

Consumer Response to Green Advertising: Investigating the Moderating Impact of Product Involvement

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Abstract

The present research aims to propose a framework posing involvement as the moderating variable between consumer's attitude towards the advertising (Aad) and brand image (BI), in the context of green communications in the form print advertisements. How such green advertising impacts consumer's Aad and whether this attitude results in positive BI is the aim of this study. Based on the extensive review of literature, two group experimental models are derived from research investigations of Aad and BI, investigating the moderating role of the involvement on BI. Each respondent was assigned randomly to one of the levels of experimental manipulation exposing them to visual stimuli in the form of one of two print advertisements, followed by responding to questionnaire framed which included measures of demographics, involvement, attitude towards the ad and brand image. The post-analysis results for model 1 reveal consistency with previous literature reviewed, showing that consumer Aad, irrespective of the level of involvement, is significantly correlated to the BI formations among the respondent groups. However, the results of the second hypothesis for moderation, tested under the steps given by Baron and Kenny, show major inconsistency with the past literature. The change statistics show that the sample consumers actually did not consider involvement a major factor while developing image perceptions for the experimental product. However further research is essentially required to identify the scenario in the context of purchasing behaviors, as involvement largely affects the process of buying even if it fails to change the perceptions about the image of the product.

Keywords: Attitude towards the ad (Aad), Brand Image (BI), Green advertising, Product Involvement.

Introduction

In today's businesses, enterprises and organizations are becoming increasingly committed to environmental issues due to tougher environmental legislation, economic and other influences as well as an increasing concern about the environment among the general public. In a competitive and global setting, companies need to understand the need to care for the environment as part of their operations (Brorson et al., 2006). During the past 30 years, the society's concern about the environment has increased with focus on ecological awareness, such as warnings of natural resource scarcity and loss of biodiversity. The issues being addressed have changed from local problems to more global questions, due to an imbalance in the ecological system caused by excessive human consumption and behavior (Tjarnemo 2001).

Indian companies are also serious about building environmental sustainability into their business practices (Jamge 2012). If sustainability is important for consumers and for

organizations who want satisfied consumers, green marketing can be highly effective. Green marketing promotes the environmental benefits of products, and even company's sustainability initiatives and is continuing to grow in popularity, in large part due to the fact that consumers are increasingly integrating their environmental values into their purchasing decisions.

Green marketing is a vital constituent of the holistic marketing concept which is based on the assumption that consumers will view a product or service as environment friendly and then implement buying choices accordingly (Jamge 2012). Similarly, Peattie & Charter (2003) defined Green marketing as "the holistic management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the needs of customers and society, in a profitable and sustainable way". In fact, green marketing is the process of developing products and services and promoting them to satisfy the consumers who prefer products of good quality, which at the same time do not have a detrimental impact on the environment. Pickett-Baker and Ozaki (2008) summarized that a typical attitude of a green consumer to green marketing decisions is readiness to pay a bigger price for an eco-friendly product than for an analogous simple product.

Killbourne (1998), investigated into the growing interest that companies have been showing in using green advertisement as a tool to develop a favorable corporate identity, focusing on particular green products. This shift in how corporations pitch green advertising could be attributed to the growing need for business to respond to integrated sustainability as opposed to marketing green products only for green consumer segments. However, advertising an image over a particular product increases the possibility of 'green washing', a term used for inaccurate or misleading green claims. Hence, despite the benefits offered, green advertising activity has run into major problems, with people in many countries becoming increasingly skeptical about its credibility, requiring the advertisers to put in a lot of extra efforts to reel in favorable response from their consumers.

However, it has long been proposed that how any form of marketing communication is perceived and processed, is deeply concerned with whether the consumer finds the product personally relevant enough (Greenwald & Leavitt 1984). This filtering of information in accordance with the personal relevance and requirement is referred to as the moderating impact of involvement. It is agreed upon that the level of involvement reflects the degree of personal relevance or importance of the message to an individual. If the message is personally relevant, a person is expected to process the information at a deeper level than if s/he were to find it not personally relevant (Greenwald & Leavitt 1984). Research shows that when product involvement is high, buyer decision processes are thought to proceed through extended decision making, a series of sequential stages involving information search and evaluation of criteria (Browne & Kaldenberg 1997; Celsi & Olson 1988); consumers neither wish nor are able to exert a great deal of effort to process information in a low involvement situation (Chung & Zhao 2003). Therefore, product involvement is an important framework, vital to the understanding of

consumer attitude and decision-making behavior towards the associated communications (Chakravarti & Janiszewski 2003; Fill 1999).

