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AUTHOR Moore, Roy L.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine the relationship of advertising exposure to a variety of cognitive and affective variables in a nonprofit charity campaign. The study also tested the transactional model of advertising effects, which combines exposure, motivations, and gratifications for viewing. A sample of 350 adults was randomly selected and interviewed by telephone. Television exposure and attention variables were considered, along with four independent factors: information seeking (gratification), social utility (gratification), alienation (avoidance), and anxiety (avoidance). Results indicated that gratification/avoidance measures were more important and had a higher impact in the cognitive stage of attitude formation than did exposure variables, which were more important in the affective stage of attitude formation. The findings suggest that a well-designed mass media charity advertising campaign can increase consumers' levels of awareness, levels of liking, and degrees of action through gratification/avoidance; that gratification/avoidance measures can serve as guidelines for message positioning; and that the use of short messages with high repetition may be appropriate for charity promotion. (DF)

SOME COMMUNICATION EFFECTS OF CHARITY ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS

by
Roy L. Moore
Assistant Professor

Department of Journalism
Georgia State University
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
(404) 658-3200

Pradeep Korgaonkar
Doctoral Candidate

Department of Marketing
Georgia State University
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
(404) 658-2740

George P. Moschis
Assistant Professor

Department of Marketing
Georgia State University
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
(404) 658-2740

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INTRODUCTION

Although more nonprofit organizations are adopting marketing strategies to attract and allocate resources, little research has been done to ascertain the appropriateness of such strategies. Advertising may play an important role in attracting donations for such organizations, and for those who can attract their share of donations, the results can be rewarding. (In 1978, Americans gave over $35 billion to charities.)[1]

Although many nonprofit organizations rely heavily on media public service announcements to persuade their audiences, research is lacking on the impact of such messages on the public. Thus, we chose in this investigation to examine the relationship of advertising exposure to a variety of cognitive and affective variables in a typical nonprofit charity campaign.

Studies of the effects of advertising have traditionally used advertising exposure as an independent variable and sales or attitudinal response as a dependent variable.[2] Such research has typically employed the mere exposure hypothesis, assuming that exposure equals effect and offering an incomplete picture of how advertising works. The traditional persuasion model of mass media effects has also proved to be inadequate in understanding the advertising process.[3] On the other hand, the "limited effects" model, which views audience members as active and selective, comes closer to substituting the fable of the omniscient audience for what Bauer and Bauer have called the "myth of the omnipotent media."[4] An even more accurate picture of advertising effects is the transactional model,

combining exposure, motivations and gratifications for viewing.[5] In this study, we test the transactional model and compare it to the traditional persuasion model of advertising effects.

STUDY DESIGN

A sample of 350 adults were interviewed by phone using a random digit dial method in a large metropolitan southern area. For the first part of the survey instrument, we constructed gratification and avoidance items by reviewing the available literature on gift giving.[6] Two sets of items measuring gratification and two sets measuring avoidance were incorporated into the questionnaire. A varimax factor analysis of the data confirmed four independent factors: (1) information seeking (gratification); (2) social utility (gratification); (3) alienation (avoidance); and (4) anxiety (avoidance). The range of alpha coefficient of reliability for the variables in this study was between .60 and .74, with .50 to .60 often suggested as adequate for initial stages of research.[7]

PREDICTOR VARIABLES

1. Two exposure variables were used in line with previous research:[8] (1) TV Attention Exposure refers to the closeness of attention paid to charity ads on television; (b) TV Exposure is the total approximate number of ads for charities seen during the previous six months. Responses were standardized and combined to form the "exposure" measure.

2. TV Gratification and Avoidance. Two questions were used to obtain data on gratification/avoidance:

Television Gratifications: People pay attention to charity ads on television for different reasons. For each reason I mention, please tell me whether it applies to you a lot, a little, or not at all.

a. To satisfy curiosity (Information Seeking).

b. To help you decide whether the charity is worth supporting (Information Seeking).

c. To find out what different charities are doing (Information Seeking).

d. To hear if any cure for a disease was found (Information Seeking).

e. To have something to discuss with others (Social Utility).

f. To see which charities important people are supporting (Social Utility).

g. Because you like the person who does the advertisement (Social Utility).

h. Because you happen to support the charity that advertises (Social Utility).

