Examining the Role of Emotions on Extreme Sport Advertising: The Relationship among Sensation Seeking, Involvement, Emotion, Attitude, and Intention

Woo-Young Lee, University of Central Missouri
Youngjin Hur, University of Central Missouri

Communication Abstract 2010-209
June 5, 2010 1:25 PM
Poster (Audubon)

Introduction

The number of U.S. citizens interested in extreme sports has increased over the past few years, particularly with the emergence of artificial climbing as one of the hottest trends in the industry (Mittelstaedt, 1996). Although a great number of scholars from the fields of marketing and advertising have investigated effective advertising strategies for service offerings, few studies have focused exclusively on sport related service facilities. Further, the role of emotion evoked by advertising in the relationship between consumers’ personality trait and attitudes has not been thoroughly gauged in the field of sport management.

Literature Review

Previous studies about Optimum Stimulation Levels (OSL) posited that people seek out stimuli with the appropriate arousal potential (Raju, 1980). Particularly, certain personality traits such as sensation seeking and impulsivity have an inherent disposition to engage in social, financial, and physical risk-taking, such as drinking, drugs, sex, driving, and gambling (Zuckerman, 1983). In addition, Zuckerman and Kulhman (2000) argued that participants in high-risk sports, such as hang gliding, auto racing, and rock climbing showed higher sensation scores than non-participants. One aspect of enduring trait that has attracted research attention is how it influences emotional states (Mooradian & Oliver 1997; Roehm & Roehm 2005). Further, McDaniel and Lee (2007) argued that wall climbers’ emotional responses are significant functions of personality trait (i.e., sensation seeking).

The concept of product involvement has been examined by a number of studies in the advertising literature (Zaichkowsky, 1994). Celsi and Olson (1988) suggested that the essential characteristic of product involvement is the perceived personal relevance that a product offers to consumers. Further, previous research argued that individual’s level of product involvement significantly impacts emotional arousal evoked by the product commercial (McGrath & Mahood, 2004).

Over the last two decades, marketing scholars have devoted increased attention to the emotional aspects of consumer behavior (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1992). An increasing body of consumer research indicates that emotions are evoked in response to the advertisement (e.g., Holbrook, 1980; Holbrook & Batra, 1987), the retail environment (e.g., Machleit & Eroge, 2000), and the consumption of products/services (e.g., Steenkamp & Gielens, 2003). Further, there exists evidence that emotional reaction can influence consumers’ attitudes toward ads/products (Labroo & Ramanathan, 2007). For example, Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) suggested that consumers’ multi-sensory and emotive aspects of consumption experiences are crucial motivation for leisure and sport activity. Arnold and Price (1993) also argued that seeking emotional arousal drives sport consumers’ pleasure and thus, positive attitudes to participation in risky sport (i.e., white water rafting).

Based on the aforementioned literature, it is logical to deduce that (1) personality trait and product involvement influence the emotional state evoked by ads, and (2) the emotional state predicts attitudes toward the ads. From this deductive logic, the authors hypothesized and tested the model by using quasi-experimental research design.

Methods

Data were drawn from a convenience sample of 250 undergraduates from a large university located in the Mideast region of the United States. An artificial wall climbing facility was selected to represent advertising for extreme sport services. Ad was created with the assistance of a local advertising agency to increase realism, using an Adobe Photoshop CS2 Program. Prior to ad exposure, demographic factors (i.e., age, gender, and ethnicity), impulsive sensation seeking (ImpSS) trait, and level of wall climbing involvement were asked to subjects in an effort to collect
data concerning relevant antecedent variables. Following the ad treatments, subjects filled emotional (i.e., pleasure and arousal) and cognitive (i.e., attitudes toward ad and future intention) ad responses.

Results and Discussion

To test the measurement model, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied using the structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis with AMOS 16. All loadings of the indicators for each construct were significant at p value of .05, and greater than the suggested value of .60 (Kline, 2005), with the exception of four items (i.e., IMP2, SS1, SS2, and SS3).

Cronbach' α, composite reliability and average variance extracted were used to test reliability of the measures. Cronbach' α ranged from .76 (ImpSS) to .89 (attitude and intention), composite reliability scores ranged from .61 (ImpSS) and .90 (intention). The average variance extracted ranged between .36 (ImpSS) and .74 (intention). The CFA results revealed that the chi-square per degree of freedom ratio (χ²/df ratio = 475.83/237 = 2.01), the comparative fit index (CFI = .92), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = .064) indicated adequate fit. A structural equation model was conducted to test the hypotheses. Model fit of the structural model test was found to be acceptable (i.e., χ²/df ratio = 506.08/243 = 2.08; CFI = .92; and RMSEA = .066).

In terms of hypothesis testing, five of six hypotheses were supported. Specifically, sport involvement significantly influenced arousal (path coefficient = .30), which then influenced pleasure (path coefficient = .54). Attitude toward ad was determined by arousal (.18) and pleasure (.77). Finally, attitude influenced intention (.70).

The present study provides an integrated model by incorporating three major factors in extreme sport advertising. The study provides a greater understanding of how sport consumers generate positive attitudes toward the ad targeting extreme sport facility (i.e., artificial wall climbing). Further, the findings of the current study imply both theoretical and practical implications. First, participants’ need for stimulation (ImpSS) and product involvement are significant predictors of emotions produced by ad exposure. Second, path coefficients suggest that pleasure had the greatest effect on attitude toward the ad. Finally, results also indicate emotional ad strategy for an extreme sport facility targeted at certain types of urban consumers, such as sensation seekers, can introduce them to potentially new experiences otherwise unavailable to them (e.g., “rock” climbing).

Key words: extreme sport, advertising, sensation seeking, involvement, emotion