

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Severin and Tankard state that persuasion “is one of the most basic forms of communication,” (Severin and Tankard, 2001). Persuasion is an important part of communication. It is basically the process of changing people’s minds. Whether it be a politician grasping for that final vote, or a major advertiser striving to increase sales of a certain product, or an environmentalist organization eager to convince people to recycle, it is a common occurrence (Mayfield, 2006). One may be persuaded and not even realize about it. It isn’t necessarily a conscious action because persuasion can occur subconsciously as well.

For example, advertiser inserts emotion element in the advertisement with hope that viewers will feel the emotion they intend and subsequently move them towards purchasing the advertised product. Positive advertisement makes the consumers to like the advertisement and then buy the product while the negative emotional advertisement like fear appeal are assumed to make the consumer to buy the solution offered in the advertisement (Aaker et al., 1986). Nevertheless, not all advertisement has the power of persuasion to persuade consumer to purchase although in the act of persuasion, attitude change is extremely important (Severin and Tankard). One can be persuaded of an argument, but that does not mean that one will practice what he or she has heard (Mayfield, 2006). In changing people’s attitudes, or predispositions

toward things (Severin and Tankard), advertisers will be in the process of changing people's behaviors. And behavioral changes are the most important.

In some occasions, the message that advertiser want to sent does not receive by the consumer. Researchers suggest that there are no guarantees that the viewing audience actually feels the intended emotion associated with the appeal (English, 1990; Stout et al., 1990 and Cotte et al., 2001). One explanation for this lack of congruency between the advertisers' intentions and consumers' reaction is that consumers are active recipients of the advertising attempt, that they read the advertisement and try to make sense of it within their own lives (Mick and Buhl, 1992; Scott, 1994). Reader-response theory holds that different people interpret advertisement differently (Scott, 1994).

Therefore, this study attempts to examine how Malaysian respond to fear and sex advertising appeal and its influence on purchase intention. This study also builds on prior work, from a different research tradition that examines gender differences in advertising response (Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy, 1990 and 1991; Meyer-Levy and Sternthal, 1991; Dube and Morgan, 1996). Sexual appeals and fear appeals are chosen as the topic for this study based on their ubiquity in print advertising (Turley and Kelley 1997) and for their importance as topics for research according to academicians (Hyman et al., 1994).

2.1 Advertising in Malaysia

The advertising industry in Malaysia faces complex challenges, in particular the numerous government regulations (Waller et al., 2000). The regulations reflect the national aspirations of achieving a Malaysian identity and culture, while conforming to the values of Islam, the national religion. These aspirations were set out by the Ministry of Information and specified in the Advertising Code for Television and Radio (1990). This Advertising Code was designed to safeguard advertising and the consumers against the influence of foreign cultural values. In particular, it prohibits the “adaptation or projection of foreign culture which is not acceptable to a cross section of the major communities of the Malaysian society either in the form of words, slogans, clothing, activity or behavior” (p.6).

Advertisements which depict “ways of life that are against or totally different from the ways of life followed by Malaysians” were also disallowed. As pointed out by Deng et al. (1994), the government instituted this regulation because of the belief that not all its citizens are prepared to fully accept all aspects of Western culture. Examples include disco scenes; clothing imprinted with words or symbols conveying undesirable messages or impressions; scenes of an amorous, intimate or suggestive nature; and kissing between adults. However, because of the rise in sexually related diseases, especially AIDS, the government has since relaxed the ruling on sex related advertisements. This ruling only applies to advertisements that inform the public about the danger of AIDS and in no way encourages promiscuity.

The Advertising Code also promotes cultural sensitivity in advertisements. It prohibits advertisements that “contain statements or suggestions which may offend the religious, racial, political or sentimental susceptibilities of any section of the community”. Party political broadcast that targets a specific racial group or incites one group to rise against another is strictly prohibited. Such prohibition stemmed from the 1969 racial riots. This prohibition is deemed to be vital in achieving racial and national harmony in a multiracial country such as Malaysia (David et al., 2000).

Besides conforming to the existing laws and regulations, advertisements were also required to promote social responsibility. For instance, advertisements were required to “inject civic mindedness and desired behavioural attitudes in life, such as queuing up when boarding a bus and keeping public places clean” (Advertising Code Television and Radio 1990, p6). As such, any advertisements that depict anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated.

In an effort to reduce the elements of foreign culture being used in advertising, the Ministry of Information has, since the early 1970s, imposed the Made-in-Malaysia (MIM) rule, which requires all advertisements to be produced locally. This rule is also designed to protect the relatively new local film and advertising industry by requiring that most commercials be produced in Malaysia. The talent, creative team and the production staff must also be Malaysians. Foreign scenes or technologies can only be used after prior approval from the Ministry of Information. This approval is granted when the technologies or footage are unavailable in the country. If the language used

in the commercials in English, then it must be “Malaysia-English” and the use of “British- or America English” is prohibited (Parker 1982).

