

The Effect of Cross-Model's Product Demonstration and Product Involvement on Attitudes toward the Ad

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Abstract

Recently, the cross-model strategy of using male models in advertisements for women's cosmetics has been increasingly utilized. Academics have begun to discuss and study cross-model advertisements, but most of the studies have focused on the effects of the presence of a cross model. We investigated the effects of a cross-model's product demonstration as an advertising creative strategy on consumer's attitudes toward the ad. We examined the effects of a male model demonstrating the advertised products for women's cosmetics on female consumers' attitudes toward the ad. As a result, we found that when a male model demonstrated a product in a women's product advertisement, consumers' attitudes toward the ad were more positive the higher their product involvement. Therefore, product involvement was found to be a moderating variable in the effect of cross-model product demonstration on attitudes toward the ad. This study contributes to the line of research on the effect of cross-model and product demonstration advertising, providing practical implications for advertising practitioners.

Keywords: *Cross Model, Product Demonstration, Advertising, Branding, SNS*

1. Introduction

Advertising often reflects social trends, cultures, and other phenomena. This is also true for the advertising strategy of using models. Traditionally, advertising models have been based on reinforcing preexisting stereotypes of consumers [1]. Gender stereotypes and advertising model strategies are no exception. Male models are often used for products that are mostly used by men or in situations where men use the product, whereas female models are often used for products that are mostly used by women. This reflects the overall socio-cultural characteristic of distinct gender roles of men and women [2].

In contrast to the past, when gender roles were clearly distinguished, these boundaries have disappeared from various fields. Advertisers have been increasingly using models of a different gender from the gender of consumers using the product, which is called a cross-model strategy [3]. For example, a cosmetics company called "Celeb View" executed an advertisement featuring male models for women's cosmetics to

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increase brand awareness and sales [4]. The cross-model strategy in advertising is a creative strategy that uses a model whose gender is opposite to that of the main customer or user. Advertising effectiveness can be enhanced by bringing unexpectedness to consumers who see the advertisement [5]. Several studies have also been conducted on the effectiveness of cross-modeling strategies to reflect these changes. Most of these studies have focused on the effect of cross-models on consumer responses to advertisements [6].

In addition, product demonstration advertisements are widely used, and advertisements using both cross-models and product demonstrations have recently emerged. For example, “Lily By Red,” a color cosmetics brand, received much attention and increased brand awareness through an ad in which a male model demonstrates a lipstick designed for women. Similarly, a women’s cosmetics brand called “Lakka” ran a demonstration ad that showed a male model using a women’s cosmetics product, garnering attention from female consumers [7]. Thus, an increasing number of advertisements use cross-model demonstration strategies that exceed the use of cross-models. However, there is a lack of academic research on this topic.

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of advertisements featuring cross-models and how the advertising creative strategy of cross-models demonstrating products influences consumers’ attitudes toward advertisements. Additionally, advertising effectiveness using cross-model demonstrations may vary depending on the level of consumers’ product involvement. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the effect of cross-model product demonstrations on consumers’ attitudes toward ads and how this effect could change depending on product involvement. This study helps to develop an understanding of attitudes toward ads using a cross-model creative strategy and provides academic implications for the field and practical implications for marketers and advertisers.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cross-model Strategy

An advertising model acts as an informant to convey product information, persuade consumers, and form consumer attitudes toward an ad. In addition, the role of the advertising model is to enhance advertising effectiveness by combining the credibility and attractiveness of the informant with the product [1]. The cross-model strategy refers to the mismatch between the stereotypical gender image of a product and the gender of the advertising model [5]. It can give consumers a sense of novelty through the appearance of non-stereotypical models and can positively influence consumers’ evaluations of the ad by increasing their attention [3]. The reason for using the cross-model strategy is not only to take advantage of consumers’ favorable feelings toward attractive models of the opposite gender but also to make them feel familiar with family members and friends of the other gender, who may be the actual buyers of the product, so that they have a favorable attitude toward the ad.

Research on the gender of advertising models has been divided into *the match-up hypothesis*, which states that advertising effectiveness is higher when the gender of the product user and the advertising model match, and *the mismatch hypothesis*, which argues that advertising effectiveness is higher when the gender of the product user and the advertising model mismatch [6]. Research on the congruence hypothesis suggests that when the gender of the main user of a product and the gender of the advertisement model match, consumers feel a sense of unity with their idealized self, which leads to positive evaluations of the ad and the product; however, when exposed to advertisements in which the gender of the product user and the advertisement model do not match, consumers feel psychological discomfort, which can lead to negative evaluations of the ad and product [8].

Although the results of these studies are inconsistent, the mismatch hypothesis has recently received

considerable attention. Previous research has found that male consumers show more favorable brand attitudes and purchase intentions when a female model is featured in a beer ad. Another study used consumer's construal level to test the effectiveness of cross-model advertising, and it showed that consumers with low construal level showed more positive attitudes toward the ad with a cross model than those with high construal level [9]. Studies on cross-model advertisements have shown different results, depending on certain moderating variables. In this study, we examine the effectiveness of a cross-model strategy using product demonstrations and consumers' level of product involvement as moderating variables.

