

## Different Types of Appeals Utilized in American Advertisements in Decades

YAMADA Michiko

愛知大学国際コミュニケーション学部

*Faculty of International Communication, Aichi University*

*E-mail: michikoy@vega.aichi-u.ac.jp*

### Abstract

Two hundred and forty American advertisements (120 each from the 1990s and the 2000s) were collected in order to examine the kinds of products and types of informational and emotional appeals in advertisements. The results showed that two kinds of advertisements, image improvement and foods, were seen significantly more often in the 1990s when compared to the 2000s. By contrast, two other kinds of advertisements, service and retail, were found in significantly higher numbers in the 2000s than in the 1990s. Three types of informational appeals (price, quality, and availability) were seen significantly more often in the 1990s than in the 2000s, while one type (offer) was found to be significantly more common in the 2000s than in the 1990s. None of the emotional appeal types was found to show any significant difference. Having different informational appeals between the 1990s and 2000s demonstrates a change in what was considered an effective advertisement over time.

240のCM（1990年代と2000年代で120ずつ）が集められ、そのCMの商品が何なのか、そして情報（あるいは感情）アピールがどう使われているかを検証した。結果、企業イメージを良くすることを目的として作られたCMと食品のCMは、2000年代より1990年代に多く見られ、ここには有意差が見られた。そしてサービス業と服飾業は2000年代により多く有意差が見られた。値段、質、そして入手可能性の高さなどを示した情報アピールは1990年代のCMに有意差を持って多く見られ、逆に「提供される様々なサービス」の情報アピールは2000年代に有意差を持って多く見られた。感情アピールは、1990年代と2000年代にどのアピールにも有意差は見られなかった。1990年代と2000年代で見られる情報アピールに有意差が見られたことは、効果的な広告が時代とともに変わってきたことを表している。

## Introduction

As Laskey, Fox, and Crask (1995) stated that message strategy and effectiveness are related to each other, and informational and emotional appeals are widely utilized in advertisements as a way of reaching the target audience and achieving the desired results (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Ereelles, 1998). Informational appeals tell the audience about the advantages of a product feature (Okazaki, Mueller, & Taylor, 2010). As Puto and Wells (1984) and Puto and Hoyer (1990) outlined, consumers can make a logical decision about what they purchase by following the information provided in the advertisements. According to Harmon, Razzouk, and Stern (1983), informational appeals include the following 11 categories: price (e.g., saving money, quantity, financing), quality (specific features about the product compared to its competitors), product performance (showing that the chosen product is superior to others), availability (emphasizing that the product is easily obtainable), special offers (what comes with purchasing the product), taste (telling the audience the product tastes better than others), nutrition (nutritional benefits provided by the specific product), packaging, safety (promising the audience that it is safe to use), company research (research done by the company in order to prove the high quality of the product), and new ideas/models (telling the audience the product is new/innovative).

While informational appeals stimulate consumers' reasoning, emotional appeals elicit emotional, and not logical, decisions (Aaker & Stayman, 1992). These advertisements focus on image rather than information in order to grab consumers' attention (Batra & Ray, 1983). Consumers are aware of this tactic and recognize it as a way of gaining consumers' trust and differentiating one product from another (Ball & Mackert, 2013). In this study, emotional appeals are divided into 11 aspects including respect for the elderly and status (Mueller, 1987), harmony with nature (Wagennar, 1978), humor, tradition, future, romance, a drama (to provoke the audience into having strong feelings), fear, diet and health, creating touching feelings, and promoting the audience to realize the real-life situation (Hasegawa, 1990).

