions and read others moods during encounters. In these ways, mood information is acquired and used informally for social and professional interactions. For example, knowledge of the boss's mood on a particular day may help an employee anticipate the boss's reactions to a request for a pay raise. Analogously, knowledge of the consumers' mood state in certain situations may provide marketers and advertisers with a more complete understanding of consumers and their reactions to marketing strategies and adverts.

This mood-state knowledge may be particularly relevant for understanding consumer behaviour as affected by the content of marketing communications and adverts and the context in which these communications appear. Advertising typically has some positive or negative content that can trigger affective reactions (Coulter 1998). Early research on mood and persuasion indicated that people who are in a positive mood are more susceptible to persuasion than the average person. For example, Janis (1965) had some people read a persuasive message while they ate a snack and drank soda, while others simply read the message without the accompanying treats. Greater attitude changes occurred among the “munchers” than among the “food free” group. Similar effects were also found among people listening to pleasant music (McMillan and Huang, 2002).

Good feelings enhance persuasion partly by enhancing positive thinking. In a good mood, people view the world through rose-coloured glasses. They also make faster, more impulsive decisions, they rely less on systematic thinking, but more on heuristic cues (Schwarz, 1991; Garner, 2004). Because unhappy people ruminate more before reacting, they are less easily swayed by weak arguments. Thus, it has been suggested that if you cannot make a strong case, it is a smart idea to put your audience in a good mood and hope they will feel good about your message without thinking too much about it (Schwarz, 1990).

One of the reasons for this, is proposed by the ‘feelings-as-information’ view, that while negative moods signal to people that something is wrong in their environment and that some action is necessary, positive moods have the opposite effect; they signal that everything is fine and no effortful thought is necessary (Schawtz, 1990). As a result, people in a positive mood are more persuadable because they are less likely to engage in extensive thinking of the presented arguments than those in a neutral or negative mood.

Although the ‘feelings-as-information’ view contends that happy people tend to rely on peripheral route processing, an alternative cognitive response explanation – the ‘hedonic contingency view’ – asserts that this is not always the case (Wenger and Petty, 1994).

According to this perspective, happy people will engage in a cognitive task that allow them to remain happy and will avoid those tasks that lower their mood. Research investigating this possible effect indicated that a happy mood can indeed lead to greater message elaboration than a neutral or sad mood, when the persuasive message is either uplifting or not mood threatening (mood congruent) (Norris, Colmon and Aleixo, 2003; Coulter, 2003; Wegner, Petty and Smith, 1995). Thus,

it appears that happy people do not always process information less than neutral or sad people. Taken together, the above studies suggest that there is a likelihood that mood has a lot of effect on the way messages are received and processed. Therefore the aim of this study is to determine whether being in a positive mood or negative mood affect audience evaluation of advertisement as effective or not effective.

Materials and Methods

Design

A between-subject experimental design was employed to test whether positive or negative affect induced by the film clips had any effect on advertising effectiveness. Advertising effectiveness was measured by attitude towards the advertised products scale and intention to buy the advertised products scale. The adverts were embedded into the positive and negative film clips.

Setting

Two laboratories in the Department of Geography and Planning Science, Faculty of the Social Science, University of Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State were used for the study, because of their quiet situation which allowed for a carefully controlled environment.

Subjects

The research participants were three hundred and twenty (320) university undergraduates drawn from the Faculty of the Social Science. Like most other advertising research studies (e.g. Knoch and McCarthy, 2004; Fieldling *et al*, 2006; Shenge, 2003; Morison *et al*, 2003) this study was conducted using undergraduate students, but, unlike those studies, the participants were not paid for participating in the research; neither did they receive any credit on any course for their participation.

Materials

The advertstiments.

