

The Role of TV Message Content in the Adoption Process of Durables in Developing Countries: The Case of Jordan

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Abstract. As competition grows, advertising becomes more important and this costs money. The increasing costs of advertising emphasizes the importance of using creative advertising messages. The aim of this study was to examine the role of TV message content in the adoption process of durable (Washing Machines) in developing countries (e.g., Jordan). Based on a quantitative approach, this study concluded a strong positive correlation between good content of TV advertising messages and the adoption process of washing machines.

Introduction

Advertising permeates our daily lives. At times people view it positively; at other times they view it negatively. Some advertising informs, persuades, or entertains us; some of it bores, even insults, us [1, pp. 416-430].

Advertising expenditures have a variety of purposes. It enhances the image of the organization, builds brand preferences, promotes the sale of particular items and announces a special promotion or sale [2; 3, pp.137-144, 4, pp.18-22; 5, pp. 38-47]. Advertising is widely used in the developed world and is increasingly used in developing and previously "socialist" countries [6]. Advertising is used all over the world because it is a cost-effective method of communicating ideas [7, pp. 478-481].

Message content can impact sales revenues and can have the final say in the success of an advertising campaign. Creative advertising can be used in positioning a product in the market place. Product names, for example, can affect the impact of advertising expenditures. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to show the relationship between the content of TV advertising messages and the adoption process of washing machines in Jordan.

The Content of TV Advertising Messages and the Adoption Process

When business organizations advertise their products on TVs, they do not do that simply to entertain people or to show some charming individuals. They do that to facilitate satisfying exchanges [8, PP.50-60]. The main interest of product advertising is to provide potential buyers with information and then to develop positive attitude amongst those buyers to enhance their willingness to adopt such a product, service or an idea [9, p.2]. In some situations, an advertisement may inform and entertain its audience but, still unable to attract potential buyers to adopt the product. The ultimate success of an advertising message is measured by its ability to influence its audience to buy the product and to make current customers rebuy the product [10, pp.37-77].

TV advertising directed to consumers is perceived to have enormous potential for influencing individuals' desires to buy a product. This type of advertising permeates most aspects of life in the globe, therefore, it has a unique role to play in the adoption process. What enhances this unique role is the fact that it has the capability to show and explain the product simultaneously [11, pp. 28-31].

The content of the advertising message is no less important than the TV itself. The message content could stress product features and benefits and thus the focus here is on "demonstrable differences" or "The unique selling proposition". The message can also emphasize brand personality and, hence, the focus here is on "image", "goodwill" and "brand quality". Moreover, the aim of the message could be positioning a product through a great idea. The focus here is on "the marketing strategy" [12, pp. 1-3].

Message creativity often is a deciding factor in the success of a TV advertising campaign. The use of creative advertising on TV can accelerate the adoption process of products. Television advertising affects the "learning process" of consumers. Consumers' adoption processes of products vary depending upon certain factors. Some of these factors are, the presentation of the advertising message and message content [13].

In a study conducted by Rossiter and Thomas [3, pp. 137-144] on the persuasion process and television advertising, researchers found that TV advertisements can affect the cognitive aspect of "personality" and, therefore, this can affect the ultimate outcome of consumers.

Previous research [e.g., 4, pp. 18-22; 8, pp. 50-60; 10, pp. 73-77; 15, pp. 200 -213] on the adoption process of products concluded that the most common way of studying this process is by viewing it as a five-stage process (i.e., Awareness, Interest, Evaluation, Trial and Adoption). In the awareness stage, TV advertising and creative message content are tremendously important as they can show and explain the product simultaneously. If the product is totally new to the market, consumers begin to explain the product's first appearance in the marketplace, when sales are zero and profits are

negative. Profits are below zero because initial revenues are zero and at the same time the firm usually must cover large expenses for promotion and distribution [1]. Therefore, TV and message content play a crucial role in making potential buyers aware of the product's features, uses and advantages, and in shifting consumers from the awareness stage to the interest stage.

In the interest stage, TV and creative message content can attract potential buyers to collect information about the product. Maintaining buyers interests is critical to the success of the whole advertising campaign and the survival of the concerned product. Competitors' reaction to the success of the advertising message could confuse potential buyers and shift their interest to other messages. Clarity, simplicity, credibility and the use of reference groups (e.g., famous actors, actresses, sport personalities) may help in maintaining the interest of potential buyers and in shifting them to the evaluation stage.