Avoidance: People avoid watching ads for different reasons. For each reason I mention, please tell me if it applies to you a lot, a little, or not at all.

a. Charity ads try to scare people (Anxiety).

b. Because charity ads make you feel guilty (Anxiety).

c. Because people are not interested in causes charities fight for (Alienation).

d. Because charity ads seed unpleasant thoughts in people's minds (Alienation).

e. Because charity ads usually ask for donations (Alienation).

CRITERION VARIABLES

The criterion variables selected were cognitive, affective and action variables derived from the conceptual framework of Lavidge & Steiner.[9] The variables were operationalized as follows:

1. Awareness: Measured by the number of charity organizations a person could name.

2. Knowledge: Indexed by an individual's ability to identify correctly: (a) cause(s) five charities fight for; (b) spokespersons of four charities; (c) goal of March of Dimes; (d) number of agencies supported by the United Way. The possible range was 0 to 11.

3. Liking: Liking is defined as a positive attitude toward the charities measured by summing responses to three "agree--don't know--disagree" items.

4. Preference: Charity preference was measured by asking respondents which of five charities mentioned fought the most worthy cause and the second most worthy cause.

5. Action: Action was measured by indexing six variables, indicating whether of not the respondent had been involved in activities such as a telethon or walkathon, charity contributions, participation as a volunteer, etc., during the previous six months. The index range was 0 to 6.

CONTROL VARIABLES

A validity problem arises if the gratifications and avoidances are not media connected, so the effect results not from media content but from the more general variable tapped by the gratification measure. Variables included in the analysis to control for this spurious relationship were Education, Parent/Nonparent, and Interpersonal Communication about Charities during the previous six months.

RESULTS

Since older people were expected to be more concerned about health issues than younger people, the degree of differences in the exposure and gratification and avoidance items in the two groups was examined. The analysis showed that overall older people did have significantly higher mean values on gratification ($T^2 = 2.9$, $p < .01$) and lower values on avoidance items ($T^2 = .91$, $p < .30$). The

differences on the exposure variable showed that the younger people had higher overall mean values than the older group. One possible reason for this could be differences in memory between the two groups. Young people may remember seeing an advertisement for a longer period of time than older people. The difference was significant for American Cancer Society advertisement. This may be because most of the "preventive" type ads of the American Cancer Society are aimed at the younger group, as reflected in the higher mean score (.642) (Table 1).

The attention scores show that the older group had a higher score than the younger. The high scores on attention, gratification and low score on avoidance items may support the hypothesis that the older people are more involved with the issue and hence pay more attention to charity advertisements than the younger group.

A further examination was made to ascertain whether (i) gratification and avoidance are merely another way of measuring exposure, and (ii) whether the avoidance measures were simply the mirror images of the corresponding gratifications. The analysis showed that the correlation coefficient between exposure measure and gratification/avoidance was 0.071 (n.s.), indicating that exposure and gratification/avoidance are largely independent of each other. The results further indicated a weak relationship between the gratification and avoidance measures (Table 2).

The central question is whether the gratification and avoidance measures add anything to the explanation of cognitive and affective variables beyond the variance explained by the traditional exposure variables.

The findings are presented separately for each criterion variable in Table 3.

Awareness

Awareness and exposure had a low correlation of .085. However, when gratification and avoidance measures are added as a block, the multiple correlation

improves to +.16 ($p < .01$). The simple correlation between awareness and gratification/avoidance measures is -.11 ($p < .05$). The gratification/avoidance relationship is unchanged when the exposure to other information sources, college education, and parental status are controlled respectively. The lack of strong relationship between awareness and exposure, provides support for the selective perception hypothesis. It also provides evidence that selective perception exerts a casual influence in the relationship, since simple awareness presumably cannot generate gratification or avoidance. This is further confirmed by the fact that alienation has a significant -.15, ($p < .01$) correlation with awareness (Table 4).

