

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the study of theoretical approach, the developed conceptual model and the research hypothesis. The research hypotheses cover two major relationships, namely attitude towards print advertising and purchase intention; and subjective norm towards print advertising and purchase intention.

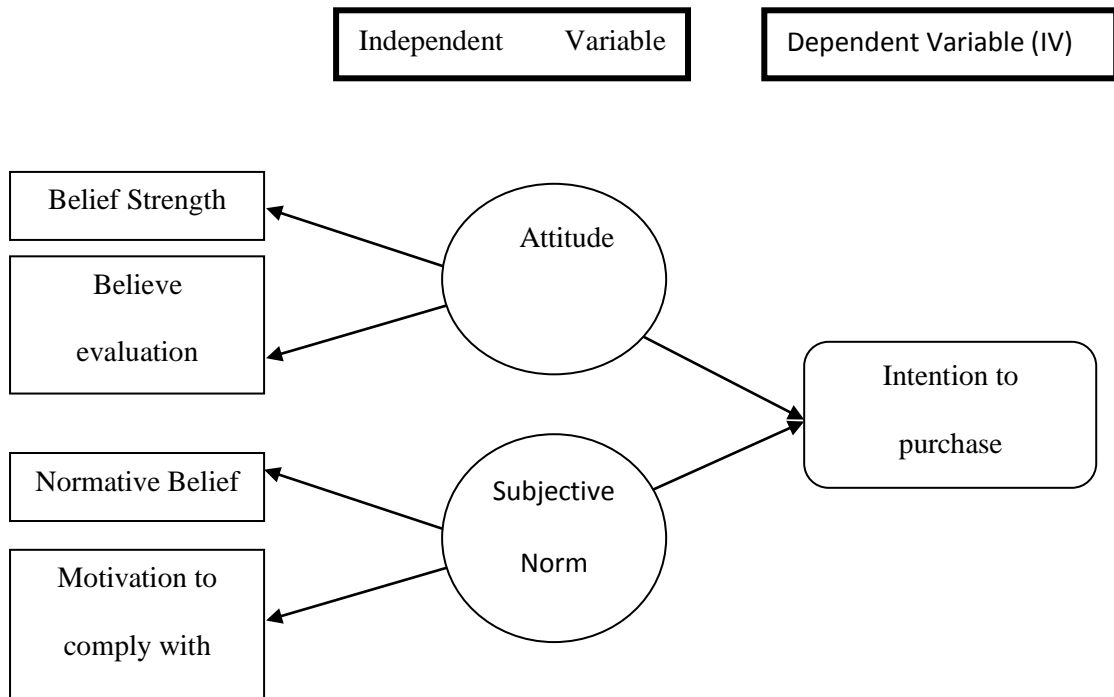
Two different advertising appeals are used in the study which are sexual appeal and fear appeal. Comparison between these two appeals on the respective relationships will be examined and gender effect will be observed.

3.1 Conceptual Model

Based on Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980) which suggests that human behaviour can be predicted by an individual's stated intention to behave in a given way and supported by literature review presented in Chapter Two, a conceptual model has been developed which consist of the independent variables (IV); attitude and subjective norm and the dependent variable (DV) of consumer's intention to purchase which are explained in the model as per below.

Figure 3.1: Theory of Reasoned Action Model

The TRA model is presented as in Figure 3.1 below:



This study is guided by the TRA (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980), which proposes that human behaviour can be predicted by an individual's stated intention to behave in a given way. Two factors, an individual's attitude toward a given behaviour and his/her subjective norm (i.e. his/her perception of the desirability of the behaviour to important others), contribute to an individual's behavioural intention (Hyllegard et al., 2009). The following equation is used to express this relationship:

$$BI = (AB)w_1 + (SN) w_2$$

where BI denotes behavioural intention, AB denotes attitude toward the behaviour, SN denotes subjective norm, and w1 and w2 denote the weights[2] of the respective factors.