The Malaysian Government’s primary task is also to ensure that none of contrasting elements against religion are depicted in commercials. In Malaysia, culture and religion goes hand in hand. Most of the cultural values were actually shaped by various religious practices. For instance, the Advertising Code for Television and Radio (1990) was heavily influenced by the government’s effort to promote Islamic values throughout the country. This includes the imposition of stricter regulations on the mass media content based on Islamic principles and values. For example, the women in Malaysian advertising must be portrayed as having “good behaviour acceptable to local culture and society” (Advertising Code Television and Radio 1990, p.7). Furthermore, female models must adhere to the Advertising Code’s decent dress code which stipulates that a female model must be “covered until the neckline, the length of the skirt worn should be below the knees, the arms may be exposed up to the edge of the shoulder but armpits cannot be exposed”. This ruling has restricted the advertising of female and male underwear on mass media. In addition, because of religious and cultural sensitivity, the sale of female contraceptives and female hygiene products were strictly limited on the mass media. Advertising of female hygiene products on national television, in particular, was allowed only after 10o’clock in the evening. Islam forms the largest single religious group in Malaysia, practiced by around 60% of the population. Islam prohibits gambling and alcohol consumption. However, because Malaysia is also a multicultural society, these restrictions were only limited to national mass media such as television and prints that are targeted at the Malays. Other media such as Chinese, English and Hindu language newspapers

and magazines were allowed to carry both gambling and alcohol advertisements provided that the advertisements do not encourage the readers to gamble nor increase alcohol consumption.

Finally, death is a bad omen in Malaysia, and not something one should glorify. Death in a family brings “bad luck” to the whole family, perhaps for between one and three years. Therefore, advertising a funeral service will be frowned upon. Furthermore, Asian values dictates that the children are the ones who would bear the funeral costs of their parents, so purchasing a funeral service before a death is like telling the parents their “time is up”.

2.2 Advertising Appeals in Print Advertisement

The examination of advertising appeals is an effective way to understand the characteristics of advertisements (Jeon et al., 1999; Moon and Chan, 2005). An advertising appeal is defined as any message in advertising designed to motivate consumer behaviour (Mueller, 1987). Therefore, the advertising appeal consists of content indicating the targeted people’ interests, goals or problem (Moon and Chan, 2005). By using diverse advertising appeals, the advertisers are trying to not only get the attention of their audiences, but also persuade them to act (Hyunjae Yu et al., 2008).

Several cross-cultural studies have suggested that advertising appeals could be designed to persuade consumers in specific cultures that might vary in different cultures based on varying levels of either individualism or collectivism (Han and

Shavitt, 1994; Zhang and Gelb, 1996). The comparisons of advertising appeals between different cultures provide an illuminating opportunity to examine how specific cultural characteristics are reflected through advertising content (Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996; Moon and Chan, 2005).

Research also has shown that specific advertising appeals are more frequently used than others and are preferred in one culture over another (Han and Shavitt, 1994; Moon and Chan, 2005). For example, comparison appeals do not tend to be popular in Asian countries such as South Korea because people in collectivistic cultures do not tend to like confrontation (Choi and Miracle, 2004). As recently as 2005, sex appeals in advertising were also found to be unpopular in Asian countries like China and South Korea due to the influence of Confucianism and patriarchic norms in both those countries (Nelson and Paek, 2005). Also, the use of a celebrity endorser tends to be more commonplace in South Korean advertising than in USA advertising (Choi et al., 2005; Paek, 2005).

A few content-analytic studies on web sites also found different uses of advertising appeals. For example, Okazaki and Rivas (2002) partly analyzed advertising appeals on web sites for multinational corporations. The researchers used the individualistic advertising appeals “modernity”, “youth”, and “enjoyment” based on the previous literature (Lin, 2001). Also, they utilized “tradition”, “group consensus”, and “soft sell” as the major advertising appeals of collectivism based on Cheng’s (1994) suggestion. They found that collectivistic advertising appeals were not present on the Western countries’ web sites. In their cross-cultural content analysis of weight-loss web sites, Yu and King (2005) found that South Korean web sites used more

appearance/looks appeals in several elements on the weight-loss web sites. For example, words directly related with outward appearance (e.g. “Mom-mae” (body-line), “Kaksunmi” (the beauty of body-shape)) were found significantly more on South Korean weight-loss web sites compared to those of the USA. The use of caricature/animation techniques was also significantly more popular on South Korean web sites than on USA web sites.

Beaudoin (2002) analyzed TV advertisements produced between 1991 and 1999 to investigate the kinds of advertising characteristics that vary across advertisements targeting different groups (i.e. youth, adult, or general, which were determined by coders based on to whom each ad message is directed) and across the advertisements produced by different sponsors. He found that advertising characteristics varied by different target groups and by organizations. Similarly, Paek (2006) conducted a content analysis of advertisements available in youth-oriented magazines (i.e. a sufficient number of teenagers in their readership) between 1999 and 2005. She found that a variety of advertising appeals were adopted in advertisements, including testimonial, humor, curiosity/teaser, and association, and that the use of the appeals varied among sponsors.

