

Attitude towards Advertising and Information Seeking Behavior – A Structural Equation Modeling Approach

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Abstract

Today marketers are much interested in finding factors influencing attitude towards advertising. Past researches suggest that individuals use advertisement for three basis purposes viz. information seeking, entertainment, social expression and may influence attitude towards advertising. This research investigates the influence of information seeking behavior on attitude towards advertising using Pollay & Mittal Model. Research further investigates relationship of demographic variables with information seeking, and finally various sources referred & frequency to referring by both information seekers & non-information seekers. Model confirmation in AMOS 18.0 supports Pollay & Mittal Model of attitude towards advertising. Model further suggests that information seeking behavior is associated with positive attitude towards advertising.

Key Words: Advertising, AMOS, Attitude, Information seeking, Optimum Stimulus Level

1. Introduction

Advertising is generally criticized for the eroding credibility, manipulation and promotion of materialism and has been the subject of long debate since its inception. However it is a universal truth that advertising is ubiquitous in modern life (Akaka et al. 2010). Literatures in advertising suggest that advertising is either easily ignored by the individuals or is perceived to have little value. So with increasing alienation of consumers due to advertisement clutter and rising advertising cost; impact of attitude towards advertisement on success of advertising is of major interest of marketers (Mittal 1994; Spangenberg 2005). But even more important question is what affects individuals' attitude towards advertisement. Answer could be found through another question i.e. why do individuals read/watch advertisements and how do they use it.

1.1 Individuals' interest in advertisements & Information Seekers

Studies suggest that individuals use advertisement for three basis purposes- Information Seeking, Entertainment, Social Expression (Eadie et al. 2007; Gordon 2006; Couler et al. 2001). Individuals use advertisements to seek necessary, valuable information to support their purchase related decision making and to remain updated (Krishnam and Smith 1998). Information seeking is the process or activity of attempting to obtain information to bridge the knowledge gap (Kumar 2010). Information seekers bridge above knowledge gap & seek information of their interest by monitoring, browsing, searching, being aware. Information seekers also attach high value to the information that is accessible, updated, accurate and reliable (Bates 2002).

Bauer (2008) found that information seekers have higher Optimum Stimulus Level where as Zemke, Raines and Filipczak (2001) identified following behavioral characteristics of Information Seekers:

- Information seekers are avid readers
- Like lively and varied materials
- Prefer good access to various information sources
- Do heavy online chatting
- Devote substantial time for information searching

- Are frequent users of search engines (like Google, Ask, MSN etc).

1.2 Attitude towards advertising

Fishbein defined attitude as “a learned predisposition of human beings”. Based on this predisposition, “an individual would respond to an object or an idea”. Kotler stated that “an attitude is a person’s enduring favorable or unfavorable evaluations, emotional feelings, and action tendencies toward some object or idea”. Thus Attitude towards advertising is an important concept as it is concerned with the general attitude towards the broad institution of advertising and can influence the way a consumer responds to any advertising (Mehta 2000, El-Adly 2010). Individuals’ attitude towards advertising is affected by the individual experiences and belief constructs of individual about product information, hedonic/entertainment, falsity/no sense, good for the economy, and corrupt values/materialism (Pollay & Mittal 1993).

1.3 Information Seekers and their attitude towards advertising

According to Optimum Stimulation theory individuals strive to achieve a certain level of stimulation from environment in such that when overall stimulation is low process results in increased stimulation level and when overall stimulation is high process results in decreased stimulation level (Zentall 1975). Thus individuals with high Optimum Stimulus Level (OSL) will tendency to receive and explore external stimuli because of higher need for environmental stimulation (Raju 1980). As Information seeker is an individual with high Optimum Stimulus Level (OSL), they can be expected to be fond of taking in advertising as advertising stimuli are among the strong external stimuli (Bauer 2008 et al., Schiffman & Kanuk 2010). Further as literatures suggest one of the utility of advertisement is information seeking and information seekers who actively seek information from various sources including advertisements to might have a positive attitude towards the advertisements in general (Krishnam and Smith 1998, Bauer et al. 2008). This research paper aims at exploring information seekers and non-information seekers attitude towards advertising and making recommendations to the marketers on the basis of findings.

