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# Consumer Perceptions of Brand Mention in Magazines by Level of Involvement

Charles J. Quigley\*, Sharmin Attaran\*\*, Elaine M. Notarantonio\*\*\*

## ABSTRACT

Consumer perceptions of different methods of information delivery in magazines were studied. Three information delivery methods (advertisements, advertorials, editorials) and two types of consumer products (high involvement, low involvement) were used to evaluate reader perceptions of selling intent, source credibility, and purchase intention. Significant differences between high and low involvement products and between editorials, advertorials, and advertisements in perceived selling intent, perceived credibility, and purchase intention were found. Gender and prior knowledge of the product were also significant. Implications for marketers and policy-makers are also discussed.

**Keywords:** Product Involvement, Brand Mention, Consumer Behavior, Advertisements, Product Placement

## INTRODUCTION

Magazines remain a vital source of information and entertainment for consumers. Brands realize the significance of consumer loyalty to magazines via monthly subscriptions, therefore, many brands promote their products and services in magazines in a variety of ways. These may include traditional print ads, advertorials or through brand placement (mention) within an article or editorial. Each strategy has the potential to influence a consumer's decision differently. The focus of this research is to examine consumer perceptions of these strategies within magazines. The persuasion knowledge model, which stipulates that when an advertising attempt is recognized, the message is impacted by how consumers interpret the intent of the source which can discredit the message, source, or brand (Friestad and Wright 1994), is used as the basis of this study. Previous research using the persuasion knowledge theory has focused on TV advertising (Lawlor and Prothero, 2008), newspapers, and the internet (Moore and Rodgers, 2005) with little research focusing on magazines (Van Reijmersdal, Neijens, & Smit, 2010). Also, the effect of advertorials in magazines on perceived credibility and purchase intent has not been studied.

The results of this research can help brands make decisions about where to place their ads as well as how magazines can better provide information to their readers. Perceived credibility may be part of consumers' decision heuristic and therefore influence their decisions. In addition, unlike traditional advertising, when selling intent is not clearly disclosed as when a brand is mentioned in editorials, brands may want to consider the ethical implications.

Consumer magazines publish articles on a variety of topics pertaining to the subject matter of the publication. These magazines publish articles and editorials that appear to be objective and unbiased. The subject matter of these articles are based upon the special interest of the magazine reader. For example, articles about new fashion trends are published in fashion magazines and weight training advice is published in health and fitness magazines. These articles almost always mention or recommend brands within the context of the topic. More often than not these brands are also advertised within the publication. The readership however, may interpret positive information about a product mentioned in a feature article as an unbiased and objective brand endorsement. On the other hand, in a paid advertisement, the reader is more likely to be aware of the selling intent which may affect the

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perceived credibility of the message and its source and negatively affect their feelings about the product (Attaran, Quigley, & Notarantonio, 2015).

The effect that the method of information presentation has on the likelihood of purchase is the focus of this research. The constructs and the relationship among these constructs that are examined in this research are based on the persuasion knowledge model proposed by (Friestad & Wright, 1994). This model presumes that consumers are skeptical about tactics marketers may use to persuade or influence them. Consumers accumulate knowledge about how, why, and when a message influences them in order to help them cope with persuasive attempts. People learn about persuasion from personal experience, family, friends, and the media. Based on their accumulated knowledge, consumers begin to interpret information differently. They may pay less attention to the information and decrease their level of involvement and engagement (Friestad, 1995). As a result, marketers must continually to change their strategies to accommodate consumers' adaptation to stimuli (Friestad, 1995).

When consumers acquire knowledge of marketers' persuasive attempts, they may develop skepticism toward the product or brand and lower their likelihood of purchase (Ngamvichaikit & Beise-Zee, 2014; Verhellen, Oates, De Pelsmacker, & Dens, 2014). This may also result in a lower level of trust toward the source of the persuasion. Consumers are more susceptible to influence when they believe a source is "credible". Source credibility is a function of trustworthiness and perceived expertise. (Sternthal, Dholakia, & Leavitt, 1978). When consumers are exposed to information from a credible source, there is a greater likelihood of persuasive influence (Chaiken & Durairaj, 1994).

Marketers have found multiple ways to provide information about products and brands in an attempt to disguise their persuasive intent. The use of advertorials have increased as marketers attempt to mitigate perceived persuasion of traditional advertisements. Brand mention within editorials is also used to disguise persuasive intent. Advertisements and advertorials in magazines are often separated from editorial content. Advertisements and advertorials are usually presented on their own page or clustered together towards the front or back of the publication. The separation of ads and advertorials from

editorial content has the potential to influence the readers' perception of persuasive intent (Fitch & Yoon 2010). When an advertising attempt is recognized, the message is impacted by how consumers interpret the intent of the source which can discredit the message, source, or brand (Friestad & Wright 1994). However, when a brand is mentioned within the context of an editorial, the persuasive intent is not always obvious.

