HIGH INFORMATIONAL VERSUS LOW INFORMATIONAL ADVERTISING APPEALS: AN EVALUATION OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR LOW AND HIGH INVOLVEMENT PRODUCTS[1]

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Abstract

The primary research hypothesis for this study was that informational appeals are more effective for high involvement product categories, and low informational or emotional appeals are more effective for low involvement product categories. This hypothesis was explored through evaluation of subjects' cognitive responses, ad attitudes, and brand evaluations. High informational versus low informational appeals for the same brands of beer and automobiles were shown to 67 subjects in an experimental design. The results of the study suggest the importance of television advertising for a low involvement product category.

Introduction

Traditional models of advertising assumed that effective ads modified brand beliefs and attitudes through viewer/reader comprehension of product attribute assertions (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975, and McGuire 1978). Researchers and practitioners soon realized, however, that this type of cognitive effort rarely occurs when consumers are viewing advertisements. Following the early work of Krugman (1965) and Ray et al. (1973), researchers began to explore alternative models of advertising effects that minimize the amount of attribute processing the consumer undertakes. These models characterized much advertising as "low involving", whereby ad messages produce awareness-based behavioral change prior to any attitudinal changes.

In an attempt to integrate the low and high cognitive effort models, Petty and Cacioppo (1981) developed a model of advertising effects based on consumers' level of involvement. This viewpoint, called the Elaboration Likelihood Model, asserts that, as a product increases in personal relevance or consequences, it becomes more important for the consumer to develop a reasoned judgment (Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann 1983). Therefore, consumers are more likely to commit the cognitive resources necessary to evaluate product relevant information under conditions of high involvement. Under conditions of low involvement, consumers may not be willing to spend the time or effort required to consider product-related information, and instead will focus on "peripheral" cues in the ad (e.g., attractiveness of the spokesperson, background scenery, music, etc.). Under conditions of high involvement, however, consumers will prefer to expend this cognitive effort, and will evaluate the extent and quality of the product-relevant information contained in the advertisement. This notion of high and low involvement with advertising was studied by manipulating the situation for which subjects evaluated the ads (e.g., Petty and Cacioppo, 1981; Park and Young, 1986).

However, along with this notion of high and low involvement with advertising messages is the premise that product categories can also be classified as having either high or low involvement for the consumer. For example, Engel and Blackwell (1982) discuss the distinction between the two types of product categories. The high involvement products which consist of various consumer durable products such as automobiles, stereos or televisions. The purchase decision for these products is said to be based on attribute information given the complex nature of the products. The low involvement products consist mainly of frequently purchased branded goods such as tissues, soda pop or bubble bath. For these products the effort to acquire attribute information is perhaps not seen as beneficial as there is not much 'cost' associated with a suboptimal choice.

This perspective suggests that advertisers for high involvement products should select high informational appeals that provide cogent and persuasive "bits" of information. On the other hand, advertisers for low involvement products should select low informational or emotional appeals that focus on the attractiveness of the endorser, exquisite background scenery, or the elicitation of a positive emotional state in the consumer (Shimp 1981).

It is this relationship between advertising appeals and level of product involvement that this study investigated. Specifically, this research examined the impact of high informational versus low informational appeals on consumers' cognitive responses, attitude toward the ad, evaluation of the brand, and probability of purchase across high and low involvement product categories.[2]

Hypotheses

Cognitive Responses

One of the most common methods of assessing consumers' reactions to advertisements is cognitive responses. The categories of support arguments, counter arguments, and source derogations were used by Wright (1974) to evaluate advertisements under

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[1] This paper was presented at the 1985 APA meetings.

[2] The involvement level with any product varies across individuals due to inherent values and needs and involvement with a product might be subject to situational influences which increase or decrease the involvement level. Therefore while we speak in terms of general categories we must keep in mind there is variation across people and situations for involvement with product categories.

involvement with the ad, their overall cognitive response scores and their attitude toward the ad. The automobile high informational ad does not follow this pattern.