In the present study, we expand on the existing framework proposing involvement as the moderating variable between consumer's attitude towards the advertising (Aad) and brand image (BI). We present a new scheme analyzing consumer's perception of green communications in the form of eco-friendly print advertisements. How such green advertising impacts consumer's attitude towards the advertisement and whether this attitude results in positive brand image is the core of this study. This study focuses on investigating and evaluation of new concepts of environmental management in compliance with these environmental trends to help companies enhance their core competences about green innovation or environmental management to improve their green images.

Review of Literature

Concern about the environment has been rising since the 1960's, however, in recent years societies have started noticing environmental issues increasingly steadily (Chen 2008). Though Indians lack sufficient knowledge about environmental issues, there is a generally high concern for the environment and Indians score very high on environmentally friendly behavior, especially with respect to conservation of resources and decision to purchase green products (Jain & Kaur 2004). Research studies claim that even if consumers approve of environmental protection, that does not mean that they will necessarily act as green consumers, and their decisions regarding buying will be favorable for eco-friendly products. Weidenboerner (2008) proposed that even individuals with very positive attitudes toward the environment were only marginally likely to engage in environmentally responsible behavior. It would seem that these attitudes represent an infancy stage, where the attitudes have yet to be internalized into deeper values associated with the emotionality that later leads to environmentally responsible behavior. The more a person realizes what they would sacrifice in terms of convenience and consumptive lifestyle, the more willing they are to allow environmental damage to go on.

This necessitates the importance of communicating the conceptual link among green marketing, environmental justice, and industrial ecology. Such green communications lead to increasing market awareness and larger greener segments. A research by Do Paco et.al.(2009) concludes that those firms that do not respond to the 'green challenge' with eco-products, risk losing some credibility in the form of brand image, in the eyes of those consumers who are more concerned with environmental issues. In turn, those firms that use green marketing strategies will be able to take advantage of the countless opportunities presented by environmental consumerism (Do Paco, A et.al. 2009). Researchers support the notion that consumers do tend to use beliefs about a product's environmental influence to characterize a brand's image (Rios et. al. 2006). Advertising being a significant medium between the corporations and consumers helps in maintaining a favorable brand image. The role of advertising in informing consumers, either directly (Grossman & Shapiro 1984) or indirectly (Milgrom & Roberts 1986; Nelson 1974)

about brand attributes and/or prices, now includes terms such as recyclable, environmentally friendly, ozone safe, biodegradable etc. popularizing it as green advertisements and often exposing consumers to such messages. As a result, consumers develop feelings and judgments towards such advertisement claims, which affects their attitude and beliefs about the brand (Batra & Ray 1986). Therefore, when an organization decides to pose its product featuring pro-environmental benefits, it aims to capture a pro-environment image i.e. green brand image. Increasing numbers of companies are going green, positioning their brand identities based on pro environmental characteristics, functions, ingredients, and other related benefits, regularly encoding messages and symbols with the term and/or color “green” to signify these new positions. Being green has been construed as a master symbol signifying a broad range of brand positions, including environmental, eco-friendly, energy efficient, organic, as well as other concepts. Grant (2008), defined a green brand as “one that offers a significant eco-advantage over the incumbents and which hence appeals to those who are willing to make green a high priority.” This definition takes into account that most green brand research has focused primarily on the environment and related brand associations. Accordingly, a class of “green brands” exists that are something more than just pro-environmental brands. Rather, green brands represent an unknown number of positions because of the ambiguous nature of the green symbol.

The terms “green brand”, “pro-environmental brand”, and other related concepts are being used interchangeably, although they are not necessarily identical. A green brand may represent a product that does not harm the natural environment, an organic product, or one that includes no artificial components. Other green brands may be production based or associated with sustainable corporate activity. Because of the ambiguous nature of the green brand concept, what actually constitutes a green brand image, to the consumer, is unknown. Therefore, this study also sets out to refine the green brand concept based on consumer perceptions of what a green brand encompasses. Researchers have had difficulty in defining the concept of green advertising as the concept becomes even more complex due to its many dimensions including environmentalism, conservatism, human welfare ecology, preservations and ecologies (Kilbourne 1995). However, in the scope of the present study, we will study green advertising as a form of corporate communication, promoting the green phenomenon attached to their product or brand. The study proposes to understand the impact of such eco-friendly communications on the attitudes of the consumers, leading to formation of certain image of the brand, moderated by the impact of involvement. Hence, the literature follows to bring into light these variables and thereby, providing us with sufficient information to formulate the research hypothesis.