Previous research using the persuasion knowledge theory has focused on TV advertising (Lawlor & Prothero, 2008), newspapers, and the internet (Moore & Rodgers, 2005). Little research using this theory has focused on magazines (Van Reijmersdal et al., 2010). Also, the effect of advertorials in magazines on perceived credibility and purchase intent has not been studied. This study examines differences in persuasion knowledge, source credibility, and purchase intention between advertisements, advertorials, and editorials for high and low involvement products.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Source Credibility and Persuasion

Source credibility is defined in terms of two components: perceived expertise and trustworthiness (Sternthal et al., 1978). Perceived expertise refers to the degree of perceived competence or proficiency a source is believed to possess. "Trustworthiness refers to the degree to which an audience perceives the statements made by a communicator to be ones that the speaker considers valid" (Sternthal et al., 1978, p. 287). When a source is believed to be credible, the information provided by the source is more likely to exert influence. (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994; McGinnies & Ward, 1980). This influence appears to be stronger when consumers are aware of the source before they are exposed to a message compared to after exposure (Nan, 2013).

Cameron (1994) posited that lower trust, perceived bias, influence intent and direction of internal attribution were more likely to result in lower source credibility. This suggests that the source of an advertisement may not be considered credible based on the assumption that marketers advertise for personal gain and tend to provide only a positive view of products while avoiding negative information (Cameron, 1994; Eisend, 2006; Kamins

& Assael, 1987). Balasubramanian (1994) describes the difference between publicity and advertisements in terms of control and credibility. Marketers create advertisements, therefore consumers understand that the advertising message is biased, whereas with publicity, an objective endorser supports a brand and is therefore perceived as more credible.

The reader's recognition of a persuasion attempt can negatively impact the credibility of the source (Friestad & Wright, 1994; Campbell & Kirmani, 2008; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998). Persuasion knowledge and source credibility both have an effect on the success of brand mention in persuasive communications. "Brand Mention" is defined as the placement of a brand for promotional purposes (Attaran et al., 2015). Brand mention occurs within the context of editorials or articles whereas brands are promoted in advertorials and advertisements.

#### *Editorials*

Editorials are passages written by the editor of a magazine or newspaper. These sections are meant to hold no other opinion other than the editor's. Editorial space can be secured through publicity, where the source is not identified. Brand information is provided within editorials in a concept called *brand integration*. The inclusion of price or purchase location information is occasionally used within editorials.

Some research has shown that overall the credibility of editorials is higher than that of advertisements (Dix & Phau, 2009). It is assumed that an objective party recommends the brand and it is believed the party has no self-serving reason to do so. (Eisend & Küster, 2011). Consumers are not as inclined to read traditional advertising messages due to their awareness of the paid content. However, this awareness often does not exist with brand mention in articles so consumers may pay more attention to an editorial message (Van Reijmersdal et al., 2010).

Some consumers are aware that brand mentions in editorials are sponsored (Dix & Phau, 2009; Kim, Pasadeos, & Barban, 2001; Cameron, 1994) in the form of support of advertising in the publication or gifts to editors, and therefore, may impact the publication's credibility. Researchers have found that readers may find these efforts of brand integration to be misleading (Cameron, 1994; Kim et al., 2001; Lord & Putrevu, 1993).

#### *Advertisements*

An advertisement is a paid communication that identifies the message sponsor (Eisend & Kuster, 2011). Advertising's goal is to promote the sponsor's brand and therefore is not expected to be part of an objective article or program (Dix & Phau, 2009). The primary advantage of advertisements is the amount of control over the content. Consumers are knowledgeable that paid advertising's goal is to influence consumers in some manner.

#### *Advertorials*

Advertorials blur the line between advertisements and editorials and are becoming more popular with the growing skepticism of consumers towards traditional ad formats. Advertorials are paid communication inserts in publications (Cameron, 1994) executed in the editorial style of the host publication (Goodlad, Eadie, Kinnin, & Raymond 1997). Advertorials have the appearance of an editorial article in terms of relative length. Most or all of the content is aimed to influence the audience (Stapel, 1994; Fry 1989). Advertorials enjoy the advantages of traditional advertising and editorial articles in that marketers have complete control of the message and at the same time the appearance of being unbiased (Eisend & Kuster 2011; Lord & Putrevu 1993).

Since advertorials don't have the same appearance as advertisements, they may command greater attention (Elliot & Speck 1998; Robinson, Ozanne, & Cohen 2002). Advertorials are also able to offer more detail and information than traditional advertisements (Kaufman, 1984) and therefore, keep the interest of the audience longer (Robinson et al., 2002).

