

IDENTIFYING RELEVANT FACTORS OF NEWSPAPERS' ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores several factors in order to establish which are the most important in driving local newspaper readers to buy, visit shops and look for additional information about products or services promoted by ads.

The behavior in the process of buying is a consequence of a complex interplay among cultural, social, personal and psychological dimensions. This process – which occurs prior to the action – has relevant implications and marketing departments should pay attention to it.

A series of hypotheses based on how advertising appeals to consumers and how it affects decision making at the time of buying are tested using a survey administered to a sample of 1,333 respondents in Chile.

A discriminant analysis is also performed to find out why some newspapers readers are driven to buy goods or services, visit a shop or search for more information.

The results show that the appeal of the deal advertised is the single most important factor in explaining subsequent consumer behavior.

1. THEORY

1.1 ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS

What is advertising supposed to do? A classic approach in the area of marketing has defined three major functions of advertising: (1) awareness and knowledge, related to *information* or *ideas*; (2) liking and preference, related to favorable *attitudes* or *feelings* towards something; and (3) conviction and purchase, related to *actions* (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961: 60). These three advertising functions are respectively related to the traditional psychological division of behavior into three dimensions: (1) the cognitive, intellectual or rational one; (2) the emotional or affective component; and (3) the motivational or striving state, related to the tendency to treat objects as positive or negative goals (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961: 60).

Though the primary goal of advertising is to produce sales, only one of the three major functions described is directly related to the immediate action of selling. The other two functions – knowledge and preference – could result useful to produce sales in the long-term, because “ultimate consumers normally do not switch from disinterested individuals to convinced purchasers in one instantaneous step” (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961: 59). Rather, the purchase is only the final station of a process in which consumers go through a series of steps.

Advertising may be oriented to *letting know* to people uninformed about the launch of a new product/service or about what this product/service offers; it may be designed to create *favorable attitudes* or *feelings* towards a product/service and ultimately producing a *preference*; or it may be conceived to convince people informed and with favorable attitudes and feelings toward the product/service to buy it (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961: 59).

In every station, advertising effectiveness – the attention paid and the response to ads by people exposed to them – may be affected by four groups of factors: a) the characteristics of the ad; b) the characteristics of the receiver; c) the situation-context-environment; and d) the peculiarities of the source-medium-channel (De Pelsmacker, Geuens & Anckaert, 2002).

Besides the characteristics of the specific ad and receiver, the situation or environment during the exposure to the ad may influence the receiver's response to it. If a person is not able to pay enough attention to an ad because he is tired or sick, he cannot be rightly exposed to it: "For example, when somebody starts to talk to a person watching a television commercial, it will prevent him or her from fully understanding the message" (De Pelsmacker et al., 2002).

The peculiarities and nature of the source-medium-context of the message also influences the response and attention paid to it (Juntunen, 1995; Schumann and Thorson, 1990). These peculiarities are not only present at the time of discriminating between different kinds of media but also at the time of varying the aggregation or presentation of ads in one medium. In effect, the language, appeal, and narrative of ads in print or broadcasted outlets are clearly different, but also a varying aggregation and/or presentation of ads in the same kind of media can result in very different responses by receivers. Specifically, a different number, sequence, or placement of ads in one medium might produce a very contrasting response by individuals exposed (Aaker, Stayman and Hagerty, 1986; Finn, 1988; Ha, 1996; Olsen, 1994; Pieters and De Klerk-Warmerdam, 1993). This influence of the source in the advertising effectiveness has been labeled as *media context* (De Pelsmacker et al., 2002: 59).

The context of the ad – what is around an individual ad inside a medium – may be more appropriate for certain types of advertising than for others (Derks and Arora, 1993; Perry et al., 1997). It is not the same to display an ad combined with others into clusters in a newspaper or in commercial blocks on television or radio, than to present the same ad inserted into a news article with a congruent context – e.g. an ad for suitcases next to a feature about traveling (MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986).

