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Good Media Mix Strategies for Bad Times: Sequencing Optimizes

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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes an experiment which compares three commonly used marketing elements: advertising, Internet websites, and publicity. These elements are rated on two dependent variables: message acceptance (credibility and message strength), and message response (attitude and purchase intent). Direct effects of each variable are examined. Sequencing effects are also examined to see if it matters in what order potential customers encounter the marketing message. Results indicate that a website, used alone, can make a significant difference in message strength. However, to impact purchase intent, a multimedia campaign is necessary. The current study extends the authors' 2005 research comparing only advertising and publicity on the same variables. The publicity-lead sequence in both studies produced some of the strongest results on the purchase intent variable. Advertising-only was not significant for any variable in either study but was significantly present in sequencing effects. Applications for marketing professionals are included.

INTRODUCTION

Given the current business environment, marketing directors around the globe face a similar scenario: how to most efficiently allocate media dollars and marketing budgets with increased pressure for accountability. The purpose of this research is to help with that decision. This paper summarizes an experiment which compares three commonly used marketing elements: advertising, Internet websites, and publicity. Each of these elements is rated by respondents on two dependent variables: message acceptance (credibility and message strength), and message response (attitude and purchase intent). Direct effects of each variable are measured; sequencing effects are also examined to see if the order matters in which potential customers encounter the marketing message. The current study extends the authors' prior research comparing advertising and publicity on the same variables. Both concern the service industry, namely tourism, and spring break destination marketing to the college market.

Need for the Study

Pfeiffer and Zinnbauer (2010) assert that efficiently allocating marketing budgets remains one of the key challenges for marketing executives. With the introduction of the Internet and online advertising, the marketing landscape has changed considerably. Online advertising set a record of \$7.3 billion for the first quarter of 2011 (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2011) and digital ad spending is expected to reach \$62 billion by 2016 (Adweek, 2012). However, marketing directors' decision making process for budget allocation has not changed significantly. In fact,

Jupiter concludes the addition of digital marketing increases complexity and creates confusion about how to create the best efficiencies in marketing spending. “Efficient allocation of communication budgets to various channels -- offline and online -- remains a key mystery to marketers and advertising experts...” (p. 43).

Exacerbating this scenario is the increasing pressure to define and measure marketing productivity and advertising effectiveness (Briggs, Krishnan and Borin, 2005; Buijets and van Raaij, 2005). The decreases in revenues that most businesses are experiencing in the current economy are adding further pressure to marketing budgets.

Consider the travel and tourism industries. Travel demand during the current recession is down at twice the rate of the decline in Gross Domestic Product (Ritchie, Molinar and Frechtling, 2010). Hence, one easily sees the compounding pressure on the efficiency of the tourism marketing spend. However, despite the relevance of the topic, there is scarce literature comparing different media channels and investigating the effectiveness of cross-media advertising (Kitchen, Kim, and Schultz, 2008). To help fill this void, this study compares the effectiveness of three common marketing and media strategies often utilized by marketing executives: advertising, an Internet website and publicity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Publicity as an Information Agent

Advertising is classically defined by Kotler (1993) as any paid form of nonpersonal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor. Publicity he defines as editorial space as opposed to paid space in print and broadcast media to promote a product, place, or person. Advertising and publicity are both important sources of information. In fact, Wang (2006) identifies advertising and product publicity as two of the most important marketing communication sources.

However, credibility differences exist between the two strategies. Advertising is known to be a vested-interest source and consumers often discount the information (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Gartner's (1993) typology of media and other "image change agents" rates these influencers as "low," "medium," or "high" on credibility, depending on how obvious it is that the message is commercially sponsored. Change agents with less obvious commercial ties, such as travel section articles and news, are rated higher on Gartner's credibility scale than are advertising or brochures with obvious commercial ties. Fodness and Murray (1999) confirm the importance of magazines and newspapers in information searches. However, their study, as well as one by Vogt, Stewart and Fesenmaier (1998), made no distinction between advertising and publicity when referencing newspapers and magazines as travel information sources.