Studies suggest advertorials are considered more credible since they resemble editorials (Eisend & Kuster, 2011). Advertorials are not always labeled or are labeled inconspicuously. The positive effects of unlabeled advertorials may result from the advantage that publicity is more credible (Kim et al., 2001) found that subjects perceived advertorials, whether or not they were labeled, to be advertisements, rather than unbiased editorial content. However, most participants did not recall the presence of a label. It may not suffice for labels to alert consumers of the selling intent of an ad. (Cameron, 1994; McAllister, 1996; Kim et al., 2001), or that persuasion knowledge is low. Other studies show that advertorials are deceptive and can damage media credibility (Robinson et al., 2002).

## Product Placement as a form of Advertising

Marketers are always on the hunt for the most persuasive location for product promotions. One of the most popular places to use product placement is in movies, where products are imbedded in movies or TV shows and used in a specific context. Product placement can also be found in magazines, such as in editorials, advertorials and advertisements. Product placement is more popular than traditional advertisements because it is not perceived as a persuasive message (Balasubramanian, 1994). Product placement used in a high-fit advertising strategy can minimize the consumer's judgment or skepticism about the company's motive and facilitate the acceptance of the advertising strategy (Shin 420). Product placement is popular in movies and television shows, but since the advent of "zapping" allows consumers to fast-forward through traditional advertisements, product placement in magazines may be worth analyzing (Avery & Ferraro, 2000).

## High and Low Involvement Products

The designation of products into high and low involvement categories is based on consumer involvement theory. Involvement refers to a person's perception of the importance of a stimulus relevant to their interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985). High involvement products are ones which consumers exert greater effort to identify and to compare purchase options. These types of products possess greater risk for the consumer and tend to be more complex and expensive. Multiple alternatives are usually compared and consumers seek out information to base their choices on. Low involvement products do not require extensive decision making and are usually bought without much thought by consumers. These products are low risk and are usually less expensive. Information needs are low and consumers exert little effort to acquire information.

## CONCEPTUALIZATION

Brand and product information presented in traditional advertisements that clearly identify the company paying for the ads may result in the reader recognizing the persuasive intent of the source. Information presented in a magazine article is often seen as objective editorial form

which is supposed to include the opinion of the editor, may be interpreted as unbiased and objective, including positive brand statements. Advertorials may be perceived as an attempt by the source to disguise the persuasive intent of the message.

The reader's perception of the persuasive intent of the information contained in the advertisement, advertorial, or editorial will influence the perceived credibility of the source. If the information is perceived as an attempt to sell them a product or service, the reader will develop skepticism toward the message and the credibility of the message source will decrease. This will result in a lessening of the persuasive ability of the information and reduce the likelihood of purchase.

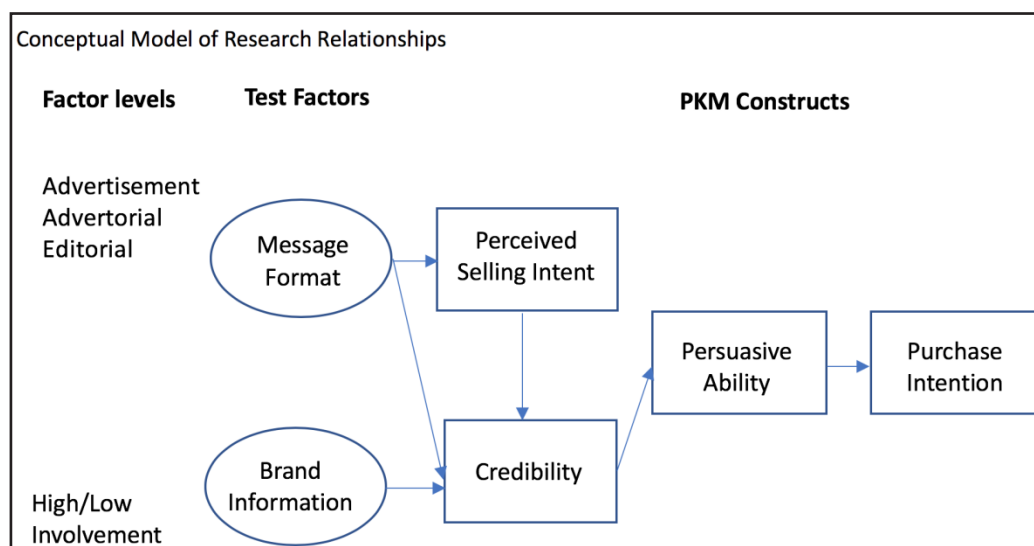
If the information is perceived to be objective and the reader does not perceive it as an attempt to sell them a product, the credibility of the source is strengthened. If the information is contained in an editorial from a magazine that focuses on certain topics and the reader associates expertise with the publication, this will further increase the perceived credibility of the source and increase the persuasive ability of the information. However, editorial content is not free of advertiser influence (Rinallo & Basuroy, 2009) found that companies who advertise with a publisher are given preferential treatment within the publication. It is unclear; however whether readers are aware that this is a common practice. It is also unclear whether consumer understand the selling intent of brand mention or how credibility and purchase intention are affected.