In the evaluation stage, potential buyers examine whether the product will meet certain criteria that are important for meeting their specific needs. Potential buyers may use other sources of information to evaluate the product. Previous research [e.g., 4, pp. 18-22; 15, pp. 200-213; 16, pp. 247- 250; 21, p. 17; 22, p. 4] reported that personal sources of information and word-of-mouth communication are likely to affect the purchase decision during the process of acquiring information about a product or range of products. The challenge here is that producers and manufacturers need to remember the importance of using creative advertising messages that would fit well on TVs and persuade people with the content. What heightens the importance of this, is the fact that advertising cannot persuade people unless they are willing to be persuaded. The use of reference groups and opinion leadership can help potential buyers in the evaluation process and in motivating them to go into the trial stage [8, pp. 50-60].

In the trial stage, potential buyers may use different strategies. For example, they may try a free sample, they may visit someone to examine the product, they may watch a demonstration by a salesman and they may hire the product. Some of these strategies and others could be explained in the advertising message. For example, a TV demonstration of the product and the advertising message could be shown and read simultaneously which, in turn, can enhance the desire of potential buyers to adopt the product.

In the final stage (the adoption stage) potential buyers choose the product they want. However, it is worth noting that entering the adoption process does not, necessarily, mean that a person will adopt the product. Rejection of the product can occur at any stage of the adoption process. A good message content with the right media can help in maintaining potential buyers' determination to adopt the product [17, pp. 43-51; 18; 19, pp. 292-294; 20, pp. 19-29; 23, pp. 179-186].

Objective of the study

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between the content of TV advertising messages and the adoption process of durable products in Jordan. The extensive literature search indicated that this subject has been widely neglected in developing countries. This negligence emphasizes the need and importance of this study. In addition, the washing machine was selected for this study as the purchase decision of this product is considered of high involvement and, therefore, respondents would be able to recall and, properly, evaluate the content of the related TV advertisements.

Study hypothesis

Based on the literature review, the following hypothesis was cited for this study:

H1 "There is a positive correlation between the content of TV advertising messages and the adoption process of washing machines in Jordan".

Methodology

The field study involved an Arabic version of a hand delivered questionnaire with statements on 5- point scales ranging from "strongly agree 5" to "strongly disagree 1" and from "very important 5" to "not at all important 1". All constructs used in this study were used in previous research and, therefore, acceptable levels of reliability and content validity are achieved. In addition, the questionnaire was subject to a pilot test study on a small sample of 100 housewives drawn from the sample of the study.

According to Jordan's Statistical Yearbook No. 47 of September 1997 (latest edition), Amman had a population of 1,696,300 with a cross-section of people representing all Jordanians and, therefore, was selected as an area of study. The sample of the study included 1800 families drawn at random, using a simple random procedure, from the files of the Water Authority. This sample size was thought to be adequate and, hence, 1800 questionnaires were hand-delivered to the wives of these families. They were asked to answer the questions with regard to the purchase of washing machines. A period of over six months was needed for the delivering and receiving the questionnaires and, in doing so, the researcher received the help of 13 assistants (B.Sc. graduates in Business Administration). Of the 1800 delivered questionnaires, 1104 usable questionnaires were returned which means that the response rate was 61.3%. This low response rate may be related to the fact that Jordanian housewives are always busy in their housework and in looking after their children which, in turn, means that very little time is left for other things (e.g., answering a questionnaire).

Statistical analysis

Housewives were asked to indicate the level of importance they attach to four statements included in question No. 1 (i. e., Q1a, Q1b, Q1c and Q1d). These statements are intended to investigate respondents' appreciation to the content of an advertising message. Table 1 shows the results.

Table 1. Importance of TV message content to Jordanian housewives

Level of importance	Very important		Important		Uncertain		Not so important		Not at all important	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	Q 1a- Product's uses, benefits and features explained in the content of the advertising message.	612	55.4	240	21.8	60	5.4	120	10.9	72
Q 1b- Characteristics of the people in an advertising message (e.g., personality and sex.).	420	38.1	240	21.8	180	16.2	72	6.5	192	17.4
Q 1c- Type of the media used to show the advertising message (e.g., radio, TV, Newspaper, etc.).	570	51.6	300	27.2	120	10.9	60	5.4	54	4.9
Q 1d- Clarity, simplicity and credibility of an advertising message.	720	65.2	300	27.2	18	1.6	36	3.3	30	2.7

1104 cases: 5 = Very important; 0 missing value; 1 = Not at all important

As evident from Table 1, a large majority of housewives have supported the statements Q1a, Q1b, Q1c, and Q1d, and considered them to be very important. Hence, it could be argued that Jordanian housewives view with great care the content of any advertising message. This could be related to the fact that most of the house needs, e.g., washing machines, refrigerators, TVs, are bought in joint decisions of husbands and wives. However, the upper hands in this issue are the wives as they spend more time watching TVs than their husbands. In addition, husbands are usually at work most of the day and in the evenings they, probably, have some social activities to fulfil which means little time is left for watching TVs.