2. Literature review

Spangenberg et al. (2005) suggest that in modern era advertising is criticized because of eroding credibility, manipulation of facts, and promotion of materialistic values. He further suggests that such criticism can signal the distraction of consumer attention & lead to the potential loss of lucrative markets. Volkov et al. (2002) found that chances of careful processing of advertisements are lowered by the high number of advertisements competing for individuals’ attention on a daily basis. Limited time and mental resources make it difficult for the audience to dedicate sufficient attention to most advertisements. Akihiro et al. (2007) suggest that informativeness and credibility of the advertising message have the greatest impact on consumers’ attitude towards advertising and marketers should work hard on these aspects to bring positive ad attitude. Zanot (1984) suggests a negative trend in public opinion about advertising during the 1960s and 1970s. Further some research has shown that the public’s attitude towards advertising has been declining over time (e.g. Muehling, 1987), while others have shown a more favorable evaluation of advertising (Shavitt et al., 1998). Alabdali (2010) suggests a critical role of demographic variables on attitude towards advertisements. Dan (2008) suggests that men, elderly and those with higher levels of education of the whole sample hold less favorable attitudes toward advertising thus confirms the impact of demographic variables viz. sex, age and education on advertising attitude.

Becker (1976) found that an individual’s propensity to search and use information partly determines his attitude toward advertising. In this regard it is possible to differentiate two archetypical consumers on opposite ends of a continuum. At the high-end of the continuum individuals characterized by a high degree of information sensitivity can be detected. They are commonly called “Information Seekers”. Solomon (2002) suggests that information seeking has often been compared to a rational problem solving process, where a gap in knowledge triggers a conscious search for information, which may apply to some situations, but in most cases the information-seeking process is dynamic and changeable. It is dependent on the context and to a large extent on the individual performing it. He further suggests that some people may plan and structure their searches, while others gather information in a more flexible and spontaneous fashion. The reasons behind different information approaches may lie in the context, but also be due to the person’s inner processes and needs. Such persons are information seekers. Hoffman and Novak (1996) suggest that according to Optimum Stimulation Level (OSL) theory individuals strive to achieve a certain level of stimulation and are intrinsically motivated to collect

information. Consumers with a high OSL aspire to a higher degree of stimulation, which they can reach by taking in external stimuli. Schiffman & Kanuk (2010) suggests that consumers with Higher Optimum Stimulus Level (OSL) are Information seeker and innovative. Such consumers are generally high risk takers, love to read/ watch/ chat/ net search, seek product/ price/ offers related information.

Bauer et al. (2008) found that active information seekers tend to have positive attitude towards the advertisements in general, As advertising stimuli are among those external stimuli, consumers with a high OSL can be expected to be fond of taking in advertising stimuli and having a positive attitude towards advertising in general. Cheung et al. (2007) observed that an individual's propensity to search and use information is an important construct in the analysis and explanation of consumer behavior. Thus active information seekers generally have more positive attitude towards advertisements. Weilbacher (2003) suggests that challenge for advertising is to find ways and means into the consumers' brain and to build an enduring perceptual representation of the brand that is acceptable and desirable.

3. Scope of the study

This research paper is an attempt to explore the impact of information seeking behavior on attitude towards advertising. For this a research model was drawn (adopted & modified form Pollay & Mittal 1993).

<Figure 1>

4. Objectives of the study

1. To study the preference of information seekers and non-information seekers for various information sources.
2. To study the demographic profile of the information seekers.
3. To study the influence of information seeking behavior on attitude towards advertising.

5. Research methodology

Keeping the objective of the study in mind Structural Equation Modeling approach was adopted. Randomized convenience sampling method was used for a sample size of 320 respondents i.e. 20 respondents for 16 manifested variables (Chou et al. 1995). Of the respondents 66.66 % were male and 33.33% were female. The sample was comprised of relatively younger respondents. Of the total respondents students and service persons comprised 45% each; remaining 10% were businessmen. 40% undergraduates, 21% graduates and 39% postgraduates comprised of total respondents.

