



Faculty of Economics and Business

**THE INFLUENCE OF FEAR APPEAL ADVERTISING
TOWARD CONSUMERS' ATTITUDE, EMOTION, REACTION,
AND PURCHASE INTENTION IN KUCHING, SARAWAK**

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Bachelor of Business Management with Honours
(Marketing)
2005

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INTENTION IN KUCHING, SARAWAK

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THIS PROJECT IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF BUSINESS
MANAGEMENT WITH HONOURS
(MARKETING)

Faculty of Economics and Business
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK
2005

Statement of Originality

The work described in this Final Year Project, entitled
“The influence of fear appeal advertising toward consumers’ attitude, emotion, reaction, and purchase intention in Kuching, Sarawak ” is to the best of the author’s knowledge that of the author except where due reference is made.

7/3/2005

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ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF FEAR APPEAL ADVERTISING TOWARD CONSUMERS' ATTITUDE, EMOTION, REACTION, AND PURCHASE INTENTION IN KUCHING, SARAWAK

By

Sim Swee Liang

This paper presents the study of consumers' responses to two different approaches of advertisements, which are fear appeal advertising and positive image advertising. The main objective of this research is to find out whether fear appeal advertising or positive image advertising able to generate higher purchase intention in the scope of consumers in Kuching. Further, respondents are asking to fill structured questionnaires regarding their attitude, emotion, and reaction towards fear appeal and positive image advertising. Two printed advertisements, one with fear appeal and another with positive image appeal were shown to respondents. Respondents then asked to fill a structured likert scale questionnaires. Sample sizes of 300 respondents were chosen. Analysis are based on t-test to identify the significant differences of respondents' attitude, emotion, reaction, and purchase intention between fear appeal ad and positive image ad. Findings indicate that there were no significant differences existed between fear appeal ad and positive image ad on respondents' attitude toward the advertisements, emotion toward the advertisements, reaction toward the advertisements, and purchase intention. However, there were significant differences existed between fear appeal ad and positive image ad on respondents' attitude toward the product advertised.

ABSTRAK

PENGARUH IKLAN BERUNSUR KETAKUTAN TERHADAP KELAKUAN, EMOSI, REAKSI, DAN KEINGINAN UNTUK MEMBELI DI KALANGAN PENGGUNA KUCHING, SARAWAK

Oleh

Sim Swee Liang

Kertas kajian ini mempersembahkan kajian ke atas tindak balas pengguna terhadap dua kaedah pengiklanan, iaitu iklan berunsur ketakutan dan iklan berunsur positif. Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk menunjukkan sama ada iklan berunsur ketakutan atau iklan berunsur positif dapat mewujudkan keinginan untuk membeli yang lebih tinggi di kalangan pengguna Kuching. Selain itu, responden juga diminta mengisi struktur borang soal selidik berkenaan dengan kelakuan, emosi, dan reaksi terhadap iklan berunsur ketakutan dan iklan berunsur positif. Dua iklan bercetak ditunjukkan kepada responden, satu dengan iklan berunsur ketakutan dan satu lagi dengan iklan berunsur positif. Responden seterusnya diminta mengisi struktur borang soal selidik. Sampel saiz sebanyak 300 telah dipilih sebagai responden. Analisis adalah berdasarkan t-test untuk mengenalpasti perbezaan kelakuan, emosi, reaksi, dan keinginan untuk membeli di kalangan pengguna di antara iklan berunsur ketakutan dan iklan berunsur positif. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan tidak ada perbezaan wujud ke atas emosi, reaksi, keinginan membeli dan kelakuan terhadap dua iklan tersebut. Manakala perbezaan wujud di antara iklan berunsur ketakutan dan iklan berunsur positif ke atas responden kelakuan terhadap produk yang diiklankan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to convey my heartfelt thanks to my supervisors, for her expert and kind advice, assistance, and encouragement in the process of completing this study.

My sincere thanks to all my friends and class mates, who have always provide me moral support, encouragement, guidance, and assistance. Also, my thanks dedicated to all my respondents who have been co-operative and candid in their views in completing research questionnaires.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and relatives for giving me moral support and advices in my life.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

Over the years, many companies have adopted promotional mix strategies in order to compete and sustain themselves in the competitive world. One of the great promotional mix strategies is advertising, in which functions as a primary means of communicating product information to the right target market. Advertising can be defined as paid non-personal communication from an identified sponsor using mass media to persuade or influence the audience (Wells, Burnett and Moriarty, 1992). From the definition, advertising can be further defined as a publicity paid message; appears in the mass media such as television, radio, magazines, and newspaper; and uses information to persuade consumers to take a desired action toward a particular product or service (Nylen, 1993).

