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THE EFFECTS OF NARRATIVE ONLINE ADVERTISING ON ATTITUDE AND PURCHASE INTENTION

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of narrative online advertising on a consumer's attitude toward a product and his/her purchase intention, and the moderating effects of advertising, product and purchase involvement on the (aforementioned) relationships. The results indicate that the four narrative online advertising elements (interactivity, vividness, entertainment, self-referencing) have a positive effect on attitude (interactivity and entertainment did not), and attitude has a positive effect on purchase intention. The former relationship is positively moderated (enhanced) by advertising involvement but on only vividness and self-referencing while the latter by only product involvement. The data do not support purchase involvement as a moderator.

Keywords: narrative advertising, attitude toward a product, purchase intention, advertisement involvement, product involvement, purchase involvement

Introduction

Advances in information and web technologies have made surfing the Internet for either pleasure or business a common daily activity for most people throughout the world. In 2009, over 75 percent of population in North America (or about 260 million people) were Internet users, a 140.1 percent increase over those in 2000 (Internet World Stats, 2010). All other continents reported increases between 177 and 1,810 percent over the same period. By 2015, U.S. Internet users are forecasted to exceed 285 million (eTForecasts, 2010). The increasing popularity in the Internet, its ubiquity, and breakthroughs in web and mobile technologies have opened tremendous opportunities for advertisers to create on-demand, interactive marketing experiences that will captivate consumers with the intention of gaining their business and loyalty.

Advertising plays a major role in communicating the virtues of a business' products and services to consumers for the purpose of generating sales. Yet, advertising can be a very complex task. One approach advertisers have been recently pursuing is with narratives that captivate their audience

through the dramatic unfolding of related events in storytelling, and play to people's natural propensity to organize information about people and their actions in a story format (Padgett and Allen, 1997). On the Internet, the objective is to create a series of episodes that continually entertain and mesmerize viewers in hopes they will return and eventually develop a sense of reciprocation (i.e., purchase products or services in exchange for being entertained). The narrative must embrace an involved, self-relevant experience to draw the viewer into interpreting the narrative to understand the storied stimuli (e.g., actors with motives, an event sequence and setting that has physical, social and temporal components) (Bruner, 1986; Padgett and Allen, 1997).

This study examines the effects of narrative advertising on a consumer's attitude towards a product and his/her purchase intention, and the moderating effects of advertising, product and purchase involvement on the (aforementioned) relationship. Four salient elements were selected to measure the effects narrative advertising: interactivity, vividness, entertainment, and self-referencing. The current study proposes that the narrative advertising elements play an influential role developing a person's attitude toward a product, such that the more the elements immerse the consumer in the story, the more positive his/her attitude will be. In turn, positive attitudes will increase the likelihood of purchase intentions, with intention being a surrogate for the actual act of a behavior. The relation between the narrative advertising elements and the consumer's attitude toward the product is enhanced by advertising involvement (i.e., how receptive a person is to the advertisement's message); a consumer who is more receptive to the message will draw greater value from the narrative. Furthermore, a consumer's product (i.e., the relevance of the product to one's self or self-image) and purchase involvement (i.e., the relevance of the purchase to one's fulfillment) will enhance the effects of attitude towards a product on purchase intentions. Thus, businesses and advertisers can gain from the effectiveness of their advertisements by understanding the effects and subsequently tweaking (i.e., fine tuning) each of the factors to their favor.

Background

Online Marketing

With the globalization of markets, businesses are no longer confined to marketing their products and services in their home country. The Internet has opened the world marketplace, and consequently business is now conducted in intensely competitive electronic markets (e-markets). Marketers have examined different techniques to woo consumers to their websites in hopes of gaining their patronage and loyalty. One technique, experiential marketing, involves engaging the consumer in a memorable event or experience, such that he/she feels as being part of it while exhilarating his/her senses and providing him/her with sufficient information to make a decision (Gilmore and Pine, 2002). Experiences have been favorable in shaping consumer attitude, mood and behavior (Demangeot and Broderick, 2006), and better matching consumers to products by evoking their feelings (Frost et al., 2008).