Appropriateness of Ad for Product Category. Subjects were asked how appropriate each ad appeal was for beer and automobiles. We expected an interaction effect with automobiles seen as more appropriate for the high informational appeal and beer more appropriate for the low informational appeal. Instead we found a main effect for appeal and no effect for product category. The low informational appeals were seen as more appropriate for both product categories (beer info $\bar{x}$=4.53; beer non-info $\bar{x}$=5.24; auto info $\bar{x}$=4.7; auto non-info $\bar{x}$=5.19) $F(1,65)=4.8$ $p<.05$. Perhaps we just prefer to be entertained with television commercials rather than viewing commercials with the expectation of gathering product information.

Test of Hypothesis Four

Attitude Toward the Brand. We hypothesized for the high involvement product the high informational ad would score higher on brand attitudes and purchase intentions than the low informational ad, while, for the low involvement product we expected the low informational appeal to elicit more favorable brand attitudes and purchase intentions. No significant differences in brand attitudes were found between the high informational and low informational appeals for both beer (12.17 vs 12.78) and autos (12.83 vs 13.11). However when asked the likelihood of purchasing the brand being advertised we found slight differences in the form of an interaction. For the product category of beer, subjects who saw the low informational ad felt more likely to purchase the brand ($\bar{x}$=11.65) than the subjects who saw the high informational ad ($\bar{x}$=9.33). For the product category of automobiles subjects who saw the high informational ad were more likely to state they would purchase the brand ($\bar{x}$=9.23) than the subjects who saw the low informational ad ($\bar{x}$=7.97). This product and appeal interaction was significant at the $p < .08$ level $F(1,65)=3.15$.

Relationships Among Cognitive Responses, Attitudes, and Involvement

Although not directly related to the hypotheses, the relationships among the dependent variables was of great interest. Even though we objectively chose a high and a low involvement product and a low and a high informational ad, we wanted to know what accounted for the variation in the subject's involvement with the ad itself.

Involvement with the Advertisements

The Personal Involvement with the advertisements themselves was measured by the PII. Involvement levels among the four ads were as follows: beer high info = 64; beer low info = 67; auto high info = 67; auto low info = 81. These scores indicate subjects were relatively low involved with all the advertisements, a finding that agrees with most theoreticians' view of TV advertising as a low involving phenomena (e.g., Krugman, 1962).

Involvement with the ad was used as a dependent measure and the cognitive responses as independent predictors. For the beer ads, the support arguments (+), source bolstering (+) and positive affect (+) explained 32% of the variation in the involvement score. For the automobile ads, the negative affect (-), the source derogation (-) and source bolstering (+) explained 32% of the variation in the involvement score. The analyses was then redone for the product category of beer, deleting 25 subjects who on the average consumed less than one beer a week. This deleted non-drinkers and very light users of the product category for which the advertisements are not targeted. Similar reanalyses were not carried out for automobiles as all subjects drove and very few ever drove the particular brand being advertised. Using only regular beer drinkers in the sample, we find source bolstering (+); counter arguments (-); support arguments (+); and positive affect (+) accounted for 55% of the variation (adjusted R square) in the PII score. The average beer drinker PII score for the beer ads was 75.

This reanalyses of only beer drinkers brought in the factor of counter arguments as significantly related to involvement levels, a finding which coincides with early work by Wright (1973). For neither product category was the treatment variable of high information versus low information responsible for any significant variation in the involvement score. The informational components did not appear to raise a person's involvement level with the ad.

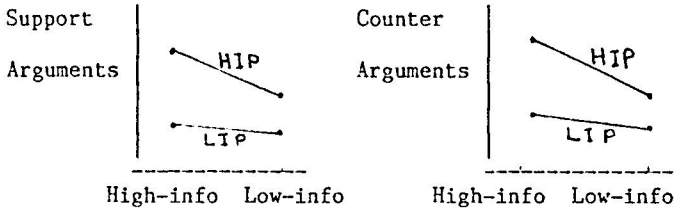
According to Cacioppo, Hawkins and Petty (1981), one of the most replicated findings in the research on cognitive responses is that the favourable thoughts elicited by a communication correlate positively with attitude change, whereas the unfavourable thoughts elicited by a communication show a strong negative relationship with persuasion. Although this study is not concerned with attitude change per se, the same findings are expected in the present study. The cognitive responses were regressed on the dependent variable of probability of purchase, a surrogate for attitude change.

