

EFFECTS OF WORLD VIEW ON ADVERTISEMENT LIKABILITY

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The association between content components of an advertisement, that is, whether it is humorous or serious, consumers' 'world view' and what they think about an advertisement will be explored in this study. The main emphasis of this research project will be to explore and identify the extent to which consumers' belief systems impact on their responses to a set of commercial advertisements. Specifically, we will investigate the correlation between persons' 'world view' in aggregate and their cognitive responses, in terms of attention, to commercial television advertisements.

Substantial empirical evidence supports the impact of a 'world view', or a belief system, on how people process information. Biel and Bridgwater (1990) concluded in their study viewers like commercials they found relevant to them and worth remembering. Another study by Delener (1990) suggested that belief systems, i.e., religion and religiosity interacted with other factors in determining consumer decision making. In addition, Sun (1988) identified 'world view' perspectives as antecedents to mass media use. In particular he found that people who have a knowable 'world view' pay more attention to public affairs, while those who have a fatalistic 'world view' pay more attention to entertainment and advertisements.

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These studies indicate that beliefs systems contribute to what people pay attention to. It is our premise that what people pay attention to, is what they like, and what they like may lead to positive behavioral responses.

The importance of this research study exist in the possibility of differentiating large market segments according to their relative 'world view'. Consequently, strategies could be developed to maximize message reach and effectiveness and, thereby, possibly having a more decisive effect on consumer behavior. If the study concludes 'world view' has an impact on how people attend to an advertisement, then incorporating 'world view' perspectives into market segmentation may enhance the effectiveness of commercials.

Theoretical Background

The theoretical construct upon which this resarch is based has been examined under a variety of studies. Kearney (1984 p. 41) describes the original use of 'world view' as an anthropological term, referring to "basic assumptions and images that provide a more or less coherent, though not necessarily accurate, way of thinking about the world". Others examined the construct in terms of its political perspective. For instance, McLeod, Amor, and Kosick (1984) use 'world view' as a surrogate for cultural factors that influence peoples' news images and political knowledge. McLeod further elaborated by stating ... " 'world view' captures the notion of a specific characterization of the external world ... and of particular components of that world, such as institutions which not only specify key attributes of that external world, but simultaneously encompasses the orientation of the subject toward them." Identifying the broad meaning of 'world view' McLeod et al. (1987) developed four distinct dimensions: pessimism, fatalism, knowable world and confidence in science. These dimensions were explored in their association with media images. McLeod concluded that fatalism (negative) and knowable world (positive) dimensions influenced peoples' knowledge acquisition of public affairs if people thought media news provided a meaningful pattern to them.

Among several dimensions of 'world view' fatalism is the concept having the most in common with variables used frequently by public relations researchers investigating media effects. A research study performed by Grunig (1986) proposed a model of public

message reception which utilized two variables: problem reception (the extent to which a person recognized that something is missing) and constraint recognition (the extent to which a person perceives constraints in a situation which limit his freedom to conduct his own behavior). Gruning found the public that held a fatalistic 'world view' had low problem and high constraint recognition. In his words, "....." for the organization the consequences are the potential for a public (fatalistic) that does not care and made no effort to plan a behavior response." (Gruning and Hunt, p. 154).

One important implication of the 'world view' approach is that people with specific characteristics use the mass media differently. This assumption was verified by McLeod et al. (1987) when they examined the cognitive processing strategies of respondents to television news and television commercial advertising. Their findings indicated respondents with a high education level and scoring low on fatalism tended to process news above average, but were below average processors of advertisements. In contrast, respondents who scored high on the fatalism component and had low incomes paid selective attention to both television news and advertisements.