Data for this study was obtained by using structured questionnaire to know the views and perception of the individual respondents. The conceptualization and development of the questionnaire was based on the existing literatures & Pollay & Mittal 1993 model. Questionnaire was divided into 2 sections. Section A of questionnaire consists of questions related to demographic profile of respondents and their information seeking behavior and section B was intended to evaluate their attitude towards advertising.

Questionnaire was analyzed for scale reliability (alpha) analysis which confirmed the scale reliability as cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be 0.784. Data obtained was further subject to convergent validity and was found to be valid as all indicators measuring same construct were found to be significantly correlated. Data was analyzed for findings using AMOS 18.0 and SPSS 15.

6. Analysis & Discussion

6.1 Information Sources referred most

Percentile analysis and Descriptive statistics were applied on the responses in Section A of the questionnaire which gave the findings about most referred source of information overall population-wise as well as information seeker-wise (Annexure 1). In referring various sources of information both information seekers and non-information seekers shown distinct behavior, however in both cases most referred source was found to be the same i.e. internet.

<Table 1>

6.2 Frequency of referring various sources by information seekers & non-information seekers

An independent-samples T-test was conducted to compare frequency of referring various sources by information seekers and non-information seekers (Annexure 2). There was a significant difference (large to moderate calculated by eta squared) in frequency of referring Internet, News paper, Television, Peers, Books and Magazines/journals.; while referring Family no significance was found.

<Table 2>

6.3 Information seeking and Demographic variables

A Pearson correlation was conducted to evaluate the relationship between information seeking behavior and demographic variables named age, occupation, sex, education (Annexure 3). Preliminary analysis showed that there were no violation of the assumptions of normality and linearity. No significant correlation was found between information seeking and Age, Education, Occupation. There was a strong negative correlation between information seeking and sex ($r = -0.719$, $N = 100$, $p < 0.01$, correlation strength large $r \pm 0.5$ to ± 1) indicating that higher levels of information seeking is associated with males.

<Table 3>

6.4 Attitude towards advertising

Research model in this study was tested by structural equation modeling using generalized least square estimation.

<Figure 2>

Minimization was achieved and model was over-identified and recursive. Chi square statistics an absolute fit index (Annexure 4) and other parsimonious fit indices suggest model conformity.

<Table 4>

Product information, Hedonic, Social image, Good for economy constructs were positively associated with attitude towards advertising; where as Falsity and Materialism constructs were negatively associated. These findings are consistent with findings of Pollay & Mittal (1993) from which research model was adopted and modified.

6.5 Information seeking and Attitude towards advertising

Structural Model testing using un-standardize estimates suggest that regression weight of information seeking behavior on attitude towards advertising was 0.46; means that if of information seeking behavior goes up by 1, attitude towards advertising goes up by 0.46. Thus information seeking behavior positively affects attitude towards advertising in general.

7. Conclusion

The paper at hand intends to analyze attitude towards advertising and information seeking behavior of audience, along with effect of demographic variables and the most referred information sources by the two. Specifically, the impact of information seeking behavior on attitude towards advertising is investigated. The results show that the information seekers have more favorable attitude toward advertising in comparison to non-information seekers. Hence, advertising companies are well advised to carefully select media among the various information sources viz. internet, newspaper, TV, magazines etc. and to carefully design advertisements so as to make them as informative and as entertaining as possible to increase acceptability among audience. On the other hand marketers are advised not to make overpromises about offerings in ads and should give serious consideration to the societal values is advertisements. Finally, given additional importance of trust on acceptance of advertising marketers should bring higher credibility in their advertisements.

