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Nostalgia Advertisements: a Content Analysis

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The authors conduct a content analysis of 2,354 advertisements drawn from popular magazines in 2004 to determine the use of nostalgia as a creative tactic. Nostalgia is defined as a bittersweet emotional state comprised of many discrete emotions produced by reflection on things (objects, persons, experiences, ideas) associated with an idealized past. Nostalgic ads were categorized into three distinct types: Actual, Borrowed and Classic. Results indicate the use of nostalgia is less than four percent ($n = 88$) of the sampled ads with the predominant type being Borrowed Nostalgia (93%, $n = 82$).

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management concerns that would primarily influence men. Specifically, a gender-typed color was chosen that was expected to be inconsistent with the image most men would want to create. Supporting this prediction, men liked the pink MP3 player less and consequently bid less than half what they offered for a functionally identical black player. In contrast, women showed no aversion to the pink player, presumably because they were not concerned about the impression it would convey. Future research will examine the influence of impression management goals on product choice and the nature of the specific impressions consumers wish to avoid or convey.

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Nostalgia Advertisements: A Content Analysis

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Extended Abstract

Background. Very little work has been done on the use of nostalgia as an advertising tactic. Holbrook and Schindler note that "nostalgia has received relatively little attention from academicians in general and from scholars devoted to the study of consumer research in particular" (1991, p. 330). Research on nostalgia is now in its infancy and has focused on nostalgia proneness (Holbrook, 1993), the emotions produced by nostalgic advertisements (Holak and Havlena, 1998), and the consequences of its use in advertising (e.g., attitudes toward the ad, brand, etc.; Muehling and Sprott, 2004; Pascal et al., 2002). The research has shown that nostalgia preferences occur in a wide range of product categories (Schindler and Holbrook, 2003), that advertisements with a nostalgic theme are capable of producing nostalgic reflections (Muehling and Sprott, 2004), and that nostalgic ads create more positive attitudes toward the ad and the brand (Muehling and Sprott, 2004; Pascal et al., 2002). However, none of the research has actually considered the incidence of nostalgia cues in print advertisement. Our purpose is to extend the current research in this area by reviewing the actual occurrence of nostalgia-themed ads used in popular magazines.

A variety of definitions of nostalgia exist in the literature. We borrow from a number of these (Holbrook and Schindler, 1991; Hirsch, 1992; Baker and Kennedy, 1994; Holak and Havlena, 1998) in defining *nostalgia* as a bittersweet emotional state comprised of many discrete emotions produced by reflection on things (objects, persons, experiences, ideas) associated with an idealized past. This definition was used in classifying ads that used a nostalgia appeal from those that were not.

Method. Using the *Top 100 ABC Total Paid Circulation* list of magazines for 2004, the authors distinguished ten different categories of magazines. The two most popular magazines from each category were selected. Two issues from 2004 were then randomly selected and reviewed. A total of 40 magazines were included in the current analysis. Two judges reviewed advertisements in the magazines looking for nostalgia ads one-third of a page or larger.

Havlena and Holak (1991) categorized nostalgia products and advertisements into two categories: (1) products or ads directly from the past and (2) new products or messages that "create a 'period' feeling" (p. 323). We adapted this framework in distinguishing the use of nostalgia in advertisements from that of products. Each ad was reviewed in detail to determine how nostalgia was being used. Three types of nostalgia were identified: Actual Nostalgia, Borrowed Nostalgia, and Classic Nostalgia.

Actual Nostalgia maps directly onto Havlena and Holak's first category, and is defined as the use of nostalgia for products from or relating to the time period from which the nostalgia was taken. For example, advertisements promoting CD's as "A Goldmine of Musical Memories" or movies described as "Timeless Classics" would be categorized as Actual Nostalgia. Havlena and Holak's second category is split into two different uses of nostalgia, borrowed and classic. **Borrowed Nostalgia** is defined as the use of nostalgia for current or modern-day products. For instance, Johnson and Johnson's use of black and white photos depicting a mother and child drawing together at the kitchen table with other crayon drawings hanging on the refrigerator in the background would be categorized in this type of nostalgia. **Classic Nostalgia** is defined as the use of nostalgia for modern products using old advertisements or memories for the same products from the past. An example of this is Jack Daniel's use of an old advertisement and pictures of their old distillery and trucks in a current ad.

Results. Of the 2,354 ads reviewed, a total of 88 were identified as using a nostalgia theme. Interjudge reliability, using the Perrault and Leigh (1989) measure, showed agreement of .979. The use of the three types of nostalgia varied little, with borrowed nostalgia being

the most common type used, 93.2% or 82 ads (interjudge reliability=.99), and actual and classic nostalgia being far less used, with 5.7% (5 ads) and 1.1% (1 ad), respectively.

Our results also showed that the magazine categories of Family and Home & Garden were the two most popular types of magazines for nostalgia ads with 21 and 19 ads respectively. Also, the results indicate that nostalgia ads appear in a wide variety of product categories, from cars to cell phones, but most often in advertisements for consumable goods. Nostalgia ads were predominantly visual (86.3%, n=76). Far fewer of the ads combined visual with copy that included nostalgic statements. The ads in the actual and classic nostalgia categories all combined visual and copy (100%, n=6), while only 6 ads in the borrowed nostalgia category used both (7.3%).

