The Use of Humor in Promoting Healthy Eating and Better Communication in Parent-Child Dyads and the Moderating Role of Attachment: a Web-Related Intervention

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The objective of this research is to make web nutrition information more effective by incorporating humor appeals to make the information more enticing and more likely to be fully explored. We expect humor to increase fruits and vegetable consumptions in parent-child dyads in a web-communication intervention. We also expect attachment to be a major mediating variable for humor effects. To verify our funding a study with 200 child-parent dyads was conducted. Results for this study are still at the analysis stage, but they seem promising to bridge the gap between humor appeal and web-interventions.

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should be more based on personal associations than in a control condition. Conversely, we expect a priming of extrapersonal associations to have a differential effect on novices such that their brand attitudes (as measured by the IAT and explicit scales) should be more based on personal associations than in a control condition.

Overall, we believe the present research project promises important insights for our understanding of the different influences consumers rely upon when constructing and reporting judgments about brands.

References

Impact of Value Aspirations, Age, and Gender on Television Viewing Connectedness among Preteens and Teens

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We examine the effect of three value aspirations (academic achievement, popularity and physical attractiveness) on connectedness with reality television. We find that both popularity and physical attractiveness are positively associated with connectedness. For males, popularity appears to be more strongly associated with connectedness that physical attractiveness. For females, teens who strive for popularity are more likely to be connected to reality TV; popularity is not associated with connectedness to reality TV for preteens. Girls who desire to be physically attractive are generally more likely to be connected to reality TV; however, this relationship becomes weaker with age.

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Background
Adopting a healthy lifestyle is paramount to reduce the incidence and impact of health problems, to better recover and cope with life stressors, and to improve quality of life. Because healthy diets rich in fruits and vegetables are part of a healthy lifestyle, they consequently contribute to better health and longevity. The objective of this research is to make web nutrition information more effective by incorporating humor appeals that render the information more enticing and more likely to be fully explored.

Humor is a fundamental ingredient of social communication and has been wildly used in ads throughout the world to improve persuasion outcomes such as attitudes, memory and behavior. The persuasiveness of humor has also been successful in educational and health settings. When neutral appeals are used to present a communication, components of the appeal are generally abstract and objective, in order to keep the focus of the viewer on processing and reasoning on the information content. Humor appeals, in contrast, are designed to trigger fun and other pleasant affective responses and thus can help individuals engage in healthier lifestyle behaviors, i.e. increased
vegetable and fruit consumption. Consequently, we hypothesize that child-parent dyads in the web-communication humor appeal will increase more their consumption of fruits and vegetables than their counterparts in the neutral appeal condition.

Nevertheless, individual differences may mediate the humor effectiveness of our web-communication intervention. Research showed that high masculinity individuals, i.e. more independent, forceful and dominant, have a distress-avoidant orientation, and, thus prefer humor appeals to neutral ones. Building upon these findings, we believe that attachment styles may mediate the effectiveness of humor appeals. According to attachment theory, interaction with significant others in times of stress facilitate the formation of a sense of attachment security. This sense of attachment is formed during childhood and guides responses to any distressful situation, such as preventative health behaviors. Specifically, individuals can be classified among three types of attachment styles. Secure attachment styles describe children that are strongly supported by their caregivers, who can acknowledge distress and turn to others for support. Avoidant attachment styles reflect children less supported by their caregivers, who faced rules restricting acknowledgement of distress and seeking of support. Anxious/ambivalent attachment styles develop from insensitive or inconsistent care giving and involve hyper-vigilance for negative affect. In this study, we hypothesize that humor appeal will be more effective for people with avoidant and anxious/ambivalent attachment styles as opposed to those with secure attachment styles because the former are not used to face the stressful situation.

Lastly, we expect humor to impact communication as well. Laughter, fun feeling and other responses typically associated with humor have been found to be the most contagious affective responses and to decrease tensions between individuals, thus enhancing communication effectiveness. Hence, we hypothesize that dyads in the humor appeal condition will have an enhanced communication that their counterparts in the neutral appeal condition.

Method

Design and Procedure:

In order to test our hypotheses, a nutritional web-intervention was developed called Marathon- Nutrition where type of appeal was manipulated. The Marathon-Nutrition website was created on the server of a major Canadian university using existing nutritional material developed by health Canada and the Canadian Produce Marketing Association.

This study required dyads of parents and children to participate in a virtual race aiming to increase their fruits and vegetable consumption. The entire study took place at home. There were 5 conditions in total (4 experimental and 1 control). The four experimental conditions followed the same 12-step template, step 1 and step 12 being pre- and post-questionnaires to assess the intervention. The intervention lasted a total of 6 weeks. Each of the remaining 10 sessions had a total duration of 25 minutes where the participants were 1) presented with an information blurb on the importance of eating healthy, 2) followed by simple tricks to increase fruit and vegetable consumption during the day, i.e. breakfast, dinner, snack, 3) and a short quiz. At the end of each session, participants fixed themselves as an objective to try a new fruit and a new vegetable.

The control condition only required participants to log in and complete the pre- and post-questionnaires at 6 weeks of interval. Meanwhile, the participants in this condition were provided with a list of nutrition websites and were invited to go on these websites in teams, i.e. parent/child dyads.

200 dyads, 400 participants in total, took part in this study. Participants were children between 8 and 12 years old and one of their parents. 3rd, 4th and 5th grade children were recruited from 31 French primary schools with a middle socio-economic status in a major Canadian city. Within each school, classes were randomly assigned to one of the 3 conditions: humor appeal, neutral appeal, or control.

Manipulations:

The humor appeal of the website was manipulated by varying the funniness of the virtual agent that guided the participants through the online content. Depending of the condition, i.e. high or low humor appeal, Yip, the virtual coach, introduced nutrition concepts in a funny or neutral way.

Measures:

The web strategies’ persuasion impact was estimated using primary outcome measures, i.e. the number of children’s daily servings of fruits and vegetables. The humor elements of the website were measured using the Attitude Towards the Brand and Ad scale adapted to children. The Romantic Attachment Scale adapted to reflect the child/parent relationship was used to measure attachment.

Conclusion and Discussion

Results analyses seem promising and are being completed at the present time.

We are confident that this study will identify the importance of well-known humor appeals in presenting information and increasing consumer fruits and vegetable consumption. It will further enrich the existing literature on the effects of humor and will help bridge the gap between peripheral communication appeals, i.e. humor, and healthy lifestyles, i.e. nutrition.

References


Effect of Country-of -Targeting on Product Evaluations

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There has been great deal of research examining the country-of-origin effect on product evaluations (Li and Wyer 1994; Maheswaran 1994) and its determinants (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000)The basic premise of the country of origin effect is that consumers categorize products and apply organized prior knowledge about the categories (schemas) to evaluate new products (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989; Sujan 1985). These categorizations and the application of prior knowledge is based on inferences. These inferences are based on whatever information is known about the product at that point rather than on product observation. . In the country of origin effect, one piece of information known when of making the evaluation is the country of origin. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the effect of another piece of information available to consumers when inferences are made, the perceived country of targeting (COT) of the product. We introduce this concept because, more and more, products sold in the U.S. have product information in different languages. 

We hypothesize that one piece of extrinsic information that consumers use to make inferences about the product is the language used on the product packaging.

Specifically, we hypothesize:

H1: When consumers are presented with product descriptions in English and another language, they form inferences about the targeted countries as being both the U.S. and the country that speaks the language seen on the package. .

The three products we selected (after pretesting) to test this hypothesis were a compact refrigerator, tortilla chips, and wine. These products were chosen for their expected country of origin effect and product familiarity. Color pictures of these three products with

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