Knowledge

The correlation between knowledge and exposure is again very low (.090). When the gratification and avoidance measures are added a multiple correlation of +.11 ($p < .05$) is obtained. The simple correlation between knowledge and gratification/avoidance measure is -.04 (n.s.). After controlling for other information sources, education, and parental status, the partial correlations of -.03, 0.00, -.05 are obtained, respectively. Thus, with likely contaminating variables controlled, a moderate relationship remains between knowledge and gratification measures, indicating a functional relationship. Again, the lack of strong relationship between exposure and knowledge is contrary to the mere exposure hypothesis.

Liking and Preference

Advertising exposure measures are significantly ($p < .01$) related to liking variable having a correlation coefficient of .175. After adding the gratification and avoidance measures, multiple correlation coefficient increased to +.20. The simple correlation coefficient between liking and gratification/avoidance is .13 ($p < .05$). Specifically, information seeking, social utility, and anxiety variables are significantly related to liking.

A chi-square analysis of the preference constructs with exposure and gratification/avoidance measures reveals that both predictor variables are significantly ($p < .05$) related to the preference formation of the second most worthy cause.

Action

Advertising exposure variables had a significant correlation of .254 ($p < .001$) with the action variable. The correlation between gratification/avoidance measures and action variable is .11 ($p < .05$). The multiple correlation after adding gratification/avoidance block to the exposure variable is .26 ($p < .001$) with the action variable.

A further analysis of; (1) younger, (2) older group are presented in Table 5. The results again indicate that for both groups, gratification and avoidance have stronger relationships with the awareness construct compared to the relationship of exposure measures. Overall, the relationship of exposure and gratification/avoidance variables is stronger for younger group than the older group.

DISCUSSION

This investigation reveals that gratification/avoidance measures are more important or have a higher impact in the cognitive stage of attitude formation. However, exposure variables are more important in the affective stage of attitude formation.

The differences in the impact of the exposure and gratification/avoidance measures suggests a low involvement hierarchy effect.[10] The major difference between Lavidge and Steiner model and low-involvement model is in whether affective development (attitude) precedes or follows behavior, as illustrated below.

Awareness ↓ Attitude ↓ Behavior	Awareness ↓ Behavior ↓ Attitude
(Lavidge and Steiner model)	(Krugman model)

In the low involvement case, there is little attitudinal development specific to the "brand" choices prior to behavior, although there is a positive attitude towards the general product class. According to Krugman, in a low involvement situation, the TV viewer passively receives information without putting up perceptual defenses. Over time, the cognitive changes occur.[11] Still later, behavior may take place without preceding or concurrent attitudinal changes. The most important role of advertising in the low involvement case is to create awareness and to help in the development of a cognitive set amenable to appropriate behavior. Our data indicate that exposure per se will not raise the level of awareness of a promotional campaign. Gratification and avoidance measures can help explain the motivational aspect of the audience. From an organizational point of view, the identification of gratification and avoidance factors may help in message positioning. Freedman found that in low involvement case the message should be positioned in the latitude of noncommitment, fairly discrepant from the recipient's present position.[12] Thus a promotional message deviating from the "alienation" factors may lead to increasing awareness and knowledge. The presence of low involvement also suggests use of a short message, a high repetition strategy in the broadcast media.[13]

In conclusion, the evidence suggests that a well-designed charity advertising campaign in the mass media can serve to: (1) increase the consumers' level of awareness through gratification/avoidance; (2) increase the consumers' level of

liking through the gratification/avoidance; (3) increase the consumers' level of action through the gratification/avoidance; (4) the gratification/avoidance measures can serve as guideline for message positioning; and (5) the use of short messages with high repetition may be appropriate for charity promotion.