For the product category of beer, we found the overall positive (+) and negative (-) affective categories to significantly account for 11% of the variation in probability to purchase the brand. When the analysis was redone eliminating non and light drinkers, only negative (-) affect remained accounting for 11% of the variation in probability to purchase. For the automobiles, none of the cognitive response categories accounted for any significant variation in intention to purchase the automobile. Given the distinct nature of the two product categories this is intuitively reasonable. For such a complex purchase as an automobile, it is unlikely any exposure from one ad might influence purchase behavior. However for the frequently purchased product category of beer, the influence of the ad on purchase intention is evident through the affective impact. Therefore we find support for the influence of advertising in purchase intentions for the so-called low involvement product category but not the high involvement product category.

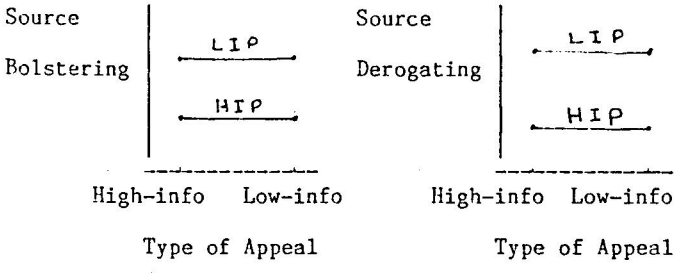
conditions of high and low involvement. His results demonstrated that more message comments (arguments) were made under high involvement conditions, but more source comments (derogations) were made under low involvement conditions. Therefore when the subjects were involved they focused on the content of the message. Subsequent research results have led researchers to model support and counter arguments as the mediators of the central route of attitude change, and source bolstering and derogations as the mediators of the peripheral route (Batra 1985). Therefore, hypothesis 1 states that:

H1A: High informational advertisements for high involvement product (HIP) categories will result in more support and counter arguments than high informational advertisements for low involvement product (LIP) categories. Low informational advertisements should have less support and counter-arguments over both products due to less opportunity to respond to informational content about the products.

Therefore an interaction between product type and appeal for support and counter arguments is predicted.



H1B: Since the peripherial route to persuasion focuses on non-message cues we expect the source factors to be more evident in the respondent's cognitive responses to the low involvement product than the high involvement product. This should be the same over both types of appeals and hence we predict only a product effect.



There is continuing controversy regarding the emotional impact of advertisements (Hill and Mazis 1986). Recent evidence suggests a need for cognitive response categories that capture this important emotional factor (Batra 1985). Therefore, this investigation looked at the number of positive and negative responses generated by test advertisements. In keeping with the "two routes" perspective, hypothesis 2 states that:

H2: In high involvement product categories, high informational ads will receive more positive to negative responses than low informational ads due to consumers' need for more product relevant information. On the other hand, in low involvement product categories, low informational ads will receive more positive to negative responses than informational ads due to consumers' desire to avoid extensive cognitive effort. Therefore we expect a true interaction between product type and type of appeal which reverses itself for positive and negative affect.

Attitude Toward the Ad

Much research has been conducted lately to investigate consumers' attitudes towards advertisements (ATTa) (Holbrook, 1978; Lutz, MacKenzie and Belch, 1983; and Mitchell and Olson 1981). The attitude to the ad is important because it may be independent of the brand attitudes. Typically, this construct is treated as an intervening variable that mediates the effects of the advertising message on brand attitudes and preferences (Edell and Burke 1984). Therefore, in keeping with the "two routes" perspective, hypothesis 3 states that:

H3: In high involvement product categories, consumers' ATTa will be greater for high informational than low informational ads. However, in low involvement product categories, consumers' ATTa will be greater for low informational than high informational ads.

Brand Evaluations

According to Shimp (1981), both informational and emotional advertising can effectively impact brand evaluations. In the central route, effective ads contain brand relevant information regarding the favorable consequences of purchasing a particular brand. In the peripheral route, however, effective ads do not provide information directed at specific product attributes or benefits. Instead, the purpose of the ad is to create a favorable attitude by leaving the viewer/listener/reader in a positive emotional state after processing the ad. Therefore, hypothesis 4 states that:

H4: In high involvement product categories, consumers will have greater brand attitudes and purchase intentions following high informational ads versus low informational ads. On the other hand, in low involvement product categories, consumers will have greater brand attitudes and purchase intentions following low informational ads versus high informational ads.