Constructs and Dimensions

Brand Image and Its Dimensions

Brand image is a widely recognized concept in marketing that has long been considered a salient aspect of marketing activities, branding and market offering with varied definitions and approaches to its understanding (Dobni & Zinkhan 1990; Patterson 1999; Keller 1998). The general theory is that if consumers link strong, favorable, and unique associations to a brand, in their memory, they are more likely to favor the brand image (i.e., favorable brand attitude) and

more likely to consider the branded product for purchase (Aaker 1996; Keller 1993). Brand associations are established in the consumer memory via multiple sources of information regarding the brand and/or product, in particular, both controlled and uncontrolled by marketers (e.g., word of mouth, advertising, packaging, endorsements, and even branded litter on the street). It is the most salient brand associations that have the greatest effect on consumer behavior and provide the core of a brand's perceived image. This is because humans have limited mental capacity and usually focus on salient information, ultimately, a person's attitude toward an object is a function of "salient beliefs" about that object (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975; Keller 1993).

This implies that brand image is a kind of impression stored in consumer's brain such that consumer's perception toward a brand can be evoked with proper brand-related associations or implications and can be affected by marketing activities, context available and characteristics of the perceivers (Dobni & Zinkhan 1990). Researchers explain brand image in the form of brand benefits. Brand benefits are the "personal value" (i.e., what the consumer perceives the product attribute will do for them) that consumers associate to a brand (Park et. al.1986). Brand benefits are further categorized into functional, experiential, and symbolic, that relates to underlying motivations (i.e. needs) that drive consumption behavior. Functional brand benefits are based on functional needs, that is, related to the intrinsic advantages of product or services consumption and usually correspond to the product related attributes (e.g the functional attributes of a cell phone may include its ability to make a call, send sms, take photographs, access internet and so on). Functional brand image helps consumers solve consumption related problems. This kind of product usually serves to satisfy consumer's external consumption demand, such as product's attributes, appearance, packaging, price etc.

Experiential brand benefits are based on the satisfaction of sensory needs and refer to "what it felt like to use the product or services" and usually correspond to the product related attributes (for e.g. experiential brand benefit of an iphone may include the feeling of excitement, tech-suaveness etc.). Experiential brand image emphasizes satisfying consumer's internal need to go after excitement and diversity, to provide consumers with sensual and cognitive enjoyment, such as amiable service, comfortable consumption environment etc. In contrast, Symbolic Benefits are related to non-product attributes, such as user imagery, that is the prototypical users of a brand (Parker 2009; Sirgy 1982). Symbolic brand image emphasizes satisfying consumer's internal need, for example, symbolic benefits are associated with the underlying needs for social expression or social acceptance and outer-directed self-esteem and basically corresponded to non-product related attributes (for e.g. symbolic benefit of owning an iphone may include the feeling of self worth, social acceptance, high self-esteem etc.).

Role of Involvement

A substantial amount of research in the past has focused on the effects of involvement on consumer's reactions to persuasive communications (Cialdini et. al. 1981; Greenwald & Leavitt 1984; Mitchell & Olsen 1981; Petty et al. 1983). Consumer spends time and energy to evaluate high involvement products, whereas spends less time and effort for low involvement products

(Richins & Bloch 1986), suggesting that the process of consumer attitude is partly affected by product involvement (Laurent & Kapferer 1985). Therefore, involvement level is the time and exertion of consumers they spend for their decision regarding the product. More recent studies have found that “when the level of involvement with a product is high, consumers pay more attention to commercials and are more motivated to process the message in depth” (Montoro-Rios et. al. 2008). Individuals, who have higher involvement with a product category show a greater interest in information search, attribute comparison and stronger brand preference (Lingyee 1997; Zaichkowsky 1985) while under low involvement conditions, people are not motivated to evaluate the true merits of an issue or product.

Since consumer behavior is totally different for products with varying levels of involvement, the implications of green communication is bound to be different for such products. Majumdar (2010) explained the concept of involvement in the context of green products. He proposed that consumers weigh attributes such as performance, brand, convenience and price against competing products. Many products that require customers to make trade-offs based on environmental benefits have failed to establish themselves in the marketplace. If a consumer has a preference for certain attributes and if the product pronounces those attributes, then there is a high probability that consumer will have favorable attitude towards that product (Majumdar 2010). In contrast with high involvement products, green marketers can significantly influence the attitude of consumers for low involvement products through persuasive advertising of environmentally friendly claims regarding their brand (Majumdar 2010).

