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ABSTRACT

This study argues that participants’ affective states determine the relative influence of hedonic ad appeals and utilitarian ad appeals on participants’ evaluations of dual function products. Specifically, this study shows that a positive affective state, in comparison to a neutral affective state, increases participants’ reliance on their attitudes toward hedonic ad appeals in developing their product evaluations. As a result, ads featuring congruent self-concepts generate more favorable ad and product evaluations when participants are in positive affective states as opposed to neutral affective states. Moreover, this study demonstrates that the relative influence of hedonic ad appeals and utilitarian ad appeals on brand evaluations is a function of participants’ affective states, as well as the congruency of image portrayals in the hedonic ad with participants’ self-concepts.

The two most dominant types of advertising appeals are believed to be the hedonic (value expressive or image) appeal and the utilitarian (functional) appeal (Johar & Sirgy, 1991; Snyder & DeBono, 1985). However, past literature does not provide sufficient information regarding how different contextual factors may affect the influence of different ad appeals on brand evaluations. What is better known is that, for a product that provides mainly hedonic satisfaction, a hedonic ad appeal is more persuasive, whereas for a product that is primarily evaluated on the basis of its functional attributes, a utilitarian ad appeal is more effective (Rossiter & Percy, 1987). Unfortunately, there has been a notable lack of attention paid to the question of which type of ad appeal is more effective for a dual-function product, one that offers hedonic satisfaction in addition to fulfilling utilitarian functions. This study, therefore, will specifically explore the influence of hedonic ad appeals and utilitarian ad appeals in different contexts for a dual-function product.

Adaval (2001) has proposed that participants’ affective states may either confirm or disconfirm their responses to product-related information, thereby altering the weight of the piece of information that is being taken into account, a phenomenon known as the affect-confirmation effect. According to Adaval’s theorization, happy individuals may allocate more weight to favorable information than to unfavorable information when they make judgments, because the valence of the former is congruent with the individuals’ affective states and the valence of the latter is incongruent with their affective states. As Adaval’s affect-confirmation effect theory suggests, the argument that affective states encourage heavier weighting of hedonic product attributes will only hold true if the hedonic ad information generates favorable evaluations which are similar in valence to the participants’ affective states. It is important to note that literature examining the effectiveness of hedonic ad appeals from the self-congruency perspective has clearly suggested that the effectiveness of an ad appealing to user image is a function of the way participants perceive themselves on the same image dimension. To the extent that participants’ self-concepts are congruent with image portrayals in a hedonic ad, consumers will generate more positive affective responses. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that, under the condition in which positive affective states are induced, positive affective responses evoked by self-congruent ad messages will encourage affect-confirmation and bias participants’ evaluation of ads and brands positively.

Adaval (2001) has further demonstrated that affect-confirmation effects occur only when consumers base their product evaluations on hedonic criteria, (criteria that pertain to affective responses), not when they develop their product evaluations based on utilitarian criteria, (criteria that mainly concern product performance and are not directly linked to affective consequences). This study carries Adaval’s theory one step further by arguing that when both utilitarian and hedonic product information is available for a dual-function product, a product that can be judged either on the basis of its hedonotic qualities or its utilitarian functions, participants’ positive affective states can increase the relevancy of hedonic product information and thus alter the weight participants assign to hedonic messages when they evaluate the product. In addition, this study proposes, that the relative importance of hedonic ad appeals and utilitarian ad appeals in rendering judgmental influence on product evaluations also hinges on the congruency of the portrayed images with participants’ self-concepts. Yet, when the portrayed image is incongruent with participants’ self-concepts, participants are motivated to elaborate on messages. Therefore, their product beliefs and their evaluations of the utilitarian ad become important judgmental inputs for brand evaluations.