2.2. Product Demonstration Advertising and Product Involvement

The method of expressing an advertising message is called an advertising appeal, which is generally categorized into rational and emotional appeal [10]. Rational appeal focuses on a product's attributes or benefits, such as performance or excellence, using objective and logical data or evidence. The subtext of emotional appeal emphasizes emotions such as joy, anger, and love that consumers feel while using a product or the mood evoked by a product [11]. Demonstration advertising, which shows the situation in which a product is used, belongs to the rational subcategory and focuses on the visual demonstration of the product. It aims to prove the function and effectiveness of a product by demonstrating it to consumers.

According to previous studies on the effectiveness of rational and emotional advertising, predicting the effectiveness of advertising is difficult. Consumers' individual characteristics often determine which would be used more effectively [12]. One of the factors that can have an impact on the effectiveness of an ad showing a product demonstration as a way of rational advertising appeal is consumer involvement with the product [13]. Research indicates that product involvement affects how consumers process information when exposed to advertising messages and is closely related to advertising effectiveness [14]. This research further shows that high-involvement consumers, when exposed to an ad, process information in advertising through a central route; thus, they tend to pay more attention to the ad and scrutinize its message.

In contrast, low-involvement consumers process information along a peripheral route when processing advertising messages. Unlike high-involvement consumers, they do not scrutinize advertising messages in detail and focus more on peripheral information, such as the tone and mood of the ad and the credibility of the model.

Research suggests that demonstration advertising is more effective for high-involvement consumers than for low-involvement consumers [12]. This research also suggests that consumers with high-involvement who process information in an ad through the central route tend to pay more attention to the advertising model's demonstration of the product, which is a rational advertising appeal. This resulted in a more positive attitude toward the ad and the brand compared to consumers with low involvement because the latter did not pay much attention to product demonstration; they did not find a significant difference between demonstration advertising and non-demonstration advertising. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The effect of product demonstration advertising on attitudes toward an ad is moderated by consumer involvement with the product.

H1a: Consumers with high involvement will show more positive attitudes toward the ad when exposed to a product demonstration ad than to a non-demonstration ad.

H1b: Consumers with low involvement show no difference in their attitude toward the ad, whether exposed to the product demonstration or non-demonstration ad.

3. Experiment

3.1. Experimental Design and Stimuli

An experiment was conducted using a 2 (product demonstration in the ad: presence vs. absence) \times 2 (product involvement: high vs. low) between-subjects design. To select the product to be used in the experiment, several products (razors, sanitary napkins, face masks, men's skin lotion, face wash, and women's cosmetics) were selected based on previous studies and interviews with three professors of advertising and mass communication. Subsequently, a group interview was conducted with six university students, and a women's cosmetic product was selected for the experiment. Additionally, the use of cross-models in women's cosmetics is increasing, and the number of advertisements with cross-models demonstrating products is increasing. For the experiment, a fictitious cosmetics brand, "ATTE," was created.

Advertising stimuli for the experiment are shown in Figure 1. (a) on the left in Figure 1 shows the product demonstration advertisement with a cross-model wearing red lipstick on a social networking site, whereas (b) on the right in Figure 1 shows the non-demonstration advertisement featuring the same model without lipstick. To control for other factors, only a brief headline ("Red lipstick for her") with the brand name and model was created without any details about the product.

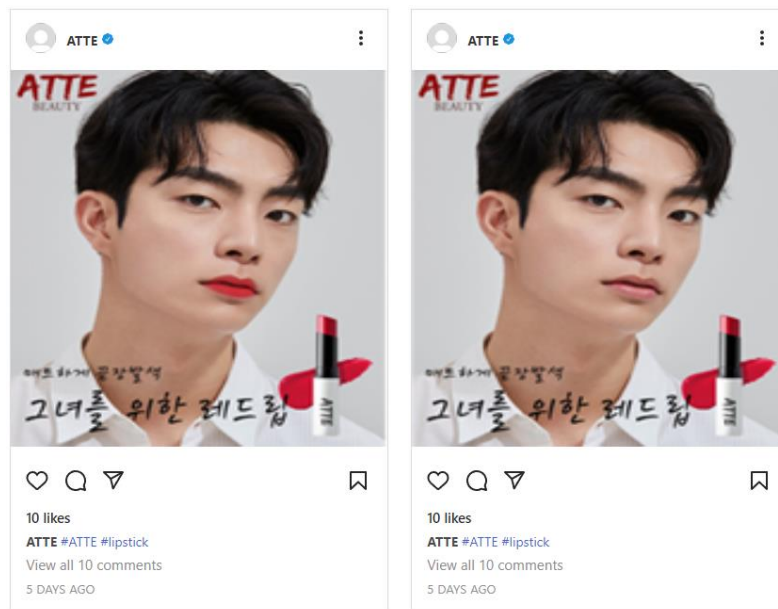


Figure 1. Advertising stimuli: (a) product demonstration, (b) non-demonstration

3.2. Participant Recruitment and Experimental Procedures

The participants were limited to women in their 20s who were the main users of women's lipstick. A total of 110 female college students enrolled in a university in the Seoul metropolitan area were recruited to participate in the experiment using an online questionnaire. Seven participants with inattentive responses were excluded, and 103 participants were included in the final analysis.