2.3 Fear Appeal Advertising

2.3.1 Definition of Fear

Fear is an emotional response to a threat that expresses, or at least implies, some sort of danger (Belch et al., 2009, p.197) and is one type of high-impact persuasive technique used in advertising. In an early assessment of the fear appeal literature

Higbee (1969) suggested that diverse stimuli could elicit change by eliciting either “visceral” or “anticipatory” fear. Anticipatory fear is stimulated by considering negative consequences of some action. In more recent study, Keller et al. (1996) found that fear appeals can be effective in changing attitudes and that there is an optimum level of fear arousal.

2.3.2 Effectiveness of Fear Appeal

The impact and the persuasiveness of the fear message strategy can be measured by the extent to which the individual is motivated to elaborate on solutions to the problem. This is akin to Yankelovich's (1991) concepts of working through and resolution, and a measure of audience involvement. At the extremes, fear appeals appear to be ineffective. When a problem is not perceived as serious, it only evokes a low level of fear or none at all. The individual is unlikely to exert much effort elaborating a solution to an unimportant problem and the message is not persuasive. When the level of fear is too high, for example when the harmful consequences of a proposed action are too horrendous “one may engage in defensive denial of the message by denying either the existence of a problem or its importance” (Keller et al., 1996, p. 448). In some cases, extreme fear or shock campaigns can therefore have an effect opposite to that intended. Take anti-smoking advertisement for example, some smokers have been so shaken by the images in particularly graphic anti-smoking advertisements that they have automatically had a cigarette to calm their nerves (Strecher et al., 1997). This alternative reaction is also supported by Lerman et al. (1997) that termed it as escape-avoidance behaviours. Lerman et al. (1997) report that heightened distress about personal risk of breast cancer has been associated with decreased adherence to recommended breast cancer screening guidelines.

The concept of defensive denial is familiar, and reflects concepts found in Festinger's work on cognitive dissonance. Raghuram et al. (1998) found a very similar phenomenon in relation to AIDS risks. They found that while students are aware of the risk of becoming infected with the AIDS virus, they feel that the risks do not apply to them as individuals nor to their group. Raghuram terms this a "self-positivity bias". The students therefore do not feel compelled to adopt "safe" behaviours and employed several techniques including filtering of information, to protect this perceived invulnerability.

Fischer et al. (1989) also examined this filtering process and found that the anti-smoking warnings printed on cigarette packets in many countries are an ineffective deterrent. Their study on eye-tracking indicated that the young subjects effectively do not see the warnings although they are clearly and intrusively printed on the packs. McKenna (1993) found a similar but altogether more personal bias among smokers. They found that while smokers admit that smokers as a class are subject to health consequences from smoking, they believed that they personally would not suffer these consequences, which will happen to other smokers. McKenna calls this particular mindset "smokers' optimism". In more recent study on anti-smoking advertising, they found that fear appeals are no longer effective because the public is well aware that smoking is dangerous (Hastings and MacFadyen 2002), however most research continues to support fear appeal effectiveness for both youth and adults (Beaudoin 2002; Biener and Taylor 2002).

On other study, Brigham (1998, p. 35) explains, in addition to self-positivity bias, youth has an optimism bias of its own: It is a feature of many adolescents to believe that they can run and not be weary, drive fast and not crash, stay up all night and be normal the next day, and do dangerous things without consequences. If there are consequences, adolescents typically believe that the consequences are so distant that they don't matter now.

Witte found that effective fear appeal contains a high-threat component and a high-efficacy component (Witte 1992, 1998; Witte and Allen 2000). A high threat condition is created when the negative consequences of some action are highly probable and the target believes he or she is highly susceptible to them. The high-efficacy condition is created when the recommended action to avert the threat is effective and the target believes he or she can achieve that recommendation.

2.3.3 Fear Appeal and Ethicality

On another studies, researchers claimed that criticisms of advertising ethicality cite its overly dramatic and increasingly graphic use of fear appeals and such advertising's general lack of societal responsibility (LaTour and Zahra, 1989; Treise et al., 1994). Additionally, some researchers suggest that improperly used fear appeals damage the credibility of advertisers and create unnecessary fears and worries among audience members (Hyman and Tansey, 1990; Treise et al., 1994). Despite its criticism, the use of fear appeals is quite common in many types of marketing communications today. The primary reason for their growing popularity is that advertisers have found them to increase the interest and persuasiveness of individual advertisements (Higbee, 1969; Hyman and Tansey, 1990; King and Reid, 1990). In fact, empirical studies indicate

that subjects better remember and more frequently recall advertisements that portray fear than they do warm or upbeat advertisements or advertisements with no emotional content (Hyman and Tansey, 1990). This is particularly important in this age of tremendous "media clutter" - cable TV, remote controls, and VCRs - where today's advertiser has to work harder for the attention of viewers.