Method

The experimental variables in this study were type of appeal, either high informational or low informational and type of product, either low involvement or high involvement. Beer was selected to represent a low involvement product and automobiles were selected to represent a high involvement product

category. Television advertisements for both product categories were selected from tapes provided by a national beer and a national auto manufacturer. The informational appeals contained factual information about product attributes. The low informational appeals contained no verifiable information on any product attributes. The actual information content of the advertisements was determined by trained independent judges along the content analyses guidelines suggested by Resnick and Stern (1977) and Pollay, Zaichkowsky and Fryer (1980). The high informational auto ad contained five pieces of information: 1) price-value; 2) performance; 3) content; 4) package; and 5) guarantee. The low informational auto ad contained two pieces of information: 1) price-value and 2) package. The high informational beer ad covered the following attributes: 1) quality; 2) taste, and 3) unique selling point. The low informational beer ad portrayed the attribute of availability, but not in an explicit way. Therefore the different advertising appeals were actual commercials developed for the same brand within the product class and differed proportionally on the amount of information in the ad. The type of appeal was a between subjects factor and the type of product was a within subjects factor.

Description of the Advertisements

1) Auto High Informational: a blue print of the automobile was developed on the screen which turned into the car by the end of the ad. Features such as importance of front-wheel drive system, placement of steel support frame and engine were emphasized.

2) Auto Low Informational: auto is driven along a winding country road in the rain. During the drive a tree falls and narrowly misses the car. The car bounces in and out of potholes. A song entitled "What a Wonderful Day" is sung throughout the entire ad.

3) Beer High Informational: an actor walks through a cow pasture explaining why the company's beer is not pasteurized. He walks into a barn and gets a beer out of the fridge.

4) Beer Low Informational: people from several cities in the south and east are shown drinking beer and having fun. A song entitled "Best of the Rockies" is sung throughout the commercial.

The two low informational ads are comparable in that they both use "song" themes to enhance the experience of using the product. These songs or music are proposed to raise emotional awareness on the part of the viewer (Batra 1985). The two high informational ads may be less comparable as the auto ad does not use a human spokesperson but relies on voice-over a visual representation of the car. We selected advertisements which occur naturally in the marketplace and acknowledge giving up some control in the comparability of high informational versus low informational advertising across products.

Subjects

The subjects were senior business students, 29 males and 38 females, who participated as part of a course requirement. The median age of the sample was 23. We feel the two product categories selected are relevant to the sample. The senior students might be likely to purchase an auto after graduation and most of the sample were beer drinkers.

Procedure

Subjects participated in groups of approximately 15. Two groups saw the high informational appeals counterbalancing for which product they saw first, either automobiles or beer. Two groups were shown the low informational advertisements, counterbalancing for which product they saw first, either automobiles or beer.

Subjects were told the purpose of the study was to evaluate advertisements. They first filled out a Personal Involvement Inventory (PII Zaichkowsky 1985) for each product category. Subjects were then shown one advertisement and their cognitive responses to that ad were taken. Following this, subjects completed the PII with respect to the advertisement they saw. Attitude measures toward the ad as well as other experience measures were taken. The next ad was shown and the procedure repeated. At the end of the task subjects were asked to identify the purpose of the experiment. They were then debriefed. The total time taken to participate was about 20 minutes.

Dependent Measures

There were three classes of dependent measures: 1) cognitive responses to the ads; 2) involvement with the ad and attitude toward the ad; and 3) evaluation of brand, and probability of purchasing the brand.

Cognitive Responses. The cognitive responses were coded into the following eight categories: 1) number of thoughts; 2) support arguments; 3) counter arguments; 4) source bolstering; 5) source derogation; 6) positive affect; 7) negative affect; 8) other (usually playback).

The support and counter argument categories pertain directly to responses or comments to the product or brand being advertised; for example, "this car handles well" would be a support argument. Therefore these are product or brand-based arguments. The source bolstering and source derogation categories relate to the execution of the advertisement; for example, "nice scenery in the ad". They have nothing to do with the product or brand itself but pertain solely to the quality of the advertisement as perceived by the viewer. We might call these armchair advertising criticisms.