HEDONIC VS. UTILITARIAN AD APPEALS

Advertising appeals can generally be categorized as either hedonic (image or value-expressive) or utilitarian (functional) appeals (Johar & Sirgy, 1991; Snyder & DeBono, 1985). The hedonic ad appeal involves building a personality for the product, from which consumers may project images, such as the values and lifestyles of product users (Johar & Sirgy 1991; Snyder & DeBono 1985). In clear contrast, the utilitarian ad appeal explicitly addresses product attributes or focuses on product quality claims (Johar & Sirgy, 1991; Snyder & DeBono, 1985).

Past literature has indicated that the effectiveness of hedonic and utilitarian ad appeals is moderated by other factors. For example, a product’s inherent characteristics determine if it is effective to employ either a hedonic or utilitarian appeal. A match between product characteristics and ad appeal has been shown to generate more favorable responses (Davis & Lennon, 1989; Rossiter & Percy, 1987). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that the effectiveness of hedonic appeals and utilitarian appeals is a function of individual differences, such as participants’ genders (Covell, Dion, & Dion, 1994), their levels of self-monitoring (DeBono & Packer, 1991; Snyder & DeBono, 1985) and their levels of control orientations (Zuckerman, Gioioso & Tellini, 1988). In a similar vein, this study argues that the effectiveness of hedonic appeals and utilitarian appeals is determined by participants’ affective states.

AFFECT CONFIRMATION EFFECTS

Past research has shown that mood has a direct influence on product judgments in that a positive affective state will generate more favorable product evaluations than a negative or neutral affective state (Gorn, Goldberg & Basu, 1993; Pham, 1998). It has also been suggested that mood can render an indirect impact on product judgments through its influence on the relative weight allocated to specific information (Adaval, 2001). Adaval proposes an affect-confirmation process to argue that, individuals’ affective states may either confirm or disconfirm their responses to a piece of product-related information, thereby altering the weight that the
piece of information is allocated. In Adaval’s theorization, individuals are sometimes confused as to the sources of their affective states and, therefore, when the valence of their affective states and their perceptions of product information is similar, they will be more confident that their perceptions of the product information are correct and will then increase the weight of this information in their product judgments.

**MOOD AND THE RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF HEDONIC AND UTILITARIAN APPEALS**

Adaval (2001) has reasoned that affect-confirmation effects are mainly limited to judgments that are based on affect. Drawing upon the distinctions between the two general types of product criteria, hedonic and utilitarian, Adaval has argued that evaluating products on the basis of hedonic criteria involves more affective responses, whereas evaluating products on the basis of utilitarian criteria concerns the products’ ability to perform and does not pertain to affective responses. Therefore, affect-confirmation effects are more likely to emerge in the former context than in the latter. Indeed, Adaval’s study has demonstrated that affect-confirmation effects occur only when consumers develop their product evaluations based on hedonic criteria, not when consumers base their product evaluations on utilitarian criteria.

Similarly, a hedonic ad appeal is characterized by its focus on promoting attractive user portrayals, thus it mainly appeals to affective responses. Utilitarian ad appeals, on the other hand, emphasize specific product attributes and do not pertain to any affective reactions directly. Extending Adaval’s (2001) argument, it is reasonable to propose that, in an ad-viewing context in which a consumer may be exposed to both hedonic and utilitarian ad appeals for the same dual-function product, the relative importance of the different appeals in determining brand evaluations will be a function of participants’ affective states. In positive affective states, hedonic ad messages may be more relevant and, therefore, the relative importance of hedonic ad messages to utilitarian ad messages on brand evaluations may be enhanced, whereas in neutral affective states, participants’ responses to hedonic ad messages and utilitarian ad messages should both equally be taken into account in determining brand evaluations.

However, it is important to note that hedonic ad appeals, aimed at evoking positive affective states, sometimes may not produce the expected positive emotional responses. The hedonic ad appeal has been closely associated with the research tradition that explores the interaction between self-concepts and ad portrayals (Johar & Sirgy, 1991). Most importantly, this line of literature suggests that the effectiveness of hedonic ad messages is a function of the congruence between individuals’ self-concepts and portrayed product images. To the extent that ad-portrayed product images are congruent with their self-concepts, individuals will generate more positive responses (Chang, 2000). Therefore, the assumed valence congruency between positive affective states and hedonic ad appeals, the underlying driving force of Adaval’s (2001) affect-confirmation process, may not exist when hedonic appeals depict product users that are incongruent with the images that participants project for themselves.