Literature comparing advertising with publicity is relatively new and not prolific. Lord and Putrevu (1993) state, “In an era of constant challenges to conventional wisdom about the relative effectiveness of various promotional tools, marketers are becoming increasingly aware of the value of publicity. Yet scholarly attention to this element is limited primarily to cursory textbook treatment,” (p. 57). Advertising has received considerable conceptual and empirical attention in the literature, they assert, while publicity “has remained the neglected element of the

promotional mix,” (p. 58). Researchers since Lord and Putrevu’s call for more study into publicity strategy adds some insight but no clear consensus of publicity’s superiority over advertising has emerged.

A 1999 study by Hallahan concluded that, while news or publicity messages might be more credible than advertising, “the evidence suggests news does not uniformly outperform advertising” (p. 339). Putrevu (2005) reported that publicity appears to be associated with deeper mental processing, and rates higher than advertising on credibility, attitude and purchase intent. Loda and Coleman (2005) found similar results, and recommended a publicity-then-advertising sequence. However, following their study, Michaelson and Stacks (2007) report no statistically significant differences between editorial and advertisements on either awareness, credibility or purchase intent. Micu and Thorson (2008) report that an advertising/ publicity combination for a new brand increases effectiveness for both brand attitudes and behavioral intent. A recent study by Kim, Yoon and Lee (2010) found that positive publicity combined with advertising induces confirmation effects while negative publicity produces mostly contrast effects.

Michaelson and Stacks (2007) state, in the discussion of their study comparing the communications effectiveness of advertising and public relations, “the business implications of this are that public relations should be afforded significantly higher stature in the marketing communications mix,” (p. 9). However, they found that advertising and editorial performed equally on almost all key measures.

The Internet Changes Everything

“The digital revolution has changed almost everything about how the tourism industry does business,” (Gretzel, Yuan, and Fesenmaier, 2006, p. 152). Beritelli, Bieger and Laesser (2007), assert that research concerning the Internet lacks comparison with other sources. Rather, the Internet is most often studied as a stand-alone medium, not in context with other media. However, some comparative studies do exist, with more surfacing steadily.

In advertising and marketing journals, the Internet is most often compared with print advertising and television. An early study by Eveland and Dunwoody (2002) comparing the Web and print ads suggests that the Internet elicits more elaboration than does print. Chang and Thorson (2004) report that using the Web in combination with television leads to significantly higher attention and message credibility than repeated exposure to television only. In their comparison, Dijkstra, Buijtels and van Raaij (2005) found a complementary effect for multimedia campaigns (television, print and Internet) compared to Internet-only marketing. While they list nine benefits of a webpage, Kanso, LeBlanc III, and Nelson (2005) report a lack of integration between print and online advertising. Havlena, Cardarelli and Montigny (2007) found synergies among magazine, online and television advertising for heavy media users. After comparing editorial commentary and print, radio and webpage ads, Michaelson and Stacks (2007) found no significant differences across media type on any variable including message recall, credibility, product rating and purchase intent. After their study of online and print ads, Wakolbinger et al. (2009) state, “Our results confirm that print and online advertising lead to the same advertising effectiveness. When these two media channels are combined, however, our experimental data indicate advantages of cross-media advertising,” (p. 361).

The Importance of Credibility

Because tourism destination selection is a high risk decision, information credibility is paramount. Flanagin and Metzger (2000) suggest that two elements hurt the credibility of a website: commercial implications and amateurism. However, in general, they found the web to be as credible as information from other mass media except newspapers. Cho (2001) asserts that the Internet ranks as the most credible external information source. Several studies have looked specifically at Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) websites. Chen (2006) concludes that design (physical appearance, color, layout, and graphics), functionality, usability, efficiency, reliability and likeability significantly influence trust and credibility in a tourism website.

Kim and Fesenmaier (2007) found credibility to be significant factor impacting on DMO website persuasiveness. In looking at source factors in e-word-of-mouth, Yoo, Lee and Gretzel (2007) suggest that authority cues increase credibility perceptions and local residents' recommendations. Park and Gretzel (2007) found "trust" to be one of nine factors synthesized from previous studies. Trust encompasses brand recognition, consistency, intentions and credibility. Loda, Teichmann, and Zins (2009) found that information on attractions and accommodations contributed to high message credibility among respondents who viewed DMO sites. In measuring the effectiveness of DMO campaigns in 2010, researchers assert the importance of cross marketing, especially in terms of reach, and suggest an inclusive, broad appeal rather than a highly segmented marketing approach (Pratt, McCabe, Cortes-Jimenez and Blake, 2010). Loda, Coleman, and Backman (2010) found similar results for credibility. An ad-then-web combination produced a significantly higher means for message strength than viewing advertising only.