Unlike some previous advertising research (e.g., Kim and Biocca, 1997; Knap and Hall, 2006; Puccinelli, 2006), utilizing existing adverts, specifically designed adverts

were used for this study. Two undergraduate actors (male and female) recruited through theatre organizations on a university campus served as the presenter of the adverts. Before video taping the adverts for each product, the actors memorized the product descriptions. Each person presented the two products to eliminate the likely effect of sex of the advert presenter.

Participants' mood manipulation

A 10-minute film clip was used to induce a negative or positive mood. Both the negative clip and the positive clip were extracts from a home video titled "The Bastard". The positive clip was about a family that everything was going on well for; the parents were prospering economically and in other respects, and the children were gaining admission into university. The negative aspect was how a gang of armed robbers came to wipe off the joy of the family by raping the daughter, killing the father and son and leaving the mother and daughter with psychologically traumatised. Extracting both positive and negative induced aspects from the same film made it possible to use the same set of actors.

The two clips were subjected to a rating by a conference of experts with raters expressing 100 percent rating for the sadness-eliciting clip and 70.5 percent rating for the happiness-eliciting clip. Another set of 20 undergraduates also watched and rated the clips on a ten-point scale; a reported feeling of sadness at 9.5 was recorded for the sadness eliciting clip and a happy feeling of 8.0 was recorded for the happiness eliciting clip. These mood-eliciting clips were combined with four types of advert to produce eight adverts and affect types.

Psychological instruments

Attitude towards using advertised product was measured using a modified form of Belch's Semantic Differential Scale (1981) measuring attitude towards using advertised products.

For reliability, Attitude Toward using Advertised Product Scale had a standardized coefficient alpha of 0.81, coefficient alpha for part 1 (five-item) split-half alpha of 0.65, coefficient alpha for part 2 (five-item) split-half of 0.68, split-half of 0.74 and overall reliability (Spearman-Brown) coefficient of 0.85 (Shenge, 2003).

For validity, there was a least correlated item-total correlation of 0.36 and a highest correlated item-total correlation of 0.61.

Intention to try advertised product was measured using a ten-item set of opposite-in-meaning evaluative factor adjectives earlier used by Shenge (1996). It measures subjects' intention to try the advertised product, which in real life advert practice, is also viewed by the advertiser as instrumental for anticipating the audience's final purchase of the advertised product.

For reliability, the Intention To Try Advertised Product Scale had a standardized coefficient alpha of 0.75, coefficient alpha for part 1 (five-items) split-half coefficient alpha of 0.61 for part 2 (five-items) split-half of 0.57, split-half of 0.62 and overall reliability (Spearman-Brown) coefficient of 0.77.

For validity, there was a least correlated item-total correlation of 0.33 and a highest correlated item-total correlation of 0.48; also, a factor analysis result on intention showed that there was a high degree of agreement among the intention scale items (Shenge, 2003).

Procedure

Prior to the participants' admittance to the laboratory, efforts were made to minimize distraction by lowering the window blind. Efforts were also made to prevent passers-by from making a noise and distracting the subjects. Participants were randomly assigned to the various experimental groups.

After the instruction was given participants watched the film clips assigned to them. Participants were not told the relevance of the film clips to the adverts. At the end of the exercise, they rated their feelings about the adverts using the questionnaire given to them. The completed questionnaires were collected and participants were debriefed, thanked and politely sent away.

Results

Table of mean scores on advertising effectiveness as determined by sex of advert presenter, product type and mood

Sex of advert presenter		Product type		Mood	
Male	female	masculine	feminine	positive	negative
39.61	40.99	41.16	40.05	44.50	32.05

A summary of 2x2x2 ANOVA table: showing the effect of Sex of Advert Presenter, Product Type and Mood on Advertising Effectiveness.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
S. A. P (A)	126.920	1	126.920	1.92	NS
Product type (B)	333.869	1	333.869	2.05	NS
mood (C)	570.249	1	570.249	8.36	.05
A X B	38.934	1	38.984	0.59	NS
A X C	36.475	1	36.476	0.55	NS
B X C	108.631	1	108.631	1.64	NS
Error	19020.135	288	66.04		
Total	612722.00	319			

*S A P = Sex of advert presenter

The results revealed that induced affect had a significant effect on advertising effectiveness ($F(1, 318) = 8.36, P < .05$). An observation of the mean score shows that participants in the happy mood have a more positive attitude towards the advertised product ($\bar{x} = 44.50$) as compared to participants in the sad mood ($\bar{x} = 32.05$). This finding concurs with Schwarz and Clore's (1988) findings that customers will often use their feelings as information and, therefore, make judgment that are congruent with the implications of these feelings.