Attitude toward Ad (Aad)

In trying to understand what triggers consumer’s behavior, the role of attitude has been explored by many researchers. Consumer’s attitude towards one object for instance is said to affect his/her attitudes towards another object with which it is associated. As Hoyer & MacInnis (1997) explain, consumer’s liking and affection of an advertisement (the liking can be due to reasons known or unknown will eventually be transferred to the product/brand). Attitude towards advertisement (Aad) has been defined as a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during particular exposure situation (Mackenzie, Lutz & Belch 1986; Burke & Edell 1989). It has been identified that favorable attitudes held toward advertising in general have a positive direct influence on the attitudes held toward specific advertisements and an indirect influence on both brand attitudes and consumer’s favorable intentions towards a brand (MacKenzie, Lutz & Belch 1986; Ryan & Bonfield 1975). According to Mehta (2000), consumer’s attitude towards advertising is one of the influential indicators of advertising effectiveness because consumer’s cognitive ability towards the advertising are reflected in their thoughts and feelings and this will subsequently influence their attitude towards the product (Mackenzie & Lutz 1989). The influence of attitude towards the ad on brand attitudes is even more significant under low involvement conditions. Consumers form

feelings (affect) and judgments (cognition) when exposed to an advertisement which affects their attitude towards the ad and beliefs about the brand (Batra & Ray 1986). Though, Weidenboerner (2008) showed that even individuals with very positive attitudes toward the environment were only marginally likely to engage in environmentally responsible behavior, it would seem that these attitudes represent an infancy stage, where the attitudes have yet to be internalized into deeper values associated with the emotionality that later leads to environmentally responsible behavior. The more consumer realize what they would sacrifice in terms of convenience and consumptive lifestyle, the more willing they are to allow environmental damage to go on. Therefore, in this study, we attempt to investigate whether consumer's pro-environmental attitude reflects in green advertisement evaluations and to what extent it has an influence over the image of the brand in their minds.

Hypothesizing the Relationship between Constructs

Theoretical Models Used To Assess Construct Relationships



We propose two models derived from research investigations of Attitude towards the ad and brand image. Also, based on the extensive review of literature, we propose that none of these models have been tested in terms of attitude, investigating the moderating role of the involvement on Brand image, in context of the green advertisement. The first model posits a direct one-way influence of attitude towards the ad on brand image. Keller (1993) suggested that associations that are unique, strong and favorable should create a positive brand image which when processed by consumers will bias consumer brand behavior. This implies that if a consumer holds a strong, positive and favorable association of the ad to which he/she is exposed, it is likely to result in a positive image of the advertised brand i.e. a positive brand image. Also it is suggested that an effective brand image construction can cast a strong impression in consumer's mind as it differentiates products and services based on tangible quality features (Mudambi et. al. 1997) including symbolic meanings (such as pro-environmental attributes) that associate with specific attributes of the brand, making a pro-environmental mental picture of the product in the consumer's mind (Cretu & Brodie 2007; Padgett & Allen 1997). In this context, consumer's exposure to green advertisements as opposed to conventional advertising, should lead to differentiated patterns of perceptual and behavioral consequences. Therefore, we propose our first hypothesis, which investigates the impact of attitude towards the ad on the brand image of the product, in context of green advertisements.

H1: In the context of green ads, positive attitude toward the ad has a significant positive direct effect on brand image.

The second-model proposes an indirect influence of attitude towards the ad on the brand image of the product, investigating the moderating impact of product involvement. A substantial amount of consumer research has focused on the effects of involvement on consumer's reactions to persuasive communications (Cialdini et al. 1981; Greenwald & Leavitt 1984; Mitchell & Olsen 1981; Petty et al. 1983). Past researches propose that the level of involvement reflects the degree of personal relevance or importance of the message to an individual. If the message is personally relevant, a person is expected to process the information at a deeper level than if s/he were to find it personally irrelevant (Greenwald & Leavitt 1984). Most of the studies conceptualized product involvement as a motivational construct (Batra & Ray 1985), where the amount of motivation may depend on the relevance of the product for the consumer (Zaichowsky 1985). Thus, an environmentally conscious consumer is expected to process the green advertisement positively, both in terms of attitude as well as image of the brand.

A number of studies in the past have examined message response involvement's role in the attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the brand and purchase intention relationship (Batra & Ray 1985; Muehling & Laczniak 1988; Park & Young 1986). However, there is very limited research investigating the role of product involvement as the mediator among attitude towards the ad and brand image. Hence, the model in this study proposes product involvement as a mediator in the Aad-BI relationship. Analysis of attitude towards the ad demonstrates that one of the most influential factors on information processing is the consumer's level of involvement. A person's level of involvement plays an important role in the persuasion process (Petty & Cacioppo 1986; Rossiter, Percy & Donovan 1991). When the level of involvement with a product is high, consumers pay more attention to commercials and are more motivated to process the message in depth (Petty et. al. 1983; Montoro-Rios et. al. 2008). Consumers with low involvement are uninterested in buying the brand and therefore do not seek specific information.