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Tables & Figures

Figure 1: Research Model

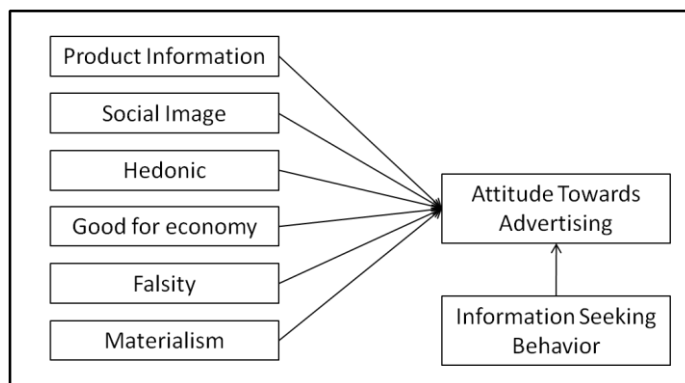


Table 1: Most referred sources of Information

Sources of Information	Rating of information sources by source most referred		
	Overall population	Information seekers	Non-Information seekers
Internet	1	1	1
News Papers	2	3	4
Television	7	6	6
Family	5	7	2
Friends / Colleagues	3	5	3
Books	4	2	5
Magazines/ Journals	6	4	7

Table 2: Frequency of Referring Information Sources

Sources of Information	T	Sig. 2 tailed (p)	eta squared (magnitude of difference)
Internet	1.999	.045*	.114 (moderate)
News Papers	2.157	.039*	.141 (large)
Television	2.573	.015*	.175 (large)
Family	.995	.327	no significant difference
Friends / Colleagues	2.074	.046*	.121 (moderate)

Books	5.238	.000*	.469 (large)
Magazines/ Journals	4.090	.000*	.215 (large)

Table 3: Results of Correlation Analysis

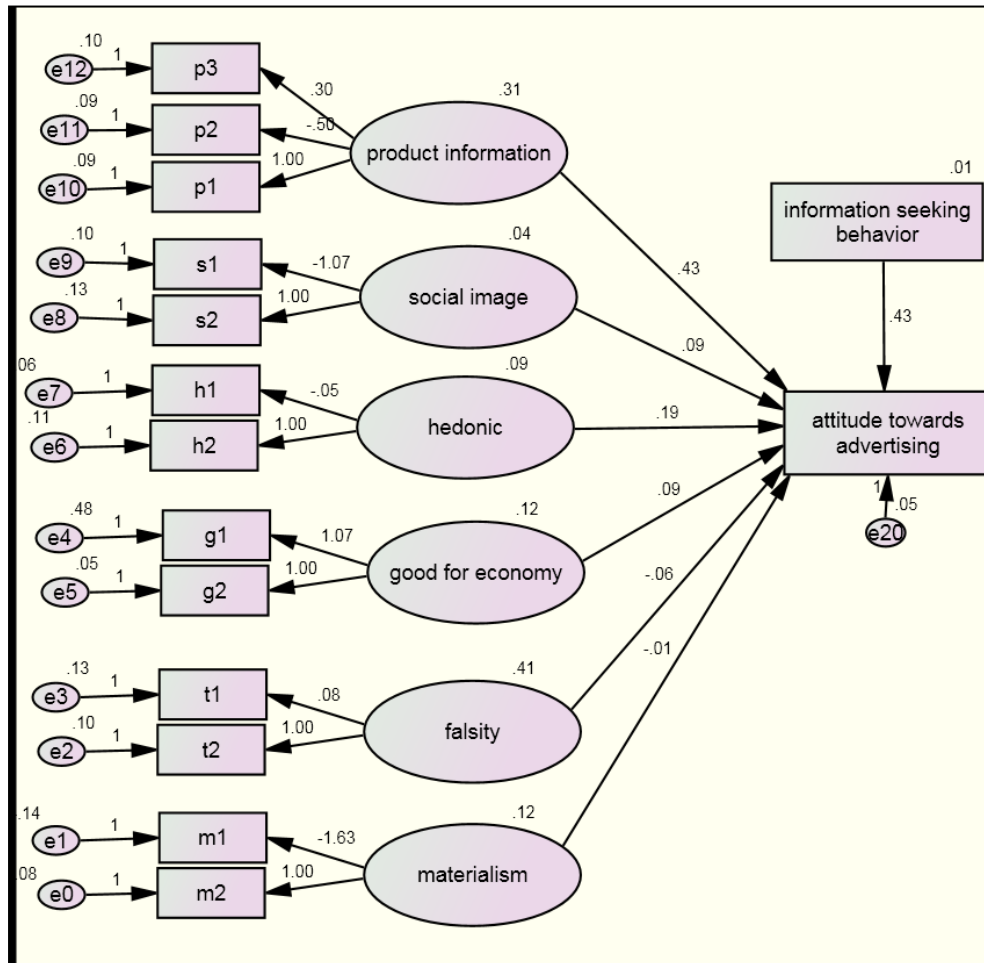
Demographic variable	Correlation coefficient for information seeking (N= 100, p<0.01)
Age	0.045
Occupation	0.123
Sex	-0.719**
Education	0.000