With the advent of online marketing, many businesses have had to learn to leverage information technology (IT) to gain a major competitive advantage (Capon and Glazer, 1987). The initial perceptions of a site's technological characteristics can either encourage or discourage the consumer's willingness to engage with it (Shih, 2004). Subsequently, the atmospherics, the physical attributes of the website's design (i.e., color, hue, visualizations, graphics, sound) that appeal to consumers' emotions and encourage them to buy have a significant influence on their choices and purchase intentions (Chen and Lee, 2004, Mandel and Johnson, 2002). In the online marketing environment, technology plays an influential role in creating an atmosphere that is conducive to buying.

Purchase Intention

Based on the theory of reasoned action, purchase intentions are often used to predict actual behavior. Prior studies have identified a positive relationship between purchase intentions and purchase behavior (e.g., Morrison, 1979). As it applies to purchase intentions, the online experience must instill positive attitudes and relate positive normative beliefs to achieve purchase intentions. A recent exploratory study identified affective involvement as a significant determinant of online purchase intention (Bosnjak, Galesic, and Tuten, 2007). Affective involvement describes a person's emotional reaction, including moods and feelings, evoked by an object (McGuire, 1974) and its personal relevance, including needs, values and interest (Zaichkowsky, 1986), towards expressing his/her actual or perceived self-image (i.e., value-

expressive motive) (Park & Young, 1986). Thus, the online experience must emphasize an emotional appeal to the consumer to consequently build purchase intention.

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) states that behavioral intentions formed through the attitude toward a behavior and subjective norms lead to actual behavior given the availability of resources and opportunities (Ajzen, 1991). The stronger a person's intention, the more likely he/she will perform a behavior. The attitude toward a behavior reflects a person's interest in performing a particular behavior, and is determined through behavioral beliefs. Methods to instill a belief of what is proper or desired behavior, and increase the association between desired outcomes and behavior will increase the chances of intended and actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Research Model and Hypotheses

Figure 1 depicts the research model of the study. It proposes that the online narrative advertising elements have a positive effect on attitude toward the product, which in turn has a positive effect on purchase intention. Also proposed are three moderators, advertising involvement, product involvement and purchase involvement. As moderators, each will enhance the aforementioned relationships.

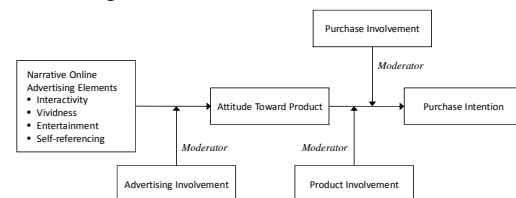


Figure 1. Research model

Online Narrative Advertising Elements

Narrative advertising involves story-telling or communicating a lived experience that unfolds in a sequence of events, conveys the storyteller's reactions to the events, describes the location and time, and captivates the audience through their interpretation (Padgett and Allen, 1997). Narrative theory suggests that people tend to combine their interpretation of experience and others by narrating, or telling stories (Padgett and Allen, 1997). The stories create scenarios in which the person assumes the role of the main character (Escalas, 2004), and becomes so immersed that he/she is consumed by the story (Gerrig, 1994; Green and Brock, 2000). The realism of the narrative leads the consumer to simulate a direct experience, and experience the feelings of the characters in the story by immersing them into their

(characters') world (Escalas, Moore and Britton, 2004).

Two important functions narrative advertising serves are its ability to meaningfully present the intangible benefits of a service or product (Mattila, 2000; Padgett and Allen, 1997), and transport (i.e., immerse) and hook (i.e., drawn into or pulled into an ad) consumers (Escalas, 2004; Escalas, Moore and Britton, 2004; Green and Brock 2000). Consequently, consumers who have been hooked feel more positive and express more favorable attitudes toward the ad (Escalas, Moore and Britton, 2004).

After a review prior studies concerning factors contributing to attitude changes in an online shopping environment, four elements were identified: interactivity, vividness, entertainment, and self-referencing. The following paragraphs discuss the elements and their link to attitude toward the product.