To avoid negative consumer attitudes, strategies using product placements within editorials which integrate content sought by consumers reading the magazine may result in less persuasion knowledge of the brand message. Consumers readily recognize the selling intent of an advertisement. Advertorials may provide a balance between the two formats since they are usually formatted similar to an editorial and may result in less persuasion knowledge than traditional advertisements. Product placement in editorials results in less persuasion knowledge, followed by advertorials and then advertisements.

The type of product about which information is being conveyed may also influence the perception of credibility, persuasive knowledge, and persuasion. For high involvement products, the importance of information

relative to their purchase decision is greater than for low involvement products. This should result in credibility of the information source and the amount of persuasive knowledge the consumer has concerning the information

exposed to be more important for high involvement goods and less important for low involvement goods. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model.



## RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Marketers use information to influence consumers to purchase their products and services. Information is provided to reinforce existing attitudes and to change others. The ability of the marketer to successfully accomplish their objectives is linked to their ability to persuade consumers that their products are best suited for the consumer. Magazines are a source of information that consumers use to acquire information concerning a variety of topics. There are a variety of methods marketers can use to provide information to consumers using magazines, including traditional advertisements, product mention in editorials and the use of advertorials. Which of these options is most effective in persuading consumers? The persuasion knowledge model (Friestad & Wright, 1994) provides a basis for understanding the impact that information has on a consumer's purchase decision making. The type of product being promoted may also influence the perceived credibility of the information and the ability of the information to persuade consumers.

When consumers recognize the selling intent of a message, the credibility of the source is often lessened. As a result, attitude toward the brand is impacted. This is consistent with persuasion knowledge theory which suggests that consumers are affected by their knowledge

of the intentions of the message. If they believe a message is meant to influence them, their attitudes towards the source or the brand may become less favorable.

An editorial can convey the brand messages without identifying the sponsor. As a result the persuasive intent of the message is not obvious, thus the consumer is less likely to develop skepticism.

Because the layout and format of advertorials are similar in appearance to editorials, consumers are less likely to recognize the sponsored content. Advertorials may therefore result in less persuasion knowledge than traditional advertisements. It is less likely that consumers will attend to the selling intent, therefore not jeopardizing credibility or purchase intention towards the brand.

For high involvement goods, consumer require more information and use multiple sources to obtain the information. There is greater risk associated with this type of purchase than for a low involvement low risk situation. It is likely that consumers will attach greater importance to the credibility of the source information. However, information conveyed through mass media, including magazines, may be perceived as high in persuasive knowledge. For low involvement situations, mass media may be a primary source of information while personal sources are more important in high involvement

situations. Personal sources are perceived as less biased, more credible and have a greater impact on purchase intention than mass media.

This research seeks to understand perceptions of credibility between advertorials and brand mention in magazine articles. It is the researchers' expectation that the findings of (Dix & Phau, 2009; Eisend & Kuster, 2011) and (Cameron, 1994) will be supported. Moreover, the present study expands previous studies and compares advertisements as well as advertorials and editorial content for both low involvement and high involvement products.

To test these relationships, the following hypotheses are evaluated:

### SOURCE CREDIBILITY

H1a: Sources will be considered more credible when viewing an editorial rather than an advertisement.

H1b: Sources will be considered more credible when viewing an editorial rather than an advertorial.

H1c: Sources will be considered more credible when viewing an advertorial rather than an advertisement.

H1d: Sources will be perceived as more credible for high involvement products than for low involvement product.

### Selling Intent

H2a: Perceived selling intent is greater for advertisements than for editorials.

H2b: Perceived selling intent is greater for advertorials than for editorials.

H2c: Perceived selling intent is greater for advertisements than for advertorials.

H2d: Perceived selling intent is greater for low involvement products than for high involvement products.

### Purchase Intention

H3a: Purchase intention for a product featured in an editorial will be greater than in an advertisement.

H3b: Purchase intention for a product featured in an advertorial will be greater than in an editorial.

H3c: Purchase intention for a product featured in an advertorial will be greater than in an advertisement.

H1d: Purchase intention for low involvement products will be greater than for high involvement products.

## RESEARCH METHOD

A total of six hundred seventy-nine subjects participated in the study over a six month period. In the first stage of the study, three hundred eleven subjects were exposed to either an advertisement, an advertorial, or an editorial which contained information about a skin care product. The advertisement, advertorial, and editorial were selected from magazines by the researchers. In the second stage of the study, a different group of three hundred sixty-eight subjects were exposed to an advertisement, an advertorial, or an editorial that contained information about an automobile. All subjects were second year students enrolled in an introductory Principles of Marketing course at a University located in New England. This introductory course is a requirement for all undergraduate students from all colleges in the university and participation in research studies is a course requirement. The first stage of the research occurred during the first four weeks of the Fall term and the second stage occurred during the first four weeks of the Spring term. Content related to the study, advertising and promotion, are covered during the last month of the course, thus student had no prior knowledge of the study subject matter.