Basically, advertising have three main objectives which are to tell and inform consumers about new products and services; to persuade audiences to purchase a product or show product's differences; and to create brand awareness and brand loyalty by reminding the consumers about the existing products in market (Wells et al, 2003).

One of the effective and persuasive communicator in advertising is the use of emotional approach. Although emotional appeal is well known as a powerful persuasion tool, the use of emotional message only limited to certain type of products. Nylen

(1993) suggest that certain types of products such as insurance, smoking item, and jewelry will be effective to apply emotional appeal, while others such as building materials should use positive image message.

According to Stout and Leckenby (1986), emotion can be defined as “subjective feelings or felt experiences as verbally expressed by the individual”. Based on Plutchik (1980), emotion consists of eight primary scopes which are anticipation, acceptance, surprise, joy, fear, anger, sadness and disgust. To further explain emotional in the scope of appeal, Moriarty (1991) defines an appeal as "a message about a need that has the power to arouse innate or latent desires". Moriarty (1991) also cites that there are eleven types of emotional appeals, which are excitement, fear (danger, personal embarrassment), family (love, protection), guilt, love (affection, romance), nostalgia, pleasure, (humor, happiness, joy), poignancy, pride, relief, and sorrow (grief, suffering). Meanwhile, according to Hoyer and MacInnis (1997), emotional appeals tend to elicit emotions such as love, wanting, joy, hope, excitement, daring, fear, anger, shame, or rejection.

One of the effective and considered powerful emotional appeal is the used of fear. Fear appeal has been a popular advertising tool in Malaysia, especially in public sector. Most of the fear appeal advertising is being adopted in promoting health and safety related issues. The most common fear appeal advertisement in Malaysia are smoking campaign, AIDS campaign, road safety campaign, breast cancer campaign, drug and alcohol abuse, insurance advertisement and so fort.

However, the issue of using fear appeal in promoting healthcare product is still considered rarely. Most of the advertisements are using positive image advertising by showing the entire product's functions, benefits and usage of the product. Example of advertisement in promoting health care product by using positive image are diet, supplementary food, organic food, vitamins and so on. Healthcare product can be classified as internal usage and external usage. Internal use healthcare products include supplementary food, vitamins, nutritional drink, organic food and so fort. External use healthcare products are exercise equipment, fitting equipment, foot massager, chair massager and so on.

The main function of fear appeal message is to raise anxiety concerning a dangerous problem which is currently faced by consumers. Fear is usually applied in self preservation appeals, which mean the fear of death, damage, harm, and injury. Fear can create a strong visceral reaction to personal as comparison to others emotional appeals. One of the fear appeal strategy is known as appeal to force or scare tactics, in which message is designed by threatening the safety or happiness of oneself, thus the threats of force tend to scare the audience and lead to an action.

The use of fear appeal approach is classified as negative emotions because the message content attempt to generate anxiety emotional response. Identification of the fear appeal message content is extremely important. Too threatening message appeal which defense mechanisms of the audience will lead to channel switching, ignorance of message (maladaptive behaviour), and considered unethical (Rogers, 1983). Meanwhile,

too gentle or moderate fear message appeal will be not influencing and easily dismissed by audience. Therefore, message appropriateness is extremely important in designing fear appeal in advertisement.

1.2 Problem Statement

The use of emotional appeal in advertising is effective in influencing consumers purchasing intention. Fear appeal is known to be effective in influencing consumers in the health and safety industries such as anti smoking campaign, AIDS campaign, road safety campaign and so fort. However, the issue of using fear appeal in promoting healthcare product is still considered rarely. Most of the advertisements are using positive image advertising by showing the entire product's functions, benefits and effects, ranging from product introduction to usage stage.

The fear message appeal should be appropriated in order to create an effective advertisement. According to Rogers (1983), if the reward (example: pleasure, social pleasure) is greater than the perceived consequences, susceptibility and severity of the danger (example: aids kills, unhealthy food consumption cause cancer), individuals will continue to practice maladaptive behavior, that is ignoring the message. According to Eagly and Chaiken (1993), if the level of fear is induced too low, the message tends to unpersuasive and unable to influence audiences. Meanwhile, too high of fear in the message might induce self mechanisms in which the person will avoid for further responding to the message and might produce aggression toward the brand.