Interactivity. With web-based, online applications, interactivity forms the basis for direct two-way online communication between the user and software application (Gurau, 2008), and has been identified as a key component to a web site (Ghose and Dou, 1998; Macias, 2003). It has been defined as the degree to which an individual can act on and react to (i.e., influence or be influenced by) a particular stimulus (Florenthal and Shoham, 2010), and characterized as having three dimensions: active control (i.e., user's ability to voluntarily participate in and instrumentally influence a communication), two-way communication (i.e., bi-directional flow of information), and synchronicity (i.e., speed of the interaction) (Liu, 2003).

Vividness. Vividness has been described as the "representational richness of a mediated environment as defined by its formal features, that is, the way in which an environment presents information to the senses" (Steuer, 1992). It includes breadth, the number of senses that are engaged, and depth, the quality or proximity to replicating parts of the human senses (e.g., 3-dimensional animations). Vividness has been found to positively affect the development of consumer attitudes. Web sites that are more vivid leave a more enduring attitude, in particular towards the site, than those that are less (Coyle and Thorson, 2001).

Entertainment. Prior research reveals that many people use the Internet to seek enjoyment, relaxation and entertainment value (Childers et al., 2001; Eighmey and McCord, 1998; Mathwick, Malhotra, and Rigdon, 2001; Parker and Plank, 2000). Entertainment embodies the appreciation

and savoring of all the nuances of a shopping experience, or the "appreciation of the retail 'spectacle'" (Mathwick, Malhotra and Rigdon, 2001). An experience that instills cognitive pleasure and sensory pleasure will have significant influences on attitude and willingness to purchase (Fiore and Yu, 2001).

Self-Referencing. When consumers view an advertisement, they often try to relate its relevance to themselves in judging its usefulness (Debevec and Iyer, 1988). Self-referencing is a cognitive processing strategy that relates input information to an individual's self-construct (Burnkant and Unnava, 1995). It is the practice of encouraging consumers to relate a product or situation to their experiences or self. Debevec and Romeo (1992) found in their study individuals who were high in self-referencing had more positive attitudes toward advertisements and products, and consequently had more favorable purchase intentions than those who were low. A narrative that references landmarks may be more successful in forming a positive attitude toward an object or advertisement as it sheds greater relevance on it.

Given the findings of prior research, the four online narrative advertising elements should have a positive effect on the development of a consumer's attitude toward a product. The following hypothesis and sub-hypotheses are proposed:

H1: *The online narrative advertising elements have a positive effect on attitude toward the product*

H1a: *Interactivity has a positive effect on attitude toward the product.*

H1b: *Vividness has a positive effect on attitude toward the product.*

H1c: *Entertainment has a positive effect on attitude toward the product.*

H1d: *Self-referencing has a positive effect on attitude toward the product.*

Attitude toward the Product

Attitude is often viewed as an index of the degree to which a person likes or dislikes an object and carries favorable connotations (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). It plays importantly in determining a person's behavioral choice and intentions (Dabholkar, 1994) as it represents his/her evaluation of the object (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977) or evaluative judgment (Bagozzi, Gopinath and Nyer, 1999), and embodies his/her salient beliefs at a given point in time (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

Changes to a person's attitude require changes to his/her salient beliefs. Yet, changing a salient belief would require a change to the strength of the belief, change to the evaluation of a belief, creation of a new belief, or change of the belief to non-salient (Lutz 1975, 1977). Prior studies that examined the role of attitude on intentions in web-based online shopping found attitude will shape purchase intentions (e.g., Jiang and Benbasat, 2007; Shim et al., 2001; So, Wong and Sculli, 2005). In bridging the link between behavioral intentions and performing a behavior, Azjen (1988) further suggests that generally, the stronger a person's intention, the more likely he or she will perform a behavior. Thus, a favorable attitude towards a product, the result of a consumer holding favorable beliefs toward the product, will result in a greater purchase intention.

