ASSOCIATION FOR CONSUMER RESEARCH

How Media and Advertising Jointly Affect Ad Effectiveness

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Ad effectiveness could be affected by both the media context in which the ad is embedded and features of the ad itself. To date, the two issues have been studied as separate areas. But both media and ads have been studied recently in a similar way using the construct of transportation. Transportation refers to the extent to which consumers are emerged into the media context or the ad itself. Wang and Calder (2006) find that media context transportation reduces ad effectiveness if the ad is intrusive to the transportation experience, whereas Escalas (2004a, b) find that transportation into the ad itself increases ad effectiveness. This paper studies the transportation effect of both the media context and the ad itself, and demonstrates how they interactively affect ad effectiveness.

[to cite]:

Jing Wang and Bobby Calder (2008) ,"How Media and Advertising Jointly Affect Ad Effectiveness", in NA - Advances in Consumer Research Volume 35, eds. Angela Y. Lee and Dilip Soman, Duluth, MN : Association for Consumer Research, Pages: 1005-1006.

[url]:

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How Media and Advertising Jointly Affect Ad Effectiveness

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Advertising that appears in a media context can be affected by both consumers' experience with the media context and their experience with the ad itself. To date, the two issues have been studied separately. One line of research focuses on the media context effects and demonstrates that consumers' experience with the media context programs could affect ad effectiveness either positively or negatively. A second line of research studies consumers' experience with the ad itself and how that affects ad effectiveness. We look at both issues in our study and seek to show how consumers' experience with the media context interacts with their experience with the ad to affect an ads' ultimate effectiveness.

Many studies have looked at advertising context effects. Some of them show a positive effect (e.g., Anand and Sternthal 1992; Feltham and Arnold 1994) whereas others show a negative effect (e.g., Norris and Colman 1992; Soldow and Principe 1981). Rather than resolving the conflicting results, Wang and Calder (2006) propose a theory that predicts both a positive media context effect and a negative one. The authors argue that it is crucial to look at the relationship between the advertising and the media context that it's imbedded in. People come to media for its content and enjoy being transported into the media content. If the advertising is inserted in such a way that it is intrusive to consumers' media experience, a high level of media transportation leads to reduced ad effectiveness because of the ad intrusion. However, if advertising occurs without intruding on consumers' transportation experience with the media, this enjoyable experience enhances ad effectiveness. The authors also show that such transportation effects operate independently of another frequently studied construct—context involvement.

Consumers' experience with the ad itself could also affect ad effectiveness. Deighton, Romer, and McQueen (1989) find that more dramatic television commercials are processed differently from more argument oriented ones. More recently, Escalas (2004b) finds that narrative ad processing is positively correlated with brand attitudes and behavioral intentions. According to Escalas (2004a), a narratively structured ad increases ad effectiveness by connecting the ad to the self via narrative transportation.

In our research, we study both media context transportation and advertising transportation and examine how they jointly affect ad effectiveness. The study has a 2 (media context transportation: high vs. low) × 2 (advertising transportation: high vs. low) design. We manipulate both context transportation and advertising transportation by varying the narrative structure of each. Following Wang and Calder (2006), participants either read a story that has a linear chronological flow, or read another version of it where the chronological flow was broken. An ad for Chicago Tribune is inserted in the middle of the story at the climax for all participants.

The High Transportation Ad consists of three small cartoon pictures that together tell a story. The first picture shows a person lying on a couch, bored; the second picture features this person reading Chicago Tribune; and the third one shows the person enjoying a party. The three pictures are organized such that the antecedence and consequence of reading Chicago Tribune are clearly conveyed. In the Low Transportation Ad, we reordered the three pictures such that it started with the party picture, followed by the lying-on-the-couch picture and the reading-newspaper picture, in that order. We predict that disrupting the narrative flow of the story within the ad will reduce consumers' transportation experience with the advertising.

When transportation into the advertising was low, we replicated Wang and Calder's (2006) results. Participants who were highly transported into the media context had less favorable product attitude because the ad was perceived as intrusive. However, this negative media transportation effect on ad effectiveness disappeared when transportation into the advertising was high. Participants had equally favorable product attitude regardless of their media transportation experience.

Advertisers select popular media programs for their advertising. However, Wang and Calder (2006) showed that such placement could lead to reduced ad effectiveness. One way to offset the negative media transportation effect is to place advertising in a nonintrusive way (e.g., Study 1 in Wang and Calder 2006). Another is to improve the effectiveness of the ad itself. One way to achieve high ad effectiveness is to state the position in a narrative format so that consumers could be transported into the advertising. Such positive experience with the ad can compensate the negative media transportation effect on advertising.