Congruence or contrast of the ad with its medium context – the close environment of the ad – might alter advertising effectiveness. In this sense, congruence between the message and its channel appears as a more convenient approach than contrast, generating a higher recall and better attitudes toward the ad (De Pelsmacker et al., 2002). For instance, people reading a sports magazine with a relaxed tone may be more willing to pay

attention and recall a humorous ad offering sports complements. It is believed that processing a message with a style similar to that of the media context is easier because both share common knowledge structures (De Pelsmacker et al., 2002). “Ads that show elements that are relevant to or congruent with the mood of a subject at that particular moment may be accessed and processed more easily” (De Pelsmacker et al., 2002: 50).

Newspapers as advertising vehicles

Newspapers have been advertising media for centuries. Indeed, newspapers and magazines were the only major media available to advertisers for a long time (Belch & Belch, 2012). Ninety years after the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg – around 1438 – appeared the first ad published on a German news flyer, announcing the miraculous benefits of a mysterious drug (Russell, Lane & Kleppner, 1993). However, newspapers are not the primary advertising vehicles in the US nowadays. According to recent reports, US newspapers are the fourth advertising channel, with a share of 10.2%, after direct mail (26.2%), TV (26.1%), and digital/online format (14.3%) (Cross & McLeod, 2012). Spain follows a slightly different path. Newspapers – with an 8.5% share – are behind direct mail and telemarketing (25%) and TV (18.5), but still ahead of the digital/online format – 7.5% (VV. AA., 2013).

Advertising used to be the major source of revenues for newspapers. On average, between 70 and 80% of the total revenue of newspapers used to come from ads, and the rest came from the sale of copies at newsstands and subscriptions (Belch & Belch, 2012; Mings & White, 2000). Thanks to this mix, the press was one of the most successful businesses in the second half of last century. Publishers in the US enjoyed steady profit margins of more than 12% per year during decades. These margins outscored those of other very successful industrial sectors, such as pharmaceutical (9%), chemical (8%), and metallurgical (7%) (Picard, 2000).

Reading newspapers habits have changed, declining steadily since the irruption of the broadcast media, as consumers began to prefer radio and particularly television as their primary source not only of entertainment

but also of information (Belch & Belch, 2012). Later, the emergence of the Internet accelerated the decline of the newspaper industry, which had reached its full maturity at the end of the last century. In recent years, the Internet has become the first source of news surpassing the print media (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2008).

Today, readers do not seem to be willing to pay for print newspapers because they can get online sports, business, national and international news commoditized and do not perceive enough differences to pay for something they can get for free (Belch & Belch, 2012). The willingness to pay for news is lower in the case of the online format. Different surveys have demonstrated that most people are not inclined to pay for online news and would abandon those newspapers or outlets that charge for articles or features (Chyi, 2005; EuropeMedia, 2002; NewMediaAge, 2009; PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2009).

As the Internet is now the first source for news consumers, it has attracted more and more advertisers. This explains why an Internet company as Google, founded 14 years ago, now makes more money from advertising than the entire newspaper industry, which has been around for more than a hundred years. In the first six months of 2012, Google's advertising revenues reached \$20.8 billion, while the whole U.S. print media – newspapers and magazines – generated \$19.2 billion on print advertising (Richter, 2012).

Though the online offering of Google and other aggregators separately does not replace the quality and informative extension of newspapers, it does replace some of the individual components offered by newspapers: they provide a place for commentary, entertain, form communities and report on specific issues. Each of those emerging competitors lacks something that is fundamental to most newspaper companies, but, taken together, they have been successful to compete with newspapers and to destroy its former informative monopoly (Anthony & Gilbert, 2006).

The decline of newspapers as advertising channels

The change of the technology cycle suffered by the newspaper industry has been exacerbated by the last economic crisis, with severe consequences for advertising expenditure. Classified ads, for instance, which used to represent

a third or a fourth of total revenues for newspapers, have abandoned print outlets and now can be found in online sites such as Craigslist.com, because these offer a more dynamic, flexible, rapid, and personalized presentation of products and services (Evans & Wurster, 1997).