TABLE 1

MEAN VALUES OF EXPOSURE, GRATIFICATION AND AVOIDANCE SCORES AMONG YOUNGER AND OLDER RESPONDENTS[a]

	YOUNG (N=238)	OLD (N=112)
Exposure		
United Way	0.621 (.486)	0.525 (0.502)
March of Dimes	0.241 (0.429)	0.246 (0.432)
American Cancer Assn.*	0.642 (0.480)	0.500 (0.502)
Heart Fund	0.422 (0.495)	0.390 (0.49)
M. Dystrophy Assn.	0.375 (0.485)	0.424 (0.496)
Any Other Charity	0.172 (0.379)	0.136 (0.344)
Pay Close Attention to Charity Ads	1.453 (0.794)	1.599 (0.853)
	$T^2 = 1.7$, $p < .15$	
Gratification		
Curiosity*	1.78 (0.664)	1.559 (0.648)
Help Decide	2.125 (0.748)	2.136 (0.834)
To Find Out	2.099 (0.723)	2.229 (0.744)
To Hear If Cure Is Found	2.267 (0.782)	2.415 (0.755)
To Discuss*	1.319 (0.528)	1.551 (0.711)
Imp. People Supporting*	1.431 (0.606)	1.534 (0.724)
Like the Person in the AD	1.509 (0.631)	1.534 (0.663)
Supporting Charity	1.944 (0.757)	1.907 (0.827)
	$T^2 = 2.9$, $p < .01$	
Avoidance		
Scare People	1.461 (0.643)	1.424 (0.672)
Feel Guilty*	1.552 (0.688)	1.407 (0.644)
Not Interested	1.517 (0.644)	1.407 (0.617)
Unpleasant	1.595 (0.677)	1.492 (0.689)
Ask for Donations	1.616 (0.747)	1.568 (0.734)
	$T^2 = .91$, $p < .30$	

[a]Younger respondents are below 40 years of age; older are 40 and over.

*Sig. at .05 level.

NOTE: Standard deviations are shown in parentheses.

TABLE 2

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN GRATIFICATION AND AVOIDANCE ITEMS

	GRATIFICATION							
Avoidance	Curiosity	To Help Decide	To Find Out	To Hear If Cure Is Found	To Discuss With Others	Imp. People Supporting	Like the Person	Support the Charities
Scare People	.21	.13	.00	.05	.11	.11	.14	.08
Feel Guilty	.29	.16	.15	.07	.10	.21	.17	.13
Not Interested	.06	.04	.07	.02	.06	.17	.06	.14
Unpleasant	.12	.10	.02	.06	.03	.11	.13	-.00
Ask for Donations	.06	.05	.01	.01	.09	.13	.10	.05

NOTE: Correlations of about .11 or greater are significantly greater than zero.

TABLE 3

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Effect Measures	Exposure	Gratification/ Avoidance	Exposure and Gratification/ Avoidance (Multiple R)
Awareness	.08	-.11*	.16**
Knowledge	.09	-.04	.11*
Liking	.17**	+.13*	.20***
Action	.25***	+.11*	.26***

*p < .05
**p < .01
***p < .001

TABLE 4

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DEPENDENT AND INDIVIDUAL GRATIFICATION/AVOIDANCE VARIABLES

	Information Seeking	Social Utility	Anxiety	Alienation
Awareness	-0.01	-0.07	-0.072	-0.15**
Knowledge	0.039	-0.09	+0.003	-0.07
Liking	0.16**	+0.11*	+0.10*	-0.04
Action	0.16**	+0.13*	-0.03	-0.039

*p < .05
**p < .01

TABLE 5

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES AMONG YOUNGER AND OLDER GROUPS

Effect Measures	Exposure		Gratification/ Avoidance		Exposure and Gratification/ Avoidance (Multiple R)	
	Younger	Older	Younger	Older	Younger	Older
Awareness	.09	.07	-.12*	-.10	.17**	.14
Knowledge	.07	.11	-.03	-.07	.08	.15
Liking	.23***	.07	.19**	.04	.28***	.08
Action	.29***	.19*	.18**	-.02	.32***	.20

*--significant at .05 level.
**--significant at .01 level.
***--significant at .001 level.