## Literature Review

Many studies have found there is a general tendency of American advertisements to use informational appeals. Gaumer and Shah's (2004) study indicated the propensity American advertisements for providing information. Among various kinds of informational appeals, Lin's (1993) study found that American advertisements rely on providing information regarding price, quality, and performance. Lin and Salwen's

(1995) study revealed that American advertisements use various informational appeals from independent research, nutrition, pricing, performance, quality, safety and special offers, to warranties and guarantees. Nishimura's (1988) study also found that American advertisements emphasized several informational aspects such as savings, affiliation, imitation, and humor. Nonetheless, there are several other studies claiming that American advertisements do not focus on informative elements (Caballero *et al.*, 1986; Hong, Muderrisoglu, & Zinkhan, 1987; Koudelova & Whitelock, 2001). Thus, it is important to examine whether informational or emotional appeals are utilized more in American advertisements. In addition, it would be beneficial to look at the differences between the 1990s and the 2000s. Thus, this study attempts to investigate the changes in informative and emotional appeals in American advertisements over time.

### **Research methodology**

A content analysis was used to reveal the informational and emotional appeals and the types of products seen in American advertisements. The types of products were categorized into the following 10 different categories: auto/parts, appliances/furniture including air conditioners and refrigerators, service (e.g., cell phone and credit card), image improvement, entertainment/toys, alcohol/cigarettes, household supplies, medicine and supplements, food, and retail stores. Informational appeals include price, quality, performance, availability, special offers, taste, nutrition, packaging, safety, independent research, company research, and new ideas/models (Resnik and Stern, 1977). Other two kinds, ingredients and warranties, were added to the 2000s' study while other two, packaging and safety, were deleted, as no advertisement employed either element in the 2000s. For emotional appeals, there were 11 categories including veneration of the elderly and status (Mueller, 1987), harmony with nature (Wagennar, 1978), humor, tradition, future, romance, drama, fear, health/diet, touching/warm, and real-life situations (Hasegawa, 1990).

### **Sample**

One hundred and twenty advertisements from the 1990s and 120 from the 2000s (a total of 240 advertisements) were collected for this study. American TV programs were randomly recorded between 7 and 8 pm in September, 1998, from NBC, ABC, FOX, and WB networks, and between 8 and 11 pm in November and December, 2008, from NBC, WB, and ABC networks.

## Results

### Types of products

Two products were seen significantly more in the 1990s than in the 2000s, whereas two other products were seen significantly more in the 2000s than in the 1990s. Advertisements for food and image improvement products were much more numerous in the 1990s than in the 2000s, as  $n = 32$  in 1998 and  $n = 18$  in 2008, and  $\chi^2(1, n = 50) = 3.92$  at  $p < .05$  for food products, and  $n = 9$  in 1998 and  $n = 2$  in 2008, and  $\chi^2(1, n = 11) = 4.46$  at  $p < .05$  for image improvement products. Other two kinds of advertisements, retail and service, were found to have significantly higher numbers in the 2000s than in the 1990s, as  $n = 2$  and 18 in 1998 and 2008, respectively, and  $\chi^2(1, n = 20) = 12.8$  at  $p < .001$  for retail, and  $n = 15$  and 37 in 1998 and 2008, respectively and  $\chi^2(1, n = 52) = 9.31$  at  $p < .01$  for service (see Table 1).

Table 1: Products In 1998 and 2008

	1998	2008	p
Auto/Parts	21 (17.5%)	25 (20.8%)	
Appliances/Furniture	9 ( 7.5%)	2 ( 1.7%)	*
Service	15 (12.5%)	37 (30.8%)	**
Image improvement	9 ( 7.5%)	1 ( 0.8%)	
Entertainment/Toys	3 ( 2.5%)	1 ( 0.8%)	
Alcohol/Cigarettes	2 ( 1.7%)	0	
Household supplies	16 (13.3%)	11 ( 9.2%)	
Medicine	11 ( 9.2%)	7 ( 5.8%)	
Food	32 (26.7%)	18 (15.0%)	*
Retail	2 ( 1.7%)	18 (15.0%)	***
TOTAL	120	120	