**HEDONIC AD APPEALS AND SELF-CONGRUENCY EFFECTS**

The underlying assumption of self-congruency research in consumer behavior lies in the symbolic functions of consumption. This line of research suggests that consumers maintain or enhance their self-images through product consumption (Sentis & Markus, 1986). Possessing self-congruent products serves as a way to complete the self-enhancement functions of consumption. As a result, products that appeal to self-congruent images are favored to products with self-incongruent images (Sirgy, 1982). Moreover, advertising that portrays self-congruent images is also rated more positively than advertising that depicts self-incongruent images (Hong & Zinkhan, 1995). Specifically, it has been established that self-congruent ad messages generate more positive affective responses and higher levels of self-referencing, thereby enhancing ad and brand evaluations (Chang, 2000).

When different dimensions of self-concepts are explored, evidence converges toward the same conclusion suggesting the superiority of ads that depict self-congruent image portrayals to ads that portray self-incongruent portrayals. For example, Jaffe (1994) has indicated that feminine participants and masculine participants respond in divergent ways to ads with different positioning strategies, with a masculine positioning strategy appealing more effectively to masculine participants and a feminine positioning strategy appealing more effectively to feminine participants. Similarly, Chang (2000) has demonstrated that feminine participants generate more positive emotional responses to ads depicting feminine users than to those with masculine users. Additionally, supportive findings regarding ad-self-congruency effects have been documented regarding personality differences (Hong & Zinkhan, 1995) and values (Leach & Liu, 1998; Wang & Mowen, 1997).

The reviewed evidence suggests that hedonic appeals depicting product users with different profiles may not always lead to positive affective states unless the portrayals are consistent with individuals’ self-images. Additionally, it is important to note that recent research has posited that the interaction between self-concepts and ad portrayals depicted in hedonic ads may hinge on other factors. Interestingly, individuals’ affective states are factors that have been shown to moderate the influence of the interaction between self-concepts and ad messages on individuals’ evaluations of the advertised brands.

**MOOD AND SELF-CONGRUENCY EFFECTS**

As reviewed earlier, an individual’s positive affective state can enhance his/her reliance on hedonic ad messages, when the affect-confirmation effect occurs. Similarly, in self-congruency literature, Chang (2002) has demonstrated that participants’ affective states moderate the influence of ad and self-concept congruency. When participants are in positive affective states, participants respond to ad messages in a selective way, with self-congruent messages generating more favorable ad evaluations and brand attitudes. Conversely, when participants are in negative affective states, the interaction effect between self-images and ad portrayals does not emerge. Chang argues that when participants are in positive affective states, they are less motivated to process information in analytical ways. Due to a lack of motivation, they engage in peripheral route processing and rely on ad-self-congruency as a cue for developing their brand evaluations. But, when participants are in negative affective states, they are motivated to process information in detail and to elaborate on ad messages to a greater degree, which reduces the influence of ad-self-congruency.

Findings in the past literature seem to reach the same conclusion: Affective states can determine the degree to which participants rely on ad-self-congruency information, information that appeals to hedonic values and involves affective responses. When participants are happy, they are more likely to rely on hedonic ad messages for brand judgments. As a result, whether or not the image portrayals are congruent with their self-images will render judgmental influence on ad and brand evaluations. In addition, it is important to note that Chang’s (2002) investigation directly com-
pares participants’ responses in positive affective states to those in negative affective states. Given that ad viewers, when not provoked by program context, editorial content, or preceding ads, may likely be in neutral affective states, it is important to directly include neutral affective states in the investigation. In partial replication of Chang (2002), this study will test whether or not the level of congruency between ad portrayals and self-concepts affects product evaluations when participants are in positive affective states as opposed to neutral affective states.