H2: *Attitude toward the product has a positive effect on purchase intention.*

Involvement

Involvement is defined as a consumer's understanding or recognition of a specific product (Traylor, 1981), and its relevancy to him/her with respect to his/her needs and values (Engel and Blackwell, 1982). It reflects how well he/she is motivated to respond to a stimulus to the product (e.g., advertisement) (Taylor and Thompson, 1982), and his/her personal demand, conception and interest in the product (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Consumers with high levels of involvement will exhibit higher cognitive and information processing activities than those with lower involvement (Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann, 1983).

Product Involvement. Product involvement (in the context of involvement) is the motivated response, including the amount of arousal, interest or drive, to a product (Bloch, 1981; Dholakia, 2001), and characterized by the perceived personal relevance a brand offers, particularly when the consumer can draw a link between the product's image or attributes and the achievement of his/her personal goals and values (Celsi and Olson, 1988; McGrath and Mahood, 2004). Given its nature, product involvement does not account for changes to a person's purchase intentions, but indicates a motivation state, and thereby will moderate the relationship between attitude and purchase intention.

H3: *Product involvement moderates the relationship between attitude toward the product and purchase intention.*

Purchase Involvement. In contrast to product involvement, purchase involvement is the personal

relevancy of the purchase decision (Hawkins, Best and Coney, 1986), and the consumer's motivation to carefully pursue a 'correct' decision (Engel and Blackwell, 1982) and reduce uncertainties surrounding the decision through his/her willingness to either perceive information in messages or seek relevant information (Zaichkowsky, 1985). The consumer's individual values, goals, needs or self-concept interact with a stimulus (stimuli) embedded in the decision (Beatty, Homer and Kahle, 1988; Mittal and Lee, 1989). Hence, it can be seen as the relevance of the purchasing activities to the consumer (Slama and Tashchian, 1985). As in the case of product involvement, purchase involvement embraces the motivation to act (decide) in response to a stimulus based on personal relevancy, and consequently enhances (strengthens) the effect of attitude on purchase intention.

H4: *Purchase involvement moderates the relationship between attitude toward the product and purchase intention.*

Advertising Involvement. Advertising involvement (i.e., ad message involvement) is defined as "a motivational state inducing message processing" (Laczniak and Muehling, 1993a, p. 303). As in the case of other forms of involvement, a person will be influenced by personal factors, including values, personal relevance and beliefs. Consumers with a high level of involvement will carefully scrutinize the message claims, exert more effort to examine the claims and persist in their efforts in the context of these personal factors. In their study, Muehling, Laczniak and Stoltman (1991) demonstrated the moderating effects of advertising involvement on the brand attitude formation process. Advertising involvement has been shown to help with the recall of advertisement information (Lee, 2000). The current study proposes high levels of advertising involvement will enhance (moderate) the effects of each online narrative element on the attitude formation of a product.

H5: *Advertising involvement moderates the relationship between the online narrative elements and attitude toward the product.*

H5a: *Advertising involvement moderates the relationship between interactivity and attitude toward the product.*

H5b: *Advertising involvement moderates the relationship between the vividness and attitude toward the product.*

H5c: *Advertising involvement moderates the relationship between entertainment and attitude toward the product.*

H5d: *Advertising involvement moderates the relationship between self-referencing and attitude toward the product.*

The proposed model identifies factors and their interrelationships that lead to the customer purchase intention of a product on an online website. The current study uses purchase intention as a surrogate for the actual act of buying, following the premise set by theory of reasoned action.

Methodology

Data were collected through an online survey questionnaire administered in Taiwan. One of four narrative advertisements for a Nissan Tiida car, Elio MP3 player, Kiss perfume and Lay's potato chips was shown to participants. Prior to viewing the advertisement, the participants were asked to select a product that they would seriously consider purchasing in the near future. They were then given the survey (psychographic) items pertaining to their product and purchase involvement to complete. Upon completing the nine items, a hypertext link took them to the online advertisement. After viewing the advertisement, the participants were asked to complete the remaining portion of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was organized into six parts. The first five contained 44 psychographic items and the fourth seven respondent demographic items. The first part consisted of items for product and purchase involvement, the second for the four narrative online advertising elements, the third for advertising involvement, the fourth for attitude toward the product, and fifth purchase intention. Each psychographic item was measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), and drawn from prior studies.