The categories of positive and negative affect attempt to go beyond the other categories by picking up the viewers' affective reactions elicited by watching the ad; for example, "this ad makes me feel good", (Batra, 1985). The final category of playback captures mainly repetitions of what was seen in the ad. Two judges independently read and coded the

cognitive responses. They agreed on 87% of the statements. The disagreements were resolved through discussion and categorized.

Involvement with the Ad. The Personal Involvement Inventory (Zaichkowsky 1985) developed for measuring involvement levels for products was used to measure involvement with the ad. This scale was developed to be generalized to advertisements although it has not been validated as such. Involvement with the ads were measured as a dependent measure to see what made the ad involving to the subject.

Attitude Toward the Ad. Attitudes toward the ad were measured by the total score of three, seven point, bi-polar evaluative scales: good-bad, dislike-like, and not irritating-irritating. The appropriateness of the appeal for the product category was measured by the bipolar-adjective appropriate for product-inappropriate for product.

Attitude Toward the Brand. Attitudes toward the brand were measured by the total score of three seven point bi-polar evaluative scales: extremely bad-extremely good, extremely pleasant-extremely unpleasant and extremely favourable-extremely unfavourable. Attitudes toward purchasing the brand were measured by the total score of the following seven point bipolar-adjective scales: unlikely-likely, probable-improbable, impossible-possible.

Extraneous Factors. Other extraneous variables such as prior exposure to the advertisement, prior experience with the brand advertised and product category usage were measured for possible use as covariates to the research design.

Results

The involvement levels of the subjects with selected product categories of automobiles ($\bar{x}$=122) and beer ($\bar{x}$=65) were significantly different from each other ($t(65)=13.24$ $p < .001$). We also checked that the subjects perceived the informational and non informational commercials as such by asking the subjects if the ad was informative or non informative on a seven point scale. The beer ads were well selected with significant differences between informational ($\bar{x}$=4.87) and non informational ($\bar{x}$=3.16) ads ($t(65)=4.03$ $p < .001$). The automobile ads scored $\bar{x}$=4.07 for informational appeal and $\bar{x}$=3.89 for non informational appeal indicating the chosen commercials for autos were not as contrasted as the beer ads even though the ads were selected based on an objective amount of information content. Therefore the results might be more contrasted for the beer advertisements than the automobile advertisements due to the receiver's perception of information content.

We also checked for the level of prior exposure to the ads. None of the subjects had seen the low or high informational auto ads prior to the study. One person recognized seeing the low informational beer ad and a few had seen the high informational beer ad. However, these people only saw it about once before and after checking their cognitive responses there was no evidence of prior recall to the ad. Since these ads were acquired from company tapes, we were able to adequately control for prior exposure to the ad.

Cognitive Response Measures

The mean levels for each category of cognitive responses are given in Table One along with the standard deviations. These mean levels of cognitive responses were checked for order differences between the first and second exposure and no differences were found.

TABLE ONE

Mean Cognitive Response Measures

	Beer		Automobiles	
	High Info N=30	Low Info N=37	High Info N=30	Low Info N=37
1. Number of Thoughts	5.63 (1.79)[a]	5.41 (1.71)[a]	5.53 (1.61)[a]	5.32 (1.84)[a]
2. Support Arguments	.53 (.73)[a]	.81 (1.37)[a]	1.07 (1.62)[a]	1.24 (1.28)[a]
3. Counter Arguments	.63 (.93)[a]	.22 (.63)[b]	.60 (.93)[a]	.19 (.40)[b]
4. Source Bolstering	2.17 (2.07)[a]	.68 (.97)[b]	.57 (.82)[b]	1.00 (1.20)[b]
5. Source Derogation	.60 (.97)[a]	.57 (1.07)[a]	1.87 (1.50)[b]	.49 (1.07)[a]
6. Positive Affect	.13 (.35)[a]	.97 (1.48)[b]	.03 (.18)[a]	.46 (.77)[b]
7. Negative Affect	.37 (.81)[a]	.27 (.69)[a]	.27 (.52)[a]	.32 (.67)[a]
8. Other (Playback)	1.27 (1.60)[a]	2.05 (2.24)[a]	1.07 (1.34)[a]	1.76 (2.05)[a]

- Standard deviations are in brackets under mean scores
- Different subscripts indicate significant differences ($p < .05$) among means. (Only reading across with cognitive response categories.)