H1: When participants are in positive affective states, the interaction between ad appeals and self-concepts will significantly determine their attitudes toward the hedonic ad. In contrast, when participants are in neutral affective states, the interaction between ad appeals and self-concepts will not affect their attitudes toward the hedonic ad.

H2: When participants are in positive affective states, the interaction between ad appeals and self-images will significantly determine their product evaluations. In contrast, when participants are in neutral affective states, the interaction between ad appeals and self-images will not affect their brand evaluations.

Mood, Self-Congruency and the Relative Influence of Hedonic Ads and Utilitarian Ads

This study proposes that when participants are in positive affective states, they are more likely to rely on their ad attitudes toward hedonic ads than their ad attitudes toward utilitarian ads to develop their brand evaluations. Moreover, as reviewed earlier, self-congruency literature argues that hedonic ad appeals may not generate more favorable affective responses unless featured user portrayals are congruent with individuals’ self-concepts. Therefore, when participants are in a positive affective state where user portrayals are congruent with self-concepts, affect confirmation may occur and participants will feel confident about their affective responses. As a result, participants’ attitude toward hedonic ads may be diagnostic for brand judgments making them more likely to exert dominating influence on brand evaluations. They are thus less likely to take their product beliefs or attitudes toward the utilitarian ad into account.

H3: When participants are in positive affective states and ad portrayals are congruent with their self-concepts, participants’ attitudes toward the hedonic ad will significantly determine their brand evaluations, but their attitudes toward the utilitarian ad will not significantly affect their brand evaluations.

In clear contrast, message incongruency has been shown to increase participants’ motivation to process messages and thus override the lack of motivation invoked by positive affective states (Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991). For example, within the heuristic-systematic model, Maheswaran and Chaiken have indicated that product incongruent information encourages systematic processing among participants, who are not otherwise motivated to do so. Building upon the same framework as Maheswaran and Chaiken, Jain and Maheswaran (2000) have further demonstrated that inconsistent information is processed more systematically in comparison to consistent information. Therefore, this study proposes that incongruency will motivate happy participants to process information. As a result, even when participants’ positive affective states encourage their reliance on their hedonic attitudes as judgmental inputs, they may still be motivated to take their product beliefs, as well as their attitudes toward utilitarian ads, into account when evaluating the advertised products.

H4: When participants are in positive affective states and ad portrayals are incongruent with their self-concepts, participants’ brand evaluations will be determined by their attitudes toward the hedonic ad and the utilitarian ad, as well as their product beliefs generated from ad exposure.

Conversely, when participants are in neutral affective states, bias toward hedonic ad attitudes as judgmental inputs may not occur. Therefore, participants will only take their attitudes toward hedonic ad messages into account when the portrayed images are congruent with participants’ self-concepts. In addition, participants in neutral affective states, whose motivation to elaborate on messages is not reduced by their affective states as are happy participants’ (Schwarz, 1990; Schwarz & Bless, 1991), will be able to elaborate on messages in both hedonic and utilitarian ads. Therefore, participants’ product beliefs, as well as their attitudes toward hedonic ads and utilitarian ads, will together affect their evaluations of advertised brands.

H5: When participants are in neutral affective states and ad portrayals are congruent with their self-images, participants’ brand evaluations will be determined by their attitudes toward both the hedonic ad and the utilitarian ad, as well as their product beliefs.

On the contrary, when hedonic ads portray images that are incongruent with participants’ self-concepts, they may not provide additional diagnostic information for participants’ brand evaluations and, therefore, participants’ attitudes toward hedonic ads will not generate significant influence on their brand evaluations. Rather, participants’ brand evaluations will be formed mainly on the basis of their product beliefs and their attitudes toward utilitarian ads, which provide relatively more diagnostic information for their brand evaluations.

H6: When participants are in neutral affective states and ad portrayals are incongruent with their self-concepts, participants’ brand evaluations will be determined by their product beliefs and their attitudes toward the utilitarian ad.