At the beginning of the experiment, participants answered questions regarding their involvement with the product (cosmetics). They were then randomly assigned to two groups separated according to whether the model demonstrated the product. Those assigned to the demonstration condition were shown an ad in which a male model demonstrated lipstick, whereas those in the non-demonstration condition were shown an ad in which the product was not demonstrated. After viewing the advertisement, the participants answered

questions about the dependent variable (attitude toward the ad) and demographic questions.

3.3. Measures

To measure product involvement, 10 items were employed using a five-point Likert scale (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.81$) based on a previous study [15]. Sample items included, "I think lipstick is important to me," "I am interested in lipstick," and "Lipstick is a product that is relevant to me." Participants were then separated into high- and low-involvement groups using the median split method (the number of participants in each condition ranged from 25 to 28). Attitudes toward the advertisement were measured by using a five-point bipolar scale with three items (bad-good, unpleasant-pleasant, negative-positive) (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.89$) based on a previous study [16].

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Manipulation Check

Following the advertising stimuli, participants were asked whether the model demonstrated the product. All of the participants correctly perceived that the model demonstrated the product. Thus, the experimental manipulation was successful.

4.2. Hypothesis Test

To test the hypothesis, a two-way ANOVA was conducted, followed by a planned contrast test to analyze the differences in means between groups. The hypothesis was that product involvement would serve as a moderator of the effect of the cross-models' product demonstration on attitudes toward the ad. As shown in Figure 2, the analysis revealed an interaction effect between product demonstration and involvement on attitudes toward the ad, $F(1,102)=3.20$, $p < .05$. The mean values of attitude toward the ad, according to product involvement, showed that those with higher product involvement had a more positive attitude toward the product demonstration ad ($M=3.30$, $SE= .155$) than non-demonstration ads ($M=2.41$, $SE= .155$). This difference was statistically significant ($p < .05$). The low product involvement group showed higher attitudes toward product demonstration ads ($M=2.87$, $SE=0.147$) than non-demonstration ads ($M=2.63$, $SE=.155$), but this difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis was supported.

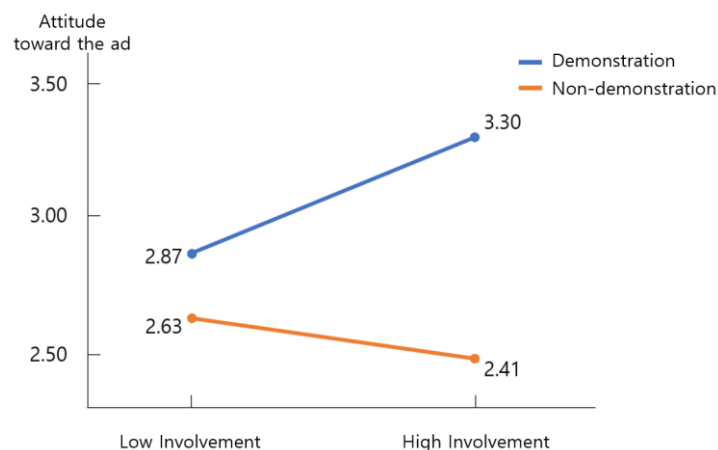


Figure 2. The interaction effect between product demonstration and involvement

5. Conclusion

We drew the following conclusions and implications. First, we found that consumers evaluated cross-model product demonstration ads more positively when they were more involved with the product. Given that product demonstration is a form of rational appeal in advertising, this result supports findings of previous research, suggesting that when consumers are more involved, the effect of an ad using rational appeal is more positive than an ad employing emotional appeal. Second, this study has practical implications. In the early days of cross-model advertisements, they were often viewed positively because they subverted existing stereotypes and generated curiosity. However, as the number of advertisements featuring cross models increased, it became difficult to maintain the initial novelty of using cross models. Therefore, the practical implication is that advertisers should consider a more creative cross-model strategy, such as showing the cross-model demonstrating the product, beyond the creative strategy of simply featuring the cross model. This study had some limitations. This study did not measure consumers' positive emotional responses (e.g., curiosity, novelty, surprise) after viewing the cross-model demonstration ads. In future studies, it would be advantageous to include variables related to consumers' emotional responses to test whether cross-model product demonstrations are mediated by consumers' emotional responses and thus affect their evaluations of the ad.

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