\* $p < .05$

\*\* $p < .01$

\*\*\* $p < .001$

### Informational and emotional appeals

The overall number of informational cues was significantly higher in the 1990s ( $n = 153$ ) than in the 2000s ( $n = 115$ ), as  $\chi^2(1, n = 268) = 5.39$  at  $p < .05$ . When checking each appeal individually, three informational cues were found to occur much more frequently in the 1990s than in the 2000s, which included availability ( $n = 14$  and 4 in 1998 and 2008, respectively) for  $\chi^2(1, n = 18) = 5.56$  at  $p < .05$ , price ( $n = 47$  in 1998 and  $n = 9$  in 2008) for  $\chi^2(1, n = 56) = 25.79$  at  $p < .001$ , and quality ( $n = 23$  and 4 in 1998 and 2008, respectively) for  $\chi^2(1, n = 27) = 13.37$  at  $p < .001$ . While these three informational

cues were seen significantly more often in the 1990s than in the 2000s, only one cue, offer, is found to have significantly more in the 2000s than in the 1990s, as  $n = 6$  and 21 in 1998 and 2008, respectively, with  $\chi^2 (1, n = 27) = 8.33$  at  $p < .01$  (see Table 2). In terms of emotional appeals, there were no significant differences between the 1990s and the 2000s for any of the elements.

Table 2: Informational appeals USA in 1998 and 2008

	1998	2008	p
Price	47 (30.7%)	9 ( 7.9%)	***
Performance	48 (31.4%)	62 (54.4%)	
Quality	23 (15.0%)	4 ( 3.5%)	***
Independent research	7 ( 4.6%)	3 ( 2.6%)	
Company research	2 ( 1.3%)	1 ( 0.9%)	
Availability	14 ( 9.2%)	4 ( 3.5%)	*
New ideas/model	1 ( 0.7%)	7 ( 6.1%)	
Offer	5 ( 3.3%)	21 (18.4%)	**
Nutrition	0	1 ( 0.9%)	
Taste	1 ( 0.7%)	3 ( 2.6%)	
Components			
Warranties		1 (0.9%)	
TOTAL	153	115	*

\* $p < .05$ \*\* $p < .01$ \*\*\* $p < .001$ 

## Discussion

The result demonstrate that there was a significant decline in the total number of informational appeals from the 1990s ( $n = 153$ ) to the 2000s ( $n = 115$ ) is found, as  $\chi^2 (1, n = 268) = 5.39$  at  $p < .05$ . Among the various informational appeals, price, quality, and availability were found to be significantly different between the 1990s' and the 2000s' studies. However, no difference was found in any of the emotional appeals between these the two time periods.

In terms of products, service (cell phone and credit card service) and retail stores were found to be in significantly higher numbers in the 2000s than in the 1990s. Comparing the numbers of wireless subscribers in both 1998 and 2008, it is natural to imagine that there was a much higher number of wireless subscribers (270,333,881) in 2008 compared to 1998 (69,209,441) (CTIA The Wireless Association, 2014). Another type of product found to show significant decreases from the 1990s to the 2000s was foods,

which may indicate the shift in Americans' interest in terms of saving money. The America Saves Campaign, which was established in 2000 by the Consumer Federation of America (CFA) was an initiative to help consumers save money (Consumer Federation of America, 2015), and indicated a higher concern for saving money. In addition, many articles were published in the 2000s, providing tips for consumers on ways to save money on groceries (America Saves, 2015; Reader's Digest, 2015; Renzulli, 2014; US News, 2015; Zelman, 2012). This may explain why there were significantly fewer food advertisements in 2008 than in 1998. Tamkins (2009) also found that the number of times people ate out was decreasing, as a way of saving money. Food companies realized this trend and consequently avoided spending large sums on creating food advertisements.