The Role of Message Strength

This research also attempts to seek out the importance of weak or strong reasoning in message claims. After a study of 40 advertising campaigns, Putte (2009) concluded that, after controlling for previous purchase behavior, the impact of message strategy was larger than the effect of the advertising expenditure. Samuelsen and Olsen (2010) conducted an experiment testing the persuasiveness of ads offering experiences versus functional benefits for a ski resort. Findings suggest that, while functional benefit claims outperformed in this high involvement situation, message strength was just as important as the framing choice. These studies build on the work of Hallahan (1995) who studied the difference between news and advertising in what he termed content class, a contextual variable in mediated messages. He found that content class (news or advertising) interacted with product involvement to impact the amount of processing by respondents, while argument strength interacted with content class to moderate message assessments, such as attitude and purchase intent.

Information Processing and Message Sequencing

Three theories underpin this study. The first is the expectancy-value (EV) theory of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). This is a model of reasoned behavior or central route processing wherein consumers carefully consider message content (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). Persuasive communications (i.e., message acceptance), then, depends on the degree to which consumers

accept message claims (Smith and Vogt 1995). Secondly, Anderson's (1971) information integration theory describes how consumers combine information from different sources (i.e., advertising, websites and publicity). This theory suggests that the sequence of exposure to information is important. Lastly, Smith and Swinyard's (1982) integrated information response model asserts that consumers' belief strength can be affected by message sequencing. Initial contact with a credible message creates "a powerful information base for attitudinal development," (p. 84).

Lord and Putrevu (1993) predicted the potential sequencing impact of publicity with advertising. They believed that information sources could interact to yield advantages for publicity-then-advertising rather than to an advertising-then-publicity sequence. This author's first study supported that belief. As Loda and Coleman (2005) reported, the publicity-then-advertising sequencing created significantly higher mean scores than advertising for credibility, message strength and purchase intent, concerning college students' destination choice for spring break. The current study extends this research by testing publicity against both advertising and the new tool pervasive in destination marketing--a DMO website.

HYPOTHESES

The amount of persuasion occurring from a promotional message depends on the extent to which consumers undergo message acceptance (Smith and Vogt, 1995). Factors influencing message acceptance include perceived *credibility* (i.e., truthfulness and accuracy) and *message strength* (i.e., weak or strong reasoning in message claims), two dependent variables tested in this study. Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) model states that attitude leads to behavioral intent. Attitude toward the brand and purchase intent are common variables of message response in marketing research projects (Hallahan 1999). Therefore, *attitude toward the destination* (i.e., a predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably) and *purchase intent* (i.e., a stage of motivation that precedes behavior) are also studied.

Message stimulus is the independent variable and consists of two parts: information source (i.e., advertising, publicity or website) and message sequencing (i.e., publicity-only, publicity-then-web, web-only, or web-then-publicity). While research comparing websites with publicity or advertising is inconclusive and not prolific, the impact and enormity of the Internet on destination marketing is clear. Additionally, prior research builds a strong case for cross marketing. Therefore, the hypotheses are:

H1: There will be greater *credibility* for a message presented on a website than for a message presented as a) advertising or b) publicity.

H2: There will be greater *message strength* for a message presented on a website than for a message presented as a) advertising or b) publicity.

H3: A message presented on a website will create a stronger *attitude* than a message presented as a) advertising or b) publicity.

H4: A message presented on a website will create stronger *purchase intent* than a message presented as a) advertising or b) publicity.

H5a. A message presented with a web-publicity sequence will produce greater *message acceptance* than any other message sequence.

H5b. A message presented with a web-publicity sequence will produce greater *message response* than any other message sequence.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted as an experiment in the form of a post-test only control group. To explore the hypotheses, five experimental groups were exposed to eight different message sources or combination of sources. They were: a) web-only b) publicity-only c) ad only d) web-then-publicity e) publicity-then-web f) ad-then-web g) web-then-ad and h) a control group. The post-test-only group design assures that subjects are not biased by previous exposures through pre-tests (Kirk, 1982). Respondents were university students seeking a spring break destination. Spring break is a sizeable target market with some three million collegians expected to travel in 2010 (Preddy, 2010). While researchers have studied information sources used by spring break travelers, no research was located that compares these three marketing components among this lucrative market.