The study of fear appeal advertising in promoting healthcare product is essential to identify the appropriateness of using fear appeal message and consumer's perceptions towards fear appeal advertising, especially in Malaysia context. The study of consumer's emotion, reaction and trust towards fear appeal advertisement is also essential in developing an appropriate advertising message. The study can address the questions of "does fear appeal advertising creates higher purchase intention as compare to positive image advertising?" and "what is the consumers' attitude, emotion and reaction if they expose to fear appeal message?"

1.3 Objectives of the Research

1.3.1 General Objectives:

- i. To identify whether fear appeal in advertising for healthcare product able to create higher purchase intention than positive image advertising

1.3.2 Specific Objectives:

- i. To identify the underlying consumers' attitude, emotion, and reaction towards fear appeal advertisement and positive image advertisement
- ii. To identify the underlying consumers' attitude toward the product advertised

1.4 Rationality of Research

This research defines the effectiveness of fear appeal advertising as comparison to positive image advertising in creating purchase intention. The result in this research is to show whether using fear appeal message in promoting healthcare product will result higher purchase intention than using positive image in advertising, or in contrast. The result will help marketers, advertisers or any organizations in health industry to design appropriate message content in promoting healthcare product (internal use) to different target group of consumers, especially in Kuching perspective.

The result of consumers' attitude, emotion, and reaction towards fear appeal advertising can be used to identify the power of persuasion level and consumers' acceptance level. Marketers and advertisers can adopt the concept to design the emotional appeal in promoting healthcare product. It is also important to provide understanding of the underlying insight regarding what Kuching people think of fear appeal in advertising and thus, the understanding can be used to design the appropriateness of message appeal in advertising.

1.5 Scope of Research

The scope of this research is to determine whether fear appeal advertising will create consumers higher purchase intention as comparison to positive image advertising in promoting health care product. Two advertisements will be tested, one with fear

message appeal and another one with positive image message to measure effectiveness of each advertisement in creating purchase intention. This study also includes customers' perception, emotion, reaction and trust towards fear appeal advertising.

Healthcare product can be either for internal use or external use. To get more accurate data, healthcare product in this study will mainly focus on internal use only. Internal use healthcare products consist of nutritional food supplementary and food that help to maintain healthy lifestyle. It is necessary to identify the scope of healthcare product because different identification of healthcare product concept will result in different of customers' perception and purchase intention. Clearly defined of the scope is essential because the result obtained will be more precise and representative in identify the effect of fear appeal advertising in creating purchase intention. Furthermore, more accurate of customers' perception can also be identified.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews some of the important concepts based on previous research studies. Overall, concept of fear appeal, effectiveness of fear appeal, the level of fear appeal in advertising, and conceptual framework will be discussed in details.

2.1 Concept of Fear Appeal

Over the past three decades, fear appeal had been used extensively especially in the marketing context (Chapman, 1992; LaTour and Zahra 1988; Rotfeld 1989). The use of threat and anxiety in advertising is known as fear appeal, which has a significant impact in influencing consumer's buying intention and behavior. Fear can occasionally guide and activate human behavior by creating anxiety and tension, thus causing people to a way to reduce uncertainty feelings (LaTour and Zahra, 1988). While according to Scott, Hastings (1987) and Hill (1988), fear appeal is defined as advertising message that contain threat messages which could result in persuasion by arousing anxiety perceived, with the purpose of increase interest and attention from audiences to the message being discussed. Hence, fear issued also contains recommend action for behavior to reduce anxiety. Hymen and Tansey (1990) explain that fear appeal is a type of "psychoactive" advertising which is capable of arousing fear in the viewer regarding the effect of the viewer's suboptimal lifestyle.

According to Rogers (1975) and Witte (1992), fear appeal has been shown to be powerful persuasive tools by threatening the individual. Fear appeal has been defined as "a persuasive message that attempts to arouse the emotion of fear by depicting a personally relevant and significant threat and then follows this description of the threat by outlining recommendations presented as effective and feasible in deterring the threat" (Witte 1994 as cited in Walton, 1996).

Besides, fear is defined as an emotional appeal that relies on some threat to one's wellbeing to motivate and influence audience toward an action (King and Reid 1990; Tanner, Day, and Crask, 1989). Ghingold and Bozinoff (1981) state that the anticipation of a negative consequence from a given behavior is thought cause fear. The existent of fear perceived by an individual may be aroused through message content, which causes to persuasion (King and Reid, 1990). Based on Ray and Wilkie (1970), an increase involvement from individual to perceive risk causes fear appeal to influence behavior. In this situation, individual will inserting new attributes into decision making procedure.