Money provided by classified ads to newspapers has almost evaporated in 12 years: it was 19.6bn US dollars in 2000 – the peak in the American newspapers' history – and dropped to 5bn in 2011 (–74%) (Newspaper Association of America, 2013). Total advertising incomes for American newspapers followed a similar trend between those years: it dropped from 48.6bn in 2000 to 20.6bn in 2011 (–59%) (Newspaper Association of America, 2013). A similar decline can be observed in European countries as Spain. Advertising expenditures in Spanish newspapers reached 1.8bn euros in 2007, and dropped to 766 million euros in 2012 (VV. AA., 2013).

Online advertising has not emerged yet as a profitable alternative to compensate the losses coming from the decline in print advertising. Though online advertising expenditure for newspapers has increased steadily in the last years – from 1.2 billion in 2003 to 3.2 billion in 2011 – it can hardly offset the dramatic losses experienced by the industry (Newspaper Association of America, 2013).

Many authors blame the press itself for this advertising scarcity. The newspaper industry jumped very late on the bandwagon of digital offerings and, when it did, it kept its old print business model. Its managers did not hesitate “to stall or delay any investment in a technology that might cannibalize the core newspaper business” (Gilbert, 2005: 746). Some executives preferred to wait and see, and did not promote any online project until its adoption became inevitable (Gilbert, 2005). Newspapers delayed for years the moment of adopting business models and innovations that could lead them to develop online products at a profitable level (Gilbert, 2005).

In the nineties, newspapers missed the opportunity to reach advertisers who were trying to target individuals with personalized messages. In contrast, most of the new players in the field of online media, such as Yahoo!, Monster.com and Cnet, developed business models that took advantage of interactive opportunities, and sold their services to advertisers who had not invested in the traditional advertising market of newspapers, because they wanted to run direct campaigns to consumers (Gilbert, 2003). “Print newspapers continued

to sell advertising through their established sales channels to established customers, who were not demanding the new direct-advertising products” (Gilbert, 2003: 31). Newspapers failed to sell ads to e-mail advertisers, to those that target specific demographic groups, and to those who engage in usage targeting, i.e. aiming at someone who usually reads the sports page, for example. “As a result, they were missing 40% of their potential sales opportunity as compared with the typical online entrant” (Gilbert, 2003: 31).

The newspaper advertising offer

In spite of the huge challenges and turbulence faced by newspapers in industrialized countries, they still remain a primary means of advertising, because they provide unique advantages to both advertisers and readers (Russel and Lane, 2001). Newspapers have many competitive advantages to offer to advertisers: a) advertising exposure in newspapers is very effective, especially among people over 35 years; b) advertising in newspapers is very flexible and provides a broad range of colors, sizes, prices, and designs – displays, coupons, inserts, etc.; and c) newspapers are a credible, convenient, and opportune source of information (Russell et al., 1993; Russel and Lane, 2001). Several studies have also shown that newspapers remain highly popular media among customers because they: a) help consumers to decide where to shop; b) are used more extensively when people are willing to make a purchase; c) are most effective in achieving the objectives of advertising; and d) are very credible media (Radio Advertising Bureau, 1997).

Newspapers have also some disadvantages as advertising channels: a) they are sometimes overloaded with ads – surpassing 60% of the available space; considering that the average reader spends around 30 minutes per day reading them, it is possible to deduce that many ads are commonly ignored by readers; b) the circulation of newspapers and its penetration have fallen constantly in recent years, especially among younger people; c) advertising costs have soared in recent years, decoupling from the decrease in circulation and penetration that follow a divergent trend; and d) newspapers face a growing competition from broadcast media and the digital/online format (Russell et al., 1993).

Advertising and the purchase decision

For many years, the role played by newspapers and other media in the promotion of commercial products has been extensively studied. Since the first empirical marketing studies, the role played by the media in the promotion and advertising of commercial goods was directly associated with a higher consumer engagement toward products. Reiersen (1967) found at the end of the sixties that exposition to print ads and media content could provoke an immediate response by receivers, changing the consumers' perception toward the product evaluated. This author found a direct relationship between the amount of information received by some people about a specific category of products and the change of perception by them about that category of products, compared with people that was not exposed to information and do not change their perception in consequence (Reiersen, 1967).