Measurement Scale Development

All measures used seven-point scales adapted from those used by Smith and Vogt (1995). *Perceived credibility* used three Likert-type scales asking how truthful, accurate and credible a specific stimulus was to the respondent. These measures were developed by Darley and Smith (1993). *Message strength* was measured with a three-item scale developed by Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann (1983). This scale asks respondents to rate message claims from weak to strong, based on whether the messages in the materials were seen as easy or not easy to understand, had strong or weak reasons or were clear or unclear. *Attitude toward the destination* was measured globally with three semantic differential scales (Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum, 1967). Respondents used bipolar attributes to rate the destination as good, positive, and interesting. *Purchase intent* was measured with two seven-point items developed by Smith (1993). The questions asked how likely the respondent were asked to select the destination, and how likely he or she would be to recommend the destination to a friend. Responses ranged from “not at all likely” to “extremely likely.”

There were eleven total items generating a Chronbach’s Alpha of .881, well within acceptable range (Nunnally, 1978). For all multi-item measures, mean scores were combined and averaged to generate one statistic for each dependent variable. Following exposure to the treatment, data were collected to measure the four dependent variables.

Data Collection Procedures

This study was implemented at two universities in the southeastern United States. A sample size of 337 student respondents (a minimum 30 per group after removing prior visits) allowed the central limit theorem to apply, assuring normal distribution for each group (Salkind 1994). As Smith and Vogt (1995) did, involvement was encouraged of all groups. To create this mental processing, subjects were asked to consider themselves persons with the time and money for a

vacation such as a spring break trip. They were instructed to read the materials carefully, told to form an evaluation of the destination, and informed they would be asked some questions about the destination later. Each participant was randomly assigned a booklet containing stimulus materials or instructions to access a website. Subjects could spend as much time as needed to become thoroughly exposed to stimulus materials. Next, the dependent measures were collected (subjects were not allowed to turn back to the stimulus materials). Following exposure to the treatment, data were collected to measure the four dependent variables.

Product and Attribute Selection

The methodology for this experiment is consistent with the Loda and Coleman (2005) study. However, this replication differs in the type of stimulus used (website compared to both advertising and publicity) and it uses actual rather than fictitious stimulus materials. In the first study, fictitious materials were developed to look like a one-page advertisement and a one-page article in a popular shelter magazine. The message within the two stimuli concerned the same destination attributes. Both were elaborately pretested until subjects in a pilot study rated them equally persuasive (using a scale of one to ten, where one is “not at all persuasive” and ten being “extremely persuasive”).

In the current study, an actual DMO website and publicity story are used as the independent variables. In the actual media environment, publicity stories and websites do not cover the exact same attributes. Authentic marketing materials were used to better represent how consumers learn about potential vacation destinations. Memphis, Tennessee was chosen as the test destination because of the authors’ interest, and the appeal of the city’s rich musical heritage to a student population.

The Memphis promotional stimuli were presented as they appeared in the actual campaign. The publicity story was duplicated in color, and presented as it appeared in the March 2007 issue of *Southern Living* magazine. Those who viewed the website were instructed to log onto the official DMO site produced by the Memphis Convention and Visitors Bureau. Members of eight experimental groups were then randomly exposed to one of these treatments: publicity-only, web only, ad only, publicity-then-web, web-then-publicity, ad-then-web, web-then-ad, and no treatment (control group).

Current Results

Multi item scales were combined and averaged to create one composite score. Univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for each dependent variable; results are presented in Table 1. Multiple comparisons were examined for areas of significance in sequencing effects (see Table 2). The independent variable for the ANOVAs was message source/message sequencing and consisted of eight treatment levels: a) web-only b) publicity-only c) ad only d) web-then-publicity e) publicity-then-web f) ad-then-web g) web-then-ad and h) a control group (as appropriate).

Results of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 tested *credibility* and predicted greater credibility for a website than for a message presented as a) advertising or b) publicity and was not supported ($F=.228$, $p=.967$). The means for website only ($M=5.25$) were not significantly different than the means for advertising only ($M=5.19$) or publicity only ($M=5.30$). Therefore, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that viewing a DMO website alone elicits greater credibility than a message presented only via publicity or advertising.