Research findings show that product involvement plays an important role in the way people process marketing and advertising information (Muratore 2003; Te'eni-Harari et. al. 2009), thus impacting consumer behavior in terms of attitude and brand image formations. Early researchers viewed attitude toward the ad as playing a role in moderating an advertisement's effects, primarily during low involvement processing conditions (Mitchell & Olson 1981; Shimp 1981). But later research evidence has challenged this position, suggesting that attitude toward the ad is an influential construct, impacting brand image, under both high and low involvement positions (Gardner 1985; Lutz et. al. 1983; Mackenzie et. al. 1986). Findings indicate that product involvement can be an important and significant variable in understanding the processes that people undergo when they are exposed to marketing and advertising stimuli. Therefore, based on the literature reviewed, the following hypothesis is framed.

H2: in the context of green ads, the impact of Attitude towards the Ad on Brand Image is significantly moderating by the role of Product Involvement.

Research Design and Methodology

Data Collection Form and Generation Of Scale Items

To produce a reliable questionnaire, both primary and secondary data was collected. The measure of attitude toward the ad, brand image and product involvement were drawn from previous studies. A brief discussion of each study variable and its measurement is as follows.

Brand Image

Brand image has been conceptualized and operationalized in several ways (Reynolds & Gutman 1984; Faircloth et al. 2001). It has been measured based on attributes (i.e. Koo 2003; Kandampully & Suhartanto 2000); brand benefits / values (i.e. Hsieh et al. 2004; Roth 1995; Bhat & Reddy 1998); or using Malhotra's (1981) brand image scale (i.e. Faircloth et al. 2001). The present study adopts the measure described by Keller (1993) that the image benefits can be classified into functional, experiential and symbolic benefits, which was originally derived from the work of Park et al. (1986). The present research paper adopts five dimensions to measure the overall brand image i.e. experiential, symbolic, social, functional, and appearance enhancer. The items under each of the sub-category is developed and modified in context of the requirements of the present research work. Sondoh et.al. (2007) has also categorized brand image into the above mentioned five dimensions and the items under each sub-category is an adoption from the works of various authors e.g. Sweeney & Soutar 2001; Tsai 2005; Del Rio, Vazaquez & Iglesias 2001. The two most appropriate scales, earlier adopted by Cronin & Tabor (1992) and Sondoh et.al. (2007) were reviewed and complimented to make it suitable in the context of green print advertisements of hypothetical brands, resulting in four subcategories these sub-categories include benefits derived in terms of experience, symbolic/social benefit, functional benefit and benefit in terms of appearance.

Product Involvement

Zaichowsky (1985) defined involvement as the perceived relevance of an object based on how well a product or service “taps-into” the inherent needs, values and interests of consumers. The Product Involvement Inventory (PII) comprises 20 items scored on a seven-point semantic differential scale for each item allocating a rating of 7 for most important and 1 for most unimportant. Scores on the items are summed to form an overall measure of involvement, ranging from a low score of 20 (indicating a low involvement product) through to a high of 140 (indicating the highest level of involvement).

The measures of attitude toward the ad was assessed using 26 seven-point semantic differential item, with 1 representing strongly disagree and 7 representing strongly agree. The statements adopted have been included in numerous other studies (e.g. Burke & Edell 1989; Zinkhan et al. 1986; Hopkins et.al. 2004; Cotte et al. 2005; Bernard 2009; Marchand 2010). For example respondents were asked: “When looking at the advertisement and considering all the information given on it, what is your overall attitude toward the advertisement?” Respondents rated their agreement with statements like “the ad is useful”, “the ad is pleasant”, “the ad has a status appeal” that measured Cognitive response, affective response and materialistic response towards the ad shown. The last three items measure *materialistic appeal*.

Stimulus and Manipulation Check

To account for variations in product involvement, we selected two different products to represent the different levels of involvement that consumers have with products they purchase. Stationary (notebook) was chosen to represent a low involvement product, and a mobile was chosen to represent a high-involvement product. To avoid the potential confounding effect of product familiarity, each product was represented by a non-branded, generic photograph. Below each photograph, selling features were listed similar to what would be found in an advertisement or online description. These descriptions were created based on the selling features of current similar products in order to create authenticity, but they did not contain any proprietary product features that could lead the respondents to assume they knew the brand. In order to avoid manipulations by the respondents, all subjects were verbally informed that the study was concerned with measuring the effectiveness of advertising in print media, designed to measure ad effectiveness. In this stage, the subjects were provided with a print advertisement of the product with enough time to look at the ad and study it. No attempt was made to prevent the interaction among the respondents over the exposure period. Since the ads developed both for low and high involvement product categories were hypothetical, the respondents were asked to analyze the given ads assuming these appeared in a magazine or newspaper. This manipulation check on our sample, prior to data collection confirmed that our manipulation was effective in creating required experimental conditions.

Stimulus Advertisement

The advertisements for the purpose of the study were collected from various online sources. Two modified versions of already existing green ads were developed, for high and low involvement products. The online ads were modified into a print version keeping the claims made in the print ads similar to the claims made in the online ads, although the names of the brands were changed. An advanced version of *Corel graphics* was used to generate the print advertisements and was developed by a professional graphic artist. The modified ads were viewed by five viewers independently and were asked to identify an ad to be green or otherwise. All the viewers identified all the designed ads as being green. In other words there was complete agreement on all ads being green indeed and these ads constituted our sample.