Although the use of fear appeals is quite popular today, its application in advertising is still not universally accepted. Critics argue that marketers often intentionally use inappropriate manipulative techniques in fear appeals when communicating with target audiences (Duke et al., 1993). Hyman and Tansey (1990) suggested that fear appeals can be unethical because they can "expose a person against his or her will to harmful or seriously offensive images." Other critics feel that advertising contributes to the development of social norms and, therefore, has an obligation to the betterment of society (Duke et al., 1993). They feel that the use of fear appeals is exploitative and attempts to stimulate demand for products by describing the negative consequences of not buying certain products. These critics contend that fear appeals are unethical because the technique is based on messages that are intended (at least initially) to elicit negative and possibly even unhealthy responses in consumers (Duke et al., 1993).

As the findings from previous researches on the usage of fear appeal advertising vary, this study focuses on Malaysian responses towards the fear advertising appeal and its impact on the purchase intention.

2.4 Sex Appeal Advertising

2.4.1 Definition of Sex Appeal and its background

Generally, sex appeals can be defined as messages, whether as brand information in advertising contexts or as persuasive appeals in marketing contexts, which are associated with sexual information (Reichert et al., 2001). More specifically, sex appeal can be defined as the degree of nudity or sexual explicitness (ibid). Sex appeal can be found in the visual, audio, and verbal elements of advertisements and can be portrayed to varying degrees (Gould, 1994). Since 1960s, the use of sex appeal in advertising has been increasing in Western countries and becoming more overt as advertisers attempt to find ways to break through the media clutter (La Tour and Henthorne, 1994). The use of sexually oriented appeals has been used as a communication technique to draw attention to their messages (Saunders 1996) and Price (2002) even claimed that sex appeal has become one of the most popular and effective tactics in mainstream consumer advertising in most of the Western countries such as the United States.

2.4.2 Roles of Sex Appeal

Past empirical studies classified that sex appeal has a number of essential roles in advertising including attracting initial attention (e.g. Reid and Soley, 1983), enhancing recall (e.g. Steadman, 1969), evoking emotional responses (e.g. Courtney and Whipple, 1983; Hoyer and MacInnis, 2001) and increasing persuasion (e.g. La Tour et al., 1990; Saunders, 1996) as well as buying intention (e.g. Grazer and Keesling, 1995). In addition, Reichert et al. (2001) summarized that using sex appeal

in advertising is attention-grabbing, augment recognition, bolster brand image, increasing receivers' interest in processing the advertisement and enhance persuasion.

More recent findings, Shimp (2003), spelled out that sex appeal serves several crucial functions in advertising. Firstly, sexual material in advertising acts as an initial attention lure to the advertisement, which is referred to as the stopping power of sex (Yovovich 1983). Attention is essential condition for learning, attitudinal change and behavioural effects. A second function of sexual element in advertising is to enhance message recall as sex is arousing, easy to relate, emotion inducing, and most of all, memorable. Last but not least, the third role of sexual content in advertising is to evoke emotional responses, such as feelings of arousal, excitement, or even lust, which in turn can create stimulation and desire for the product (Bumler 1999). According to Hoyer and MacInnis (2001), this role may affect the consumer's mood and can result in favourable cognitive processing of the ad and increase the persuasion impact. In addition to the aforementioned roles, Richmond and Hartman (1982) argue that sex appeal in advertising is also effective in eliciting fantasy or expressing the imaginative fulfilment of motives, such as sexual gratification.

2.4.3 Effectiveness of Sex Appeal

Latour et al. (1990) have provided insight into the emotional impact of sexual appeals, specifically the level and nature of evoked arousal and attitudes toward the advertisement and brand. They have found a direct relationship between the positive arousal evoked by sexual appeals and evaluations of the brand. Nonetheless, whether

sexual appeal elicits a positive or negative reaction depends on the appropriateness to the advertised product. Richmond and Hartman (1982) ascertain that sexual stimuli will enhance brand recall only if it has an appropriate relationship with the product category and the advertising execution. When sex appeal is used inappropriately, such as utilizing it solely as an attention device, exploiting the female body, degrading the female role or insulting propriety, weak brand recall may occur and may in fact produce a negative attitude towards the brand. This implies that the use of sex appeal in advertising must be appropriate to the type of products being advertised and when sex appeal is used thoughtfully and appropriately, it may produce acceptable and satisfactory results. This is also supported by a number of researchers (e.g. Grazer and Keesling, 1995) also pointed out that there are uncertainties associated with using sex appeal and sex appeal is only effective when used appropriately.

For example, previous studies, Judd and Alexander (1983) found that advertisement with decorative female models increase memory for the image in the advertisement with no difference in actually reading the information of the advertisement. Specifically, nudity and erotic content is found to be eye-catching and entertaining, but it may not be communicative and might divert the viewer from the main message. This is also supported by Stewart and Furse (2000) which also contended that sex appeal might increase attention to the advertisement, but not necessarily enhance recall or positive attitudes towards a brand. Thus, sexual appeals stimulate less argument elaboration and connecting thoughts than will non-sexual appeal. Additional evidence also suggests that, as the level of nudity and erotism increase, the intended communication effects either become negative or dissipate (LaTour et al., 1999). Moreover, Brown (2002) claimed that overly blatant applications of sex as an

attention grabber can be counterproductive. Therefore, despite the persuasiveness of sexual appeals when used in advertisements, it is likely to be the result of peripheral processes and as a result may be transient.