Subjects took part in this study in the university's behavioral laboratory. Subjects were provided with a keyboard and computer monitor and placed in a station separated from other subjects. In each stage, subjects were randomly assigned to receive one of the three forms of information conveyance; an advertisement, an advertorial, or an editorial. The researchers selected the products used in each form after collecting and comparing numerous advertisements, advertorials, and editorials from multiple issues of magazines. For both stages, all forms of promotion were pre-tested by a panel of teaching and research professors for clarity and consistency of message content. The product categories used in both studies were relevant since subjects, who were college students are familiar with both types of products.

The stimuli were electronically reproduced and presented to subjects. Subjects were allowed as much time as they wanted to view the stimuli. After viewing, subjects were required to fill out a questionnaire which was electronically

administered. The research design, which includes stimuli used and the number of subjects randomly assigned to each treatment is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: Research Design**

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Levels</i>	<i>Information form</i>		
		<i>Advertisement</i>	<i>Advertorial</i>	<i>Editorial</i>
Involvement with product/service	Low involvement product: Cosmetic Products	Group 1 Neutrogena Acne Face Crème n = 105	Group 2 Proactive Face Products n = 102	Group 3 Beauty/Face Products n = 104
	High involvement product: Automobiles	Group 4 Subaru n=123	Group 5 SMART n = 123	Group 6 BMW Hydrogen 7 n = 122

## MEASUREMENT SCALE

To measure the constructs pertinent to the persuasion knowledge model a fifteen-item scale was used. Eight items in the scale were borrowed from source credibility scales used in previous research. The scales used in these studies measured multiple dimensions of source credibility (Ohanian 1990, Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell 2001; Till and Busler 2000). These dimensions are expertise, and trustworthiness. Reliability of these scales has ranged from alpha of 0.82 to 0.95. Convergent, discriminant and nomological validity had also been examined in these studies and researchers found the scales to provide acceptable measures of the trustworthiness and expertise of an information source. In addition to the eight credibility items, five items were included to measure purchase intent and two items to measure persuasive knowledge (perceived selling intent). Items used in prior studies to measure source credibility used semantic differentials. In this study, these items were reworded to allow the use of a balanced five- point likert scale.

Factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were used to verify the dimensionality of the items used to measure source credibility, persuasive knowledge, and purchase intention. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess scale reliability. Using average factor scores, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), analysis of variance (ANOVA), and test of means were used to assess the hypotheses.

## RESULTS

The course from which students were recruited was a sophomore level course and most (99%) of the subjects reported their age in the 18–21 year range. Approximately half of the subjects were female. The majority of subjects had no experience with the product described in the study.

## FACTOR ANALYSIS

To verify the content validity of the scale used, factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the fifteen original items. The sample was randomly split and a principle component factor analysis was performed using varimax rotation to interpret the factors. Table II presents the results of this analysis. Included in Table 2 are the coefficient alphas for multi item factors. Four factors emerged, accounting for 63.5% of variation among the fifteen items. Two items, "I like what I just read about the product(s)" and "Many people would want to buy this product after reading this" did not load highly on any factor and were removed from further analysis.

Using a factor loading of 0.5 or above (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black 1995) to interpret the factors, six items loaded on the first factor. Each item reflected a source characteristic of believability, trust, or honesty. Therefore, this factor was denoted as credibility. Cronbach's alpha for this factor (0.80) indicates the scale is reliable. Four items loaded highly on the second factor. Each item reflected purchase intentions about the item conveyed



in the information. This factor was labeled purchase intention and the alpha coefficient (0.82) indicates that this scale is also reliable. Only one item loaded highly on the third factor, conveying the intent of the information. This factor was labeled Information Intent. The last factor was also single item factor, labeled objectivity.

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the other half of the subjects. Results confirm the original factor analysis with a four factor solution accounting for 61.5% of variation among the 15 items. Items loading on each factor were identical.

**Table 2: Factor Analysis: Rotated Component Matrix**

Item	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
Factor 1– Credibility (31.8%) Alpha = 0.802				
I trust the information in what I just read.	.883	.103	-.091	-.003
I believe the information provided in what I just read.	.859	.137	-.107	-.008
The information about the product(s) I just read about is honest.	.833	.040	-.039	.103
The information about the product(s) I just read about is believable.	.750	.196	.024	-.008
The source of what I just read is knowledgeable.	.646	.095	.236	.011
The content of what I just read represents the content source’s true beliefs about the product.	.545	.018	.184	.430
Factor 2 – Purchase Intention (16.4%) Alpha = 0.816				
I would buy this if I happened to see it in a store.	.028	.863	.016	.000
After reading this, I would buy this product.	.029	.857	.085	.040
I would actively seek out this product.	.179	.756	.009	.022
I would go online to buy this item.	.044	.712	-.337	.004

## MANOVA

Subjects’ response on each item defining each factor were summed then averages computed to obtain a factor score for each subject on each factor. Multivariate analysis of variance was used to evaluate the effect of the treatments on the four factors representing subjects’ perceptions of source credibility, Information intent, purchase intention, and objectivity. Included in the analysis were the covariates gender, prior product information, and major.