Test of Hypothesis One

We hypothesized an interaction between high informational and low informational ads for LIP and HIP and a main effect for product with the HIP always receiving more support and counter arguments than the LIP. The analyses showed no interaction for either support or counter arguments. We found a main effect for product type with HIP receiving more support

arguments than LIP over both types of ad appeals ($F(1,65)=6.34$ $p<.01$). No main effect for product was found with counter arguments but we did find a main effect for information, with high informational ads always receiving more counter arguments than low informational appeals ($F(1,65)=9.94$ $p<.01$). Perhaps there is more opportunity to counterargue the higher the informational appeal.

For source bolstering and source derogation we hypothesized only a main effect for product with LIP always receiving more source comments since under the pheripheral route to persuasion the source characteristics are thought to be more relevant for LIP. For source bolstering we found a significant treatment and product interaction ($F(1,65)=19.0$ $p<.001$) with LIP high informational appeal receiving more source bolstering ($\bar{x}=2.17$) than the low informational LIP appeal ($\bar{x}=.68$) and the HIP low informational ad receiving more bolstering ($\bar{x}=1.00$) than the HIP information ad ($\bar{x}=.57$).

For source derogations we again found a significant treatment and product interaction ($F(1,65)=10.59$ $p<.01$). The HIP high informational ads received more derogations ($\bar{x}=1.87$) than HIP low informational ads ($\bar{x}=.49$) and LIP high informational ads received the same amount of derogations ($\bar{x}=.60$) as the LIP low informational ads ($\bar{x}=.57$).

Test of Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis investigated the premise that high informational ads are more suited to HIP and hence should elicit more positive than negative affect while no difference should be found for low informational ads. The exact opposite is hypothesized for the LIP.

The high informational ad for the HIP actually elicited more negative than positive affect ($\bar{x}=.27$ vs. $\bar{x}=.03$, $t=2.25$ $p<.05$). This finding is exactly opposite of what was predicted. No differences were found between positive and negative affect for the HIP low informational ad. For the LIP, the low informational ad elicited more positive than negative affect ($\bar{x}=.97$ vs. $\bar{x}=.27$, $t(29)=2.47$ $p<.05$). No differences between positive and negative affect were found for the LIP high informational ads. This was as expected.

Other General Findings in the Cognitive Responses.

For both product categories, subjects had more positive affective thoughts to the low informational ads (beer = .97; auto = .46) than the high informational advertisements (beer = .13; auto = .03). There were no differences at all in number of negative affective thoughts provoked over appeals or products. With respect to the source or ad execution related thoughts, the beer high informational received a greater number of source bolstering comments ($\bar{x}=2.17$) while the automobile high informational ad received a greater number of source derogation responses ($\bar{x}=1.87$).

To get a feel for the subject's overall cognitive response to the ad, a new variable of overall cognitive response was computed. This variable consisted of six categories of cognitive responses added and subtracted in the following manner:

(Support Arguments - Counter Arguments) +
(Source Bolstering - Source Derogation) +
(Positive Affect - Negative Affect).

When we do this, the order of the positive response to the advertisements are the auto low informational 1.7; the beer low informational 1.4; the beer high informational 1.23 and finally the auto high informational with a negative score -1.07. Perhaps this index gives a representative number for the overall attitude to the ad or advertising quality. We will correlate to these measures in the next section.

Test of Hypothesis Three

Attitude Toward the Ad. Based on similar reasoning to the affective cognitive response scores, we hypothesized an interaction between appeal and product. For the HIP, a more positive attitude would prevail for the high informational appeal over the low informational appeal, while the reverse would be true for the LIP. We found a significant interaction ($F(1,65)=9.4$ $p<.01$), but in the opposite prediction. The subjects liked the low informational HIP ad better than the high informational HIP ad (15.9 vs. 11, $t(65)=4.51$ $p<.001$). The attitude measure showed no differences between the high informational and low informational LIP ads (15.2 vs. 15.1).