In addition to the aforesaid negative effects of advertising, bad uses of sex symbols in advertising may lead to unacceptable perception by audience. According to Courtney (1983), the widespread use of sex as an advertising technique has elicited significant consumer protest. On top of that, as clutter increases in advertising, consumers appear to be more able to physically avoid advertising and tune out (Bumler 1999). For this reason, every advertiser has pragmatic need to stand out. As marketers focus on developing messages that stand out, too many of them forget that their focus should not solely be on the executional devices, but on the core message.

Empirical evidence about the efficacy of sex appeal as an approach to promoting consumer goods is mixed. For example, Severn et al. (1990) found that the use of a sexually-oriented appeal produced a more positive attitude toward an advertisement for sports shoes, which, in turn, strengthened consumer intention to purchase the shoes. At the same time, however, consumers rated the sexually-oriented advertisement to be more offensive as compared to a nonsexual advertisement. Further, Severn et al. (1990) concluded that when advertising appeals were overtly sexual, consumers' cognitive processing focused more upon the execution of the message (i.e. its sexual nature) than upon the product, itself. In another study, consumers evaluated overt sexual appeals in an advertisement for jeans less favorably than they did more restrained sexual appeals, with mild appeals generating more

positive attitudes toward the featured brand as well as stronger purchase intentions (LaTour and Henthorne, 1994). Still other work (e.g., Alexander and Judd, 1978; Panda, 2005) suggests that consumers may respond most favorably to a “moderate” level of sexual intensity in apparel advertisements. Advertisements featuring lower levels of sexual intensity may fail to attract consumers’ attention, whereas those featuring higher levels of sexual intensity may distract the consumer from focusing upon the product being promoted (Alexander and Judd, 1978).

2.5 Consumer Responses toward Advertising

It is a commonly held assumption that advertising has the potential to shape consumers’ beliefs and behaviors (Hyllegard et al., 2009). Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) claimed that human behavior can be predicted by two factors, attitude and perception. Attitude towards advertisement has been defined as a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion (Lutz, 1985). On the other hand, perception constitutes of exposure, attention and interpretation, the first three steps of useful information-processing model (Hawkins et. al, 2007).

2.5.1 Perception and Information-Processing Model

The information-processing model is a series of activities by which stimuli are transformed into information and stored. Exposure, the first step in the model occurs when a stimulus such as a banner advertisement comes within range of a person’s sensory receptors nerves i.e. vision, in this example. Exposure provides consumers with opportunity to pay attention to available information but in no way guarantees it.

Most of the stimuli to which individuals are exposed to are self-selected. That is people deliberately seek out exposure to certain stimuli and avoid others. Generally, people seek information that they think will help them achieve their goals.

Next, attention occurs when the stimulus which is the banner is seen (the receptor nerves pass the sensations on the brain for processing. Attention requires consumers to allocate limited mental resources towards the processing of incoming stimuli such as packages seen on store shelves or banner advertisement on the web. Consumer attention is selective and this selective has major implication to advertisers and marketers. The same individual may devote different levels of attention to the same stimulus in different situations. Attention is therefore determined by these three factors; the stimulus, the individual and the situation.

Subsequently, interpretation is the assignment of meaning to the received sensations. Interpretation is related to how we comprehend and make sense of incoming information. It is the function of the gestalt, or pattern, formed by the characteristic of the stimulus, the individual and the situation. Several aspects of interpretation are important to consider and one of them is interpretation is generally a relative process rather than a absolute, often referred to as perceptual reality. It is often difficult for people to make interpretations in the absence of some reference point. The second aspect of interpretation is that it tends to be subjective and open to a host of psychological biases. Advertisers must be concerned with the psychological meaning as it is the subjective experiment, not objective reality that drives consumer behavior. A final aspect of interpretation is that it can be a cognitive thinking process or an affective emotional process. Cognitive interpretation is a process whereby stimuli are

placed into existing categories of meaning. This is because consumers categorize advertisements as expected or unexpected, a process which can vary by culture or individual. Nevertheless, assessment will also vary as a function of age, religiosity, gender and so on.

The last step of the model is memory which is the short-term use of the meaning for immediate decision making or the longer-term retention of the meaning. These processes occur simultaneously and are clearly interactive. For example, a person's memory influences the information he or she is exposed to and attends to and the interpretations the person assigns that information. At the same time, memory itself is being shaped by the information it is receiving.

Both perception and memory are very selective (Hawkins et. al, 2007). On the massive amount of information available, individuals can be exposed and attend to only a limited amount. The meaning assigned to stimulus is as much or more a function of the individual as it is the stimulus itself. Further, much of the interpreted information will not be available to active memory when the individual makes a purchase decision.