As presented in Table III, the main effects of information form (advertisement, advertorial, editorial) and of level of involvement (high, low) are highly significant ( $\alpha < 0.00$ ) and the interaction of the main effects is also highly significant ( $\alpha < 0.00$ ). Prior information about the product ( $\alpha < 0.00$ ) and the subjects’ gender also have significant effects ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) while their major has no significant impact on the dependent measures.

These findings address the hypotheses associated with both the form in which the information is presented and the type of product. This analysis indicates that the method of information presentation has a significant effect on

consumers’ perception of the information. These findings also indicate that the type of product has a significant effect on consumers’ perceptions of information as it is presented through advertisements, advertorials, and editorials.

**Table 3 MANOVA**

Effect		F	Sig.	Observed Power
Information Form (IF)	Wilks’ Lambda	7.024	.000	1.000
Involvement Level (IL)	Wilks’ Lambda	16.123	.000	1.000
IF * IL	Wilks’ Lambda	4.186	.000	.995
Gender	Wilks’ Lambda	3.003	.018	.800
Prior Information	Wilks’ Lambda	15.825	.000	1.000
Major	Wilks’ Lambda	1.618	.168	.500

## ANOVA

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the effect of the information form on each factor for low involvement and high involvement products. These results are presented in Table IV which includes mean factor scores for low and high involvement products. This table also contains the results of post-hoc tests of individual treatment levels.

Significant differences between the three forms of information presentation were found for perceived credibility and purchase intention ( $\alpha < 0.00$ ). Differences were also found for the perception of selling intent but at a lower level of significance ( $\alpha < 0.10$ ). No difference was

found for objectivity. Post-hoc tests identified a significant difference ( $\alpha < 0.00$ ) between the credibility associated with advertorials and with editorials. Means of each factor indicate that editorials are perceived as more credible than advertorials. This supports H1b, however significant differences were not found between advertisements and editorials or between advertisements and advertorials on perceived credibility. Thus neither H1a nor H1c are supported. For purchase intention, post-hoc tests revealed significant differences between editorials and advertisements, between editorials and advertorials, and between advertorials and advertisements. A comparison of means for each form of information presentation supports H3a, H3b, and H3c.

**Table 4: ANOVA Factor Means for Information Form**

<i>Product</i>	<i>Factor</i>	<i>Advertisement (A1)</i>	<i>Advertorial (A2)</i>	<i>Editorial (E)</i>	<i>Post Hoc Scheffe</i>
Combined	Credibility <sup>1</sup>	3.38	3.29	3.50	A2-E <sup>1</sup>
	Purchase Intention <sup>2</sup>	2.45	2.62	2.83	A1-E <sup>a</sup> , A2-E <sup>2</sup> , A1-A2 <sup>3</sup>
	Selling Intent <sup>3</sup>	3.82	3.83	3.70	
	Objectivity	3.30	3.20	3.16	
Low Involvement	Credibility	3.11	3.18	3.35	
	Purchase Intention	2.58	2.73	2.78	
	Selling Intent	4.56	4.52	4.08	
	Objectivity	3.25	3.31	3.04	
High Involvement	Credibility	3.61	3.39	3.64	
	Purchase Intention	2.37	2.46	2.73	
	Selling Intent	4.43	4.25	4.12	
	Objectivity	3.34	3.08	3.26	

<sup>1</sup> =  $\alpha \leq 0.01$ ; <sup>2</sup> =  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ; <sup>3</sup> =  $\alpha \leq 0.10$

Although the ANOVA found a marginally significant difference ( $\alpha < 0.10$ ) in perceived selling intent between the three forms of information presentation, post hoc test did not reveal significant differences between individual forms of presentation. Thus there is insufficient evidence to support H2a, H2b, or H2c.

## Test of Means

To evaluate differences between low involvement and high involvement products for each factor for the three forms of information presentation, tests of means were conducted. Table V presents the results of these tests.

**Table V Test of Means**

	<i>Advertisement</i>		<i>Advertorial</i>		<i>Editorial</i>	
	T	$\alpha$	t	A	t	$\alpha$
Credibility	6.21	0.00	2.41	0.02	4.42	0.00
Purchase Intention	1.90	0.06	2.92	0.00	0.82	0.41
Persuasive Intent	4.83	0.00	5.91	0.00	1.39	0.17

Test of means indicates significant differences exist in credibility between low and high involvement products for each form of information presentation. Comparing mean values indicates that credibility is greater for high involvement products for advertisements, advertorials, and editorials. This evidence supports H1d.