These studies point to belief systems as contributory to what people pay attention to. In advertising research numerous studies (Martiewicz, 1974; Madden & Weinberger, 1982; Duncan & Nelson, 1985) support the theory that there is a positive relationship between humor and attention. In addition, several studies (Brooker, 1981; Duncan & Nelson, 1985; Cantor & Venus, 1980) support the idea that humor is less effective than serious message content in achieving viewer comprehension. The previous advertising research, however, did not analyze the effect of belief systems on the message content, whether humorous or serious. From the previous literature review there is fundamental connection between 'world view' and how much attention a person gives to media messages. In light of this several hypotheses were generated. These are:

- H1 Attention to the serious advertisement is most highly correlated with knowledgeable 'world view'.
- H2 Attention to the humorous advertisement is most highly correlated with fatalistic 'world view'.
- H3 There is a positive relationship between knowledgeable 'world view' and likability of serious advertisements.

H4 There is a positive relationship between fatalistic 'world view' and likability of humorous advertisements.

Methodology

A non-experimental design was employed in this study because trying to controlled different dimensions of 'world view' would not be feasible given the constraints of time and money. As Kerlinger (1986 p. 348) states

"Non - experimental research is systematic empirical inquiry in which the scientist does not have direct control of independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or because they are inherently not manipulable. Inferences about relations among variables are made, without direct intervention, from concomitant variables of independent and dependent variables."

A convenience sample of MATC marketing and advertising students were gathered (n = 99) for this project. MATC students were selected because it was felt they offered the greatest latitude of demographic variation, as compared to other area colleges. The subjects were split into two groups. Group (A) contained 48 and group B (51) students. In order to control and measure the order effect of the advertisements, group (A) viewed the humorous then the serious commercial, while group (B) viewed the commercials in reverse order. (diagram below) Selection of the commercials were determined by a panel of three judges. Four hours of network commercials were viewed and several were selected for closer examination. The final two commercials selected were agreed upon by all three judges as representing the best humorous and serious commercials in equivalent low-involvement product categories. These commercials showed a bread and cereal product that were judge as being of equivalent production quality and sophistication.

	First order	Second order
Group (A)	Humorous	Serious
Group (B)	Serious	Humorous

* See Table 1 for descriptive statistics of students

Table 1: Sample Characteristics for Overall

Gender :	46 male	(46%)	
	52 female	(53%)	
Age :	Less than 25	70	(72%)
	26 - 35	19	(20%)
	36 and above	8	(8%)
Income :	Low Cl.	46	(46%)
	Middle Cl.	44	(45%)
	Upper Cl.	9	(09%)

Sample Characteristics by Groups

		Group I	Group II
Gender :	Male	23 (48%)	23 (45%)
	Female	25 (53%)	27 (53%)
Age :	Less than 25	40 (83%)	30 (61%)
	26 - 35	6 (13%)	13 (27%)
	36 and above	2 (4%)	6 (12%)
Class :	Low	22 (40%)	24 (35%)
	Middle	21 (44%)	23 (45%)
	Upper	5 (8%)	3 (9%)

Measurement**World View Dimension**

'World view' was measured using several items located on a five-point Likert type scale. Respondents were asked to circle an answer that range from strongly agree to strongly disagree with each statement.

Three specific 'world view' dimensions were used from the McLeod et al (1986) study. Our principle component analysis supported McLeod's three dimensional scale. In the 1986 study, the strongest dimension pessimism accounted for (18.3% of total variance, Eigenvalue of 3.56). The pessimism dimension represented an image of the world as a difficult place that was not going to get better. The two strongest loading items in this dimension both affirm the unfairness of life (.71, -.66). In the present study, pessimism was still the strongest dimension (31%

of total variance, Eigenvalue of 2.97). However, several items also loaded on factor 3, this cross-over was felt to be the result of a low sample size $n=99$.

Dimension two, fatalism accounted for (14.1% of total variance, with an Eigenvalue of 1.98) in the McLeod et al (1986) study. In the 1986 study, this 'world view' dimension represent passivity and detachment. The strongest loading item (.67) represents the futility of challenging one's fate. In our study, fatalism accounted for (16.7% of total variance, Eigenvalue of 1.66). The strongest loading item was (.62) for a statement representing 'disconnection from events'. However, as with the first dimension, cross-over was experienced with several items. Again, this was felt to be a consequence of the low sample size.