Subjects

A total of 120 postgraduate students in business administration, from a large university in North India, volunteered to participate in the study. Use of student-consumers in only one region is for the purpose of enhancing homogeneity among sample to strengthen internal validity. Calder et al. (1982; 1983) asserted that internal validity has to be given higher priority over external validity in testing theory; therefore using student subjects strengthens internal validity. The use of student subjects has often been debated in consumer research (Calder, Phillips & Tybout 1981; Lynch 1982) as the use of students is considered a liability in research due to legitimate concerns regarding external validity. Those subjects who did not purchase mobile/notebook or who did not sufficiently complete the task were excluded from the study, leaving 89 usable responses.

Procedure

This exploratory study uses an experimental design as this design lends itself to establishing the proposed relationships (Hoyle, Harris & Judd 2002; Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). The present study uses a two group experimental design. Each of the respondent was assigned randomly to one of the levels of experimental manipulation exposing them to visual stimuli in the form of one of two print advertisements. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of the two product involvement conditions (high/low) and were given few minutes, sufficient enough to read and assess the stimulus advertisement. Next, they were asked to complete the questionnaire and were allowed to complete the questionnaire at their own pace. The entire task took approximately 25 minutes.

Results

Table 1 Summarizes the demographic profile of the respondents as follows:

According to table 1, males comprised about 51.7 percent, while female constituted 48.3 percent of the sample. The qualification level of the respondents was put under three categories, i.e. graduate, post-graduate, others. 73 percent of respondents were those who were graduates, while rest 27 percent was post-graduate students. Further, profile of the respondents discloses that out of a total of 89 respondents, only 1 respondent belonged to the below 20 age group, leaving all the rest 89 to the age group ranging 20-25. The total sample considered for the experiment was divided into two groups to collect feedback separately in context of low and high involvement product category. The categorical summary of the sample in terms of gender, qualification and age group under high and low involvement context is also included separately in the table 1.

Table 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

| Demographic | variables | Total frequency | Total %age | Low-inv. Frequency | Low-inv %age | High-inv. Frequency | High-inv %age |
|---------------|--------------|-----------------|------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Gender | Male | 46 | 51.7 | 23 | 54.8 | 23 | 48.9 |
| | Female | 43 | 48.3 | 19 | 45.2 | 24 | 51.1 |
| | Total | 89 | 100.0 | 42 | 100.0 | 47 | 100.0 |
| Qualification | Graduate | 65 | 73 | 32 | 76.2 | 33 | 70.2 |
| | Post-grad. | 24 | 27 | 10 | 23.8 | 14 | 29.8 |
| | others | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| | Total | 89 | 100.0 | 42 | 100.0 | 47 | 100.0 |
| Age group | Below 20 | 1 | 1.1 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.1 |
| | 20-25 | 88 | 98.9 | 42 | 100.0 | 46 | 97.9 |
| | 25-30 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| | Total | 89 | 100.0 | 42 | 100.0 | 47 | 100.0 |

Hypothesis 1: In the context of green ads, positive attitude toward the ad has a significant positive direct effect on brand image.

Data in this study was analyzed using SPSS 17.0. A simple linear regression analysis was used to analyze Model 1, investigating the relationship between brand image (dependent variable) and attitude towards the ad (independent variables). The basic formulation of the regression equation is: $Y = a + b(X)$, where:

Y= dependent variable i.e. brand image towards the green advertisement (BI)

X= independent variable i.e. attitude towards the advertisement (Aad)

Table 2: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---------|--------|----------------|----|
| bimean | 4.1512 | .84242 | 89 |
| aadmean | 4.5376 | .68509 | 89 |

Table 2 summarizes the descriptive of the product's advertisement that were shown randomly to a total of 89 respondents, irrespective of the involvement level of the product shown. The table reveals the data in terms of mean, standard deviation and total sample size.

Table 3: MODEL SUMMARY

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|-------------|
| | | | | | R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. Change |
| 1 | .669 ^a | .447 | .441 | .63001 | .447 | 70.343 | 1 | 87 | .000 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), aadmean

Results from simple regression analysis carried out (Table 3) show that attitude towards the ad (Aad) was positively associated with brand image (BI). Here, the coefficient of determination, $R^2 = 0.44$, indicating that 44% of the "brand image", can be explained by the independent variable, "attitude towards the ad". Also, the positive value coefficient of correlation, $R = 0.67$, indicates the direct and high correlation between brand image and attitude towards the advertisements. This implies that as positivity of attitude towards the advertisements increases, the brand image of the product also increases.