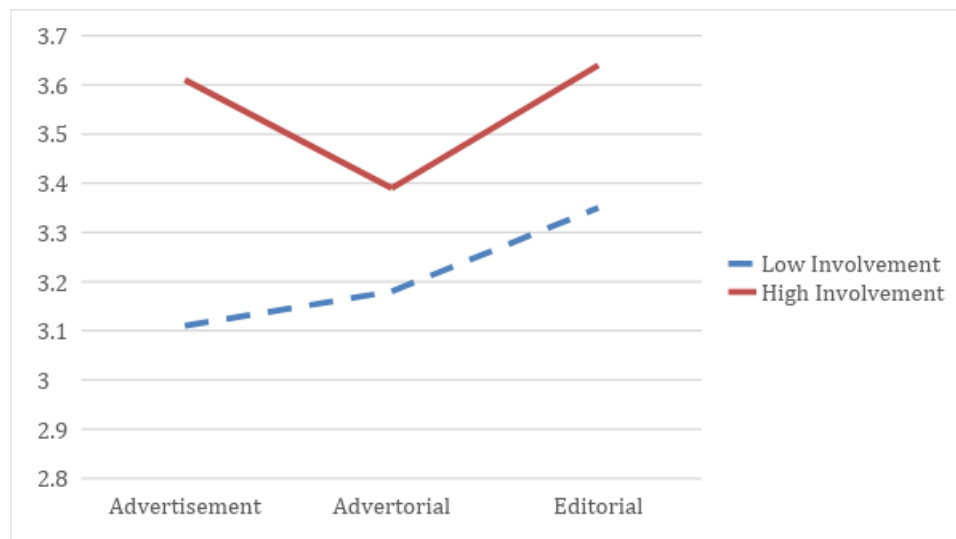
Comparing means for selling intent indicates significant differences exist between high involvement and low involvement products for advertisements and advertorials, but not for editorials. Mean values indicate that subjects perceive selling intent higher for low involvement products than for high involvement products in advertisements and in advertorials. However, subjects perceive selling intent for high involvement products to be greater than low involvement products for information presented in editorials. Thus H2d is not supported.

A significant difference ( $\alpha < 0.00$ ) was found between low and high involvement products in purchase intention

for advertorials and a marginally significant ( $\alpha < 0.10$ ) difference in advertisements. Mean values indicate that purchase intentions are higher for low involvement products than for high involvement products. These findings lend support to H3d, however the lack of a significant difference between high and low involvement products for editorials indicates H3d is not supported.

### Interaction of Information Form and Product Involvement

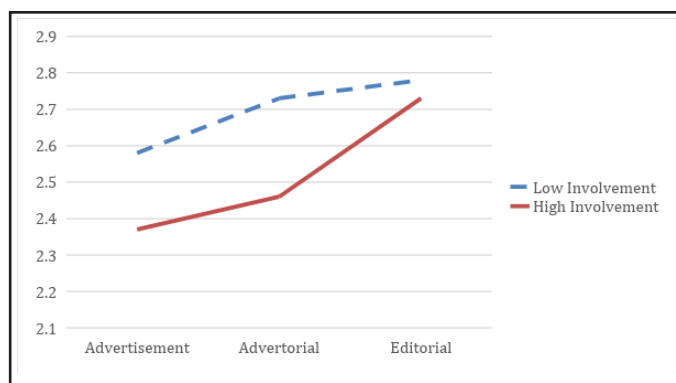
As indicated in Table II, the interaction between the form of information presentations and the level of involvement with the product was significant ( $\alpha < 0.00$ ). Test of between subject effects identified significant interaction effects for credibility, purchase intention, and selling intent. Plots of interactions on these factors are presented in Figure II, Figure III, and Figure IV.



**Fig. 2: Credibility**

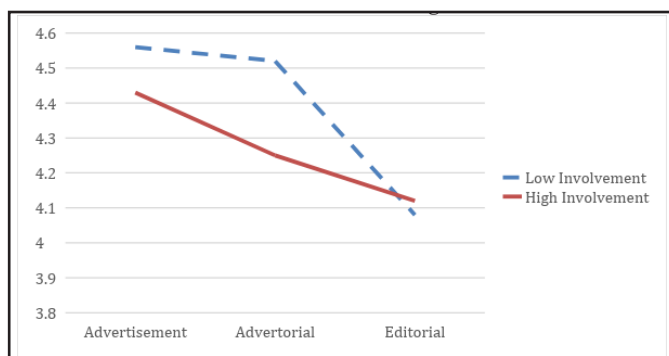
As demonstrated Figure I, credibility for high involvement products is high in advertisements, drops in advertorials and again increases in editorials. For low involvement

products, credibility follows the hypothesized relationships; low in advertisements, increasing in advertorials and then highest in editorials.



**Fig. 3: Purchase Intention**

As shown in Figure III, purchase intention also follows the hypothesized relationships for low involvement and high involvement products. For both high and low involvement products, purchase intention is lowest in advertisements, increases for advertorials, and peaks for editorials. However, the difference in purchase intention between high and low involvement products is greatest for advertorials and lowest for editorials.



