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EFFECTIVENESS OF VARIOUS ADVERTISING APPEALS FEATURED IN BANNERS

Preferences towards 4 kinds of appeals were addressed in the research: humorous, sexual, frightening and cause-related. The findings suggest divergences in males' and females' appreciation of the sex and cause-related appeals, and convergences in their inclinations towards humour and fear appeals. The results of this research are particularly beneficial for marketing managers since they indicate differences in ads recall relating to neutral, sexual and humorous appeals.

Keywords: marketing, advertising appeals, gender, banners.

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ЕФЕКТИВНІСТЬ РІЗНИХ РЕКЛАМНИХ ПРИЙОМІВ У БАНЕРНІЙ РЕКЛАМІ

У статті було розглянуто 4 види реклами: гумористична, з сексуальним підтекстом, лякаюча і соціальна. Підтверджено відмінність жіночого і чоловічого сприйняття реклами з сексуальним підтекстом і соціальної реклами і схоже сприйняття гумористичної та лякаючої реклами. Результати цього дослідження особливо корисні для менеджерів з маркетингу, оскільки вони вказують на відмінності в рекламі, пов'язані з нейтральними, сексуальними і гумористичними підтекстами.

Ключові слова: маркетинг, реклама, стаття, банери.

Таб. 3. Літ. 33.

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ЭФФЕКТИВНОСТЬ РАЗЛИЧНЫХ РЕКЛАМНЫХ ПРИЕМОВ В БАННЕРНОЙ РЕКЛАМЕ

В статье были рассмотрены 4 вида рекламы: юмористическая, с сексуальным подтекстом, пугающая и социальная. Подтверждены различия женского и мужского восприятия рекламы с сексуальным подтекстом и социальной рекламы и схожесть восприятия юмористической и пугающей рекламы. Результаты этого исследования особенно полезны для менеджеров по маркетингу, так как они указывают на различия в рекламе, связанной с нейтральными, сексуальными и юмористическими подтекстами.

Ключевые слова: маркетинг, реклама, пол, баннеры.

1. Introduction. Online advertising is gaining in its importance continuously, which is primarily due to the fact that Internet advertising spending has been growing constantly over time. Some estimations suggest that expenditures in this field on the US market reached the level of 32.03 bln USD in 2011, and are expected to grow additional 23.3% to 39.5 bln USD this year (US Online Advertising Spending to Surpass Print in 2012). Conversely, spending on online advertising in Serbia is still at a modest level, provided that according to some assessments the value of this market was approximately 6 mln EUR in 2010, which made only 3% of total advertising spending in the country. However, high growth rate from its emergence in 2005 till

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nowadays (30-50%) and forecasts for future period indicate that the relevance of this market will increase (Stjepanovic, 2011).

Understanding the significance of the Internet for marketing communications, numerous scholars and practitioners have been involved in investigating its various aspects, such as: advertising recall (Danaher & Mullarkey, 2003), beliefs and attitudes to online advertising (Wolin & Korgaonkar, 2003), banner effectiveness (Palanisamy, 2004) etc. Nevertheless, the role of advertising appeals in online advertising effectiveness has been understudied and needs to be examined in a more thorough manner. In addition, building on the studies undertaken on the topic of the role of gender in perception and preferences towards ads in traditional media (e.g., Wolin, 2003; Ognjanov, Dianoux, Linhart, & Filipovic, 2008), this study aimed to investigate whether differences in respondents' inclinations towards 4 advertising appeals displayed in banners also exist, relative to their gender.

2. Literature review and research hypotheses. Advertising (marketing) appeals represent impulses or drivers, based on the results of the applied psychology, that are used in ads in order to evoke and activate desires and feelings which stimulate the needs for advertised products (Kesic, 2003). It is noticeable that there is a broad range of advertising appeals that could be sorted out in diverse ways - rational vs. emotional; positive vs. negative; one-sided vs. two-sided; verbal vs. nonverbal etc. In the subject academic literature, one of the most investigated aspects of advertising appeals is the emotion they tend to induce and accordingly, the general theme they exploit.

3 kinds of appeals have been recognized to be particularly effective and widely used in ads, namely: sexual, humorous and frightening (Milisavljevic, Maricic, & Gligorijevic, 2012). Moreover, research on advocacy advertising (advertising which refers to some socially important causes) has emerged recently (Kotler, Roberto, & Lee, 2002; White & Peloza, 2009).

Sex appeals could be understood as the exhibition of nudity and the use of sexual attractiveness or suggestibility (Bello, Etzel, & Pits, 1983) in advertising. Given the prevalence of this kind of appeal in modern advertising, its effectiveness was examined from numerous perspectives: a) the ability to draw attention to an ad (Severn, Belch, & Belch, 1990); b) the influence on brand recall, brand recognition and purchase intention (Grazer & Keesling, 1995); c) cultural context (Liu, Li, & Cheng, 2006; Ognjanov, Dianoux, Linhart, & Filipovic, 2008); d) the role of the level of eroticism and nudity presented in an ad (La Tour, Pitts, & Snook-Luther, 1990; Kilbourne, 2005). Even though the studies in this field have rendered rather equivocal conclusions, the findings on the impact of the gender in the perception of sex appeals in ads appeared to be consistent. Indeed, in line with previous research (Manceau & Tissier-Desbordes, 2006; Ognjanov, Dianoux, Linhart, & Filipovic, 2008), it could be argued that males have more positive feelings to the display of nudity in ads than females. Thus, we hypothesised the following:

H1: Males and females differ in their preferences towards banners with sexual content.

