



UNIVERSITY MALAYA

**The impact of advertising message strategies:
Fear appeal versus sex appeal upon consumers'
intention to purchase**

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ABSTRACT

Academics and international marketing managers alike have struggled with the issue of the standardisation of advertising programme. Proponents of standardisation argue it is possible for a firm to standardised advertising programmes across countries. In contrast, critics of standardisation have consistently argued a case for their adaptation, citing cultural, economic and political barriers as reasons.

Fear and sex are among the most powerful tool of persuasion. Usage of fear and sexual message strategy in advertising creates certain types of reactions. In the Asian context, empirical studies found that fear and nudity are the most cited reasons for finding the advertisement offensive. Offensive advertisement can be harmful for the products and also to the brands

As such, a few objectives have been constructed and among others is to examine consumer response to fear and sex advertising appeal and its influence on purchase intention. The study also interested to compare gender's attitude towards those appeals. The study is guided by the Theory of Reasoned Action by Fishbein and Ajzen, which proposes that human behaviour can be predicted by individual's attitude and his/her subjective norm.

A structured questionnaire is used as the main instrument in this survey to measure the relationship between attitude/subjective norm and consumer's purchase intention after being exposed to two different print advertisements that use fear and sex appeal. Statistical analysis of the data collected from the survey is then accomplished by using the Statistical Package for Social Science program (SPSS) Windows Version 17.0. Data analysis techniques used in this study are normality test, reliability test, factor analysis, T-Test, Pearson Correlation, simple and multiple regression.

The findings from the study show that both attitude and subjective norm are positively and significantly correlated to the purchase intention, for both appeals. Moreover, there is significant difference between attitude towards fear appeal advertising for male and female, where attitude explains significantly more of the variance in purchase intention for male than for female. Meanwhile, there is no significant difference between attitude towards sex appeal advertising for male and female, where attitude explains moderately of the variance in purchase intention.

From the results, attitude is the focus when designing a fear appeal advertisement. Advertiser that target male market may want to apply fear elements in their advertisement. In the meantime, advertiser that target female market may want to avoid from using this appeal. Product for both male-female markets may use sex elements in their advertisement. Nonetheless, positive or negative reaction against sex appeal advertising depends on the appropriateness to the advertised product.

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TABLE OF CONTENT

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.0	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	RESEARCH BACKGROUND.....	3
1.2	RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY.....	9
1.3	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	10
1.4	SCOPE OF THE STUDY.....	13
1.5	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	13
1.6	ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY.....	14
1.7	CONCLUSION.....	15
2	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	16
2.0	INTRODUCTION.....	16
2.1	ADVERTISING IN MALAYSIA.....	18
2.2	ADVERTISING APPEALS IN PRINT ADVERTISEMENT.....	21
2.3	FEAR APPEAL ADVERTISING.....	23
2.4	SEX APPEAL ADVERTISING.....	28
2.5	CONSUMER RESPONSES TOWARD ADVERTISING.....	32
2.6	GENDER DIFFERENCES IN RESPONSES TO SEX APPEAL ADVERTISING.....	39
2.7	GENDER DIFFERENCES IN RESPONSES TO FEAR APPEAL ADVERTISING.....	41
2.8	POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF FEAR AND SEX APPEAL ADVERTISING ON PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR.....	42
2.9	CONCLUSION.....	45
3	CONCEPTUAL MODEL.....	46
3.0	INTRODUCTION.....	46
3.1	CONCEPTUAL MODEL.....	46

3.2	INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	49
3.3	OTHER VARIABLES	52
3.4	DEPENDENT VARIABLE	60
3.5	CONCLUSION.....	61
4	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	62
4.0	INTRODUCTION.....	62
4.1	RESEARCH DESIGN	62
4.2	RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS.....	64
4.3	QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN	66
4.4	SAMPLING DESIGN.....	68
4.5	DATA ANALYSIS.....	70
4.6	CONCLUSION.....	73
5	DATA ANALYSIS	74
5.0	INTRODUCTION.....	74
5.1	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	74
5.2	INTRODUCTION TO THE FINDINGS	75
5.3	DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS – DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	76
5.4	MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION AND NORMALITY TEST.....	77
5.5	VALIDITY TEST.....	79
5.6	RELIABILITY TEST	82
5.7	BIVARIATE ANALYSIS	83
5.8	REGRESSION ANALYSIS.....	89
5.9	T-TEST	93
5.10	TESTING THE HYPOTHESES.....	95
5.11	CONCLUSION.....	98
6	CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS	99

6.0	INTRODUCTION.....	99
6.1	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	99
6.2	SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	101
6.3	IMPLICATIONS	102
6.4	CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY	106
6.5	OVERALL CONCLUSION.....	109
7	REFERENCES.....	110
8	APPENDIX A - SAMPLE OF QUESTIONNAIRE.....	119
9	APPENDIX B - SPSS OUTPUT	126

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1	SUMMARY OF TYPES OF VARIABLES, SECTION OF QUESTIONNAIRE & SOURCES.....	65
Table 4.2	SUMMARY OF TYPES OF ANALYSIS USED FOR QUESTIONNAIRE.....	71
Table 5.1	DATA COLLECTION SUMMARY.....	75
Table 5.2	PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	76
Table 5.3	SUMMARY OF MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION, SKEWNESS AND KURTOSIS	78
Table 5.4	KMO AND BARTLETT’S TEST-INDEPENDENT VARIABLES FOR ADVERTISEMENT A	81
Table 5.5	KMO AND BARTLETT’S TEST-INDEPENDENT VARIABLES FOR ADVERTISEMENT B.....	81
Table 5.6	SUMMARY OF RELIABILITY STATISTICS.....	82
Table 5.7	SUMMARY OF CORRELATION – ADVERTISEMENT A	84
Table 5.8	CORRELATION – GENDER: ATTITUDE & PURCHASE INTENTION.....	85
Table 5.9	SUMMARY OF CORRELATION – ADVERTISEMENT B	86
Table 5.10	CORRELATION – GENDER: ATTITUDE & PURCHASE INTENTION	87
Table 5.11	MULTIPLE REGRESSION - ADVERTISEMENT A.....	90
Table 5.12	MULTIPLE REGRESSION - ADVERTISEMENT B	92
Table 5.13	T-TEST ASSESSMENT OF ADVERTISEMENTS.....	94
Table 5.14	SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES AND ITS FINDINGS.....	97

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1	THEORY OF REASONED ACTION MODEL.....	47
Figure 3.2	CONCEPTUAL MODEL DEVELOPMENT	49
Figure 4.1	GENERALIZED RESEARCH PROCESS	63