The third dimension of the 'world view' is the knowable world perspective. In the 1986 study, this dimension accounted for (9.2% of total variance, Eigenvalue of 1.29). This dimension describes a world that is both positive and understandable through mental effort. The strongest loading item (.65) endorsed the efficacy of planning, while the second most strong item (.59) asserted that active study of the world would reveal meaningful patterns. In the present study, there are again cross-over problems with these items. As stated previously, this is probably a consequence of low sample size. For the results see (Table 2).

Table 2: Factor Loading Matrices of Likert Scales for World view.

Pessimism	I	II	III
a. Despite all the worlds problems, life is getting better for most people	.57		
b. On the whole, most people live untroubled lives.	.62		.45
c. In general, life treats most people fairly.	.69		
d. Life for most people is painful and dangerous.			.41
e. Most people do not get a equal chance in life.	.45		-.55

Fatalism

- | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|--|
| a. Things going on halfway do not have much impact what is going on in this community | | .62 | |
| b. There are lots of things that happen in the world that have no cause or purpose | .43 | .44 | |
| c. What will be, will be -- there is not much we can do about changing fate. | | .58 | |

Knowable World

- | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|
| a. Intelligent planning can what at first seem to be unavoidable catastrophes. | .43 | .57 | .41 |
| b. There are patterns in what's going on in this world that we can understand if we keep trying to learn about them. | | .58 | .40 |
| Eigenvalue: | 2.97 | 1.66 | 1.08 |
| Var. Explained: | 31% | 17% | 14% |
| Alpha: | .54 | .40 | .50 |

The reliability measures were ascertained, for the present study, by adding each item score per dimension and statistically analyzing these scores using SPSSX. Cronbach alpha scores were obtained for each dimension. These are: (Pessimism alpha= .54, Fatalism alpha= .40 and Knowable world alpha= .50). These scores represent moderate reliability of the measures.

Attitudes Towards Advertisement Measure

A five-point semantic differential type scale was used to determine respondents attitudes towards the commercials. (see appendix for questionnaire) In particular, likability was the component we were trying to measure. For both commercials, principal component analysis revealed a three dimensional scale. (see Table 3) Of the nine scales, five loaded on a factor that seemed closely

related to likability. Also, this is the same factor that the 'like' scale loaded on. Three other scales representing 'informative', 'believable' and humor/serious items factor loaded on a separate dimension. One scale, 'simple' was not related to either of the other two scales.

Attention Measure

A semantic differential type scale was used to ascertain the attention respondents paid to the commercials. These self-report 5-point scales were taken from the Madden (1982) study and validated in the present research. The attention scales for both advertisements loaded on the same factor with a high reliability of ($\alpha = .88$). (see Table 4 for the factor analysis)

Research Findings

Order Effects

T-tests were performed on the effects of the commercials' ordering on respondents attention and likability scales.

Table 3:
Factor Loading Matrices of 9 Scales
for attitude toward advertising

(n = 99)

	<u>Humorous Commercial</u>			<u>Serious Commercial</u>		
	I	II	III	I	II	III
Good	.90			.66	.52	
Interesting	.88			.72		
Like	.87			.76		
Witty	.70			.78		
Artful	.68			.74		
Informative	.59	-.59			.84	
Believable	.55	-.63			.81	
Humor		.75			-.81	
Simple			.79			.94
Eigenvalue	3.97	1.45	1.01	4.62	1.23	1.00
Variance	50%	18%	10%	.51%	14%	11%

Table 4:

Factor Loadings of 4 Scales
for "attention to commercials"

(n = 99)

	<u>Humorous Commercial</u>	<u>Serious Commercial</u>
Alert	.74	.67
Observant	.73	.66
Motivated	.61	.52
Occupi	.61	.52
Eigenvalue	3.39	2.63
Variance	.49%	45%
Alpha	.88	.88

No significant difference was found in the order effect on the humorous advertisement between groups. (see Table 5) However, the results of the T-test did indicate a significant difference between groups regarding the serious commercial. (see Table 6) The results indicate that (Group 1), those who viewed the humorous commercial prior to the serious commercial rated the serious commercial higher on the scales of good, artful, likable, believable, interesting, witty, and also, showed more attention to the serious commercial. However, only 'good' and 'likable' results were statistically significant. ($t = 2.77$, $p = 0.001$ and $t = 1.98$, $p = 0.05$, respectively).