2.5.2 Beliefs and Attitudes – Indicators of Advertising Effectiveness

On the other hand, consumers' beliefs and attitudes toward advertising are important indicators of advertising effectiveness (Mehta, 2000). To date, there exist two typical views about the relationship between consumers' beliefs and their general attitudes toward advertising (Ying Wang et al., 2007). The first treats the two constructs as equivalent and interchangeable both conceptually and operationally (Mehta, 2000;

Schlosser and Shavitt, 1999), whereas the second postulates that one's beliefs about advertising are antecedents of attitude towards advertising (Brackett and Carr, 2001; Ducoffe, 1996; Pollay and Mittal, 1993). In later research on the subject, the second perspective seems to be gaining popularity.

2.5.3 Beliefs as Antecedents of Attitude

Pollay and Mittal (1993), for example, argued that beliefs are specific statements about the attributes of objects and attitudes are summative evaluations of objects. Emanating from beliefs, attitudes operate at different levels of cognitive abstraction. Specifically, attitude towards advertising is the aggregation of weighted evaluations of perceived attributes and consequences of products (Brackett and Carr, 2001). Consistently, researchers have argued that attitude towards advertising has both cognitive and affective antecedents (Shimp, 1981; Ducoffe, 1996). Belief about advertising, as a result of the benefit and cost that consumers derive from advertising, primarily serves as a cognitive predictor of attitude towards advertising. Moreover, one's belief plays a more important role in forming attitude towards advertising when the person is engaged in central processing (i.e. more deliberate, effortful and thoughtful) of advertising information than in peripheral processing (low involvement, less thoughtful, and more emotional) (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986).

On a different study, Lavidge and Steiner's (1961) conceptual model of advertising effect suggested that one's belief is a precursor of attitude, which by default is an antecedent of behavior. Past research has supported that beliefs and attitudes are precursors of consumers' response toward advertising, and ultimately their purchase intention. Mehta (2000), for example, examined the relationship between attitudes

toward advertising in general and consumer responses in terms of brand recall and buying intention. The researcher found that attitudes toward advertising in general influence attitudes toward a specific advertisement. Furthermore, consumers with a more favorable attitude towards advertising are more likely to recall the brand and be persuaded by advertising.

Prior studies have demonstrated that one's belief about advertising is a multidimensional construct (Ying Wang et al., 2007). For instance, Bauer and Greyser (1968) identified two dimensions underlying consumers' beliefs: economic and social. Later on, Pollay and Mittal's (1993) model presented seven belief factors underlying consumers' beliefs, and classified those factors into two categories. The first category, labeled as personal use, consists of factors including product information, social role and image, and hedonic/pleasure. The second category, labeled as social effect, includes value corruption, falsity/no sense, good for the economy, and materialism.

Among the seven factors, product information describes advertising's role as an important information purveyor, which contributes to marketplace efficiencies. Social role and image reflects the belief that advertising influences people's lifestyle and formation of social status and image. Hedonic/pleasure refers to the view that advertising can be fun, pleasant and entertaining. Good for the economy reflects the viewpoint that advertising accelerates consumers' adoption of new goods and technologies, fosters full employment, lowers the average cost of production, promotes healthy competition between producers, and raises the average standard of living (Belch and Belch, 2008). Notwithstanding its benefits for consumers and the whole society, advertising is often criticized for promoting materialism, corrupting

values, and misleading audiences. Particularly, advertising is accused of providing people with unending razzle-dazzle of high-end products and preoccupying consumers with commercial concerns at the expense of social, political, philosophical, and cultural scruples (Belch and Belch, 2008). As a carrier of cultural and social values, advertising can contradict or even compromise the values that a society cherishes.

2.5.4 Belief and Attitude – Equivalent and Interchangeable

Attitude towards advertising has been extensively researched (O'Donohoe, 1995) since the first comprehensive published academic work by Bauer and Greyser (1968). Research on attitudes toward advertising generally falls into two avenues. Along the first line, scholars examine attitudes toward a particular advertising stimulus, and how they correspondingly influence consumers' brand preferences and ultimately, purchase intention (Gong and Maddox, 2003). Along the second line, scholars investigate the impact of consumers' general beliefs and attitudes toward advertising effectiveness (MacKenzie et al., 1986; Muehling, 1987). It is argued that consumer behavior such as advertisement avoidance may be a result of consumers' general negative attitudes toward advertising (Li et al., 2002).

Even before, researchers also have been interested in the effect of attitude towards advertising on the effectiveness of advertising (Greyser, 1971), attitude toward the advertisement (Bauer and Greyser, 1968), and brand attitude (Shimp, 1981; Thorson, 1981; Lutz, 1985; MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989; Muehling, 1987). Ultimately, these researchers have pointed out that consumer purchasing behavior is affected by attitude towards advertising (Bush, Smith, and Martin, 1999). Specifically of interest to

advertising scholars is the observation that consumers' attitudes towards advertising in general affect their attitudes toward individual advertisements (Lutz, 1985). This linkage between overall attitude towards advertising and the attitude towards a single advertisement is important, given the pivotal role of the attitude towards the advertising construct in the advertising effects and advertising evaluation literature.

