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Advertising dislikeability in Asia

Is there a relationship with purchase intention and frequency?

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to determine what can cause dislike of an advertisement's message in Asia. Television commercials were looked at specifically to provide an insight into the construct of advertising dislikeability and how it affects purchase intention and purchase frequency.

Design/methodology/approach – The study utilizes the attention/salience hypothesis. A total of 931 people were questioned in five Asian cities (Hong Kong, Shanghai, Jakarta, Bangkok and Mumbai) using telephone interviews.

Findings – The results revealed 931 dislike attributes that were reduced to seven: style, meaningless, character, exaggeration, irresponsible, violent and hard-sell. There also appears to be a close relationship between the disliking of advertisements and purchase intention and purchase frequency.

Practical implications – Findings indicate a strong relationship of the dislikeability variables with culture and religion in the five Asian cities and this must be taken seriously by advertisers. International advertisers need to pay attention to the local values and tradition and use the advertising communication message appropriately.

Social implications – Advertisers must be acutely aware of the social norms in designing their advertisements and the findings here can be a guide for public and/or industry policy towards advertising.

Originality/value – The paper has produced a new construct of advertising dislikeability and details how it affects purchase intention and purchase frequency. This construct can be further tested in other nations and situations, in order to develop an understanding of dislike towards advertising.

Keywords Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, India, Thailand, Consumer behaviour, Advertising, Values, Religion, Social norms

Paper type Research paper



Introduction

It has been inferred that the concept of advertising as a whole (rather than a particular advertisement) is disliked, which leads consumers to “switch off” (Hollis, 1995; Cummins, 1996), yet in order for advertising to be effective it must be “liked” by the consumers (Biel and Bridgwater, 1990). The rationale is that if an advertisement is liked the consumers will confer attention upon it, thereby creating an awareness of the product or brand. This belief contends that if attention is awarded, an opportunity to facilitate consumer involvement exists, and the likelihood of motivating and affecting behavior is significantly increased. Further, it is argued that if a consumer likes an advertisement the recall process will be aided, as the chance of the product or brand featuring within the top of the evoked set is further enhanced (MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989). This forms the basis of the attention/salience hypothesis. It is also believed that advertising likeability displays a correlation with effectiveness, and, therefore, has the ability to improve sales. Such an assumption could hold for the long term, as brand associations may develop, thereby facilitating loyalty. However, such effects are generally achieved over a lengthy time period, as the consumer will take other variables (such as product quality, price, promotions, competitor activity, media consumption habits, attitudes towards advertising, cultural values, etc.) into consideration.

Although there have been a number of studies which have emphasized the role of “liking” a commercial as an important evaluative measurement (MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989; Biel and Bridgwater, 1990; Franzen, 1994; Smit *et al.*, 2006), few studies have observed the alternative view of what factors caused the “disliking” of an advertisement, and whether disliking affects purchase intention and purchase frequency (Alwitt and Prabhaker, 1994; Fam *et al.*, 2011).

This paper analyzes consumers’ attitudes towards television advertisements in five Asian cities: Hong Kong, Shanghai, Jakarta, Bangkok and Mumbai. The primary purpose of this study is to discover the Asian respondents’ feelings towards disliked advertising messages. It will address three research objectives:

- (1) to investigate the construct of ad dislikeability and whether the constructs are different in each of the five cities that are culturally different;
- (2) to examine whether advertising dislikeability affects purchase intention; and
- (3) to examine whether advertising dislikeability affects purchase frequency.

The findings will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding advertising dislikeability and will raise some issues for international advertisers, particularly in Asia, and the study concludes with managerial implications.

Background

Dislike of television advertising

Alwitt and Prabhaker (1994) claimed that the dislike of television advertising cuts across demographic boundaries, however, disliking television advertising seems more to do with TV programs and TV advertising, than solely on viewer demographics. They suggest that to be successful, marketers need to identify the appropriate reasons for the dislike and addressed the reasons accordingly. For instance, if the reason was due to TV advertising being perceived as repetitious, then the advertisers ought to consider a shorter version of the commercial. In support of Alwitt and Prabhaker (1994), Cummins (1996) asserts that advertising and its associated creativity relies