Table 4: ANOVA

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 27.920 | 1 | 27.920 | 70.343 | .000 ^a |
| | Residual | 34.531 | 87 | .397 | | |
| | Total | 62.452 | 88 | | | |

a. Predictors: (Constant), aadmean

b. Dependent Variable: bimean

Table 4, indicates that regression model 1 predicts the outcome variable significantly well as $p < 0.0005$, which is less than 0.05, making the model statistically significant for predicting the outcome variable i.e. brand image.

Table 5: COEFFICIENTS

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | .420 | .450 | | .935 | .353 |
| | aadmean | .822 | .098 | .669 | 8.387 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: bimean

Table 5 of Coefficients, provides us with information on each predictor variable. This gives us the information we need to predict brand image from attitude towards the ad. By looking under the Unstandardized Coefficients column, we can present the regression equation as:

$$BI = 0.42 + 0.82 (Aad)$$

The regression coefficient $b = 0.82$ indicates that a one unit change in the attitude towards the ad will bring 82% change in the brand image of the product. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis 1 i.e In the context of green ads, positive attitude toward the ad has a significant positive direct effect on brand image, is accepted.

Hypothesis 2: In the context of green ads, the impact of Attitude towards the Ad on Brand Image is significantly moderated by the role of Product Involvement

To test the hypothesis that product involvement moderates the relationship between attitude towards the ad and brand image, a moderation analysis was conducted. The current model for moderation used the Baron and Kenny steps for moderated regression. The following tables show the effect of product involvement as a moderating agent, on the strength of relationship shared by attitude towards the ad and brand image.

Hypothesis 2: Testing for low involvement product category (stationary)

Table 6: Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
| | | | | | R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. Change F |
| 1 | .683 ^a | .467 | .440 | .72130 | .467 | 17.082 | 2 | 39 | .000 |
| 2 | .683 ^b | .467 | .425 | .73072 | .000 | .001 | 1 | 38 | .979 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), invstationarymean, aadstationarymean

b. Predictors: (Constant), invstationarymean, aadstationarymean, interactterm

Table 6 outputs reveals the model summary generated after carrying out the moderated regression steps given by baron and Kenny. Under Change Statistics, we see that R square change is 0.46, after the addition of the interaction variable to the predictor and moderator variables. This change is not significant, $F(1,38) = 0.001$, $p = 0.979$, telling us that our presumed moderator (product involvement) does not moderate the effects of the predictor (attitude towards the ad) on the outcome variable (brand image). Hence, the moderation effect is non-significant.

Hypothesis 2: Testing for high involvement product category (mobile phones)

Again the similar method of moderated regression is carried out as above, to yield the output for another product category, characterized by high-involvement context. The results are shown in the table below.

Table 7: Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|-------------|
| | | | | | R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. Change |
| 1 | .684 ^a | .469 | .444 | .54088 | .469 | 19.394 | 2 | 44 | .000 |
| 2 | .687 ^b | .471 | .435 | .54561 | .003 | .241 | 1 | 43 | .626 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), invphonemean, aadphonemean

b. Predictors: (Constant), invphonemean, aadphonemean, interactionterm

We focus on the model summary shown under table 7. Under Change Statistics, R square change is 0.46 when the interaction variable is added to the predictor and moderator variables. This change is again non-significant, $F(1,43) = 0.003$, $p = 0.626$. The significant interaction tells us that our presumed moderator (product involvement) does not moderate the effects of the predictor (attitude towards the ad) on the outcome variable (brand image). The results of investigations carried out stands differentiated from our expectation that the effect of attitude towards the ad on brand image is strengthened with change in involvement conditions. The discussion on the inconsistency of the results from the earlier reviewed literature is carried out as follows.

Discussion

It has been emphatically recognized that environmental degradation being a critical global issue (Talpur 2010), has attracted considerable attention around the globe (Mainieri et. al. 1997). The objective of this study was to investigate the effect of attitude towards ads in the context of green ads, with regard to the impact of product involvement. Since the scope of the present study was limited to two product categories i.e. high and low involvement, an experimental design with a small sample of young college graduates, with proportionate gender equations was taken into consideration. The resultant demographic statistics reveal a homogeneous sample, providing specific estimation of consumer attitudes among a particular group of youngsters from a city of northern India. The hypothesis developed and tested; thus, specifically posit the attitude of the young consumers towards the brand image of green print ads. The study results also provide initial insight into the effect of a specific feature of print ads shown, i.e. relevance of product involvement as a moderator on the relationship between attitude toward the ad and brand image.