In addition to studying how an individual audience will respond to a particular advertisement based on their attitude towards advertising, researchers are also interested in knowing the public attitude towards advertising because of its implications for public policy initiatives (Wills and Ryans, 1982; Rotzoll et al., 1986; Calfee and Ringold, 1988; Pollay and Mittal, 1993). Policy makers have been especially concerned about the negative social effects of advertising (Wills and Ryans, 1982; Rotzoll et al., 1986; Pollay and Mittal, 1993). Advertising has been criticized for presenting misleading information, promoting undesirable values, and persuading people to buy things that they do not need (Katona, 1964; Pollay, 1986; Pollay and Mittal, 1993). Therefore, it is critical for advertising scholars to follow the public opinion about advertising because of its impact on advertising-related regulatory policies (Wills and Ryans; 1982).

Attitude toward advertising is affected by audience behavior toward advertising (Bauer and Greyser, 1968). If the decision-maker's behaviour is positive towards advertising, he/she will be inclined toward advertising (Pollay and Mittal, 1993). The advertising dimension that was researched extensively was attitude toward advertising (Bauer and Greyser, 1968; Pollay and Mittal, 1993; Ramaprasad and Thurwanger, 1998; Yang, 2000; Dahl et al, 2003; Chan et al., 2007). Belief factors such as

hedonic, good for economy, product information, consumer benefits, values corruption, and materialism showed a consistently strong relationship with attitude toward advertising (Bauer and Greyser, 1968; Ramaprasad and Thurwanger, 1998; Pollay and Mittal, 1993; Yang, C.C., 2000; Waller and Erdogan, 2004; Fam et al., 2005; Tsang and Tse, 2005; Munusamy and Hoo, 2007).

2.6 Gender Differences in Responses to Sex Appeal advertising

Even though previous research is far from consensus about the effectiveness of sex appeal, marketers generally believe that males and females react differently to diverse forms of sex appeal due to their own implicit sexual and personal motivations and desires (e.g. La Tour and Henthorne, 1994; Costa, 1994). This is because demographics such as gender are factor affecting consumers' levels of perceived offensiveness of an advertisement (Prendergast et al., 2002). For example, a number of researchers (e.g. Yovovich, 1983; Garrett, 1993) believe that men and women have different perceptions about what is sexually attractive or being sexy. They found that males are most sexually aroused when presented with nudity or suggested nudity sources but sources that are romantic are most noticeable to their female counterparts (e.g. Anne, 1971). Taflinger (1996) also stated that for females, sexual desire is generally a mixture of factors including their physical, emotional, and physiological needs, not just appearances. And in more recent study, female consumers have a lower tolerance level towards advertisements illustrating nudity than male consumers (Prendergast et.al, 2002).

As the biological and psychological needs of males and females differ, the effectiveness of sex appeal is gender related (e.g. Richmond and Timothy, 1982; Grazer and Keelsing, 1995; Bhat et al., 1998). For example, Garrett (1993) claimed that advertisements using female models tend to attract both the attentions of female and male audience in almost equal amounts. However, if a male model is used, only females tend to have an interest increase. Taflinger (1996) claimed that many advertisements targeted towards men use partial or complete female nudity while many ads targeting towards women often use elements of courtship, love and romance rather than nudity. Due to the gender differences in responses to sex appeal, Reichert et al. (2001) warned that sex appeal may be effective to one gender but may be offensive to the opposite gender.

In a different study, Grazer and Keesling (1995) found that among male participants, intention to purchase jeans was highest when the product was promoted at a moderate (versus asexual, low, or high) level of sexual intensity. Findings indicated no differences in brand recall among male consumers exposed to high and low levels of sexual intensity in advertisements, however, leading the researchers to speculate that perhaps consumers have become accustomed to a social climate rife with sexually suggestive advertisements. Finally, efforts to compare male and female responses to sexual appeals in advertising have suggested that women typically respond more negatively to advertisements featuring mild sexual appeals or content that alludes to rape or violence. Both men and women, however, react negatively to the use of blatantly overt sexual appeals (LaTour and Henthorne, 1994; Andersson et al., 2004).

2.7 Gender Differences in Responses to Fear Appeal advertising

In the last ten years, consumer research on advertising and consumers has come to some conclusions about differences in processing style between men and women. These conclusions include that women elaborate more on the information in the advertisement, that they are more detailed processors of the information especially negative information and that men will overweigh positive emotions rather than negative emotions (Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy, 1990; Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran, 1991; Meyers-Levi and Sternhal 1991; Dube and Morgan, 1996).