Attitude toward a given behaviour is calculated as the summed product of belief strength (b_i) and belief evaluation (e_i):

$$AB = \text{Sum} (b_i e_i)$$

Belief strength is the extent to which an individual believes a behaviour and/or its outcome to be true or probable, whereas belief evaluation is the importance or desirability of the belief to an individual. Subjective norm is the summed product of normative belief (NB_i) and motivation to comply with others (MC_{ij}):

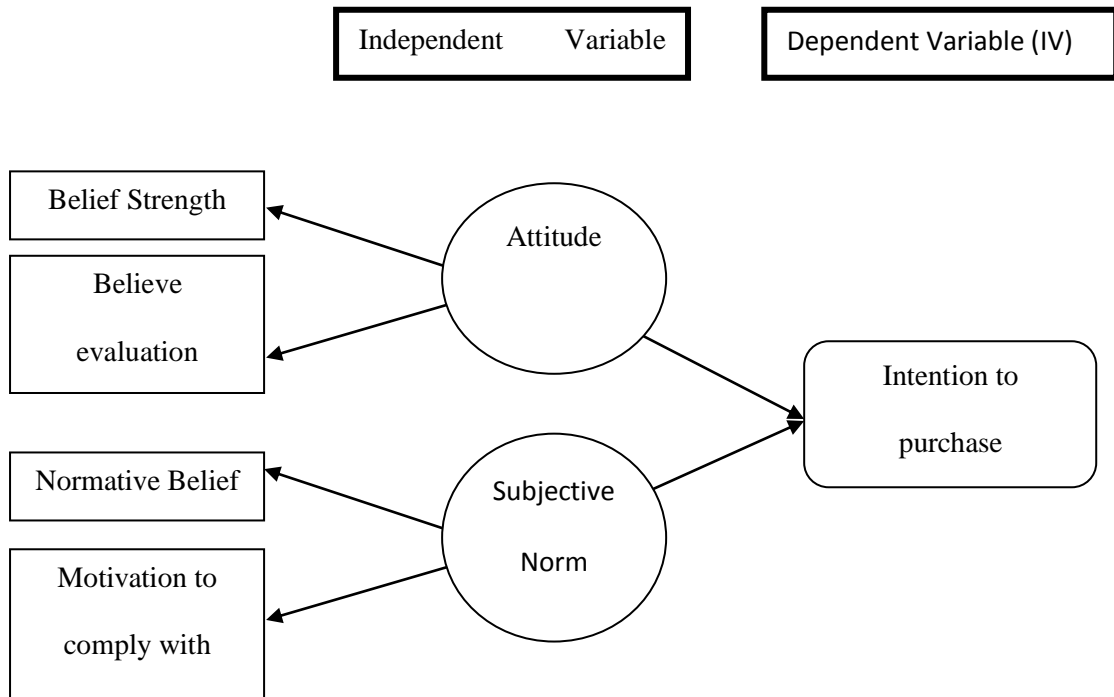
$$SN = \text{Sum} (NB_{ij} MC_{ij})$$

An individual's perceptions about what others think or believe constitute his/her normative beliefs. One's motivation to comply refers to the extent to which an individual wants to do what others think that he/she should do. As such, behavioural intention can also be expressed algebraically as:

$$BI = \text{Sum} (b_i e_i) + \text{Sum} (NB_{ij} MC_{ij})$$

In this study, the TRA is used to predict consumer's intention to purchase the affected products that are featured in the two print advertisements, which adopting two different appeals; fear and sexual. The Conceptual Model of the study is shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: Conceptual Model Development



3.2 Independent Variables

3.2.1 Attitude

As discussed in the literature review of Chapter Two, 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). Consumers' beliefs and attitudes toward advertising are important indicators of advertising effectiveness (Mehta, 2000). Specifically, attitude towards advertising is the aggregation of weighted evaluations of perceived attributes and consequences of products (Brackett and Carr, 2001).

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; Muehling, 1987; MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989). Ultimately, these researchers have pointed out that consumer purchasing behavior is affected by attitude towards advertising (Bush et al., 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.

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.

Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H1: There is significant relationship between attitude towards fear appeal advertising and purchase intention

H2: There is significant relationship between attitude towards sex appeal advertising and purchase intention

3.2.2 Subjective Norm

According to Theory of Reasoned Action, prediction on human behaviour could be made based on two factors which are subjective norm and also attitude. Subjective norm consists of consumer's perception or normative belief of the desirability of the behaviour to important others and motivation to comply.

Normative beliefs refer to the perceived behavioural expectations of such important referent individuals or groups as the person's spouse, family and friends; and depending on the population and behaviour studied. It is assumed that this normative belief in combination with the person's motivation to comply with the different referents determines the prevailing subjective norm. Normative belief constitutes of exposure, attention and interpretation, the first three steps of useful information-processing model (Hawkins et. al, 2007). On the other hand, one's motivation to

comply refers to the extent to which an individual wants to do what others think he/she should do.