Hypothesis 2 predicted greater *message strength* for a website than for advertising or publicity. The hypothesis was supported ($F=2.65$, $p=.016$). The means for website only ($M=5.57$) were significantly different than the means for advertising only ($M=5.00$) and publicity only ($M=5.08$). According to this research, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that viewing only a website may generate more message strength than viewing a message presented only as advertising or publicity.

Hypothesis 3 tested *attitude* with a control group and predicted a website alone would create a stronger attitude than advertising or publicity. The hypothesis was supported ($F=2.56$, $p=.014$) but only for the control group. The means for website only ($M=5.29$) and publicity only ($M=5.06$) were not significantly different from each other, but were significantly different than the control group ($M=4.38$). Advertising only ($M=4.83$) was not significant against the control group. According to this research, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that a DMO website alone elicits a stronger attitude than a message presented via publicity or advertising, but a website or a publicity story does create a stronger attitude than seeing no message at all.

Hypothesis 4 tested purchase intent using a control group and predicted a website only would create stronger *purchase intent* than advertising or publicity viewed alone. H4 was supported ($F=3.87$, $p<.01$) for the control group. The means for website only ($M=3.47$) was significantly different than the control group ($M=2.40$) but not from other message sources. Therefore, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that a DMO website elicits stronger purchase intent than a message presented via publicity or advertising, but it does generate greater purchase intent than seeing no message.

Table 1

ANOVA Results for Dependent Variables

	Type III	Mean		
	Sum of Squares	Square	F	p
Credibility	1.059	.177	.228	.967
Message Strength	12.324	2.054	2.65	.016
Attitude	25.374	3.625	2.56	.014
Purchase Intent	36.254	5.179	3.88	.000

Note: Attitude and purchase intent were tested with a control group.

Hypothesis 5a. and 5b. predicted stronger means for the web-then-pub sequence due to both sources' high ratings for credibility in the literature. However, neither the hypothesis for message acceptance or message response was supported based on paired comparisons. The web-then-pub comparison was only significant against the control group, not against any other message sources. Therefore, there is no significant evidence to conclude that potential student break travelers will have a stronger response when they view the message first via a website, followed by a publicity message.

Other Sequencing Effects.

Multiple comparisons of message acceptance yielded no significant sequencing effects for the credibility component, but yielded five significant comparisons for the message strength variable. For message response (attitude and purchase intent), all comparisons with the control group were significant except for the ad-only group. Otherwise, there were no significant sequencing comparisons for the attitude variable. One significant difference resulted for purchase intent; this difference ($p=.028$) was between ad only ($M=2.92$) and pub-then-web ($M=3.54$). These results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Significant Pairwise Comparisons for Sequencing Effects of Message Sources by Variable

<i>DV</i>	<i>Treatment</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Treatment Group</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>P</i>
Credibility					no difference
Attitude					no difference
Message Strength	web only	5.57	pub only	5.08	.019
	web only	5.57	ad only	5.00	.008
	ad then web	5.55	pub only	5.08	.023
	pub then web	5.61	pub only	5.08	.010
	pub then web	5.61	ad only	5.00	.004
Purchase Intent	pub then web	3.54	ad only	2.92	.028

Note. All pairwise comparisons against the control group were significant except for ad only for both attitude and purchase intent variables.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