## Limitations

In this study, informational or emotional appeal was counted only once, even if either one occurred more than once in the same advertisement, as was done by Abernethy and Franke (1996). Thus, even when the voice-over kept repeating the price information in one advertisement, it was counted as one appeal. However, when consumers repeatedly hear the price information in one advertisement but hear it only once in another advertisement, or when one advertisement shows the price in a very small font in the corner of the screen and another shows the price in a large font covering the entire screen, there is a different impact on consumers. Thus, in terms of future research, it could be beneficial to count the number of times an appeal occurs, as well as review the way it is displayed on screen.

In addition, it is also important to examine an endorsed product. For instance, a furniture advertisement may repeat pricing information while a cosmetic advertisement focuses more on image. Cutler and Javalgi (1993) revealed that different approaches are used in emotional appeals, depending on the product, as the service advertisements were found to have higher numbers of emotional appeals than the product advertisements. Laskey, Seaton, and Nicholls (1994) showed that informative appeals worked better than image-centered advertisements for travel-agency promotion. Thus, it is important to analyze the various kinds of advertisements and examine the differences, depending on the type of product being advertised.

Furthermore, Jean *et al.* (1999) found the difference in informational and emotional appeals depended on whether it was a TV or magazine advertisement, whereby the former utilized more rational appeals and the latter did not use much in the way of informational appeals. It can, therefore, be seen that numerous factors used to be taken

into consideration in terms of creating effective advertisements.

It is also important to examine differences among consumers. Obermiller, Spangenberg, and MacLachlan (2005) found that consumers who were dubious about a product's credibility from the start tended to show less favorable attitudes toward the product. Yoo and MacInnis (2005) found that different types of informational and emotional advertisements were used to enhance brand attitudes. According to their research, advertisements with informational appeals that evaluate a product's credibility help consumers to develop positive attitudes toward the product. On the other hand, in terms of advertisements with emotional appeal, emphasizing positive feelings works better in helping consumers develop positive attitudes toward a product.

Fu and Chen (2012) looked at the differences in purchase decision-making between informational and emotional approaches. Their study found that when product quality information was provided as part of an informational appeal, it affected the decision-making process for those consumers who had a strong desire to buy the product, while emotional appeals seemed to work for those who were not as willing to obtain the product. Those consumers appeared to care more about indirect information, such as product color or background image. Dens and Pelsmacker (2010) divided emotional appeals into positive and negative ones. They revealed that positive emotional appeals worked better when consumers did not have a strong desire or interest in buying a product, while negative emotional appeals created stronger negative feelings toward the product. Their study also found that informational appeals worked better for the advertisements of products that consumers use daily, whereas emotional appeals had more of a positive effect when it came to personal-pleasure items, such as snack foods.

Additionally, generational difference may play a role, as those in their 20s appeared to pay closer attention to, or were more critical of, cosmetic advertisements than those in their 60s. Thus, it is also important to analyze consumers' characteristics, as seen in various other studies (Krolikowska & Kuenzel, 2008; Moore & Harris, 1996; Moore, Harris, & Chen, 1995; Obermiller, Spangenberg, & MacLachlan, 2005; Ruitz & Sicilia, 2004).

It may also be important to compare several different countries such as Korea, Japan, and the US. Similarities between Korea and Japan may indicate cultural resemblance, while those between Japan and the United States may indicate similar economic roles in the world (Jeon, 1999). When comparing American and Korean advertisements, Korean advertisements were found to use more emotional appeals (Jeon *et al.*, 1999) similar to the findings of Hong, Muderrisoglu, and Zinkham (1987) that Japanese commercials included more emotional appeals compared to American commercials. Lin (1993) compared Japanese and American advertisements and found less informative

elements in the Japanese ones. In addition, Ramaprasad and Hasegawa (1992) did not find Japanese advertisements that focusing on emotional appeals, which had been commonly found in American advertisements. However, when Biswas, Olsen, and Carlet (1992) compared American and French advertisements, they found that French advertisements employed more emotional appeals than American ones. In conclusion, it can be said that there are various factors involved in creating advertisements and in consumers' decision-making processes. Future research should investigate these aspects further.

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