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REFUTING FEAR IN HEURISTICS AND IN RECYCLING PROMOTION: TOWARDS A SOCIAL MARKETING BASED ON HOPE

PhD Lecturer Gonzalo Díaz Meneses

University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
 Faculty of Economics and Business
 C Building, office 1.15
 35017 Tafiira Campus
 The Canary Islands (SPAIN)
 Phone: 003428452807
 Fax: 003428451829
 gdiaz@dede.ulpgc.es

Introduction

This paper deals with emotions in order to demonstrate that recycling behaviour is associated more with positive emotions than with cognitions. The resulting model displays a marked contrast to the classic cognitive paradigm in the sense that this perspective highlights the idea that consumers act on the basis of their affective reactions, with cognitive factors playing a minor role. In addition, it shows within the hedonic process there are alternative routes to achieve both recycling involvement and behaviour depending on both the emotional and cognitive characteristics of individuals.

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Methodological aspects

A questionnaire was used to gather information about cognitive and emotional aspects and involvement with recycling. Recycling behaviour was also measured using this questionnaire. This questionnaire was self-administered and the individuals chosen at random. This work used a sample of 339 individuals and the error is 5.32 per cent (confidence interval 95.5 per cent). The fieldwork took place in spring 2007.

The characteristics of the measuring instrument in terms of questions on the following variables of the study are:

- Knowledge of recycling and ecological conscience: a 16-item, 5-point Likert type scale based on that proposed by Bohlen et al. (1993) and Scholder (1994). It refers not only to information about knowledge of ecological damage and the impact of one's own actions on nature but also to practical information about the function of recycling. To be specific, the respondent was asked to indicate his/her level of agreement with those 16 item statements on the scale, with 1 indicating the lowest level of agreement and 5 the highest.
- Sentiments and emotions related to recycling: a 48-item, 5-point Likert type scale based not only on Dunlap and Van Liere (1984) and Grendstad (1999) from the environmental literature, but also on Westbrook and Oliver (1991) from the psychological literature on emotions. It gathers information not only about the respondent's disquiet about the balance of nature and the possibility of an ecological crisis but also to answer the following question; What kinds of emotion did you feel during your recycling behaviour experience? In this way, the respondent had to express his/her level of agreement with those 48 statements on the scale, with 1 indicating the lowest level of agreement and 5 the highest.
- Involvement with recycling: a 6-item, 5-point semantic differential question based on Zaichkowsky (1985) and Díaz and Beerli (2002) and defined as involvement and responsibility regarding recycling; with 1 on the scale indicating low involvement and 5 high involvement.
- Recycling conduct: three Likert type questions, each with one item and five points, referring to the respondent's level of collaboration related to the total glass, paper and container material generated in the household and to be recycled, with 1 on the scale indicating low collaboration and 5 indicating high collaboration.

Analysis of results

This work focuses on the analysis of the emotional profile of consumers from the perspective of their role as collaborators in selective waste collection programmes. The results show that, if the aim is to design campaigns in keeping with the target audience, there must be greater emphasis on emotional than on cognitive aspects. Thus, one practical implication that it seems logical to suggest is that the consumer might be convinced to recycle by peripheral routes of persuasion, such as music and poem appeal, a sense of humour or telling stories about our emotional bond with nature.

Prior to testing the hypotheses, we carried out a factor analysis with varimax rotation of the scales used to measure the cognitions, emotions and involvement with recycling. We also tested the reliability of the three scales by means of Cronbach's alphas and the scales displayed values that indicate the reliability of the dimensions under consideration.

To test Hypotheses One and Two, a correlations analysis was applied between the factors related to the cognitions scale and emotions scale and the variable of recycling behaviour. As result shows, there is a statistically significant relationship between five emotional factors and five cognitive factors and recycling behaviour. On that basis, it is clear that Hypothesis One, which proposes that recycling behaviour is more correlated with emotions than with cognitions is confirmed. Moreover, on the basis of the same results, Hypothesis Two, which proposes that recycling behaviour is more correlated with positive emotions than with negative emotions, is accepted. In fact, of the five emotional dimensions with statistically significant associations with recycling behaviour, only the feeling of shame and guilt (emo3) displays a negative valence.