Consumers are constantly faced with the need to make decisions about products and services. Some decisions are very important and entail great effort, but others are practically automatic and people make them by habit. Evaluating and buying products are very complex processes – often analyzed separately – and depend on many variables (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Peterson & Jolibert, 1995).

The decision-making process is further complicated because of the huge number of decisions made by people every day in a marketplace environment characterized by consumer *hyper-choice* (Solomon, 2007). This *hiper-choiceness* has been exacerbated by the irruption of the Internet. For instance, the Web has changed the way many consumers search for information about products and services. If consumers experienced in the past a deficit of information about products and services, today they experience just the opposite: oversupply of data, details, facts and statistics that may be more confusing than enlightening (Solomon, 2007). Compared to the Internet, newspapers seem to offer a key competitive advantage to advertisers: they filter, condense, classify and present data orderly (Solomon, 2007). However, the media are not the only relevant factor at the time of studying consumer behavior. Consumers usually pay attention to a lot of extrinsic factors when choosing a product, such as price, brand image,

packaging, country of origin, and post-selling service, and consider some intrinsic elements, such as design, style, color, etc. (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). Each one of these factors can play a significant role. For instance, consumers may tend to prefer local to foreign products, *ceteris paribus*, except when imported goods are undoubtedly more convenient than local ones in terms of price and quality (Elliott & Cameron, 1994). Besides, consumers seem to have a “hierarchy of countries” at the time of preferring imported goods. At the top of this hierarchy are products from the United States, followed, in descendent order, by those of Germany, Japan, North of Europe, South of Europe, the rest of Asia-Pacific, South America and Africa (Liefeld, 1993).

When consumers evaluate and select products in the marketplace, some cognitive and affective processes take place in their minds. This occurs because people establish a relation with products based on feelings, attitudes and intentions (Liefeld, 1993). People respond to these feelings, attitudes and intentions generated by products, with perceptions (evaluation) and/or actual actions (election). In the first case, people form images in their minds, and do not necessarily make a decision. In the second case, perception leads to a concrete and observable action, being purchase or rejection of the product the most common ones (Liefeld, 1993).

Buying a product requires a higher level of *engagement* by the consumer than only evaluating a product. Buying tends to be considered a response to a problem, following a series of steps in order to get a solution. This process is commonly composed by four stages: a) problem recognition; (b) information research; c) evaluation of alternatives; and d) product choice (Solomon, 2007).

Once a consumer recognizes a purchasing decision problem, he needs adequate information to solve it. The following search of information may be internal or external. Indeed, when a person is confronting a purchase decision, he usually recalls and compares the evaluated product or service with many others already saved in his memory. By doing that, he engages in an internal search, scanning his own memory to assemble information about different product alternatives. But this may be not enough to those market-savvy who need to supplement their internal search information with external search, based on advertisements, friends’ recommendations, word-of-mouth, etc. (Solomon, 2007).

In any case, people do not always follow a *logic* sequence when buying. Sometimes, impulses might be more powerful than rationality. Solomon (2007) considers that a helpful way of characterizing the decision-making process is considering how intense has been the effort conducted to make the decision:

An extended problem solving process at the time of buying is highly related to the traditional decision-making perspective. It is initiated by a motive that is fairly important to the person, who feels that the eventual decision carries a fair degree of risk. The consumer collects as much information as possible and evaluates each product alternative. The evaluation is often based on the consideration of brand attributes and how those attributes fit into a set of desired characteristics.

A limited problem solving process means that the buyer is not very much motivated to search for information or to evaluate each product alternative rigorously. He instead uses simple decision making rules to choose among alternatives.

Consumer purchase decision may also be categorized depending on consumer utility. Regarding this categorization, Peter and Tarpey (1975) have differentiated among three consumer decision strategies: a) minimization of expected negative utility (perceived risk); b) maximization of expected positive utility (perceived return); c) and maximization of expected net utility (net perceived return). Both authors concluded that the net perceived return model could explain more variance in brand preference than the other two models (Peter and Tarpey, 1975).