The order effects did not change the students' perception of the humorousness of the advertisements ($t = .68$, $p = .50$), or the seriousness ($t = .58$, $p = .56$). The overall scores indicated students perceived the humorous commercial as humorous and the serious commercial as serious. (mean value = .889 and -.136, respectively). These results validate the choice of the commercials as representative of humorousness and seriousness content. (see Table 7 for overall ratings)

Table 5

T-test Scores on Ratings of Humorous Commercial for Likability, Beliveability and Attention between two groups

Group I/Humor First

	+2	+1	0	-1	-2		Means	t	p
Good						Bad	.20	-.48	.63
Artful						Artless	.44	-.90	.37
Like						Dislike	-.83	-.20	.84
Witty						Dull	.41	.55	.58
Interesting						Uninteresting	.02	.45	.65
Informative						Uninformative	.40	1.24	.21
Believable						Unbelievable	-.60	.28	.77
Humor						Serious	.96	.68	.50
Simple						Complex	-.36	-1.15	.25
Attention						Not Attention	.32	-.07	.94

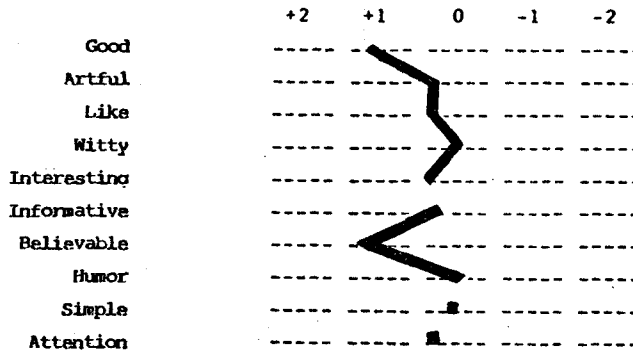
Group II/Serious First

	+2	+1	0	-1	-2		Means	t	p
Good						Bad	.13		
Artful						Artless	.22		
Like						Dislike	-.14		
Witty						Dull	.27		
Interesting						Uninteresting	.09(-)		
Informative						Uninformative	.67		
Believable						Unbelievable	.53(-)		
Humor						Serious	.82		
Simple						Complex	.67		
Attention						Not Attention	.33		

Table 6

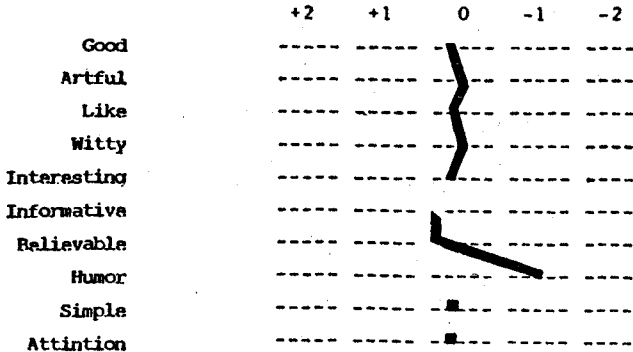
T-test Scores on rating of serious Commercial for Likability, Believability and Attention between two groups

Group I/Humor First



	Means	t	p
Bad	1.13	2.77	.007*
Artless	.75	1.56	.123
Dislike	.75	1.98	.05**
Dull	.23	1.18	.24
Uninteresting	.71	1.85	.060
Uninformative	1.27	1.81	.074
Unbelievable	1.10	1.41	.16
Serious	-1.42	.58	.56
Complex	.23	-.83	.41
Not Attention	.80	1.76	.08

Group II/Serious First



	Means	t	p
Bad	.62		
Artless	.41		sp < .001
Dislike	.31		sp = .05
Dull	.02		
Uninteresting	.28		
Uninformative	.88		
Unbelievable	.80		
Serious	-1.31		
Complex	.41		
Not Attention	.47		