A number of conclusions are drawn from this study. First, while research has been done about the effect of nostalgia ads on consumers, none has actually done a content analysis on the frequency of nostalgia in print ads. While nostalgic ads are not as common in print as was found for guilt appeals (Huhmann and Brotherton, 1997), previous research shows that the use of nostalgia has a number of practical implications for marketers including more favorable attitudes toward the ad and brand (Muehling and Sprott, 2004; Pascal et al., 2002), as well as increased intentions to purchase the product (Pascal et al., 2002). Given the ramifications of the tactical use of nostalgia, it is surprising that the actual incidence of ads using nostalgia is so small.

Previous research showed that the use of nostalgia is effective; the current research indicates that nostalgia is not a method used widely in print advertising. Further research can be done to show how nostalgia works in the ad, determining which type of nostalgia (actual, borrowed or classic) and which mode (visual, copy, or both) is most effective. Borrowed nostalgia appeared most often in our research, but that does not indicate it is the most effective. Lastly, research could ascertain whether nostalgic ads are more effective for certain product classes or in certain types of magazines.

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The Impact of Information Format on Consumer Search Order and Choice in an Online Setting

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Extended Abstract

Consumers are having more control over the information flow on the Internet, which helps them to find information that better matches their preferences and be more confident in their judgments (Ariely 2000). However, it is also recognized that the information on the Internet is overloaded and highly manipulative, which can largely influence consumer information search and decision making. For example, research shows that the background picture and color of a web page can influence both novice and expert consumers' choice and such an effect is mediated by the search behavior for novice consumers (Mandel and Johnson 2002).

This research builds on the literature of online consumer information search and preference construction and further investigates how online information presentation format influences consumer search order and choice. The objectives of this research is to examine (1) how attributes presented in digital versus non-digital format and salient versus non-salient format influence consumers' search order of attribute and alternative information, and (2) how the search order affects consumer choice.

Built on Lal and Sarvary's (1999) definition of digital versus non-digital attribute, we consider digital attribute information as information that is presented by numbers, scales, or categories; whereas non-digital attribute information is presented by detailed description. It is much easier and faster to examine digital attribute information. Consumers can easily apply a cut-off point on digital

attribute information to quickly screen all the alternatives. They can even use digital attribute information to make inferences about non-digital attribute information if they perceive there is certain correlation among the attributes (Kardes et al. 2004). Thus, we expect

H1: Consumers tend to examine the same digital attribute information earlier when a product is presented by more non-digital (vs. digital) attribute information.

We argue that an attribute examined earlier (vs. later) will have more impact on choice and such an impact is over and above the effect of attribute importance. First, an attribute examined earlier is more likely to be used as a screening criterion to exclude other alternatives. Second, given consumers do not always examine all the attributes, an attribute examined earlier tend to be accessed more frequently. This will make the attribute more accessible in the memory, which increases its impact on choice. Therefore, we predict

H2: Consumers' tendency to search the same digital attribute information earlier when a product is presented by more non-digital (vs. digital) attribute information is likely to increase the impact of that digital attribute information on choice.

Consumers' need for cognitive closure (NFCC) may moderate the hypothesized effect. NFCC relates to consumers' motivation for information processing and judgment (Webster and Kruglanski 1994). It refers to individuals' desire for definite knowledge, thus avoiding confusion or ambiguity. Individuals with high NFCC tend to reach a conclusion quickly and are reluctant to process further information (Kruglanski and Webster 1996). Therefore, we hypothesize that

H3: The impact of digital attribute information on choice is stronger for consumers with high (vs. low) NFCC.

Visually salient information can be created by increasing the object's size and contrast (Janiszewski 1998). It is much faster and easier for consumers to locate and pay attention to visually salient information (e.g., Janiszewski 1998). It is also easier for consumers to visually screen and sort all the alternatives according to the visually salient attribute. Therefore, we predict that consumers tend to examine alternatives with higher values on the visually salient attribute earlier. They will examine alternatives with lower values on the visually salient attribute only when they are not satisfied with the alternatives examined earlier.

H4: Consumers tend to examine alternatives with higher values on the visually salient attribute earlier.

It is found that the amount of attention focused on an attribute directly affects its importance (MacKenzie 1986). Hence, visually salient attribute will receive higher importance in choice. In addition, as consumers process higher values of the visually salient attribute much earlier and more often in the search, they are more likely to anchor on those values and perceive choosing alternatives with lower values on the visually salient attribute as a loss. Given consumers' general tendency of loss aversion, we predict that consumers will prefer the alternatives examined earlier, i.e., those with higher values on the visually salient attribute. Therefore, we expect

H5: Consumers' tendency to examine alternatives with higher values on the visually salient attribute is likely to increase the impact of the visually salient attribute on choice.

Sorting alternatives according to the visually non-salient attribute may reduce such an effect. When alternatives are sorted by the visually non-salient attribute, that attribute will distract consumers' attention and change consumers' search order. Hence, we hypothesize that

H6: The impact of the visually salient attribute on choice is stronger when alternatives are not sorted by a non-salient attribute.

We propose to conduct two online experiments to test our hypotheses. Results from our pretest show that participants tend to examine the same digital attribute information earlier when there is more non-digital (vs. non-digital) attribute information. Study 1 focuses on the impact of digital attribute information on choice and study 2 examines the influence of the visually salient attribute on choice.

Our research adds to the literature of online consumer information search and preference construction by showing when digital attribute information can have more impact on choice and how visually salient attribute influences consumer preference. This research also shows the underlying processes of these effects: consumers' search order for attribute and alternative information. Finally, this research discusses how individual difference and information organization may moderate these effects.

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