Methodology

Design

This study was a two-factor experimental design. The two manipulated factors were: ad difference (two ad user profiles: feminine vs. non-feminine) and affective states (two levels: positive vs. neutral). In addition, participants were further categorized into high feminine groups and low feminine groups. Given that self-concepts are multi-dimensional (Markus & Wurf, 1987), this study will explicitly focus on one dimension of self-concept, namely, femininity.

Product Selection

As noted earlier, a product can serve hedonic functions or utilitarian functions (Batra & Ahtola, 1990; Mano & Oliver, 1993). This study will only focus on products that can provide both hedonic and utilitarian satisfaction for consumers. A pretest (N=20)
was conducted to select a product that college students were likely
to purchase, and also could be evaluated both on hedonic and
utilitarian criteria. As a result of the pretest, sneakers were chosen
to be the product.

In addition, participants in the study were asked the degree to
which they agreed with two pairs of two statements describing their
sneaker purchase behaviors. The first two items were designed to
measure the hedonic element of the product: “When purchasing
sneakers, I will select those that fit my image” and “when purchas-
ing sneakers, I will select those that my friends will feel jealous of.”
The two items were significantly correlated, Pearson’s \( R=0.40, \)
\( p=.01 \), and, therefore, were summed and averaged to represent the
hedonic element. The other two items were designed to capture the
utilitarian element of the product: “When purchasing sneakers, I
will consider product quality” and “when purchasing sneakers, I
will take product functions into account.” These two items were
also significantly correlated, Pearson’s \( R=0.55, p=.01 \), and, conse-
quently summed and averaged to represent the utilitarian element.
A \( t \) test indicated that, as expected, the hedonic functions and
utilitarian functions of sneakers did not differ in importance, \( t \)
(165)=1.03, \( p=.31 \), \( M_{\text{hedonic}}=5.27 \), \( M_{\text{utilitarian}}=5.39 \).

Stimuli

Professionals working at Ogilvy & Mather Ad Agency in
Taipei created stimuli ads. Utilitarian ads contained specific prod-
uct attribute information, such as weight, breathability and fit.
Visuals and layouts were similar for ads with different user portray-
als. All ads used in this study were pre-tested to ensure that message
manipulations would be successful. To improve external validity,
the ads were inserted between real filler ads. Moreover, a fictitious
brand was used to reduce any possible confounding influence of
brand familiarity.

Participants

One hundred and sixty-seven participants were recruited from
the campus of a college in a metropolitan area of Taiwan. Forty-nine
percent of the participants were male. All of the scales used in the
study were translated into Chinese following Brislin’s (1987)
translation and translation-back procedure.

Procedures

At the beginning of the experiment, participants assigned to
the positive affective state condition were told that the study session
was composed of three parts. Participants were informed that the
first part was a pretest for the researcher’s next project, which would
explore the effectiveness of television commercials. In order to
create the scripts for these commercials for use in the future study,
the participants were asked to provide the researcher with stories of
happy life events they had experienced.

The second part of the study started with participants’ ratings
of their affective states. Then the second coordinator told them that
this part of the study was designed to examine the effects of various
ad formats or techniques on viewers’ information processing, a
false story designed to camouflage the purposes of the study from
the participants. Next, participants read a filler ad followed by two
stimuli ads for the same product, one using hedonic ad appeal and
the other employing utilitarian ad appeal. Finally, participants read
another filler ad. The order of the two ads was rotated. Given that
the order of ad presentation did not have any significant effect on
how participants evaluated the hedonic ad, \( F(1,166)=29, p=.05 \),
the utilitarian ad, \( F(1,166)=33, p=.07 \), or the brand, \( F(1,166)=1.19, \)
\( p=.28 \), responses from the two sequences were collapsed. After
reading the ads, participants provided their cognitive responses and
rated their perceptions of the user images in the ads, after which they
rated their ad and product attitudes.