On contrary, recent study done by Hyllegards et al., 2009, they found that normative belief or perception does not predict the intention of consumers to patronize American Apparel.

Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H3: There is significant relationship between subjective norm towards fear appeal advertising and purchase intention

H4: There is significant relationship between subjective norm towards sex appeal advertising and purchase intention

3.3 Other Variables

3.3.1 Advertising Appeal

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).

Research 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). Beaudoin (2002) found that advertising characteristics varied by different target groups and by organizations. Similarly, Paek (2006) found that a variety of advertising appeals were adopted in advertisements, including testimonial, humour, curiosity/teaser, and association, and that the use of the appeals varied among sponsors.

3.3.1.1 Fear Appeal

One of the appeals tested in this study is fear appeal. Fear is an emotional response to a threat that expresses, or at least implies, some sort of danger (Belch *et al.*, 2009). Keller et al. (1996) found that fear appeals can be effective in changing attitudes and that there is an optimum level of fear arousal. 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 (Yankelovich, 1991). 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).

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 i.e. by buying the product.

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). The use of fear appeals although is exploitative, attempts to stimulate demand for products by describing the negative consequences of not buying certain products (Duke et al., 1993).

3.3.1.2 Sex Appeal

The other appeal tested in the study is sex appeal. 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). 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.

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, Pitts, and Snook-Luther, 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.

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.

Latour, Pitts, and Snook-Luther (1990) have found a direct relationship between the positive arousal evoked by sexual appeals and evaluations of the brand. 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 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.

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. 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).

Based on the above discussion, this hypothesis has been developed:

H5: There is significant difference between attitude towards fear appeal advertising and attitude towards sex appeal advertising

3.3.2 Gender Effect and 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 i.e. negative information in fear appeal advertisement and that men will outweigh positive emotions rather than negative emotions (Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy, 1990 and 1991; Meyers-Levi and Sternthal 1991; Dube and Morgan, 1996). In another study, it says that demographics such as gender are factors affecting consumers' levels of perceived offensiveness of an advertisement (Prendergast et al., 2002) and this includes fear appeal advertisement. 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".

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). 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).

Nevertheless, prior study by Cotte and Coulter on emotional advertisements, they found that there were no gender effect on the fear appeal advertising. 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 although initially the researcher expected that the fear appeal might be viewed as inappropriate, leading to negative attitude, but this did not happen.

Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H6: There is significant gender effect between attitude and intention to purchase the context of fear appeal advertising

3.3.3 Gender Effect and 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). 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). 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). 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 similar vein, 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.

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. Overt sexual appeals may have detrimental effects on attitudes toward the advertisement and brand, and therefore may reduce purchase intention (Grazer and Keesling 1995).

Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H7: There is significant gender effect between attitude and intention to purchase in the context of sex appeal advertising

3.4 Dependent Variable: Intention to purchase

From the above hypotheses, the study able to understand the relationship between attitude and subjective norm on fear and sex appeal advertising and how it influences the intention to intention the affected product.

It is a commonly held assumption that advertising has the potential to shape consumers' beliefs and behaviors (Hyllegard et al., 2009). As such, different advertising appeal may give different attitude and subjective norm that will lead to different intention.

Past research has supported that consumer's attitudes towards advertisements and their attitudes toward brands may shape their purchase intention (Miitchell and Olson, 1981; Mackenzie et al., 1986; Shimp, 1981; Percy and Rossiter, 1992; De Pelsmacker and Van Den Bergh, 1996). On the other hand, recent study done by Hyllegards et al., 2009, they found that normative belief and by extension, subjective norm does not predict the intention of consumers to patronize American Apparel.

However, according to TRA proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), in combination, attitude and subjective norm lead to the formation of a behavioural intention, and in this study is intention to purchase the products featured in the two print advertisements. As a general rule, the more favourable the attitude and the subjective norm, the stronger should be the person's intention to purchase the product. Intention is thus assumed to be the immediate antecedent of actual behaviour.

As the study on the effectiveness of fear and sex appeal advertising is still deficient in Malaysia, it is interesting to find out consumer's response towards both advertising appeals and how it influences the intention to purchase.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed about the developing of the conceptual framework for the study integrating the variables together with their dimensions and how they related to each other. Seven research hypotheses have been defined in this chapter. These hypotheses will be used as the basis of data analysis which will be presented in Chapter Five.

Following that, in Chapter Four, the discussion will cover the research methodology, which includes the research instruments, sampling and survey method, questionnaire design and data analysis method.