The survey questionnaire was posted on the Chunghwa Telecom Online Questionnaire website (qqq.cht.com.tw/webform). To encourage people to participate and complete the survey, vouchers that could be used at 7-Eleven convenience stores were randomly awarded and a drawing for various prizes was held. After three weeks, 1,281 questionnaires were collected, of which 816 were deemed usable (229 viewed the car, 109 the perfume, 132 the potato chips, 346 the MP3 player).

Analysis

Reliability and validity tests were performed on the data in SPSS 12.0. Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the internal consistency of the items. The alpha coefficients for all constructs were well over the recommended .70 threshold (Nunnally, 1978).

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and the average variance extracted (AVE) were used to confirm the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model, respectively. The EFA reduced the number of items to 38 as four either had a factor loading of less than .60 or loaded onto two factors with a difference of less than .20 (between the loadings).

With nine constructs in the model, the goodness of fit index (GFI), normed fit index (NFI) and comparative fit index (CFI) were generated in a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with AMOS 5.0. Both the NFI and CFI were above the recommended .90, .934 and .956, respectively, while the GFI was close at .893. Thus, the indices support the proposed model's convergent validity. AVE, the ratio of the construct variance to the total variance among indicators, was used to estimate the discriminant validity and internal consistency. Since the AVE values are above .50 (Barclay et al., 1995), the model demonstrates good internal consistency (reliability). As also shown in Table 4, the square root AVE values along the diagonal are greater than the construct correlations. This supports discriminant validity.

A Pearson's correlation analysis provides an understanding of the level of correlation between each variable. All four narrative online advertising elements positively correlated with attitude toward the product and purchase intention. This suggests that when consumers reacted very favorable to the effects of each element, they were more likely to change their attitude toward the product and consequently inclined toward purchasing the product. However, a negative relationship exists between purchase intention and purchase involvement. Yet, advertisement and product involvement positively correlated with other variable.

Structural Model

A structural equation model (SEM) was used to simultaneously test and estimate causality among the proposed relationships, and assess the model's goodness of fit in AMOS 5.0. Five fitness measurement indices, goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI), comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), support goodness of fit for the proposed model (Table 5). Chi-square (χ^2)/degrees of freedom and RMSEA indicate the data's deviation from the model and consequently the overall goodness of fit. For the current study, the χ^2 (972.198, degrees of freedom = 258) is not significant. The RMSEA value of .058 is supportive of χ^2 . Using a .08 cutoff, RMSEA values of .10 or greater indicate a poor fit

while values of .05 or less a good fit. These are corroborated by GFI, CFI and NFI values, .913, .960 and .946 respectively, that are all close to 1. Given the results of these goodness of fit measures, it may be concluded that the data fits the proposed model.

Hypotheses Tests

Figure 2 summarizes the results for the direct effects. The data support the hypothesized relationships between all four narrative online advertising elements and attitude toward the product (H1a, b, c, d supported). Although all four paths are significant, the large standardized coefficient for self-referencing (.44) suggests that it is the most influential on attitude formation. The R^2 value of .55 indicates that a good portion of the variance is captured by the four variables. Thus, a narrative online advertisement can have a positive effect on forming a person's attitude towards a product.

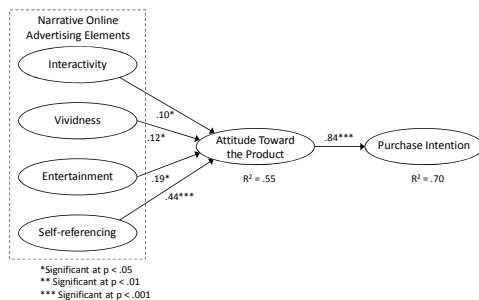


Figure 2. Direct effects

The relationship between attitude toward the product and purchase intention was also significant (H2 supported). The large standardized coefficient (.84) suggests that purchase intentions can be largely influenced a customer's attitude. Customers with a very positive attitude towards a product will be more inclined to purchase it, using purchase intention as a surrogate for actual behavior. With purchase intention added to the direct effects model, the R^2 improves to .70.