At the beginning of the final part, participants were told that
this part of the study was a nation-wide survey designed to explore
college students’ values and lifestyles in Taiwan. They rated their
agreement with select items from Bem’s (1974) Sex Role Inventory
measuring their femininity, as well as other self-related scales.
Participants in the neutral affective state condition were told that
the study was composed of two short sessions, instead of three. They
started from the second session described for participants in the
positive affective state condition. After each group finished the
study, the coordinator provided a short debriefing.

Independent Variables

Affective States

Nineteen items were selected from the UWIST mood adjective
checklist (Matthews, Jones, & Chamberlain, 1990) to measure participants’
affective states. Participants rated their agreement with each item on a 19-item
7-point Likert scale. Factor analyses with varimax rotation generated four factors with eigen-values
larger than one. The first factor, with an eigen-value of 6.28,
accounted for 19.86% of the variance and was labeled “negative
emotions.” The second factor, with an eigen-value of 2.46 ac-
counted for 12.95% of the variance and was labeled “positive
emotions.” The third factor, with an eigen-value of 2.01, accounted for
10.59% of the variance and was labeled “passiveness.” Cronbach’s reliability alphas
for negative emotions, positive emotions, and passiveness were satisfactory at .84, .81, and .79 respectively. Additionally, the two
items in the calmness scale were significantly correlated, Pearson
\( R=0.67, p=.01 \). ANOVA indicated that participants in the positive
affective state condition had significantly higher ratings on the
subscale of positive emotions, \( F(1,165)=6.38, p<.01 \);
\( M_{\text{positive}}=4.77 \), \( M_{\text{neutral}}=4.32 \), than those in the neutral affective
state. Moreover, participants in the positive affective state condition generated significantly lower ratings on the subscale of
passiveness, \( F(1,165)=4.18, p<.04 \); \( M_{\text{positive}}=3.42 \), \( M_{\text{neutral}}=3.84 \),
than did those in the neutral affective state. However, participants
in the positive affective state condition and the neutral affective state condition did not differ in their ratings of negative emotions,
\( F(1,165)=.17, p=.68 \), and calmness, \( F(1,165)=.71, p=.40 \). There-
fore, the results of the manipulation checks were satisfactory.

Self Difference: Self-ratings on Femininity

Participants rated their agreement regarding whether or not the
items listed accurately described themselves. The 20 items were
selected from Bem’s (1974) Sex Role Inventory. Cronbach’s reli-
bility alpha for this subscale of femininity was satisfactory at .85.

Ad Difference: Feminine Ads vs. Non-feminine Ads

This study created hedonic ad appeals through the description
of users in the ads. Participants were exposed to ads containing
messages delineating ad characters with either feminine or non-
feminine values. Feminine items in Bem’s (1974) Sex Role Inven-
tory were employed as a manipulation check measure. Cronbach’s reliability alpha for this subscale was satisfactory at .91. ANOVA
indicated that users portrayed in the feminine ad received signif-
cantly higher ratings on femininity than did the characters depicted
in the non-feminine ad, \( F(1,167)=35.44, p<.01 \); \( M_{\text{feminine}}=4.77 \),
\( M_{\text{non-feminine}}=3.94 \). Therefore, the result of the manipulation
check was satisfactory.

Ad-self-congruency

Based on the two groups of individual differences and the two
groups of ad differences, participants were further categorized into
either the ad-self-congruent group or the ad-self-incongruent group. Specifically, high feminine participants assigned to read feminine ads and low feminine participants assigned to read non-feminine ads were categorized to be ad-self-congruent participants. On the other hand, feminine participants assigned to read non-feminine ads and low feminine participants assigned to read feminine ads were categorized to be ad-self-incongruent participants. In all, 79 participants were categorized in the ad-self-congruent group, with 50% of the participants being male. Eighty-eight participants were categorized in the ad-self-incongruent group, with 47% of the participants being male.

Dependent Measures

Multi-attribute Product Beliefs

A pretest of 20 participants was employed to determine the most important product attributes participants consider when purchasing sneakers. The six top attributes were: “color selection,” “durability,” “comfort,” “style,” “weight,” and “ease of putting on.” Participants in this study were asked to rate how important each of the six attributes was to them when selecting a pair of sneakers. Additionally, they were also asked to rate how likely it was that the advertised product had each of the six attributes. Multi-attribute product beliefs were estimated first by multiplying the importance rating by the likelihood rating for each attribute and then summing the scores of all six attributes.

