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The Body in Advertising and the Consumers

IAREP 2005

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Introduction

Advertising is a mass communication, where, sometimes, beautiful people try to persuade consumers to buy or to do something, because our society places a very high premium on physical attractiveness and tends to assume that what is beautiful is good. In this way the physically attractive source functions as a cue that facilitates information processing by directing consumers' attention to relevant stimuli, which gives rise to positive feelings, (Solomon, Bamossy and Askegaard, 1999). The person's satisfaction with the physical image it presents to others is affected by the proximity that image corresponds to the image valued by his culture, because each culture develops their ideals of beauty that may include physical features as well as clothing styles, among others.

In this research we wanted find out which impact body in advertising has in consumers and as well as to understand how far it could be effective. In addition to this, it is important to analyse the characteristics of the receptor and their responses to ads. In fact, to the characteristics of the receptor, we can say that, there is some evidence that supports the claim that individual differences can lead to changes in the way people respond to an advertising appeal (Moore et al., 1995; LaBarbera, Weingard and Yorkston, 1998).

To the ads responses we consider that affect and cognition are two main individual processes that exert an influence on the behavioural responses and some attention as been devoted in trying to understand more clearly the influence of these two variables in advertising effectiveness (Fabrigar and Petty, 1999; Moore, Harris and Chen, 1990). In this field our research interests are also to understand the influence of advertising in consumers' emotions, attitudes and behaviours. In this way we have to consider emotions and attitudes the two main dependent variables in this research. Advertising emotional responses is one of the main influences on A_{ad} (Coulter, 1998; Coulter and Punj, 1999). This is the main reason why emotional responses to the ads were included in this investigation as a dependent variable.

Finally to dependent variables, we consider the attitudinal responses toward advertising, because it is related with advertising effectiveness. Several models have been proposed to explain the antecedents of attitudes toward the advertising (A_{ad}) and its causality relations (MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch, 1986). There is a considerable amount of evidence on the A_{ad} has effects on brand's attitude and brand's cognition (Batra and Ray, 1986; Lutz, 1985; Brown and Stayman, 1992).

The independent variable is related to the individual characteristics of the consumers specifically the self and the self-discrepancies. We are interested in the cognitive orientation of the self, where it is considered an information processing system (Bem, 1967), an organizational force that serves as a nucleus around which new information is processed (O'Donohoe, 1994).

To understand better the Self and the self-discrepancies we are also interested in a specific field of the self-concept, the body image. This interest is relevant because the person's physical appearance is a big part of his self-concept. Body image refers to a consumer's subjective evaluation of his physical appearance. Body image in advertising can convey an ideal of beauty and could contribute to the acquisition of self, (Lewis, Brooks-Gunn, 1979).

One other variable was included in this study, attitude toward advertising. We think that it is important to know what advertising attitude in a sample of young adults is because advertising scepticism increases with age.

The main purpose of this investigation is to analyse the role of individual differences, specifically, self discrepancies and preoccupation with body image play in the responses to advertising.

Method

Subjects

Two hundred and twenty six undergraduate students attending the Escola Superior de Comunicação Social of the Institute Polytechnic of Lisbon participated in this study. Of this sample 74,2 % are female and 25,8% are male. Their ages range between 17 and 31 with a mean age of 19,23 years.

Measures

Three instruments were used to measure the characteristics of receptor, our independent variables, Attitudes Toward Global Advertising, Preoccupation with Body Image, using a 6 point scale (1- completely disagree and 6 completely agree) and, finally, Self-discrepancies with six levels (Intellectual, Physic, Social, Personal, Emotional and Economic) using a 4 point scale (1- As I am, 2 - A bit better than I am, 3 - A fair bit better than I am and 4 - Much better than I am) developed by Luna-Arocas 2000.

Some instruments were used to measure the advertising responses using a same 6 point scale, Attitude towards the advertising (A_{ad}), the global evaluation of the ads, the emotional response toward the ads and three sub-scales about the body in advertising

(body in general, man's body and woman's body) were our dependent variables. They were chosen because they are related to the concept of advertising effectiveness. Global evaluation of the ads is made by using a single-item associated with a 6 point scale (1= I didn't like it at all, 6= I liked it a lot).

The emotional response towards the ads was assessed with PAD (Meharabian and Russell, 1974), a 18-item self-report instrument in the form of a semantic differential. This five-point semantic differential evaluates three independent dimensions of emotional responses: Pleasure, Activation and Domination. A scale was built to measure attitude towards the advertising, its items were extracted from the relevant literature (MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989). A_{ad} scale has 21 items and it was answered using a 6 point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree).