Six hierarchical multiple regression models were created to test the three moderating effects in AMOS 5.0. Each variable contains the composite scores of the responses under its respective construct. The first three models (i.e., models 1-3) tested the moderating effects of product involvement and purchase involvement on the relationship between attitude toward the product and purchase intention while the second three (i.e., models 4-6) the moderating effect of advertisement involvement on the relationship between narrative online elements and attitude toward the product. For product and purchasing involvement, the first model confirms that a significant relationship exists between attitude toward the product and purchase

intention. The narrative online advertising elements were added as control variables to show that they had either little influence or no significant effect on purchase intention. The moderators, product and purchase involvement, are introduced in Model 2 and examined for their direct effects. Although product involvement has no significant effect on purchase intention, it was kept as its interaction term provided a synergistic value (Frazier, Tix and Barron, 2004). In Model 3, the interaction terms were included. The results support the contention that product involvement moderates the effect of attitude on purchase intention as the standardized coefficient is positive (.33) and significant ($p < .001$). Thus, H3 is supported. In contrast, the data identify a negative moderating effect for purchase involvement. Rather than enhancing or strengthen the relationship, purchase involvement has an opposite effect and may reflect an antagonistic interaction (Cohen et al., 2003); H4 is not supported. The inclusion of the interaction terms increased R^2 to .57 from .53.

Testing the moderating effects of advertising involvement was similarly performed. Model 4 ensures the main (direct) effects between the narrative online elements and attitude are significant. Model 5 adds the moderator, advertisement involvement, and tests its direct effect to ensure it is significant and enhances the model's explanatory ability (R^2). Because the study proposes that advertisement involvement will enhance the effects the narrative online advertising elements, R^2 should increase, which it does. The third model represents the moderating effect as the interaction (multiplicative term) between the dependent and moderator variables (i.e., entertainment x advertising involvement, vividness x advertising involvement, self-referencing x advertising involvement). The results show that the moderating effect (of advertisement involvement) is negative for interactivity and not significant for entertainment. Therefore, only H5b and d are supported. The moderating effect also increased R^2 to .39 from .30.

DISCUSSION

The current study examined the relationship of four narrative online advertising elements, attitude toward a product, purchase intention, advertising involvement, product involvement and purchase involvement. The proposed model suggests that the four elements (interactivity, vividness, entertainment, self-referencing) will positively influence a consumer's attitude toward a product, and his/her advertisement involvement will enhance or strengthen the relationship, such that the more involved the consumer is with the advertisement message (i.e., the more relevant the

message is to him/her with regard to his/her needs and values) the stronger the influence will be. In turn, the consumer's attitude toward the product will positively impact his/her purchase intention, and his/her product and purchase involvement will enhance or strengthen the impact. A person with a strong attitude toward a product will be inclined to purchase it. His/her product and purchase involvement will enhance the effect of his/her attitude on his/her intention.

The current study's results partially support the proposed model. The direct effects of the elements on attitude and attitude on intention are supported. In the case of the former, all four narrative online advertising elements will influence a person's attitude toward a product with the heaviest influence coming from self-referencing. In an online environment, narrative advertising exposes the consumer to the experience of using or owning a product or service through storytelling. This has been successfully done through other media (e.g., Escalas, 2004, Mattila, 2000). However, selling a product online presents several potential opportunities to businesses, particularly with presenting the product through IT-enabled features that take the consumer beyond the one-way communication of static displays and images, and immerse him/her into a virtual world that captivates, mesmerizes, entertains, engages and reflects. The four elements represent facilitators that enhance and enrich the storytelling, such that the consumer becomes an active participant through interactivity, entertained through episodes encapsulating goals, actions and outcomes (Escalas, 1990), and persuaded through the vividness of the presentation (Green and Brook, 2000). Because self-referencing has the largest impact (of the four elements) on attitude formation, the story should contain visual and auditory cues that stimulate the consumer into relating his/her stored experiences (i.e., mental landmarks) to the story, particularly when the narrative is structured very similarly to the ways he/she receives his/her information over his/her daily life experiences and structures prior knowledge (Adaval and Wyer, 1998; Mattila, 2000). The elements should also immerse the consumer into the story, such that he/she simulates using the product. Simulation serves two purposes, to improve the retention and recall of information (e.g., Lord, 1980) and immerse the consumer into the narrative. When a person simulates an event, he/she frequently thinks about his/her own actual or potential behaviors, and creates behavioral episodes in which he/she becomes the main character (Fiske, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1991).