Furthermore, it can be acknowledged that humour represents one of the most extensively used appeals throughout the history of advertising (Beard, 2005). Similarly to the observations made in the case of sex appeals, a lack of consistency

in findings on the matter of effectiveness of humor appeals can also be noted (Chattopadhyay & Basu, 1990). Nevertheless, both scholars and practitioners agree that this kind of appeals trigger person's attention (Madden & Weinberger, 1984; Kotler, Roberto, & Lee, 2002) and might contribute to better brand recall (Chattopadhyay & Basu, 1990; Krishnan & Chakravarti, 2003) and person's overall response to an ad (Wolburg & Pokrwczynski, 2001). The paucity of studies investigating the role of gender in the perception of humorous ads implies that this domain is quite uncovered by academic research and needs to be examined to the greater extent in the future. However, given the fact that some previous studies (Acuff & Reiher, 1997; Filipovic, 2010) revealed that children of different ages react to different kinds of humour, but no significant correlation was established between children's gender and preferences to various types of humour, we consider it reasonable to assume:

H2: Preferences towards humorous appeals will not depend on the respondent's gender.

The third type of appeal that could be recognized as commonly used refers to the fear appeal. This kind of appeal indicates unfavourable consequences that could occur if a receiver of a message does not act in conformance with the suggestions given in the advertising message. The fear appeals were comprehended from manifold perspectives, such as: the impact of the level of fear on the receiver's behaviour (Keller, 1999), the influence of the recommendations to evade the threat (Das, de Wit, & Stroebe, 2003), the role of personal characteristics of an individual (Lee & Shin, 2011) etc. Moreover, with regard to the person's gender and his/her reaction to fear appeals, diverse studies (Maciejewski, 2004; Lewis, Watson, & Tay, 2007) yielded adverse results. Provided that Maciejewski's study (2004) was conducted in a more general manner than the one by Lewis, Watson and Tay (2007), we hypothesized:

H3: Evaluation of fear appeals on banners will not vary by gender.

One of the fields that have drawn researchers' attention substantially in the recent period pertains to advocacy advertising. Even though that term could comprise a broad range of issues and corresponding appeals, the most frequently examined were altruism and ecological behavior. White & Peloza (2009) asserted that people would be willing to give for charity either incited by egoistic (i.e., by highlighting the benefits for a donor) or by altruistic (i.e., by highlighting the benefits for others) motivations. Furthermore, it was ascertained that people responded better to altruistic appeals than to egoistic ones, yet the reaction would be mostly beneficial to appeals that enhance one's image about him/herself as well (Fisher, Vandenbosch, & Antia, 2008). Concerning the gender, researches (Lee, 2009; Lee, Haley, & Avery, 2010) unambiguously indicate that females are more perceptive to advocacy advertising than males. Hence, we assume the following:

H4: Male and female respondents will rate the use of cause-related appeals (altruistic and ecological appeals) in a different manner.

Finally, it was also fruitful to consider the effectiveness of different advertising appeals in general. Since this study failed to find any research undertaken on this matter in the body of the subject literature, it appeared reasonable to compare effectiveness of the two most extensively used marketing appeals - humorous and sexual, but also the neutral one. Consequently, we hypothesized:

H5: The type of the marketing appeal featured in a banner will influence banner recall.

3. Research methodology. The sample comprised 228 university students (out of 289), recruited from 5 undergraduate courses at the University of Belgrade, Serbia. Participants volunteered to participate in the experiment in return for extra credit in the courses where the researchers had obtained the permission of their instructors. Of the participants, 70.2% were females and 29.8% were males; the ages ranged from 20 to 24 ($M = 21.8$, $SD = 1.7$). Gender in this study is operationalized as a binary variable: male or female, as proposed by the majority of marketing gender studies. As Wolin (2003) alleged, the results would be generally identical whether gender was operationalized as a binary or continuous construct.

The first research question was formulated in the following manner: "Generally, I like banners which...", while the other half of this statement included: a) "feature sexual content"; b) "are funny"; c) "contain a somewhat frightening message"; and d) "convey deeper message they are engaged in (e.g., against smoking)". The participants assessed their fondness of each of these banner types (differing by appeals) on the Likert 7-point scale, in which 1 denoted "I completely disagree" and 7 - "I completely agree".

In the second phase of the research the participants were exposed to the website which presented the banner that featured one of 3 kinds of marketing appeals - neutral, sexual or humorous. Each banner contained both verbal and visual content that reflected the type of marketing appeal: a) neutral banner presented a female's shoulder carrying a bag with different tourist attractions (Eiffel Tower, Pizza Tower, Burj Al Arab etc.), with the message "One agency for the whole world!"; b) sexual banner depicted a man sitting on the bed and female's legs wearing shoes with high heels, stating: "Get into the adventure!"; and c) humorous banner presented the back sides of people (allusion to Mount Rushmore National Memorial), with the message: "The other side of the travels". All banners advertised the imaginary tourist agency Globus and the respondents were asked to say what was presented on the banner (that he/she was exposed to) and what the message on it was.