Consumers consider sets of product attributes by using different rules, depending on the complexity of the decision and its importance for them. One classification presented by Solomon (2007) divides the decision making between compensatory and non-compensatory categories:

Compensatory: when people give a product a chance. Consumers who employ these rules tend to be more involved in the purchase and thus are willing to consider the entire picture in a more

exacting way. The election is carried out after analyzing positive and negative attributes, but sometimes people also take into account the importance of positive attributes, essentially multiplying brand ratings by importance weights (Alba and Marmorstein, 1987).

Non-compensatory: People eliminate all options that do not meet some basic standards. This type of decision is made by consumers who only buy well-known brands names and would not consider new options even if they were equal or superior to existing ones. When people are less familiar or not motivated to process information, they tend to use simple non-compensatory rules (Park, 1976).

The appeal of advertising

What attributes should advertising meet to be effective and appealing? Some marketers and authors have listed a series of attributes to answer that question. An effective and appealing advertising should be based on these elements: a) a powerful strategy, which is considered the core of advertising; b) an engaging idea and a promise of a benefit or deliverable to the consumer; c) a message that stands out and is remembered (Russell et al., 1993; Russel and Lane, 2001).

Based on these listed attributes, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: *An effective and appealing offer advertised in a local newspaper is positively related to motivate the consumer into buying the product offered.*

H2: *An effective and appealing offer advertised in a local newspaper is positively related to motivate the consumer into visiting shops where the product offered is sold.*

H3: *An effective and appealing offer advertised in a local newspaper is positively related to motivate the consumer into looking for additional information about the product or service promoted in the ad.*

Method

This study explores several factors in order to establish which are the most important at the time of producing an active response by local newspapers' readers exposed to print ads. These active responses to advertising exposure were classified as a) buying; b) visiting shops; and c) looking for additional information about the product or service promoted.

To know how people respond to an ad considered as "appealing", a quantitative face to face survey to 1,333 people was conducted. People were surveyed in ten Chilean cities (Antofagasta, La Serena, Valparaíso, Viña del Mar, Rancagua, Curicó, Talca, Chillán, Concepción and Puerto Montt), between June and July, 2012. People surveyed were aged between 15 and 65 years old. 48.6% of them were men and 51.4% women, in line with the gender distribution of the Chilean population according to the 2002 Census. More than half of them (54%) used to read a newspaper during the last week and almost a third (28%) acknowledged that they read one every day. The margin error was +/- 3.7% with a 95% confidence interval. The sample was stratified and then adjusted by age and income according to available official statistics.

People were asked if advertising in local newspapers in Chile: a) is appealing or attractive, b) offers good deals; and c) is helpful to make a buying decision. These variables were related to reading habits and perceptions about the local press declared by respondents: a) reading frequency; b) level of satisfaction with information provided by local newspapers; c) level of satisfaction with entertainment provided by local newspapers; d) level of trustworthiness; e) level of quality; and f) influence of local newspapers. All these variables were measured through Likert scales that ranked levels of agreement/disagreement and satisfaction/dissatisfaction declared by people surveyed, where 1 is equal to total disagreement or dissatisfaction and 5 is equal to total agreement or satisfaction.

A discriminant analysis is also performed to find out why some newspapers readers exposed to ads are driven to a) buy; b) visit a shop; or c) acquire more information.

Results

Figure 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables used in the analysis. The highest correlations occur between reading frequency and completeness of information and entertainment needs. This result is not surprising, since those who read the newspaper more frequently tend to value it more than those who do not do so. For the same reason, quality of the newspaper is moderately correlated to completeness (information and entertainment) and trust. However, influence of the newspaper shows low correlations with all other variables. This might be explained since local newspapers serve only an informational role but are not influential in public issues.