Although this study proposed that the effects of all four elements on attitude would be enhanced by the consumer advertising involvement, that is the

relevance of the advertisement message to a consumer's values and needs, the results indicate only the effects of vividness and self-referencing are affected. This suggests that persons who have been sensitized to the narrative are more perceptive to and influenced by the advertisement message in forming their belief (attitude) in the product. In terms of stimulation, the richness of the narrative in stimulating the consumer's senses, and conjuring and relating stored experiences is leveraged by his/her motivational processing and scrutiny of the advertisement message. Businesses seeking to gain the greatest benefit from narrative online advertising should develop and understand the profile of those comprising the market segment the product is meant to attract, and tailor the narrative toward stimulating them through vividness and self-referencing cues.

As expected, attitude toward the product has a strong and positive impact on purchase intention. This result is consistent with prior studies that have generally examined the effect of attitude on intention. To more efficiently convert viewers to buyers, the goal for manipulating the four narrative online advertising elements should focus on instilling a positive attitude of the product in the minds of consumers. Prior studies have found that all four elements can positively influence attitude (e.g., Burns, Biswas and Babin, 1993; Debevec and Romeo, 1992; Fiore and Yu, 2001; McMillan and Hwang, 2002). In the context of narrative advertising, positive attitudes include finding the product interesting, attractive and good, having a positive evaluation of it, and feeling the product is worthy of buying. Thus, in focusing the narrative, a business needs to lead the customer toward believing in the product along these aspects.

Of the two proposed moderators (product and purchase involvement), product involvement enhanced the effect of attitude on purchase intention. Product involvement may be stimulated by stilling a strong belief in the consumer that the product will help him/her achieve his/her personal goals and values. This belief (i.e., involvement) will leverage his/her attitude toward the product in the sense that a person who possesses positive and strong feelings (attitude) toward the product will have those feelings strengthened by the product's or brand's relevancy, particularly its ability to help him/her achieve his/her personal goals. A consumer is more inclined to commit to the purchase (purchase intent) based on these affective motives. Thus, although a consumer's positive attitude sufficiently leads to the likelihood of him/her purchasing the product, it (attitude) can strengthen by demonstrating the personal benefits gained through owning the product. As in the case of advertisement involvement's effect on the

elements and attitude, a business needs to understand the profile of the persons whom the product was meant for and emphasize its self-fulfillment benefits.

In contrast, the results indicate purchase involvement has a negative moderating effect. Because purchase involvement focuses on personal relevancy of the purchase decision, the tasks and activities may be less affective in nature, such as pricing products, searching and gathering information, deliberating on alternatives and applying decision rules (Zaichkowsky, 1985). This suggests that purchase intention is led more by affective responses to a narrative. For businesses seeking to reap the benefits of narrative online advertisements (e.g., brand recognition, increased sales), emphasis should be placed on appealing to the consumers' emotions. Therefore, narrative online advertising represents a planned cohesive approach that attempts to capitalize on the integration of the various components identified in the proposed model.

CONCLUSION

The rapid increase in the popularity of the Internet as a global marketplace opens an enormous opportunity for businesses to strategically position themselves. Narrative advertising has been demonstrated as an effective means for capturing the interests of consumers for products and services, particularly those with intangible benefits. For a business investing in narrative online advertising, attention should be paid to embedding relevance throughout the narrative in the form of self-referencing cues and ways will facilitate advertising and product involvement, and appealing to the consumers' emotions.

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