To assess the influence of good TV message content on the adoption process, housewives were asked to indicate their level of agreement regarding 5 statements included in question No. 2, i.e., Q2a, Q2b, Q2c, Q2d and Q2e. These statements represent the five stages in the adoption process, i.e., awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption consecutively. Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2. Housewives' agreement regarding the influence of good TV message content on the adoption process

Level of agreement	Strongly agreed		Agreed		Uncertain		Quite disagree		Strongly disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Q2a- Good content of TV advertising messages makes you aware of existing washing machines.	720	65.2	180	16.3	90	8.2	60	5.4	54	4.9
Q2b- Good content of TV advertising messages makes you self-motivated to get information about the product's features, uses, advantages, price and location of the washing machine.	576	52.2	240	21.7	180	16.3	48	4.4	60	5.4
Q2c- Good content of TV advertising messages makes you consider whether the washing machine will satisfy certain criteria that are critical for meeting your special needs.	474	42.9	198	18.0	240	21.7	66	6.0	126	11.4
Q2d- Good content of TV advertising messages makes you use or experience the washing machine for the first time, possibly by visiting someone who has the product.	414	37.5	258	23.4	228	20.6	78	7.1	126	11.4
Q2e- Good content of TV advertising messages makes you buy a specific washing machine.	384	34.8	234	21.2	132	11.9	96	8.7	258	23.4

1104 cases; 5 =Strongly agree; 0 missing value; 1 =Strongly disagree

It is noticeable from Table 2 that, good content of TV advertising messages could influence the adoption process of washing machines. A big majority of housewives have agreed with the statements. However, because averages only serve to reflect central tendencies and in order to have a deeper look into the relationship between the main

issues of TV message content (i.e., Q1a, Q1b, Q1c and Q1d) and the adoption process, Person Correlation Coefficient was conducted (Table 3).

Table 3. Correlations between variables of message content and stages of the adoption process*

Message content	Adoption process				
	Awareness	Interest	Evaluation	Trial	Adoption
- Product's uses, benefits and features explained in the content of an advertising message	.66 (.00)	.58 (.00)	.56 (.00)	.55 (.00)	.53 (.00)
- Characteristics of the people in the advertising message (e.g., personality and sex)	.57 (.00)	.54 (.00)	.52 (.00)	.51 (.00)	.49 (.01)
- Type of the media used to show the advertising message (e.g., Radio, TV, Newspaper, etc.)	.65 (.00)	.61 (.00)	.58 (.00)	.55 (.00)	.53 (.00)
- Clarity, simplicity and credibility of an advertising message	.69 (.00)	.67 (.00)	.64 (.00)	.62 (.00)	.60 (.00)

* Figures in Table are person correlation coefficients with corresponding levels of significance in parentheses.

It is evident from Table 3 that all of the correlations are positive and significant at the level of $\geq .01$. Further, most of the correlations are above .45 showing a strong degree of positive correlations between the content's main issues of TV advertising messages and the adoption process of products in Jordan. These positive correlations may have come as a result of the lack and inaccessibility of product information. In the developed world product information is excessively available to consumers through leaflets, brochures, magazines (which are delivered free of charge right to their doors), newspapers, TVs, radios, etc. Therefore, consumers in these countries can rely on many impersonal sources of information which are easily accessible. The picture is absolutely different when it comes to Jordan where free delivery of leaflets, brochures and magazines are non-existent. This makes TV and radio the most accessible impersonal sources of information. TV may have the upper hand over radio as it can broadcast the message and show the product simultaneously.

To test the study hypothesis (**H1**), a single overall measure (i.e., Q2, which covered the main issues of message content) was asked. Respondents' answers to this question were used to conduct Person Correlation Coefficient between this single overall measure and the different stages of the adoption process. Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4. Correlations between the single overall measure of message content and the stages of the adoption process*

Issue	Adoption process				
	Awareness	Interest	Evaluation	Trial	Adoption
- The single overall measure of message content.	.73 (.00)	.69 (.00)	.64 (.00)	.56 (.00)	.54 (.00)

* Figures in table are person correlation coefficients with corresponding levels of significance in parentheses.

Table 4 shows strong positive correlations between the single overall measure of message content and the stages of the adoption process at a significant level of > .01. This level of significance supports the study hypothesis (H1) which stated that:

"There is a positive correlation between the content of TV advertising messages and the adoption process of washing machines in Jordan".

The findings of Table 4 are consistent with both, the results of Table 3 and the interpretations given by the researcher.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Under most circumstances the main objective of a firm is profit. Therefore, a firm needs to select the best advertising alternative that generates the highest present value for long-term profits. TV advertising plays a crucial role in creating awareness and providing information to potential buyers about goods and services.