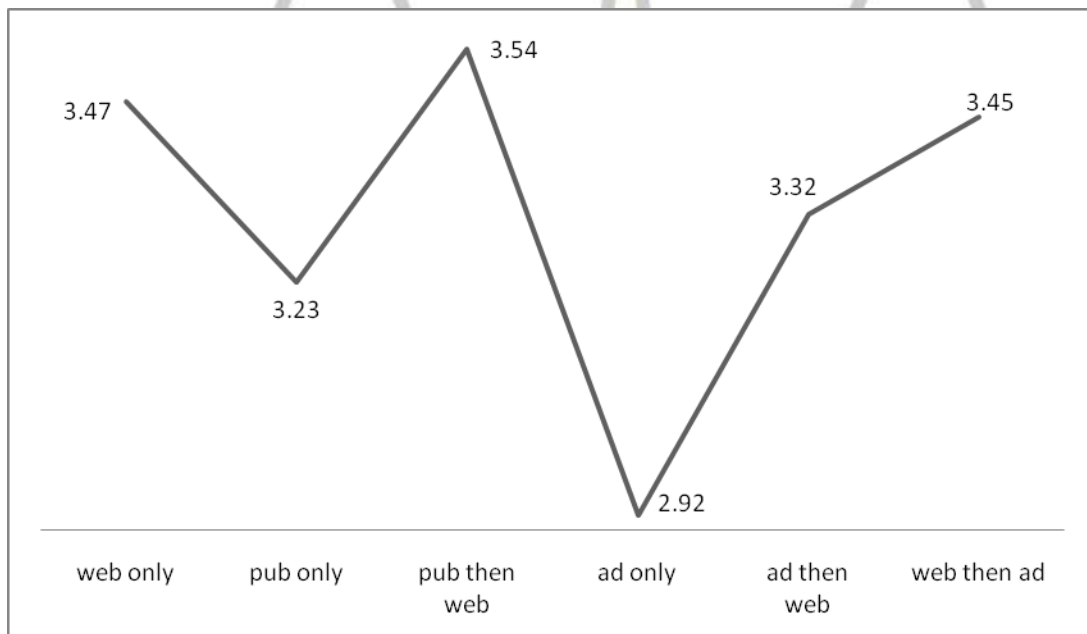
These research results suggest that it makes no difference to the perceived credibility of a marketer's message, or the attitude generated by that message, whether the message is viewed on a website, in an advertisement, or as editorial/publicity.. The finding of no significance is inconsistent with other previous research suggesting that either a website or a publicity story is the most credible message source. However, in the current study, when the control group was included among respondents for the credibility and purchase intent variables, the advertising stimulus was not even significant against this group, suggesting that the advertisement was no more impactful than seeing no message at all. At least for the credibility variable, this finding is consistent with research suggesting that advertisements are less believable because of their obvious commercial tie and overt marketing intent.

The message strength variable included the highest number of paired comparisons resulting in a significant difference. Interestingly, the web, when viewed alone, was seen as generating greater message strength than when advertising or publicity was viewed alone; however, the web was never significant in leading a message sequence. Ad-then-web and publicity-then-web were the generators of significantly greater message strength when multiple messages were viewed. For this research, message strength is defined as the degree to which message claims are presented with weak or strong reasoning (Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983). The high number of significant paired comparisons may be explained by Wang (2006) who suggests audiences may allocate more cognitive capacity to make sense of varied messages. It follows perhaps, that part

of this increased cognition would include an examination of weak or strong reasoning. The significance of the message strength variable seems to underscore the work of Samuelsen and Olsen (2010) who found that message strength was just as important as the framing choice (functional versus experiential) for a tourist destination.

For the purchase intent variable, often the variable of primary concern to marketing practitioners, the only area of significance among response groups involved multi-media or cross media (see Figure 1). Respondents who viewed a message first in publicity form and then viewed the message on a website were significantly more inclined to purchase (or visit) than those who only viewed an advertisement. All other response groups were significant to the control group except one. The group who saw only the ad had no more of a significant response toward purchase than the group who saw no message at all (control).

Figure 1
Differences in Purchase Intent by Treatment Group



Note: All means were significant against the control group (M=2.40) except ad only. The singular significant difference among stimulus groups was between pub-then-web and ad only.

Comparison with Advertising Versus Publicity Study

Contrasting the results of the current study with the authors' previous research (Loda and Coleman, 2005) comparing advertising and publicity with the same type of experiment on the

same variables provides interesting insights. Neither study found a significant difference among message types concerning attitude. Only the first study found a difference for publicity over advertising for the credibility variable. Both studies found a significant difference for publicity (either alone or in a sequence) on the message strength and purchase intent variables. In fact, the publicity-lead sequence in both studies produced some of the strongest results on the purchase intent variable (publicity-then-advertising reported in 2005 and publicity-then-web in the current study). Advertising-only was not significant for any variable in either study but was significantly present in sequencing effects.

Conclusion

The current study indicates that a website, used alone, can make a significant difference in message strength. However, to impact purchase intent, a multimedia campaign is necessary. A website viewed alone does not generate greater purchase intent, even among an audience of college students who use web resources more than most other cohorts. This study is corroborated by the authors' first study in recommending a publicity-first sequence. Specifically, publicity should kick off a campaign followed by ads either on a website or in ad advertisement. In addition, this research suggests that advertising alone has no significant impact on any variable. Ads must be used in combination with publicity or the web to create an adequate response among potential customers.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Researchers in several disciplines are calling for academic research to attend to practical applications as well as to developing concepts (Swain, 2004; Li and Petrick, 2008). Therefore, what follows are media mix strategies suggested from this research that can potentially help marketers increase their effectiveness and improve their accountability.