Procedure

The administration of the instruments and the exposition to the ads took place in Escola Superior de Comunicação Social, after the subjects were told that the general purpose of the study was to investigate the relation between individual variables and advertising. The voluntary nature of participation was stressed and the confidentiality of the data guaranteed. The subjects were further informed that their first activity was to think about a series of statements and were presented the Attitude towards Advertising, Body Image and Self-Discrepancies scales.

Afterwards, the individuals had to answer a questionnaire about what is advertising. Following the subjects was exposed to the first ads and answered a questionnaire to measure A_{ad}, the emotional response, the global evaluation of the ads and some statements about body images. A similar process took place for the second ads.

The first ads was a press image showing two persons with a man and a woman in a erotic scene in a message about a brand tissue (Renova), and the second ads was a television image about a perfume (Amor Amor) in a idyllic scene.

Data Analyses

In a first moment it was realised a descriptive analyses about responses with means and standard deviations. In a second point it was made a correlation analyses with a canonical correlation between dependents variables in each message and independent variables.

Results

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics for the three independent variables on this investigation, attitudes towards advertising, preoccupation with body image where the

medium value of the scale is 3,5 and self-discrepancies with the medium value of 2,5 in the scale.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for ATA, PBI and Self-discrepancies

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Attitude toward advertising	223	2,40	5,60	4,20	,534
Preoccupation with body image	193	1,50	4,66	3,06	,612
Self - Discrepancies	223	1,00	3,29	1,83	,455

As it can be observed, this population has a favourable attitude toward advertising (4,20) and has a lower level of preoccupation with body image (3,06) and also a lower level of self-discrepancies (1,83). This young people fill it well with them. Identified the differences between genders we verified that women (4,26) are more favourable to advertising than men (4,04) and that men are more self-discrepant (1,93) than women (1,79).

Tables 2 and 3 provide descriptive statistics concerning the individual reactions to the ads. The division in two tables is an attempt to present separately the reactions to ads 1 and ads 2.

Message relative to the Tissue Message (Ads of Renova)

Relatively to the valuation about the advertising the results can be found in table 2, where the medium value of the scale is placed in point 3,5.

Table 2. Valuation relative to Tissue message

Tissue Message	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard. Deviation
Global Opinion	221	1,00	6,00	3,80	1,250
Attitude – Affective Dimension	219	1,50	5,90	3,84	,881
Attitude – Cognitive Dimension	220	1,55	5,27	3,33	,722
PAD - Pleasure	218	3,00	6,67	4,96	,682
PAD - Activation	220	2,33	7,00	4,49	,864
PAD - Domination	218	2,83	6,50	4,64	,678

About this message, the results suggest that people accomplish a slight positive global valuation (3,80) about the tissue message in consonance with the attitude they built up in their affective and cognitive dimension. They felt attracted by message (3,84), but

rationally they had little information about message (3,33). About the emotions provoked by the message we can deduce that it provokes activation (4,49) and pleasure (4,96) leading people to get satisfied and happy with it and **at the** some time inducing some calm and relax. Finally people feel that they can control the emotions provoked by de message (4,64).

There are differences by genders in relation to global opinion and affective dimension. The women global valuation shows that they like more the advertising (3,94) than men (3,36).

Table 3. Valuation about the body in general Tissue message

Tissue Image	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Ideal body of beauty	224	1,00	6,00	4,14	1,158
This body tell me something	223	1,00	6,00	3,28	1,389
This body make me fill badly	223	1,00	6,00	1,85	1,082
I don't forget this body	223	1,00	6,00	2,79	1,347

The results suggest that the bodies in the message are ideals of beauty (4,14), although they do not say anything to people (3,28), at least in their opinion. The seeing of such beautiful bodies does not make them feel bad (1,85) and it is not because of it that they would be **not** kept in their memory (2,79).

It was stated, as it had been in previous analyses, differences by genders. The bodies in the ads represent more to woman an ideal of beauty (4,25) than to man (3,87). Bodies have more meaning to woman (3,46) than to man (2,75). Finally woman (3,0) affirm that they are more difficult in forget the bodies that man (2,79).

Table 4. Woman's body in the Tissue message

Feminine Body – Tissue message	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Professional appeal	225	1,00	6,00	2,40	1,232
Erotic appeal	225	1,00	6,00	4,40	1,176
Body like an object	223	1,00	6,00	3,18	1,386
Woman discriminate	224	1,00	6,00	2,07	1,093

The results shows that the woman's body exposed does a lot of erotic appeals (4,40) and eventually it could be considered as function-object (3,18), but not at all woman is discriminated in the message (2,07). There are no differences between sexes in the valuation of woman's body in the message.

