The Moderate Effect of Consumer’S Brand Awareness on Attitude Change of Well-Known Brand

Jinsong Huang, Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, China
Ping Zhao, Tsinghua University, China
Raymond Liu, University of Massachusetts, Boston

Past ad researches seldom pay attention to heterogeneity in consumers of well-known brand. In this study, we split consumers of well-known brand into low and high brand awareness categories. The results show that 1) participants with low brand awareness change their attitudes from pre-ad to post-ad; 2) their brand attitude does significantly change only when they have low brand awareness and high message involvement; and 3) the brand attitude curve is S shape with segments of none brand awareness, low brand awareness and high brand awareness.

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Results and Discussion

Results from our model suggest that perceived behavioral control is an antecedent to attitude towards planning, as was proposed. Incorporation of the additional variables—death avoidance, age, and income provided further insight. There were negative relationships between death avoidance and perceived behavioral control as well as attitude toward funeral planning. Individuals may experience lack of control in planning because of an inability to come to terms with their own mortality. These sources of resistance may be due to death avoidance.

Age had a positive, direct effect on an individual’s level of perceived behavioral control and the relationship between age and attitude towards planning was partially mediated by perceived behavioral control. Although there was a positive relationship between age, perceived behavioral control, attitudes toward planning and intentions to engage in planning, it appears that an individual’s age does not interact with an individual’s level of anxiety about death. One explanation for this is that some older individuals do not feel “integrity,” or a sense that their life has been meaningful and worthwhile. A lack of integrity could mean that individuals find it uncomfortable contemplating their own mortality and considering funeral planning, regardless of their age.

There was also not the predicted direct relationship between income and perceived behavioral control. This may be due to the fact that discretionary income, rather than gross income, has more impact on an individuals’ perception of available resources to engage in funeral planning. Significant (and positive) relationships were found between attitude toward funeral planning and intentions to engage in funeral planning and subjective norms and intentions to engage in funeral planning. Additionally, partial support was found for all three mediating relationships proposed.

Systematic consumer research is needed to help in understanding the consumer decision making process in this unique product category. Our findings provide insight for transformative consumer research as well as social marketing efforts that might help in encouraging consumers to initiate dialogue about end of life preferences. In our study, we found that funeral planning might be subject to control factors such as money or psychological variables related to an individual’s attitude about death. We also found that the subjective norm construct was significantly and highly related to intentions to plan. Historically, the subjective norm has been found to be a weak predictor of intentions (Azjen 1991). The relative importance of subjective norms or “important others” in funeral planning behavior may provide some useful insight into the importance of the family structure in this consumption behavior. Further, our model provides evidence that an attitude about death clearly have some effect on their propensity to engage in planning behavior. Marketing communications messages that use persuasive techniques (Knowles and Linn 2004) to mitigate the anxieties and resistance that individuals may have about death might be more effective than other types of appeals in encouraging planning behavior.

References

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Most heavily advertised brands in the market are well-known brands and it is important for us to know whether a well-known brand should still deliver advertising heavily. However, most ad researches simply divide brands into familiar and unfamiliar brands (e.g. Campbell and Keller 2003; Kent and Allen 1994), few researches pay attention to heterogeneity in consumers of well-known brand. This might be the cause for opposing views for effectiveness of well-known brand’s ads. Kent and Allen (1994), and Campbell and Keller (2003) find that brand familiarity plays a positive role in communication effectiveness. This implicates that well-known brands should deliver
advertising heavily. However, similar to Machleit and his colleagues (1993), Campbell and Keller (2003) also find that attitude toward the ad has a more powerful impact on brand attitudes for unfamiliar than for familiar brands. Lodish and his colleagues (1995) find that the advertising tests are much more effective for new brands than for established brands. Therefore, well-known brands should not deliver advertising heavily.

We divide consumers of a well-known brand into low and high brand awareness (Laroche et al 2005) categories (in addition, assuming another group with none brand awareness for an unknown brand). These two categories may have different responses to a well-known brand advertisement. When we regard the audiences of a well-known brand as a whole (e.g., Kent and Allen, 1994; Campbell and Keller, 2003), the conclusion is highly contingent on the higher proportional audience type, which in turn might lead to some inconsistence of current research conclusions. In this article, we attempt to examine the moderate effect of brand awareness on brand attitude change.

Three experiments are respectively focused on host product, extended brands’ product, and co-branding product with three well-known brands Pepsi, Lenovo and Coca-Cola. The number of participants in Pepsi, Lenovo and Coca-Cola experiments are 207, 405 and 207 respectively. Strong arguments printing ads with real positive information are used as stimulus. All of the participants know the brands but are quite unfamiliar with the ads. The measurement items of brand attitude, attitude toward ad, purchase intention, and message involvement are selected from the literature. Brand unfamiliarity/familiarity and unknown/known are used to measure brand awareness, and brand cognition is measured by thought listing. Reliabilities for all measurements are bigger than 0.7. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted in Lenovo experiment and confirmatory factor analysis in the other two.

The samples are collected one by one in similar self-study rooms by giving a small gift. The questionnaire is 3-paged. Pre-ad attitude, demographic items and other irrelevant questions are contained in the first page and filled out first. After that, the participants are required to read the ad and then to fill in questions in third page. It costs each participant 4-5 minutes to complete the process. Difference between high and low brand awareness is examined by brand usage experiences. Solomon four-group design in Pepsi and Lenovo experiments is conducted to verify whether the experimental stimulus is the only factor for the difference between the pre-experimental test and the post-experimental test.

Participants with low brand awareness in all the three experiments change their attitudes from pre-ad one to post-ad one. The correlation analysis of brand awareness and pre-ad brand attitudes shows that the higher brand awareness, the higher brand attitude evaluation. Further study in the cross effect of brand awareness X message involvement in all the three experiments shows that brand attitude does significantly change before and after ad only when participants have low brand awareness and high message involvement. Ad attitude of the participants with low brand awareness have significantly greater effect on brand attitudes than that of the participants with high brand awareness. However, the effects of cognitive brand response and pre-ad brand attitudes on post-ad brand attitudes are pretty much the same among different levels of brand awareness.

Brand awareness has a significant moderator effect on the three pre-ad brand attitudes, but message involvement has no significant moderator effect on pre-ad brand attitudes. However, when controlling pre-ad brand attitudes, message involvement has a significant moderator effect on post-ad brand attitudes, while brand awareness has no moderator effect on post-ad brand attitudes.

We find in this study that when the level of brand awareness is high, consumers’ preference in the brand will increase. The result demonstrates that brand awareness could have a positive effect on ad effectiveness. However, this result only reflects comprehensive effectiveness of enterprises’ past marketing effort, rather than the effectiveness of one ad exposure. Therefore, ad exposure has insignificant effect on brand attitudes change to people with high brand awareness. This could explain why the sales will not accordingly increase from ad during continuous large-scale ad delivery. Furthermore, this study implicates that the attitude curve is S shape with segments of none brand awareness, low brand awareness and high brand awareness. When an unknown brand is used to study ads, it is possible that participants do not obtain high awareness during the experiment. Therefore, the study results might be very different from using a well-known brand.

There are some limitations in this study such as limited experiment stimulus and without considering the effect of competitive interference groups and low level exposure groups. In the future study, we will use emotional advertising as experimental stimulus, and carry out experiments with competitive interference groups and low level exposure groups.

References