TV advertising can increase the number of buyers or enhance the usage rate among current buyers or both. Many customers can be converted form competing brands. Current customers can be maintained by developing brand loyalty and others can be attracted by expanding the total market for the product class. Greater usage comes from reminding customers to use the brand and from telling them about new uses.

The issue of television advertising is one of the most complex and emotional subjects in business. Businesses spend large sum of money on this type of promotion to motivate potential buyers to adopt their products.

The results of this study suggest that TV advertising messages in Jordan guide housewives through a sequence of steps that culminates in the purchase of washing machines. These steps (awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption) constitute of the adoption process of products.

The content and form of the TV advertising message can be affected by many factors. Features and benefits of the product can affect the content of the message. Characteristics of the people who play different roles in the message can influence both the content and form.

The strong and positive correlations between the content variables of the advertising message and the different stages of the adoption process in this study, emphasize the need for creative advertising. The intermarriage between TV advertising messages and their influence on the adoption process, which can be detected from the results of this study, confirms the fact that audio material must not overpower the visual material and vice versa. However, a television message should make optimal use of its visual portion. This demands a great amount of planning and coordination during the execution of the advertising campaign.

By making a simple comparison between the findings of this study and the advertising messages that are shown on the Jordanian Television, one can say that most of them are ineffective. The reason for this is related to the fact that most of these messages are full of tunes and songs with no sufficient product information. In an environment where lack of product related information exists, the role of TV messages becomes very important in filling this gap. Jordanian consumers, mostly, make their own judgments based on little information that is gathered from here and there, and in other times decisions are made, solely, based on roomers. This atmosphere, probably, gives another explanation for the importance that Jordanian housewives attach to TV message content.

Although the individual income in Jordan ranks among low level incomes when compared with world standards, there is quite large segment that earn high income. In their promotional strategy, marketers of washing machines could use leaflets, brochures and magazines that could enhance their competitive edge and increasingly influence the adoption process of this segment. This segment, usually, has the purchasing power and the will to buy. Marketers should not worry about the costs of such promotional tools. The medium and long run returns will exceed such costs.

However, this study did not answer questions as to how best TV advertising messages could be incorporated in the overall promotional mix strategy of importers and manufacturers of washing machines. And which element of the promotional mix strategy is the most effective element in Jordan? These issues are left for future research.

Questionnaire

- Wherever possible, please answer the following questions with regard to the purchase of washing machines.

a) Content of the advertising message

Q1- How important are the following factors in making you appreciate the content of an advertising message?

	Very important	Important	Uncertain	Not so important	Not at all important
a) Product's uses, benefits and features explained in the content of an advertising message	5	4	3	2	1
b) Characteristics of the people in the advertising message (e.g., personality and sex)	5	4	3	2	1
c) The type of media used to show an advertising message	5	4	3	2	1
d) Clarity, simplicity and credibility of an advertising message	5	4	3	2	1
e) Others, please specify	5	4	3	2	1

Q2-Taking into accounts Q1a, Q1b, Q1c, and Q1d, altogether, how important are these factors in making you appreciate the content of an advertising message?

Very important	Important	Uncertain	Not so important	Not at all important
1	2	3	4	5

b) Adoption process

Q3- To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Quite disagree	Strongly disagree
a) Good content of TV advertising messages makes you aware of existing washing machines (Awareness)	5	4	3	2	1
b) Good content of TV advertising messages makes you aware about the features, uses, advantages, price and location of the washing machine (Interest)	5	4	3	2	1

Q. 3. (Conbtd).

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Quite disagree	Strongly disagree
c) Good content of TV advertising messages makes you consider whether the washing machine will satisfy certain criteria that are critical for meeting your special needs (Evaluation)	5	4	3	2	1
d) Good content of TV advertising messages makes you use or experience the washing machine for the first time, possibly by visiting someone who has the product (Trial)	5	4	3	2	1
e) Good content of TV advertising messages makes you buy a specific washing machine (Adoption)	5	4	3	2	1

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دور محتوى الرسائل الاعلانية التلفزيونية في عملية تبني السلع المعمرة في الدول النامية: الأردن كحالة دراسية

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ملخص البحث. إن نمو المنافسة أدى إلى زيادة أهمية الإعلان و هذا يعني زيادة في النفقات. إن زيادة تكاليف الإعلان تؤكد أهمية استخدام الرسائل الاعلانية المتجددة والبارعة. لقد كان الهدف من هذه الدراسة التحقق من دور محتوى الرسائل الاعلانية التلفزيونية في عملية تبني السلع المعمرة في البلدان النامية كالأردن. فباستخدام أسلوب كمي، أظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة علاقة قوية بين المحتوى الجيد للرسائل الاعلانية التلفزيونية و عملية تبني هذا النوع من السلع.