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How Embarrassing: An Examination of the Sources of Consumer Embarrassment and the Role of Self-Awareness

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Recognizing the discomfort that many consumers experience while purchasing seemingly day-to-day products, websites such as www.shopinprivate.com offer customers a safe-haven from embarrassment. Such retail channels allow consumers to avoid the stares, questions, and comments they anticipate from other shoppers as they make their purchase of socially embarrassing products. However, the effects of consumer embarrassment extend beyond the obvious class of products such as condoms and laxatives. In fact, embarrassment in the consumption context is manifested in many other ways, impacting a host of industries, such as online dating, a $473 million industry, the weight-loss industry weighing in at $65 billion, and the plus-size clothing industry, estimated at $32 billion. Considering the widespread impact of consumer embarrassment, it is imperative to understand the causes of consumer embarrassment and also address possible ways to mitigate embarrassment in hopes of improving consumption decisions.

Though there have been a limited number studies that examine specific aspects of embarrassment (Dahl et al 1998, 2001), marketing has yet to avail a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of consumer embarrassment. Therefore, the goal of this paper is twofold- first, to examine the extent to which embarrassment, as identified in psychology literature, maps out onto the consumption context, and second, to identify and test the existence of factors that potentially affect consumer embarrassment. In study 1, an exploratory analysis reveals that the landscape of embarrassment in the consumption context might not entirely resemble that which was painted in psychology literature. Study 1 also serves to provide a better understanding of the situations in which consumers experience embarrassment and how they cope with it. Study 2 builds upon the findings of the first study to examine the effects of increased self-awareness on the purchase of socially embarrassing products.

In the extant psychology literature, authors have primarily reported the existence of two theoretical accounts of embarrassment- the social evaluation account (Miller and Leary, 1992; Miller, 1996) and the awkward interaction account (Parrott and Smith, 1991; Sabini et al, 2000; Silver et al, 1987). The former theoretical account posits that embarrassment is the result of a threat to one's desired social identity and belonging to a while the latter describes embarrassment as the result of a public disruption of a social performance. A third theoretical account, the loss of self-esteem account (Edelmann, 1987; Babcock, 1988), has received very little attention and appears to be somewhat discredited in psychology. According to this account, people feel embarrassed as a result of a disappointment with themselves, resulting in what researchers have dubbed a loss of situational self-esteem. This account holds that embarrassment might even be expressed privately, as people fail to act in accordance with their own standards.

The results of Study 1 (n=76), consisting of both scaled and open-ended items, indicate that in fact consumers have experienced all three forms of embarrassment in the consumption context. Surprisingly, although the psychology literature might have speculated otherwise, 77% of the survey respondents indicated experiencing a private embarrassment that might be best captured by the loss of self esteem account, with as many as 39% of all respondents stating that they had experienced this form of embarrassment somewhat frequently. In fact, 21% of all respondents indicated that this was the most commonly experienced form of embarrassment in a consumption context. Of the several examples of private embarrassment subjects provided were:

> *"I felt embarrassed when buying embarrassing self-help books online from Amazon.com"*
> *"I feel embarrassed when I try on a clothing that is a large size."*
> *"I felt embarrassed in looking for singles online."*

The results also indicated that a desire to maintain one's social identity, consistent with the social evaluation account, was a source of consumer embarrassment for respondents, with 53% saying that they had experienced this form of embarrassment somewhat frequently and 23% agreeing that it was the most commonly experienced form of embarrassment in consumption situations. The following excerpts highlight the validity of the social evaluation account for embarrassment in the marketplace:

> *"It's embarrassing to be seen shopping at a discount store like Marshalls or TJ Maxx. If I buy something from there I usually lie about where I got it."*
> *"Buying condoms or 'feminine products' is embarrassing."*

Lastly, the awkward interaction account of embarrassment found a great deal of support, with 78% of respondents agreeing that they had experienced this form of embarrassment somewhat frequently, and 56% stating that it was the most common form of embarrassment in consumption situations. Participants provided examples including knocking over product displays and breaking products because they did not know how to properly use them.

The results of study 1 not only helped to create a guideline for understanding how embarrassment is manifested in the marketplace, but also provided help in shaping study 2. Existing literature suggests that several individual level differences have been known to impact