Nevertheless, prior study by Cotte and Coulter on emotional advertisements, they found that there were no gender effect on the said advertisements. The two print fear appeal advertisements were on Bayer and Shell. The Bayer advertisement promoted its ability to manufacture a more effective stop sign material. Shell advertisement which depicted a graphic of car accident scene promoted safe driving booklet available at Shell gas stations.

Overall, both male and female respondents evaluated the advertisement less positively. However, the appeal was likely the most effective appeal compared to other appeals used in the study i.e. guilt, humor and warmth appeal. Somewhat, surprisingly, the respondents felt most positive towards the advertisement when they verbally elaborated using protocols although initially the researcher expected that the fear appeal might be viewed as inappropriate, leading to negative attitude, but this did not happen.

Cotte and Coulter also found that there appeared to be a serious issue regarding the measurement of emotional responses to advertising. The study has shown that different ways of measuring felt emotional response like fear do not triangulate but instead deliver researcher to different conclusion. This is definitely problematic for comparing across studies, or even designing new studies. The study believed that the differences are not due to the measurement method per se, but to the differing levels of processing allowed or encouraged within the various method.

2.8 Potential Effects of Fear and Sex Appeal Advertising on Purchase Behaviour

Consumer' attitude towards advertisements and brands may shape their purchase intention (Miitchell and Olson, 1981; Shimp, 1981; Mackenzie et al., 1986; Percy and Rossiter, 1992; De Pelsmacker and Van Den Bergh, 1996).

Ford et al. (1997) hypothesized a model for examining female responses to sex role portrayals in advertising. The model suggested that the negative company image caused by using potentially offensive sexual advertising has a negative impact on purchase intentions to buy a company's products. Consumers who are not happy with the role portrayal depictions might not purchase the products of companies that they perceive as using offensive advertisements. Overt sexual appeals may have detrimental effects on attitudes toward the advertisement and brand, and therefore may reduce purchase intention (Grazer and Keesling 1995). However, more recent

research (Phau and Prendergast, 2001) found that, while consumers with tertiary education may find the advertisements for one product offensive, this offending image does not spill over to other products from the same company.

One of the most prominent examples of fear appeal advertising was the campaign by Benetton that was run in various countries. The Benetton campaign showed varying terrifying and offending visuals, for instance, blood-covered dirty clothes, an overcrowded boat with refugees jumping into the sea in despair, people with tattoos reading “HIV positive” dying people etc. The Benetton campaign was perceived offensive and led to many debates, especially among advertising practitioners (Clemens and Stahlschmidt, 1994; Voigt, 1994; Happel, 1995)

Waller et al. (2008) discussed that, meeting and addressing what the consumers want should remain the focus of an effective health information promotional campaign. After all, there is a social responsibility ‘contract’ between the advertisers and the consumers when the latter permits the advertiser to operate in their ‘environment.’ If this condition is not met and offence is taken, inevitably the consumers will tend not to listen to the message or patronize the business, even though it may be a good product and have benefits to the consumer. This is jive with Michell and Al-Mossawi (1999) study that claim an offensive advertisement will not be effective in capturing an audience’s attention or changing his/her attitudes. In addition, an alienated public will certainly have a negative attitude towards the advertisement and brand recall (Zinkhan and Martin, 1982; Gardner, 1985).

Some of these critics have claimed that, consumers tend to respond favourably to advertisements and reward advertisers with purchases if advertising messages are congruent with their culture (Buzzell, 1968; Hornik, 1980; Harris, 1984; Belk et al., 1985; Boddewyn et al., 1986; Zhang and Gelb, 1996). A number of studies have found that advertisements that reflect some local cultural values are more persuasive than those that ignore them (Marquez, 1975; Madden et al., 1986; Hong et al., 1987; Han and Shavitt, 1994; Gregory and Munch, 1997; Taylor et al., 1997). Therefore, knowing what consumers like about a communication is important, as advertisements that are liked are given greater mental processing effort and this might lead to a purchase of the advertised product (Walker, 1990; Thorson, 1991; Franzen, 1994; Walker and Dubitsky, 1994; Hollis, 1995).

As suggested by Biel and Bridgwater (1990, p. 38) likeability does have a persuasive effect, as it can directly affect feelings towards a brand, that is “If we like the advertising, we are more inclined to like the brand by means of a simple conditioning process”. In their study of US television commercials, Biel and Bridgwater (1990) identified five likeable dimensions which they labelled “ingenuity” “meaningfulness” “energy” “warmth” and “rubs the wrong way”. They concluded that, the overall contribution each of these dimensions makes towards explaining advertising likeability differs from one product category to another. Aaker and Stayman (1990) also carried out a similar likeability study covering 80 commercials, and came up with identical findings to Biel and Bridgwater (1990).

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter talks about definition of fear and sex appeal advertising and reviews the literature and previous researches and empirical studies. It also contains related and relevant literature, which discusses about response towards fear and sex appeal advertising and its effect on purchase intention.

Following that in Chapter 3, the discussion will follow with the conceptual framework and the development of hypothesis in this study.