**Fig. 4: Selling Intent**

Figure IV demonstrates that perceived selling intent for both low and high involvement products follows hypothesized relationships; highest for advertisements, decreasing for advertorials and lowest for editorials. The difference between low and high involvement products in perceived selling intent is greatest for advertorials and nearly disappearing for editorials.

## DISCUSSION

Based upon the results reported, it is demonstrated that the whether information is presented in an editorial article, an advertisement or an advertorial, perceived credibility will vary. The same is true of perceived selling

intention and reported purchase intention. However, there was no difference in perceived objectivity of information conveyed in the different forms of presentation.

However, the higher perceived credibility of editorials as compared to advertisements and advertorials but not between the latter two can be attributable to the presence of disclosures. Advertorials, by law are required to include a disclosure. Consumers read editorial content in magazines to gain information or be entertained on a topic of interest. There are no disclosures on editorial articles. As explained by (Dix & Phau, 2009), the consumer attaches a higher level of credibility (trustworthiness and expertise) to the editorial message.

With respect to purchase intention, there is a greater likelihood of purchasing a product mentioned in an editorial than in an advertorial or an advertisement. Also, consumers are more likely to purchase the product in the advertorial than in the advertisement. However, respondents are not more likely to purchase a product featured in an advertorial than in an editorial.

A possible explanation for this is that the amount of product information in both editorials and advertorials is greater than that in an advertisement. Based on a study by (Kim & Lennon, 2000), the amount of product or service information perceived while watching television shopping programs was positively related to purchase intention (Kim & Lennon, 2000). It is reasonable to extend this finding to advertisements, advertorials or editorials may influence purchase intention. This is supported by (Jasper & Ouellette, 1994) who found a positive relationship between the amount of product information and purchase intention.

Consumers clearly perceive the selling intent of advertisements and advertorials, while this does not appear to be the case for editorials. It is intuitive that readers' goals of reading a magazine article are for entertainment and/or information and there are no required disclosures for such content. As noted earlier, there exists a regulatory requirement to disclose the selling intent of advertorials. According to (Martin & Smith, 2008) disbelief, distrust, and suspicion are likely to be activated only when consumers are aware of the persuasion attempt and/or presence of the persuasion agent – as would be the case with a required disclosure. When either the attempt or the role of the agent is not evident, as the present study has

demonstrated is the case with editorials, consumers are left to process concealed marketing efforts without the defense mechanisms that usually guide their responses to persuasion.

As stated earlier, the persuasion knowledge model posits that as consumers are repeatedly exposed to persuasion attempts, they begin to recognize them as such and become less engaged with material, discount current spokespeople, or are distracted from the intended messages (Friestad, 1995). This study confirms that readers are aware of the selling intent of traditional advertisements. Because consumers are less aware of the selling intent of editorials, they will not be as likely to discredit the message or the source.

However, this finding leads to questioning the ethical implications as well. For example: Is it the intent of publishers to mislead consumers? Are they being led to believe that a magazine editorial or article is completely objective and unbiased? Future research may focus on these questions.

### MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are implications for both marketers and public policy makers. Marketers must consider that, although consumers perceive editorial content to be more credible than advertisements or advertorials, there is the danger that brand mention in editorial can boomerang in the long term. According to (Notarantonio & Quigley, 2009), once consumers become aware of a persuasion attempt through a seemingly objective source (e.g. word-of-mouth or editorial content), it may have a positive effect initially, but in the long term results in lower purchase intention as compared to a traditional advertising approach. The reason for this is that if the reader becomes aware of the selling intent of the editorial, they perceive a certain degree of deception; whereas, with traditional advertising, consumers are well-aware of the selling intent due to required disclosures. Therefore, although there may be some positive consumer response in the short-term, marketers must use caution in implementing a strategy that, in the long run, may jeopardize customer loyalty.

Consumers do not develop skepticism or counter arguments when the selling intent or sponsor is not evident. Perceived credibility may be part of consumers'

decision heuristic and therefore influence the decision. Requiring in ad disclosure might be desirable when brand mention in editorials is sponsored or paid. They may also consider requiring editors to disclose a publication's policy regarding the relationship between a sponsor's advertising expenditures and amount of editorial coverage provided to that sponsor.

### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Participants were drawn from students registered in a foundations of marketing class. Since these students have an interest in business and marketing, future studies should include non-business students. The present study evaluated neither the impact of age nor gender on consumer perceptions. Future research should examine these variables as there may be strategic implications. Comparing perceptions across various media may be examined. For example, are perceptions of credibility, purchase intention and selling intention be impacted when a radio announcer touts the benefits of a brand during regular programming as compared to an advertisement for the brand? With the competition for the consumers' attention, it is crucial that companies identify innovative solutions to this audience erosion problem. Engagement with the brand is often the key to success and this is often achieved with social medial delivery of information. The various methods of information delivery via social media might be examined. Future research should also examine these variables in a business-to-business context.

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