4. Findings and discussion. In order to investigate the role of gender in the responsiveness to different advertising appeals descriptive statistics were analyzed and independent-samples t-test was run. The results displayed in Table 1 reveal that females prefer humorous and cause-related advertising comparing to males, while males, compared to females, favour sexual and frightening appeals.

In both gender groups humour appeals were appreciated more than all other kinds of appeals, and in the case of females, the lowest level of discrepancy in their dispositions on that matter was determined ($SD = 1.296$). Moreover, it could be observed that attitudes to sexual and cause-related appeals diverged significantly within the male group ($SD = 1.957$ and $SD = 1.953$), indicating rather divided opinions of men on this issues. The results of the t-test, aimed at examining whether divergences in preferences of various advertising appeals occur across genders, are reported in Table 2.

The obtained results support the first 4 research hypotheses. They suggest statistically significant differences in inclinations to sexual and cause-related appeals according to the respondents' gender. On the other hand, no significant differences related to gender was established in the cases of fear and humourous appeals.

Table 1. Preferences of different advertising appeals: means and standard deviations

Type of an appeal	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sexual	Male	3.51	1.957
	Female	2.36	1.559
Humorous	Male	5.33	1.691
	Female	5.74	1.296
Fear	Male	2.73	1.572
	Female	2.37	1.582
Cause-related	Male	4.78	1.953
	Female	5.32	1.735

Table 2. Comparison of different appeals preferences according to gender: Results of the t-test

Type of an appeal	t	df	p
Sexual	4.280	102.755	.000**
Humorous	-1.774	99.931	.079
Fear	1.583	223	.115
Cause-related	-2.070	225	.040*

Asterisks indicate that the results of the t-test are significant at *5% or **1% levels of confidence.

These findings are in concordance with the preceding analysis of descriptive statistics and also reinforce certain findings of some of the previous studies (Manceau & Tissier-Desbordes, 2006; Acuff & Reiher, 1997; Maciejewski, 2004; Lee, Haley, & Avery, 2010).

Considering the effectiveness of different marketing appeals, the analysis revealed that among 57 respondents who provided the answers to these questions, 36 were true and 21 were false (Table 3).

Table 3. Recall of the banner content according to the type of marketing appeal

		Marketing appeal			Total
		Neutral	Humorous	Sexual	
Respondent cited correctly the picture or the message from the banner	Yes	11	18	7	36
	No	6	5	10	21
Total		17	23	17	57

The results of the χ^2 test indicate there is a statistically significant correlation between the type of marketing appeal and banner recall ($\chi^2 = 5.802$, $p < 0.05$), thus the final hypothesis is confirmed. The thorough inspection of the results presented in the preceding table suggest that the participants are more ready to notice humorous appeals, which is in line with the findings of some previous studies (Madden & Weinberger, 1984; Kotler, Roberto, & Lee, 2002), but they are also more able to remember them, comparing other two types of the researched appeals. However, in the case of sexual appeals the opposite conclusions appear to be true, which is pinned up by the subject literature (Grazer & Keesling, 1995).

5. Conclusions and limitations. The comparison of the effectiveness of different marketing appeals has remained underresearched in academic literature till nowadays. The results of this study indicate that the utilization of various advertising appeals would affect banner recall, and therefore it may be concluded that all types of appeals would not be equally effective. Further studies in this field should address the

question of the effectiveness of marketing appeals related to the type of an advertised product.

Furthermore, the findings that investigated divergences in male's and female's perception of various advertising content clearly indicate that gender differences on this matter are apparent. Revealing the discrepancies in advertising preferences that occur relative to gender, enables marketers to direct their advertising budgets more efficiently and to target their consumers in a more effective fashion. Since advertising appeal is one of the main parts of the ad that should incite a person to conduct in compliance with the advertising message, it is of crucial relevance to create advertising appeal that coincides with the person's characteristics to the highest extent.

Consequently, based on the findings of the present study, it could be argued that employing humorous and fear appeals could be useful in advertising of products aimed both at males and females, while sexual and cause-related appeals should be adjusted to target specific gender group. However, fear appeals should be used prudently when addressing males, since this kind of appeals proved to be the least preferred by men. Future studies can involve more types of appeals and different levels of the same appeal (e.g., low and high frightening ad content, half-nude and nude models etc.).

Several limitations of this study should be denoted. Firstly, it should be acknowledged that non-probability sampling was used in the collection of data for this study, which restrained us from drawing some general conclusions. Additionally, there was a lack of the gender balanced sample, as the result of general student population structure at the University where the study was conducted. Finally, the research was based on self-assessment of the respondents, which sometimes can yield vague results. Nevertheless, we believe that some insights on the role of gender in preferences of different advertising appeals were acquired and they could be a valuable benchmark for some larger researches dealing with the same issues.

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