Table 5. Man's body in the Tissue message

Man Body – Tissue message	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Charming body	221	1,00	6,00	4,39	1,372
Athletic body	222	1,00	6,00	4,95	,870
Assumption of the body	222	1,00	6,00	4,04	1,221
Virility appeals	222	1,00	6,00	3,94	1,399

These results present a high valuation of man's body in the message. So it is considered a quit seduction (4,39) and an athletic body (4,95), assuming it (4,04) and making some appeals to virility (3,94).

In the differences identified by genders, it was stated that for women man's body looks more seductor (4,83) than to men (3,09). Also women (5,08) considered it more athletic than men (4,60) and, finally, women (4,06) considered too that it makes more appeals to virility than men (3,60). These differences are quite interesting and show the new reality of man's body being used in advertising and the appetite of women possess about it, as well as, the impact it has been to the brand, which has the feminine gender as public target.

Message about the perfume message (Ads of Amor Amor)

We are going to develop the same logic of previous message. At first place it is going to be described the valuation about global opinion, opinions about body images, the attitude towards the message and, finally, the emotions it arises.

Relatively to the valuation about advertising, the results are in table 6, where the medium value is situated in the point 3,5 of the scale.

Table 6. Valuation relatively to the perfume message

Perfume message	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Global Opinion	219	1,00	6,00	4,01	1,256
Attitude - Affective Dimension	220	1,30	5,90	3,71	,909

Attitude - Cognitive Dimension	222	1,36	5,55	3,51	,769
PAD - Pleasure	221	3,00	7,00	5,04	,684
PAD - Activation	222	2,00	7,00	4,34	,883
PAD - Domination	219	2,67	7,00	4,68	,669

This message to a perfume has a quite favourable global opinion (4,01) and a positive attitude either in its affective dimension (3,71) or in its cognitive dimensions (3,51). People like the ads and considered that it possesses clearly beliefs which make them to have a consistent attitude. About the emotions, this message provokes on people some activation (4,34), happiness and satisfaction (5,04) letting people relaxed and calm, feeling that can control the situation (4,68) and not let themselves being taken by emotions.

In differences by sex, women (4,12) have a global opinion of the ad more favourable than men (3,71), and considered the ad more credible and persuasive (3,62) than men (3,27).

In relation to the valuation of the body in general the results can be found in table 7, where the medium value of scale is situated in point 3,5.

Table 7. Valuation of the bodies in global terms of perfume message

Body in Perfume message	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ideal Body of Beauty	225	1,00	6,00	3,65	1,099
This body tell me something	225	1,00	6,00	2,91	1,153
This body make me feel badly	225	1,00	5,00	1,66	,940
I don't forget this body	225	1,00	6,00	2,36	1,213

The bodies in the message are considered, by people, ideals of beauty (3,65), but they do not arise any enthusiasm on them, it does not say anything to them, do not make them feel bad, and people considered that they can easily forget those bodies.

It does not exist differences by genders in this message which is discreet to people.

Table 8. Woman's body in the perfume message

Feminine body – Perfume message	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Professional appeals	226	1,00	6,00	2,26	1,172
Erotic appeals	226	1,00	6,00	4,03	1,299
Body like an object	225	1,00	6,00	2,97	1,327
Woman discriminate	225	1,00	5,00	1,73	,877

They considered that there are a lot of erotic appeals produced by woman's body (4,03). They still think that woman is not in the message as an object (2,97) and they do not feel she is discriminated (1,73).

In differences by genders, men (4,36) considered, that there is, in this ads, more erotic appeals than women (3,94).

Table 9. Man's body in the perfume message

Man Body – perfume message	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Charming Body	221	1,00	6,00	3,79	1,322
Athletic Body	223	1,00	6,00	3,75	1,122
Assumption of Body	222	1,00	6,00	2,99	1,178
Virility Appeals	222	1,00	6,00	3,24	1,360

In this valuation, man's body is considered, in a moderate degree, athletic (3,75) and seductor (3,79) (charming), they considered also that there is not an assumption of the body (2,99) neither appeals to virility (3,24). In differences by gender, women, (4,03), considered that the man's body is more seductor than to men (3,13).

Some conclusions we can identify in analyse of these two messages. One conclusion refers to the importance of the man body in advertising when the target is the woman. The other conclusion is related to the importance of the ideal body in advertising. To identify the causal links to explain these two conclusions we were to make correlations analysis.

Correlations and causal relations

Correlations

To identify relations between personal variables and responses to messages, we analyse bivariate correlations. In a first analyse the personal variables were correlated with responses to bodies. The results are in the table 10 and 11.

