A Consumer’s Information-Processing Model for Sport Web Advertisement: Event Value Orientation and Consumer Involvement Perspective

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Marketeters put substantial effort into the selection of advertising strategies used for target group based on their psychological differences (Ruiz & Sicilia, 2004). In order to understand individuals’ information-processing behaviors and create effective advertising strategy, researchers developed the Dual-process theories and the Planning model (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994; Vaughn, 1980). To date, however there is limited research that examined consumers’ information-processing behavior in sport management field. The purpose of this study are (a) to examine the potential moderating effect of sport event consumers’ involvement level (i.e., high vs. low) and event’s value-orientation (i.e., utilitarian vs. hedonic) on their information-processing behavior, (b) to test advertising effectiveness, in terms of attitudes, across different types of advertising strategies (i.e., informational vs. emotional).

To understand individuals’ information-processing behaviors, researchers proposed Dual-process theories; (a) effortful (i.e., central route and systematic processing), and (b) effortless (i.e., peripheral route and heuristic processing) modes (Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983; Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994). Those scholars argued that different level of individuals’ involvement plays a significant moderating role in their attitude formation (Reinhard & Sporer, 2008). More specifically, under high-involvement conditions, individuals use central route to create effortful and cognitive processing to focuses on the information that an individual’s feeling is central to the true merits of the object. On the other hand, low-involved individuals utilizes peripheral route to generate effortless and affective processing to form their attitude with less effort and time (Petty et al., 1983). Recently, however some researchers revealed new theory that effortless modes can co-occur with effortful modes (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994). For example, Reinhard and Sporer (2008) revealed that when individuals have high-involvement conditions, they utilized all available information (i.e., effortful and effortless cues) to make their judgments.

In the consumer behavior literature, there are two unique values in consumption behaviors: hedonic and utilitarian values (Okada, 2005). These two different value-orientations of product also play significant moderating in individuals’ attitude formation (Vaughn, 1980). Several researchers revealed that utilitarian product create more effectiveness through informational appeals, whereas, hedonic product more effectively communicate through emotional appeals (Johar & Sirgy, 1991). Although, this matching perspective seems reasonable, other scholars found inconsistent results (Stafford & Day, 1995). In the context of service, scholars found that individuals used all available information to evaluate the messages for hedonic consumption, since they are more motivated and highly involved compare to utilitarian consumption (Wakefield & Inman, 2003).

Extending above literature from dual-process and matching theories, the authors found that both individuals’ involvement level and value-orientation perform as moderators. Therefore, the hypotheses were developed as:

H1: For the information-processing of utilitarian sporting events in low-(high-) involvement conditions, the effect of emotional (informational) appeal is greater than that of informational (emotional) appeal on attitude toward the advertisement.

H2: For the information-processing of hedonic sporting event in low-involvement condition, the effect of emotional appeal is greater that of informational appeal, while under high-involvement conditions, the effect of both informational and emotional appeals (there will be no statistical difference) are greater on attitude toward the advertisement.

The current study used a 2 (high vs. low involvement) x 2 (utilitarian vs. hedonic sporting event) x 2 (informational vs. emotional advertisement) factorial between-group experimental design. The sample for main experiment were 215 (55% male; 45% female) college students in a large US university. The utilitarian sporting event selected for the experiments was a sports job fair, and the hedonic sporting event was a golf tournament. Among various types of advertising strategy, current study employed informational and
emotional appeals by following Ruiz and Sicilia’s (2004) classification. Additionally, Purchase decision involvement (PDI) was used for involvement manipulation (Mittal, 1989).

The subjects perceived the two different PDI conditions in a significantly different manner, M high PDI = 4.93. M Low PDI = 3.16, F (1, 213) = 123.61, p < .001. In addition, subjects perceived the job fair as a utilitarian event, and golf event as a hedonic event, M sport job fair = 3.352 versus M golf tournament = 5.726, F (1, 213) = 53.760, p < .001. Furthermore, informational and emotional appeals were perceived significantly different way, M informational = 2.656 versus M emotional = 4.472, F (1, 213) = 243.259, p < .001.

Results of ANOVA indicate that for utilitarian sporting event and in low-involvement condition, subjects responded favorably to emotional than informational appeals, M informational = 3.72 versus M emotional = 4.76, F (1, 49) = 7.82, p < .01, while, highly-involved subjects rated higher for informational than emotional appeals, M informational = 5.26 versus M emotional = 3.39, F (1, 49) = 23.67, p < .01. Thus, H1 was supported.

For hedonic event, the attitude toward the advertisement scored significantly favorable for emotional than informational appeals under low-involvement conditions, M informational = 3.38 versus M emotional = 4.28, F (1, 51) = 5.66, p < .05. However, in high-involvement condition, subjects responded favorable to both informational and emotional appeals, M informational = 4.98 versus M emotional = 5.01, F (1, 60) = .02, p = .93. Thus, H2 was supported as well.

In general, the results of current study found that consumers’ information processing and their attitude formation are heavily depends on the selection of advertising strategy. Focusing on utilitarian event, individuals’ information-processing behaviors were consistent with dual-processing model (e.g., ELM and HSM). However, In terms of hedonic sporting event, highly-involved individuals utilized both cognitive and affective evaluation system to process their information (Reinhard & Sporer, 2008.) Thus, results of current study suggest that dichotomous model should shift to co-occurrence model for hedonic sporting event, particularly among high-involvement conditions. On the other hand, low-involved individuals process information via affective elaboration system (Petty et al., 1983). Theoretical and managerial implication will be discussed in this presentation.