Ad Attitude toward the Hedonic and the Utilitarian Ad

A 5-item 7-point Likert scale was used to measure participants’ attitudes toward the ads. The five items were adopted from Madden, Allen, & Twible (1988). Cronbach’s reliability alpha was deemed satisfactory at .91. The same scale was used to measure the utilitarian ad. Cronbach’s reliability alpha for ad attitude toward the utilitarian ad was deemed satisfactory at .88.

Brand Attitude

Brand attitudes were measured with a 5-item 7-point Likert scale. The items were adopted from Holbrook and Batra (1987) and Mitchell and Olson (1981). Cronbach’s reliability alpha for this scale was deemed satisfactory at .91.

Results and Analyses

To test H1, regression analyses first considered responses of participants in the positive affective state condition. When ad attitudes were regressed upon self-ratings on femininity, ad difference (dummy coded with the feminine ad being –1 and the non-feminine ad being 1), and the interaction between self difference and ad difference, $R^2$ was estimated at .30, $F(3, 84)=11.36, p=.01$. Results showed that only the self-difference by ad difference interaction was significant, $t=3.51, p=.01, \text{Beta}=.52$. In contrast, the impacts of self-difference, $t=29, p=.77, \text{Beta}=.04$, and ad difference, $t=15, p=.88, \text{Beta}=.02$, were not significant. When the three variables were regressed on participants’ ad attitudes in the neutral affective state condition, $R^2$ was estimated at .21, $F(3, 80)=6.89, p=.01$. As expected, the influence of the self by ad interaction was not significant, $t=3.33, p=.75, \text{Beta}=.26$. In addition, the impacts of self-difference, $t=90, p=.37, \text{Beta}=.42$ and ad difference, $t=85, p=.40, \text{Beta}=.44$, were not significant, either. Therefore, H1 was supported.

To test H2, regression analyses first considered responses of participants in the positive affective state condition. When brand evaluations were regressed upon self-ratings on femininity, ad difference, and the interaction between self and ad, $R^2$ was estimated at .31, $F(3, 84)=12.06, p=.01$. Results showed that only the influence of the self by ad interaction was significant, $t=2.52, p=.01, \text{Beta}=.37$. In the influences of self-difference, $t=1.87, p=.07, \text{Beta}=.25$, and ad difference, $t=1.40, p=.17, \text{Beta}=.16$, were not significant. When the three variables were regressed on participants’ brand evaluations in the neutral affective state condition, $R^2$ was estimated at .20, $F(3, 80)=6.31, p=.01$. As expected, the influence of the self by ad interaction was not significant, $t=1.58, p=12, \text{Beta}=.29$. In addition, the impacts of self-difference, $t=96, p=.34, \text{Beta}=.17$, and ad difference, $t=1.04, p=.97, \text{Beta}=.01$, were not significant, either. H2 was thus supported.

Regression analyses were conducted to test H3. When brand evaluations were regressed upon attitudes toward the hedonic ad, the utilitarian ad, and product beliefs, $R^2$ was estimated at .45, $F(3, 40)=10.25, p=.01$. As expected, only attitude toward the hedonic ad was significant, $t=3.23, p=.01, \text{Beta}=.45$. Participants’ attitudes toward the utilitarian ad, $t=1.73, p=.09, \text{Beta}=.22$, and their product beliefs did not exert significant influence on brand evaluations, $t=1.50, p=.14, \text{Beta}=.20$. Therefore, H3 was supported.