Table 10. Correlations between personal variables and responses to bodies

	Ideal Beauty		Tell me something		Fill me bad		Don't forget	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
P Corporal Image	.262**	.211**	.199**	.255**	.228**	.214**	.260**	.167*
Self Discrepancy	.077	.081	.132	.077	.297**	.343**	-.018	.103

Table 11. Correlations between personal variables and responses to man body

	Seductor Body - M		Athletic Body - M		Assumption Body - M		Virile Body - M	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
P Corporal Image	.244* *	.198**	.188**	.104	.157*	.212**	.076	.171*
Self Discrepancy	-.080	-.141*	.062	-.057	.058	.024	-.058	-.088

These results show us that we will can to find some relation between the two set of variables (personal variables and responses to body in messages). The correlations are significatives between preoccupation with corporal image (IMACO) and what young people see in bodies in messages. The correlation between IMACO and feminine body in advertising is not significant.

The correlation between personal variables and attitudes toward messages and emotions are not relevant.

Canonical Correlations

The canonical correlation between two set of variables was analysed. One set include the personal variables (Corporal Image and Self discrepancies) and the other set where include the responses toward bodies in messages. The results are in the table 10

Table 12. Canonical correlations between to set of variables

	tissue message	perfume message
Canonical Correlation	0,490	0,531
Qui Square	64,07	85,58
Significance p	0,002	0,000
Redundancy	12,60	14,20

These results show us we can say that the personal variables are related with responses to the bodies of the messages as we have known in bivariate correlations. To identify where these correlations were more linked we were to develop partial correlations. The results are in the table 11.

Table 11. Partial correlations between to set of variables

	(Corporal Image; Self Discrepancies) * (Reponses from Corporal Images in the message)		(Corporal Image; Self Discrepancies) * (Global opinion; Attitudes and Emotions to messages)	
	Tissue message	Perfume Message	Tissue message	Perfume Message

Canonical Correlation	0,419	0,507	0,257	0,421
Qui square	45,60	65,08	15,35	35,41
Significance p	0,004	0,000	0,222	0,000
Redundancy	9,01%	12,7%	3,42%	8,84%

These results suggest that the more proportion of explanation is related to the responses toward bodies in messages. The attitudes and emotions have fewer relations.

Causal Relations

We can identify a lot of relations between variables related with tissue message. One of them is the construction of the global opinion.

- A multiple regression with attitudes and emotions how independents variables show us a stable model with an explained variance of 63,6% in tissue message. The contributions to built global opinion were affective attitude toward message with Beta 0,686 and PAD pleasure with Beta 0,166. In a perfume message we have a similar relation with an explained variance of 61,5%. Global opinion toward message was built with affective attitude toward message with a Beta of 0,785.
- A multiple regression with responses toward bodies in advertising how independents variables shows us a stable model with an explained variance of 13,2% in tissue message. The contributions to built global opinion were, when the body tell something to young people (Beta: 0,171), when body don't fill young people bad (Beta: - 0,214), when young people don't forget body (Beta: 0,215) and when body is not discriminated in message. In a perfume message we have another relation with an explained variance of 20,6%. Global opinion toward perfume message was built with when the body is an ideal of beauty (Beta: 0,354), when feminine body appeal to professionalism (Beta: 0,266) and when feminine body is not discriminate in message (Beta: -0,146).

Finally we could find a significant correlation at level 0,001 between preoccupation with corporal image and when the body make young people fill badly with body in message, to tissue message the correlation was 0,228 and perfume message 0,214.

Conclusion

The current research has already emphasised the projection mechanisms in advertising and states that body image and the discrepancies of the self, influence the perception that young people has of the body in advertising messages. Recent research (Pereira e Antunes 2004), shows that emotional intelligence seems to be an important variable which helps to explain the development of an attitude towards advertising.

When we analyse responses toward this type of messages we found some relations that explain global opinion that people has toward message. Global opinion toward messages is stronger dependent of attraction that message has in young people (affective attitude toward message). The body has also a little contribution to global opinion toward message in tissue message when people has some rejection with message (tissue message) the dimensions were related with negative positions of the young people, woman not be discriminate in message and they don't fill badly with body in message. When young people have attraction to the message (perfume message) the dimensions were related with body to be an ideal of beauty. Finally is interesting to see that when these young people have more preoccupation with body image more they fill badly with bodies that are ideals of beauty.

In this research body image and self – discrepancies have high correlations with the responses to body image in advertising.

Practical Implications

In advertising body image still seems to be an important investment. There is a particular interest on man's body, directed to woman.

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