In addition, it is clear that the greater the involvement with recycling is, the more positive the valence of those emotions is. Moreover, the unpleasant emotions, namely sadness, followed by boredom and tedium and anger display differences in terms of consumer involvement with recycling in that the more involved with recycling the consumer is, the less he/she tends to feel this type of emotion. On that basis, Hypothesis Three, which proposes that the higher the involvement with recycling is, the more strongly the positive emotions are associated with recycling behaviour is accepted.

Similarly, in the case of the cognitive factors, knowledge of how to recycle, ecological interest, ecological conscience and ecological disconcern, in that order, display statistically significant differences in terms of consumer level of involvement with recycling. To be specific, it is clear that the higher the involvement with recycling is, the more strongly the cognitive resources are associated with recycling behaviour, as proposed in Hypothesis Four.

In order to test whether there are statistically significant differences in terms of emotions and cognitions, depending on the level of recycling behaviour, a means difference test was performed. To that end the variable related to recycling behaviour was divided at percentiles 33 per cent and 66 per cent to create three sub-samples, each with a different level of collaboration with recycling. A comparison of the two

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sub-samples representing those who recycle most and those who recycle least shows that changes in the behaviour generate the most significant effects in the emotions associated with recycling. On that basis, Hypothesis Five, which proposes that, while any change in the involvement with recycling is associated to more differences in terms of cognitions than emotions, any change in the recycling behaviour is associated with more differences in terms of emotions than cognitions, is fully accepted.

Conclusions

The call for consumers to be ecologically responsible is frequently based on fear appeal, which could be projected by warning of environmental disasters; for example, the recent dire warnings about climate change. In that respect, it is thought that such ecological campaigns lead to greater awareness of the danger than could result from following a model unrelated to the principle of sustainability. However, while recognising the undoubted advance of the pro-environmental logic that can be induced by planting the idea of natural disaster in everyone's mind, one should ask whether society and consumers need to feel threatened in order to achieve social mobilisation in favour of nature. In response to that question, this work focuses on the analysis of the emotional profile of consumers from the perspective of their role as collaborators in selective waste collection programmes. The results show that, if the aim is to design campaigns in keeping with the target audience, there must be greater emphasis on emotional than on cognitive aspects. Thus, one practical implication that it seems logical to suggest is that the consumer might be convinced to recycle by peripheral routes of persuasion, such as music and poem appeal, a sense of humour or telling stories about our emotional bond with nature.

However, as already indicated, the citizen's recognition that waste recycling is more important is something that is better achieved by informative means than by affective means. This is because involvement with recycling is more significantly associated with knowledge of how to recycle and with ecological conscience and interest than with determined emotiveness, although the emotions of peace of mind and confidence remain present. Nevertheless, as recycling behaviour does not always have to be high involvement, it seems appropriate to use peripheral routes of persuasion or an emotional approach in the case of low involvement audiences.

Finally, this work proposes that greater effort be devoted to the heuristics of hope; it is not the fear of doomsday that should become the basis of the ecological ideology of the new millennium but rather the hope that the consumer can become more oriented to recycling.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THREAT APPEALS IN THE ADVERTISING OF COUNSELING SERVICES

Ms Katrin Eccarius

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Ms Jayne Krisjanous

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Dr Janet Carruthers*

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Dr Nick Ashill

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

**Corresponding author, School of Marketing and International Business, Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600 Wellington, New Zealand. Tel: +64-4-4636917, Fax: +64 4 4635231, email: janet.carruthers@vuw.ac.nz*

Abstract

This paper discusses effective advertising of counselling services to target audiences. It proposes a new model for empirical testing, and analyses threat appeals in regard to their effectiveness for high anxiety students, one of the major target groups for counselling services. In particular, affective and cognitive responses to a threat appeal advertisement and their effects on attitude toward the advertisement and behaviour are examined. A significant gap in the literature exists that integrates both affective and cognitive responses within conceptual models of threat appeal advertising. This study contributes further to knowledge of threat appeal effectiveness, targeting 'anxious' audiences.

Keywords: Advertising effectiveness, threat appeals, anxiety, counseling services

Introduction

In recent years, the reported incidence of mental health disturbances world-wide has risen dramatically to some 450 million (World Health Organisation, 2003). Furthermore, amongst them, 150 million, especially those in high income countries, will suffer from clinical depression at one point in their lives (World Health

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