Regression analyses were conducted to test H4. When brand evaluations were regressed upon attitudes toward the hedonic ad, the utilitarian ad, and product beliefs, $R^2$ was estimated at .62, $F(3, 41)=20.85, p=.01$. As expected, all three variables had significant influence on brand evaluations (for attitude toward the hedonic ad, $t=3.11, p=.01, \text{Beta}=.32$; for attitude toward the utilitarian ad, $t=4.57, p=.01, \text{Beta}=.51$; for product beliefs, $t=2.51, p=.02, \text{Beta}=.27$. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was supported.

For H5, results indicated that when brand evaluations were regressed upon attitudes toward the hedonic ad, the utilitarian ad, and product beliefs, $R^2$ was estimated at .82, $F(3, 33)=46.56, p=.01$. As expected, all three variables had significant influence on brand evaluations (for attitude toward the hedonic ad, $t=6.70, p=.01, \text{Beta}=.61$; for attitude toward the utilitarian ad, $t=3.15, p=.01, \text{Beta}=.28$; for product beliefs, $t=2.35, p=.03, \text{Beta}=.21$. Therefore, H5 was supported.

For H6, results showed that when brand evaluations were regressed upon attitudes toward the hedonic ad, the utilitarian ad, and product beliefs, $R^2$ was estimated at .36, $F(3, 43)=7.58, p=.01$. As expected, the influence of attitude toward the utilitarian ad was significant, $t=3.15, p=.01, \text{Beta}=.43$, whereas attitude toward the hedonic ad was not significant, $t=1.89, p=.07, \text{Beta}=.27$. However, inconsistent with expectation, the influence of product beliefs was not significant, $t=.59, p=.56, \text{Beta}=.09$. Therefore, in terms of the reduced influence of the hedonic ad, findings were supportive.

DISCUSSION

Findings in this study indicate that positive affective states encouraged participants to evaluate the advertised product on the basis of their attitudes toward the hedonic ad. As a result, whether or not the hedonic ad portrayed images congruent with participants’ self-concepts significantly contributed to their evaluations of the ad and the advertised brand. In contrast, when participants were in neutral affective states, self-congruity did not affect their ad and brand evaluations.

Moreover, participants’ affective states can bias their brand evaluation process. When participants are in a positive affective state, their attitudes toward the hedonic ad messages are deemed important. Yet, the likelihood that affective states may increase the importance of hedonic product information is implicated by the congruency of portrayed product images in hedonic ads with participants’ self-concepts. As a result, when they were in a positive affective state and the portrayed ad images were congruent with their self-concepts, attitudes toward hedonic ads helped determine brand judgments and, therefore, exerted significant influence on brand evaluations. The findings were in line with Adaval’s (2001) affect-confirmation effect theory, in that positive affective states confirmed the positive affective responses generated by self-congruent hedonic ad messages and increased the influence of the
hedonic ad on brand evaluations. On the contrary, when happy participants processed self-incongruent ad messages, they were motivated to elaborate on messages and to take their product beliefs, as well as their attitudes toward the utilitarian ads, into account.

When neutral participants processed self-congruent ad messages, as expected, participants’ product beliefs, developed from messages in the utilitarian ad, together with their attitudes toward the hedonic ad and the utilitarian ad, influenced their brand evaluations given all the information was relevant for brand judgments. However, inconsistent with expectations, under the self-incongruent condition, neutral participants did not take their product beliefs into account. It is likely that ad messages describing a brand with self-incongruent images might be treated as being less credible, and thus participants were less likely to develop product beliefs based on its ad information.

Findings of this study should be discussed within its limitations. For example, the fact that participants in the neutral mood did not engage in the first phase of the study might introduce unnecessary confounding influences to the findings. Nevertheless, findings of this study still have important implications for marketers. It is common for advertisers to use mixed ad strategies, employing hedonic ad appeals for television commercials and introducing product attributes in print advertisements. Therefore, findings of this study can help marketers develop more effective media planning. For example, when running a hedonic television spot, marketers should consider selecting a humorous or warm-hearted program that can evoke positive affective states, in order to enhance the effectiveness of hedonic ad appeals. Conversely, to help readers focus on product attributes, media planners should select a neutral editorial context for an attribute-focused print ad.

REFERENCES