** significant at the 0.01 level

Table 4: Research Model Fit Indices

Model fit indices	Values	Recommended guidelines	Interpretation	References
χ^2 N=320	56.138	-	-	Klem, 2000; Kline, 2005; McDonald and Ho, 2002
Probability Level of chi square	.288	> .05	Model fit	
TLI	.901	=> .90	Model fit	Klem, 2000; McDonald and Ho, 2002
CFI	.913	=> .90	Model fit	Klem, 2000; McDonald and Ho, 2002
SRMR	.049	< .05	Model fit	Klem, 2000; McDonald and Ho, 2002

Figure 2: Path diagram of research model



Annexure

Annexure 1: GROUP STATISTICS- DESCRIPTIVE

	InfoSEEK	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
F1	1	39	4.85	.38	.10
	2	60	4.40	.88	.20
F2	1	39	4.62	.65	.18
	2	60	3.90	1.07	.24
F3	1	39	4.31	.75	.21
	2	60	3.40	1.27	.28
F4	1	39	4.00	1.00	.28
	2	60	3.70	.73	.16
F5	1	39	4.31	.63	.17
	2	60	3.70	.92	.21
F6	1	39	4.69	.63	.17
	2	60	3.25	.85	.19
F7	1	39	4.38	.77	.21
	2	60	3.35	.67	.15
F8	1	39	3.77	1.01	.28
	2	60	2.95	.83	.18

Annexure 2: T- TEST INDEPENDENT SAMPLES TEST

		Levene's Test		t-test		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
		F	Sig.	t	Sig.		
F1	Equal variances assumed	9.842	.004	1.717	.096	.45	.26
	Equal variances not assumed			1.999	.045	.45	.22
F2	Equal variances assumed	.967	.333	2.157	.039	.72	.33
	Equal variances not assumed			2.386	.023	.72	.30
F3	Equal variances assumed	4.422	.044	2.314	.027	.91	.39
	Equal variances not assumed			2.573	.015	.91	.35
F4	Equal variances assumed	.721	.402	.995	.327	.30	.30
	Equal variances not assumed			.931	.363	.30	.32
F5	Equal variances assumed	2.205	.148	2.074	.046	.61	.29
	Equal variances not assumed			2.246	.032	.61	.27
F6	Equal variances assumed	2.161	.152	5.238	.000	1.44	.28
	Equal variances not assumed			5.582	.000	1.44	.26
F7	Equal variances -assumed	.480	.494	4.090	.000	1.03	.25
	-not assumed			3.972	.001	1.03	.26
F8	Equal variances -assumed	.388	.538	2.548	.016	.82	.32
	-not assumed			2.437	.023	.82	.34

Annexure 3: CORRELATIONS **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

		ISEEK	AGE	OCP	SEX	ED
ISEEK	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.045	.123	-.719**	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.803	.496	.000	1.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
AGE	Pearson Correlation	.045	1.000	.827**	-.128	.777**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.803	.	.000	.476	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
OCP	Pearson Correlation	.123	.827**	1.000	.000	.690**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.496	.000	.	1.000	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
SEX	Pearson Correlation	-.719**	-.128	.000	1.000	.145

		Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.476	1.000	.	.421
	N	100	100	100	100	100
ED	Pearson	.000	.777**	.690**	.145	1.000
		Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	.000	.000	.421	.
	N	100	100	100	100	100

Appendix 4: Absolute Fit

Result (Default model)

[Minimum was achieved](#)

Chi-square = 56.138

Degrees of freedom = 51

Probability level = .288

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