Table 7

Humorous Commercial

Overall means for ratings

	+2	+1	0	-1	-2		
Good	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Bad	.81
Artful	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Artless	.32
Like	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Dislike	.11
Witty	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Dull	.34
Interesting	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Uninteresting	.04(-)
Informative	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Uninformative	.54(-)
Believable	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Unbelievable	.56(-)
Humor	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Serious	.88
Simple	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Complex	.52
Attention	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Not Attention	.34

Serious Commercial

	+2	+1	0	-1	-2		
Good	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Bad	.86
Artful	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Artless	.57
Like	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Dislike	.52
Witty	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Dull	.10
Interesting	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Uninteresting	.50
Informative	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Uninformative	1.07
Believable	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Unbelievable	.94
Humor	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Serious	-1.36
Simple	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Complex	.32
Attention	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	Not Attention	.65

Table 8:

Correlation between Attention Index Scores and
World View

<u>World View</u>	<u>Attention to Serious Commercial</u>		
	r	p	n
Knowable World	.27	.003	99
Fatalism	-.11	.13	99
Pessimism	.03	.38	99
	<u>Attention to Humorous Commercial</u>		
	r	p	n
Knowable World	-.69	.24	99
Fatalism	-.006	.43	99
Pessimism	.02	.38	99

Hypotheses Results

H1 This hypothesis was tested using the Pearson Correlation. (see Table 8) Results indicate attention to the serious commercial is correlated with the knowable 'world view' dimension ($r = .27$ $p = .001$). This correlational pattern was not observed for the humorous commercial. ($r = -.692$, $p = .24$) The first hypothesis was supported.

H2 No statistically significant relationship was found between fatalistic 'world view' and humorous commercial. ($r = -.006$, $p = .43$) The second hypothesis was not supported

H3 All scales regarding the serious advertisement likability indicated statistically significant values when correlated with knowable 'world view'. (Table 9) This result supports our hypothesis that exposure to a serious advertisement contributes positively to the increase in peoples' likability of advertisement content for those who have a knowable 'world view'.

H4 No statistically significant support was found for the hypothesis that there would be a positive relationship between fatalistic 'world view' and likability of a humorous advertisement.

Table 9:
Correlation between Likability Scores and Knowable World

<u>Likability</u>	<u>For Serious Commercial</u>		
	r	p	n
Good	.26	.004	99
Like	.40	.00	99
Artful	.39	.00	99
Witty	.17	.04	99
Interesting	.32	.001	99
	r	p	n
	<u>For Humorous Commercial</u>		
Good	-.09	.17	99
Like	-.07	.24	99
Artful	-.04	.32	99
Witty	-.04	.34	99
Interesting	-.08	.23	99

Discussion

The most significant threat to external validity may be that the findings represent only, or mainly, reactions to the 'manifest' content of the two commercials, rather than their specific humor or serious content. An ideal study to address this situation would be to find, or if budgetary considerations would allow, to produce two commercials, one serious the other humorous about the same product. Another threat to external validity is the sample size and nature of its composition and acquisition. The results of this study may not be generalizable beyond the confines of this particular group. Although, there is some variation in demographic variables, the sample frame probably does not represent the general populace. Future studies should examine the demographic composition of the populace to be extended to, and analyze these factors with the demographic composition of the respondents tested. The last threat to be examined is the contextual limitations of a field study. These limitations can be the relative 'spartan' environmental surroundings, as compared to the comfort of one's home. Presumably, the home environment would have some effect on attention to commercial content, as well as, the feelings towards humor and seriousness of the commercial. Additionally, programming context

was not considered in this study. A future study should examine the effect of different types of programming on viewers' reception regarding humor and serious commercial advertisement.

The finding of the impact of order effects needs to be further explored in future studies. In our study those people who view the humorous commercial prior to the serious commercial score the serious commercial higher on the likability scale. Research needs to be done to explore more fully the interaction of humor and other possible content messages on subsequent commercials.

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