Make Sure Your Marketing Efforts Include Publicity

Publicity can improve the effectiveness of your website and the effectiveness of your advertising. Marketers who do not have a planned and organized PR effort should consider starting one, complete with resources solely devoted to the publicity function. Publicity is just as important, if not more so, than advertising. Assess whether your marketing resources are allocated with this in mind.

Be Strategic with Your Website

Marketers should devote resources to drive traffic to their website for extended content. As you make this happen, you need to understand what potential customers need to see to strengthen their purchase intent. Conduct the necessary research to understand which of your product, service or destination benefits are primary drivers in the decision making process. Then make sure your website prominently features these benefits.

Use Cross Media Marketing

Website marketing alone does not move the needle. Advertising alone has little impact but plays an important complementary role. Publicity is a powerful marketing tool. Use these elements

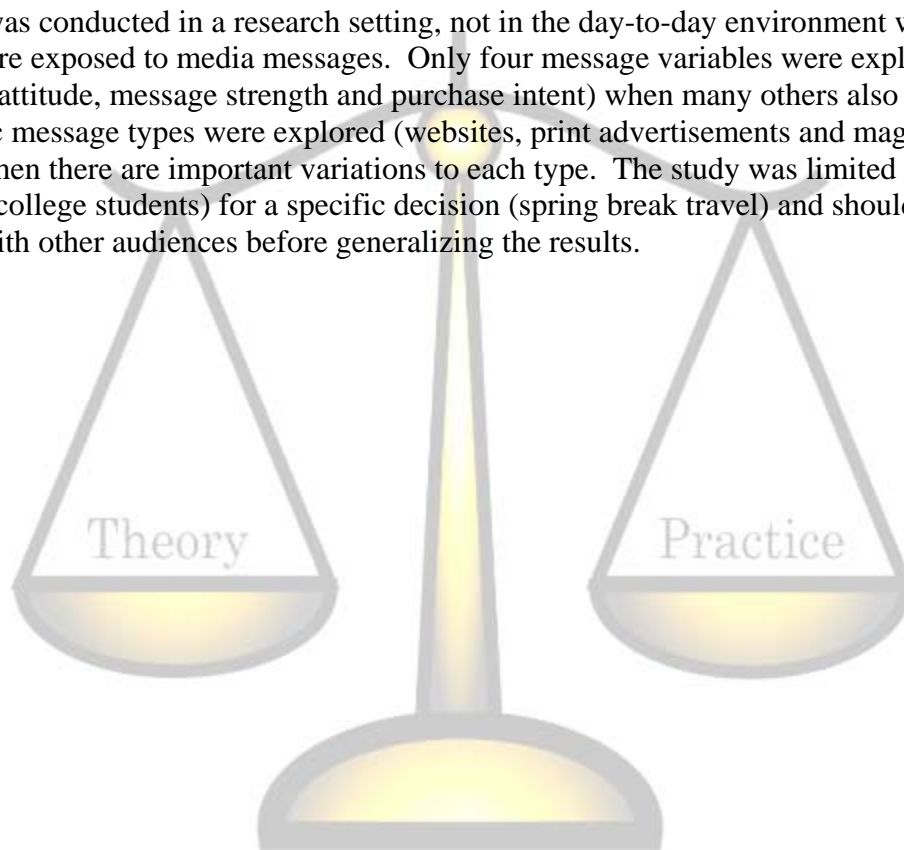
together to create the greatest impact. Integrated marketing communications will likely provide the best return.

Remember that Marketing is a Process

The timing of messages is important. This research suggests that you should begin campaigns with a publicity effort. This may require a shift in your normal operating procedures. Consider the lead time required for a thorough publicity campaign and adjust your due dates and work schedules accordingly.

Limitations

This study was conducted in a research setting, not in the day-to-day environment where consumers are exposed to media messages. Only four message variables were explored (credibility, attitude, message strength and purchase intent) when many others also exist. Three very specific message types were explored (websites, print advertisements and magazine publicity) when there are important variations to each type. The study was limited to a specific population (college students) for a specific decision (spring break travel) and should be replicated with other audiences before generalizing the results.



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