This result agrees with the higher PII score and higher overall cognitive response measure for the low informational HIP ad. The similarities among the involvement scores, the attitude measures and the cognitive reponses are shown in Table Two.

TABLE TWO

Correlations Among Advertising Response Measures

	Beer		Automobile	
	High Info N=30	Low Info N=37	High Info N=30	Low Info N=37
Correlations				
Involvement and Attitude	.72	.59	.38	.64
Involvement and Cognitive Responses	.57	.65	.20	.63
Cognitive Responses and Attitudes	.74	.68	.40	.64

In summary the relationships among the various measures used to assess the subject's responses to advertising are found in Table 2. We generally find high and similar correlations among the subject's

Extraneous Factors

The extraneous factors were first correlated with the various dependent measures to determine their use as covariates. For beer, prior brand usage was not related to attitude toward the advertisement r=.22, or the cognitive response measures r=.24. Prior brand usage was related to probability of purchase r=.73, and involvement with the advertisement r=.51. Product category usage was not related to attitude toward the ad r=.10 or the cognitive response measures r=.01. Product category usage was related to probability of purchase r=.40 and involvement with the advertisement r=.38. Deleting the 25 subjects who did not consume at least one beer a week also reduced these relationships to r=.06 and r=.16 respectively. The best predictor of probability to purchase the brand of beer was prior use of the particular brand.

For the product category of autos, the extraneous factor of prior use of the brand was not related to any of the dependent measures since so few subjects had ever driven that particular brand.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study sought to investigate if certain types of advertising appeals were better suited for different types of product categories. The different types of product categories appear to have been well chosen with beer representing a low involvement product class and automobiles representing a high involvement product class. The low versus high informational beer ads were also well chosen. However, the low versus high informational auto ads were not perceived to vary widely in information content by the subjects.

The results of the cognitive response analyses found the low informational ads elicited more positive affect than the high informational ads over both products. To get some idea of what this means in an overall ad evaluation context we added all the positive aspects and subtracted all the negative aspects: the support and counter arguments which pertain to the brand or product being advertised; the source bolstering and source derogation which pertain to ad execution itself; and finally the positive and negative affect which capture the affective or emotional comments made while viewing the ad. However this perception of the ad did not carry over to attitude toward the brand or likelihood to purchase the brand. In fact those who saw the high informational auto ad showed higher likelihood to purchase than those who saw the low informational ad. The opposite occurred for the product category of beer. This ordering is exactly what Engel and Blackwell (1982) would predict as far as suitability of type of appeal for these product categories.

However, in order to put this idea of advertising effectiveness into perspective we tried to predict the purchase intention from the cognitive responses elicited from the ads. Overall we found significant effects for the beer commercials with only the overall positive and negative affect accounting for 11% of the variation in probability of purchase. No effect on probability of purchase was found by the elicited cognitive responses over either type of appeal for automobiles. These results might be viewed in a relative manner, i.e., television advertising for beer has more impact on purchase intention than television advertising for automobiles, or perhaps we are always in the market for a beer but not for an automobile.

Lifestyle or low informational advertising was better than the high informational advertising for the product category of beer in this study. Although, for automobiles, the high informational ad scored higher on probability of purchase than the low informational ad, other indicators such as cognitive responses did not account for any variation in purchase intention. The effectiveness for type of appeal for automobiles may not be significant due to type of product category. One exposure to an ad for a high involvement product can not be expected to influence purchase intentions.

These findings were not surprising. For example, when a consumer is currently in the market for a high involvement product, he or she will be more likely to prefer and attend to advertisements that contain information on salient attributes (the central route). However, under all other conditions, consumers will prefer to be amused, awed, entertained or placed in a host of other emotional states by the advertisements that they view (the peripheral route).

Other studies have traditionally manipulated involvement through situational instructions (e.g., Wright 1973, Petty and Cacioppo 1981) or demand instructions (Park and Young 1986). We feel it is important to look at the advertising effects based on ads as they now exist in the marketplace without special involvement instructions to the subjects. However, to overcome the limitations of this study ads for different product categories need to be better matched on content to avoid idiosyncratic results and subjects are needed which have a homogeneous level of involvement with the product category.

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