Summary and discussion

This study experimentally examines the effects of mood on advertising effectiveness. Sex of advert presenter and product types were build into the study to control for the possible effect that they may have on the study. Positive and negative mood were induced with the use of home video.

In measuring advertising effectiveness two criteria were combined: attitude towards advertised product and intention to try advertised product. Belch (1981), Cacioppo and Petty (1974), and Schroeder (2006) have found that multiple criteria were more efficacious in measuring of advertising effectiveness than a single criterion.

The findings reveals that there is a significant effect of mood on advertising effectiveness, but there are no significant effects of sex of advert presenter and product type on advertising effectiveness

Wegener & Braverman (2004) provided evidence that people who are in a good mood like adverts more and are more capable and willing to process message

information. This means that when people are in good mood they view the world through rose-coloured glasses and evaluate events around them positively (Garsper, 2004). Various mechanisms have been proposed to explain this phenomenon. According to the excitation or affect transfer hypothesis (Cantor, Zillman and Bryant 1975, Tavassoli, Shuitz and Fitzsimons 1995), the positive evaluation of the context is transferred to the advert and, as a result, the advert is also positively evaluated. Another explanation is the fact that a positive mood enhances advert processing according to the hedonistic contingency theory (e.g. Lee and Sternthal, 1999).

People in a positive mood engage in greater processing of stimulus because they believe that the consequences are going to be favourable. This explanation is similar to that advanced by Isen (1984) who stated that knowledge structure (associative networks) associated with good moods are generally more extensive and better integrated than structures that are associated with bad moods (affective priming).

Aylesworth and Mackenzie (1998) provided a different explanation for the same phenomenon. They established that television advert processing is better when people were in a positive mood after seeing a programme. Their explanation is that people who are in a bad mood after seeing a programme are still processing the programme centrally while seeing the advert, as a result of which the advert is processed peripherally. People who are in good mood after seeing a programme are less inclined to analyse it further, and, therefore, are more capable of processing the advert centrally. As a result, a media context that is well appreciated may lead to a more positive appreciation of the advert shown in that context and to more elaborate advert processing. The excitation transfer hypothesis and related theories have been confirmed in several other studies (Goldberg and Gorn, 1987; Murry, Lastovicka and Singh 1992; Lynch and Stipp, 1999).

The finding of this research lends credence to Puccineli's (2006) findings that participants in a good mood react positively to a salesperson who conveys positive feelings and are willing to pay more for the product endorsed by the person, while participants who are in a bad mood react negatively to such a person and are willing to pay less for the product.

This finding contradicts some studies that concluded that a positive mood does not lead to positive evaluation of advert, e.g., Cantor and Venus (1980), Derks and Avora (1993). In their findings, using the contrast effect of Mayers – Levy and Tybount (1997), they assert that message style that contrasts with the nature of the context may lead to positive advertising effects.

The study suggested that a positively evaluated environmental context, or a context that evokes a positive mood, leads to a less positive advert evaluation and especially less advert processing. This phenomenon is attributed to the fact that a positive mood reduces the processing of stimulus information. According to the cognitive capacity theory, a positive mood activates an array of information in the memory that limits the recipient's processing of incoming information (Mackie and Worth, 1989).

It is worth noting that for an advert to achieve the desired aim of creating a favourable impression in the mind of the audience it seems to be useful if members of the audience are in a happy mood.

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