Firstly, the proposition that the impact of attitude towards the ad on brand image is significantly positive is tested. The study results reveal that consumer's attitude towards the ads, irrespective of the level of involvement, is significantly correlated to brand image formations among the respondent groups. The results are consistent with the literature reviewed for this study and show that with an increase in positive attitude towards the green ad, there is a significant positive impact on the brand image. The model fits appropriately, ensuring that the hypothesis tested successfully predicts the dependent variable i.e. brand image, thus implying strong consistency with the earlier held notion that if a consumer holds a strong, positive and favorable association of the ad to which he/she is exposed, it is likely to result in a positive image of the advertised brand i.e. a positive brand image.

The second hypothesis proposed to test the impact of attitude towards the ad on brand image, moderated by the role of product involvement. For the purpose of testing the moderation effect, the steps given by Baron and Kenny for moderated regression analysis was conducted. The test results revealed weak relationship status of the proposed model in both the product categories i.e. low and high involvement. The change statistics under model summary reveals results inconsistent with the past research reviewed. These change statistics show that the sample consumers actually did not consider involvement a major factor affecting the relationship between attitude towards the ad and brand image. For both the product categories (i.e. high and low involvement) the test results revealed that the consumers, irrespective of whether the product is high or low involvement, would require more reasons than just being eco-friendly, to patronize the advertised products.

In a recent study, Majumdar (2010) points out that while customers may purchase an eco-friendly low involvement product for the benefit of environment even if the price is marginally higher, they will not purchase high involvement green product for it just being eco-friendly. They will weigh attributes such as performance, brand, convenience and price against the competing products. A closer one-on-one interaction with the respondents also revealed the antecedents to such inconsistent results. The product shown in the ads being hypothetical in nature, the respondents were more skeptical regarding the shown product, thereby influencing the expected results for the second model. Also, the respondents might purchase the product for the sake of the environment; the image of the products shown due to their unfamiliar feature remains unaffected by the impact of attitude of the respondents towards the ad, negating the impact of involvement. However, further research is essentially required to identify whether the same scenario is replicated in the context of purchasing behaviors of the consumers, as involvement largely affects the process of buying even if it fails to change perceptions about the image of products. The results might be different if the experiment is carried out with a larger and more heterogeneous sample and with a familiar brand, already holding a prior image in the respondent's mind.

The results can be helpful for the marketers, planning to launch a new product, still unfamiliar in the market. For better decision making, the managers need to understand that only including the green context while bringing a new product in the market is not enough. The detailed implications for managers are explicitly discussed in the following section.

Managerial Implications

The present study analyses the impact of attitude towards green ads on brand image, moderated by the role of product involvement. The study undertakes a profound review of green print advertising in the context of both low and high involvement product categories of hypnotized brands. The effectiveness of the ads in terms of attitude towards the ad and brand image is explored, moderated by the effect of product involvement and the relationship between attitude towards the ad and brand image. The results of the present study provide an understanding of two specific aspects of consumer behavior and thus provide practitioners an understanding of how the use of green print advertising for the products with different levels of involvement can result in varying degrees of consumer's attitude toward advertising (Aad) and their effect on the image of the brand (BI). Our proposed models provide marketers with a framework to understand how their marketing plans influence consumers. Marketers can use the model proposed in this study to rationalize the use and effectiveness of green advertisements for both low and high involvement product categories.

The identification of how the consumers respond to green advertisement for the products of varied levels of involvement from a hypotheses unfamiliar brand will help practitioners to establish effective marketing strategies. It is very important to understand the attitude dimensions from consumer's point of view, and how these attitudes affect the image dimensions of an unfamiliar brand as well. Knowledge of this, may assist managers to develop a marketing strategy based on consumer's perceptions and meanings of the product, especially for the marketers who are new to the market competition. The results of the study provide useful insights into the minds of young consumers and help marketers with new unknown brands, planning to sweep the market with the green bow.

Limitations and Further Research

The sampling frame for this study was limited only to a small group of undergraduate, graduate and post graduate students as subjects. Therefore, results must be used with caution. Consequently, the results of this study are not capable of generalization to all populations of consumers, as the target population consisted largely of young college students below the age of twenty-five, thereby encountering only a fraction of actual population. Also, the scope and results may vary for the other product categories and brands, since green ad of a hypnotized brand that is totally unfamiliar to consumers is likely to present a desolate contrast initially. With repeated exposures or considering a more familiar brand, the initial contrast effects could possibly be replaced by classical conditioning effects. Therefore, there is a need for further

research taking multiple exposures into account with more real existing brands, involving a larger and much heterogeneous sample. Also, the use of only one media i.e. print is assessed; while new advertising media such as mobile and internet bringing evolutionary changes to the way marketers reach the consumers have not been put into consideration. The responses of the youngsters to more tech-savvy media need to be put under consideration. Thus, further research should be conducted to reveal whether differences in media type can influence our integrative model.

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