

Factors Responsible for the Small and Medium Scale Indian IT Entrepreneur's Ability to Global Advertising Standardization in Japan and the United States: A Closer Examination of High-involvement Products.

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ABSTRACT

The question of whether to standardize or adapt advertising internationally remains a matter of great importance to researchers and practitioners. While studies have compared the use of standardization between high-involvement and low-involvement categories, research within either of these categories is limited. In general, researchers have concluded that high-involvement products generally have more standardized advertisements than low-involvement products. This paper compares the standardization levels between different high-involvement product categories. We examine high-cognition and low-cognition high-involvement products. The research questions are examined via content analysis of print advertisements of highly circulated American and Japanese magazines using a framework developed by Harris and Attour (2003). A modified coding scheme was developed for advertisements that contained no text. Results indicate that ads for low-cognition high-involvement products are more likely to be standardized across these two cultures than ads for high-cognition high-involvement products. Second, prior research has suggested that television advertising is more likely to be standardized than print advertising, but little is known about what type of print advertising is more likely to be standardized. We find that picture ads are more likely to be standardized than ads containing text.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Companies that standardize their advertising across the globe have a lot to gain through decreased costs, increased efficiency, a uniform global image and better ability to develop ideas to their full potential (Mueller 1992). Advertising is standardized when elements such as copy and visuals are kept the same across countries (Nelson and Paek 2007). Thus, it is not surprising that the question of advertising standardization has received a great deal of attention from researchers (cf. Boddewyn, Soehl, and Picard 1986; Kripalani, Laroche, and Darmon 1988).

While standardization is more cost effective than adaptation, some messages may not transfer well between cultures. The question of what to standardize, as well as how much, are very real concerns for marketers (Mueller 1991). While many studies have compared high and low-involvement products, there has been little emphasis on variation of standardization within either of these categories. The objective of this paper is to examine if different cognition levels and types of advertisements (picture versus text) affect standardization of high-involvement products. This study looks at the print advertisements from two countries, the United States and Japan. Japan is an ideal comparison country because on the one hand it is affluent, economically well-integrated with the United States and has a large and mature advertising marketing while on the other hand it has very different cultural traditions (Hall 1976).

While it has been suggested that advertising for high-involvement products tend to be more standardized and differences in standardization have been noted across product categories, most such efforts have compared the difference between high and low-involvement products (cf. Mueller 1991). Less attention has been paid to differences in standardization across various categories of

high-involvement products. Second, prior research (cf. Mueller 1991) suggests that television (visual medium) has greater standardization than print (textual medium). However, less is known about differences in standardization across various types (visual versus textual advertising) of print advertising. While research in consumer behavior suggests that recall and attitude influence is greater for advertising with pictures (cf. Mitchell and Olson 1981; Unnava and Burnkrant 1991) little is known about whether this element has an influence on advertising standardization.

To address these questions, we used the content analysis methodology. This technique is widely used in the global standardization context (cf. Mueller 1991; Harris and Attour 2003; Whitelock and Chung 1989). Since our study focuses on different types of high-involvement products, we selected three high-emotion/low-cognition product categories: jewelry, apparel (clothing and shoes), and accessories (purses and other accessories). The jewelry category excludes watches, which are included in the high-cognition section. High-emotion/high-cognition focuses on the following three product categories: electronics, watches and automobiles. Watches are not included in the jewelry section because they provide more function than traditional jewelry and therefore more cognitive thought is put into the purchase of a watch.

We selected popular, widely circulated magazine titles from both countries. From the United States we selected three women's magazines *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, and *Vogue*, two business magazines *Forbes* and *Fortune*, two men's magazines *GQ*, and *Men's Health*, and the cultural magazine *Vanity Fair*. From Japan we selected two high-end women's magazines *Ginza* and *Glitter*, and additionally *Elle* Japan. We selected four men's magazines *Huge*, *Goethe*, *Leon*, and *Sense* and the business magazine *Forbes Japan*. An American National with a degree in Japanese Linguistics currently working in Japan translated the text for all the ads that were analyzed. We analyzed print ads published in these magazines during one single calendar month. We used a modified version of the coding scheme developed by Harris and Attour (2003) (See Appendices A and B). We have developed a second coding scheme to allow for the advertisements that do not have text. After reviewing all of the advertisements published in these 15 magazines during one calendar month we found there were 81 matches. A match is created when a brand is advertised in both countries. 32 of these advertisement matches fell into the high-cognition category, while 49 were low-cognition. 52 of the matching advertisement pairs were scored using the "Picture" coding scheme, while the remaining 29 fell into the "Text" category. There were a total of 47 brands represented including: Citizen, Dolce & Gabbana, Louis Vuitton, Prada, and Volkswagen.

The mean standardization score of the high-cognition advertisements was 38.37, compared with 73.04 for advertisements of low-cognition products. Remember, a score of 100 indicates perfect standardization. In other words, a low-cognition advertisement is almost twice as likely to be standardized than one for high-cognition products. A t-test indicates that the differences between these means are significant. Text advertisements have a mean standardization score of 32.10.

Advertisements with no text, other than the brand name, have a mean standardization score of 73.04. A -test has determined that these results are significantly different.

Our research demonstrates that within the category of high-involvement products, low-cognition product advertising is significantly more likely to be standardized. While a content analysis study does not allow us to explore why such differences exist between low and high-cognition high-involvement products, we would conjecture that the differential processing of information and different psychological meanings of the two products might be contributors (cf. Friedman 1986).

Second, we find that picture ads tend to be more standardized than text ads. Mueller (1991) found that television advertising tends to be more standardized than print advertising. She conjectured that the economics of television advertising production made it more worthwhile to standardize it than print advertising which was less costly to produce. We offer an alternate reasoning that the visual elements are easier to standardize as compared to the textual elements. Thus, not only does the visual element of advertising aid recall and have greater influence on attitudes (cf. Mitchell and Olson 1981; Unnava and Burnkrant 1991), it is also easier to standardize.

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