In the fear appeal advertisement, message appearance is primary using fear, threat and anxiety. Fear appeal always apply in the public service announcement to influence behavior in variety areas such as smoking (Sutton and Eiser, 1984; Leventhal and Watts, 1966), safe driving campaign (Griffeth and Rogers, 1976), alcohol and drug abuse (king and Reid, 1990; Schumann and Treise, 1992), and most frequently used to link sexual practices with AIDS (Bush and Boller, 1991; LaTour and Pitts, 1989). Meanwhile, the use of fear appeal in commercial advertising is considered rarely.

Common fear appeals in advertisements that can be seen are fear in a dangerous situation, fear of abandonment and loneliness, fear of death and so forth. The use of fear in advertising can influence individual to remember the events that relate to the image in advertisement. Individual will project the use of product that could eliminate the fear in the future. When come to purchase time, individual will remember how the product could do, project the future fear that might happen if not using that product, and thus decide to purchase that product (Taflinger, 1996)

2.2 The Effectiveness of Using Fear Appeal in Advertising

Impact of fear appeals greatly influence individuals to generate longer memory in audiences mind. One research was conducted by Smith and Wilson (2002) in which younger children and older children are exposing to television news. The research shows that older children are more likely to understand and frightened by television news as comparison to younger children. Both age groups were able to recall by describing the television news stories. Both age groups also describe the news as scary and feel upset.

One research has been done by Montazeri and McEwen (1997) in Scotland, United Kingdom regarding the perception of two anti-smoking advertisements. This study is to find out audiences preferences and perceptions on fear induce campaign and positive image advertising. Two advertisements were presented to audience, one with fear appeal and another with positive image. The result shows that 52% of respondents prefer fear appeal ads and 16% prefer positive image ads, while 32% claim that they

prefer both. Further, the result shows that respondents who prefer fear appeal ads is due to the reality of the message appeal, clear message presented, powerful impact, and shock provoking.

Another research is conducted by Phau (2000) in Singapore to measure the effectiveness of fear appeal in anti smoking campaign by compare the result towards smokers, past smokers and non smokers. The results show that higher possibility of smokers who had smoked less than 5 years to quit smoking, and 87% of respondents consist of smokers that smoked less 5 years. The study also states that respondents are less concern for their own health when the numbers of years increase. Besides, the results also indicate that smokers are likely to associate maladaptive behavior, which is ignoring the fear appeal message. Smokers also perceived the message not meaningful and unimportant as comparison to non smokers and past smokers. Significantly, smokers trust towards the message appeal is lower. Smokers also perceived the fear appeal message does not provide useful information and reduce the confidence in smoking. Further, Wheatley (1971) states that fear appeal tend to be better and effective to nonusers of a product as compare to users in stimulating brand switching behavior.

Another important element which is also considered importance is “trust”. The “trust” refer to the degree of believe audience perceive from the fear appeal message. Based on Bord and O’Connor (1992) recommend that the sources of communication is important in order to make audiences believe the message appeal and to determine the

acceptance of risk message. In another meaning, the message appeal must concrete, verifiable and not influenced by vested interest (Meyrick, 2001).

2.3 The Level of Fear Appeal in Advertising

Although fear appeals have shown to have a great impact towards individual, however, the message appeal must be carefully designed. Psychological research done by Rotfeld (1988), King and Reid (1990) conclude that fear appeal need to be at the optimal level to work effectively as fear arousal tend to create varying effects. From the study, design of fear appeal message should be appropriate and to deliver the message effectively. According to Eagly and Chaiken (1993), if the level of fear is induced too low, the message tends to unpersuasive and unable to influence audiences. Meanwhile, too high of fear in the message might induce self mechanisms in which the person will avoid for further responding to the message and might produce aggression toward the brand. In addition, Higbee (1969) states that invoking too much fear eliminate intense feelings of anxiety and causes individual to ignore and avoid the advertising. It is widely acceptable for low to moderate level of fear appeal since a direct relationship holds between fear and attitude enhancement. (Krisner and Darley 1973 as cited in Witte, 1992). However, stronger fear appeal tend to be more effective and persuasive as comparison to low fear appeal especially in health and safety campaign such as smoking, AIDS prevention, dental hygiene, and safety driving (Higbee, 1969; LaTour and Pitts, 1989). In reality, emotional fear appeal shows a positive significant relationship with persuasion (Boster and Mongue, 1984; Rotfeld, 1989; Sutton, 1982).