Figure 1
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND CORRELATIONS

	Median	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Ad attractive-ness	2.86	1.353	1.00							
2. Offers in newspaper	3.05	1.352	0.592**	1.00						
3. Help in buying decision	3.05	1.194	0.531**	0.439**	1.00					
4. Reading frequency	3.68	1.980	0.319**	0.313**	0.289**	1.00				
5. Cover information needs	3.30	1.818	0.361**	0.379**	0.306**	0.745**	1.00			
6. Cover entertainment needs	3.69	1.592	0.350**	0.357**	0.289**	0.679**	0.820**	1.00		
7. Trust-worthiness	2.75	1.171	0.368**	0.400**	0.281**	0.491**	0.545**	0.487**	1.00	
8. Quality	2.43	1.426	0.399**	0.458**	0.319**	0.488**	0.569**	0.557**	0.676**	1.00
9. Influence	3.15	1.758	0.029	0.310**	-0.077*	0.218**	0.241**	0.268	0.296**	0.330*

N=838; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

A discriminant analysis was performed using four categories associated with consumer behavior after being exposed to advertisement in the local newspaper, namely buying, seeking more information, visiting the shop and not taking any specific action. The analysis produced two significant functions defined by eight significant variables (Figure 2).

Figure 2
 RESULTS OF DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS

Variables	Function 1		Function 2	
	Standardized Canonical Discriminant Coefficients	Correlations with Discriminant Score	Standardized Canonical Discriminant Coefficients	Correlations with Discriminant Score
Help in buying decision	0.53	0.76*	0.24	0.37
Ad attractiveness	0.52	0.73*	-0.42	0.18
Cover information needs	0.31	0.42*	-0.18	0.40
Influence	-0.43	-0.28	0.48	0.77*
Offers in newspaper	-0.23	0.30	0.50	0.69*
Quality	0.10	0.32	0.33	0.69*
Trustworthiness	-0.2	0.27	0.12	0.56*
Cover entertainment needs	0.05	0.37	0.11	0.44*
Reading frequency	-0.01	0.34	0.02	0.36
Eigenvalue	0.59		0.06	
Canonical Correlation	0.61		0.23	
Wilk's Lambda	0.59		0.94	
χ^2	422.74		46.61	
<i>P</i>	< 0.001		< 0.001	
* Largest absolute correlation between each variable and any discriminant function.				

The first function is defined by *help in buying decision*, *ad attractiveness*, and *covering information needs*. The second function is defined by *influence*,

offers in newspapers, quality, trustworthiness, and covering entertainment needs. Examining the group centroids (Figure 3) indicates that the first discriminant function separates the *no action taken* group from the remaining groups. Similarly, the second discriminant function separates the *buy* group from the remaining groups. The *buy* group is characterized mainly for being seduced by appealing offers, because the local newspaper is influential for readers and it is a source of quality information.

Figure 3
GROUP CENTROIDS FOR THE TWO SIGNIFICANT
DISCRIMINANT FUNCTIONS

<i>Group Centroids</i>	<i>Function 1</i>	<i>Function 2</i>
Buy	-1.69	0.66
Seek more information	-0.74	-0.15
Go to the shop	-0.30	-0.26
No action taken	0.73	0.10

Finally, as shown in Figure 4, the percentage of consumers correctly classified with the discriminant procedure was 52.1%. This level compares favorably with the percentage that would be achieved by chance.

Figure 4
CLASSIFICATION RESULTS^a

Actual Group	Predicted Group Membership			
	1	2	3	4
1. Buy	49.1%	31.6%	7.0%	12.3%
2. Seek more information	15.0	21.4	30.1	33.5
3. Go to the shop	8.7	18.5	22.1	50.8
4. No action taken	0.0	5.1	13.8	81.1

^a Group cases correctly classified equals 52.1%

Final Remarks

Based on a survey conducted in ten Chilean cities among 1,333 persons between June and July, 2012, it was possible to relate the levels of satisfaction of those newspapers' readers that declared paying attention to print news content and print advertising with some active purchase decisions taken by them.

A discriminant analysis performed with data collected permitted to conclude that people compelled to buy after reading local newspapers and pay attention to print ads were mainly motivated by the level of appeal and attractiveness of the deal offered by the ad, the level of influence exerted by the newspaper where the ad is contained, and the level of quality of information provided by the news outlet. Not clear is the relationship between those variables and the actions of visiting a shop or looking for additional information about the product or service offered in the ad. Therefore, this article provides robust evidence about the strong relationship between the editorial role of a newspaper company – i.e. its mission as a provider of high quality information – and its commercial role – i.e. being an effective channel for advertisers that want to sell products.

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