Consumers Prefer Television Ads With Dance; Researching the Effects of Dance on Consumer Behavior

Carla Walter, Missouri Southern State University, USA
Loay Altamimi, University of Savoie, France

The purpose of this research was to explore consumers and their relationship with advertisements using dance as a nonverbal communication method; evaluate international differences between ad preferences; and explore the effects dance has on consumer behavior. Respondents (n=101) were surveyed in the United States and France in two separate phases. The surveys were built upon interpretive dance theory and conducted using proprietary web-based software Sphinx Plus² - Edition Lexica-V5. Dance communicated information as argued, with international differences. Moreover, 67% of respondents preferred ads with dance in them, and the highly significant preference influenced behavior. Dance provided entertainment, a favorable distraction, and hedonic feelings.

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Prior to 1990, music was considered incidental to the advertising message and its effects on consumer behavior. Importantly, consumer researchers found that music was much more than incidental (Scott 1990). That breakthrough path was facilitated by other researchers examining advertising effects on consumers using theoretical frameworks that borrowed from a variety of disciplines (see McCracken 1986, Scott 1994, Mick and Buhl 1992, McQuarrie and Mick 1999, and Joy and Sherry 2003 for examples). With both this historical yet continual pressing of the frontiers of consumer research as a means of inspiration, this research had multiple purposes. The first was to explore consumers and their relationship with advertisements using dance in them. The second was to evaluate if there were international differences between preferences, and beyond that, what gender preferences existed if any. Finally the research was set to explore what effects an ad with dance in it would have on consumer behavior with respect to the product being advertised. One hundred and one respondents were surveyed in the United States and France in two separate phases to facilitate the research. The two surveys were available to respondents in two versions (English and French) and both were conducted via the internet, using proprietary web-based software (Sphinx Plus2-Edition Lexica-V5 and SphinxOnline http://www.sphinxonline.com was also utilized in the survey design as well as monitoring data collection and the results analysis). In comparison to traditional methods of survey data collection, web surveys are considered to be a faster and a less expensive way to collect data from a global audience (Schmidt, 1997; Wyatt, 2000; Roztocki and Lahri, 2003; Wright, 2005). Also and more importantly for this study, using the web makes it possible to deliver almost any kind of content (including videos) and to introduce new types of interactivity into the survey process (Baulac, Bolden and Moscarola, 2000; Conrad, Couper and Tourangeau, 2003), such as play/stop video, show/hide or jump to certain elements and questions depending on the respondent’s answer.

In the first phase we tested a survey method for examining connections between dance in television advertising, culture, and consumption. The survey incorporated a variety of questions to gather data (i.e., television viewing, search behavior and preference for ads with dance in them online and on television, and demographic information) and utilized open-ended questions based on five interpretive dance premises (Sklar 2001). The assumption was that dance is used in advertising because it communicates nonverbally cultural information and in turn may connect this information to consumption. The three product advertisements using dance in the foreground were Nike, Isenbeck Beer, and MasterCard. The respondents were presented with hyperlinks to the three different television ads to view and rate their preference for. Next they were asked to describe the types of people, dance, and culture presented in their respective preferred ad, and the connection they saw between the type of dance used and the product advertised. The findings suggest that dance in the television ads used in this research communicated information as argued. The findings in phase one make a significant contribution to the literature in demonstrating that dance in television ads influences consumers and their relationship with culture and consumption (Walter et al. accepted, Consumer Culture Theory 4, 2009).

In the second round, the same respondents were surveyed again, building on results from the first round. Data from phase two suggests that 67% of respondents preferred ads with dance in them, and the highly significant preference was integral to the advertisement. The main reasons for the enthusiasm for the ads were that dance provided entertainment (65%), a favorable distraction (12%), and hedonic feelings (11%). Preference for all ads was further correlated with respondent’s memories of past events. Mainly these centered on a) socialization in educational institutions from childhood through university; b) respondents being reminded of someone else, such as a friend or relative while watching the dance; and c) a social event such as a wedding or party. Two other findings were additionally noteworthy: nearly half of the respondents indicated “Yes”, the dance in the ad would influence their desire to buy the product; and just over half stated the opposite. In anticipation of the polarized answers, respondents were queried open endedly on the survey as to their reasons for a “No” or “Yes” response. Respondents who thought the ad would influence their buying indicated they liked the dancing for each of the ads. For the Isenbeck Beer and MasterCard commercial, their view of the dance as humorous was important to the respondents. For Nike and Isenbeck Beer, they also felt the dance made the product interesting. However, for all three of the ads, respondents had “other” reasons for believing the dance would make them buy the product. For those respondents who indicated the dance did not encourage them to buy the product, this was highly significant based on the ad choice. Reasons centered around dislike of credit cards for the MasterCard advertisement. The notion that the advertisement has nothing to do with the product was important for each of the three ads. However again, “other” was given as a large percentage reason for not buying the product for Nike and Isenbeck Beer.

In summary, this exploratory research builds upon dance, advertising, and consumer theories and contributes to the literature in three ways. First, dance may enter the consumer research realms as a viable aspect of television ads, and perhaps ads in hypermedia generally, proving important for understanding consumer behavior in terms of preference or non preference for a product for a variety of cognitive and affective reasons. Secondly, the research method is one that can be adapted to other advertisements that use dance in them, or not, and used for extending the research for example, as in exploring the neurobiological effects on consumers watching dance in advertising. Third, consumer researchers are now sensitized to the use of dance in television advertising, broadening the resources available to evaluate consumers and their behaviors. However, in addition to the neurobiological research agenda, an expanded analysis of consumers’ reasons for ad preference with dance in advertisements and measures of the degree to which this preference in different cultures exists can influence consumer behavior is needed. To accomplish this, our research stream includes utilization of in-depth interviews and ethnographic research approaches in addition to the survey methods articulated here.

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This is true for both the late entrant and for a pioneer that tries to re-position itself when challenged by the later entrant.

Pioneering (Dis)advantage and Later Entrant (Dis)advantage: The Role of Consumer Goals in Pioneer and Later Entrant Brand Advantages
Tor Arne Wanebo, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway
Even J. Lanseng, Norwegian School of Management, Norway

A widely held assumption in consumer research is that there can be only one pioneer brand in a product category and that this pioneer has advantages (i.e. market share and profits) over later entrants. However, most of the brands in a product category are late entrants. This paper investigates whether a late entrant can overcome the pioneer’s advantage and achieve one for itself by becoming included in a goal-derived category. The assumption made here is that a favorable position in a goal-derived category simultaneously shields the late entrant from a typicality judgment that would favor the more typical pioneer and places the late entrant closer to a favorable evaluative judgment (i.e. an ideal category member) than the pioneer. Results from two experimental studies suggest that a late entrant strategy capitalizing on consumer’s goal-derived categorization is superior to a strategy of adding new and unique attributes in a taxonomic product category. This is true for both the late entrant and for a pioneer that tries to re-position itself when challenged by the later entrant.