

## **RATIONAL APPEAL: THE RESEARCHERS INTERPRETATION OF HOW ADVERTISING WORKS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The presentation of the communication message requires that an appeal be made to the target audiences. Rational advertising stems from the traditional information processing models of decision making where the consumer is believed to make logical and rational decisions; such approaches are designed to change the message receiver's beliefs about the advertised brand and rely on their persuasive power of arguments or reasons about brand attributes. This paper theoretically explored the concept of rational appeal and identified its dimensions/executional styles. These dimensions of rational appeal include factual, slice-of- life, demonstration and comparative advertising.*

***KEYWORDS: Rational Appeals, Factual, Demonstration, Comparative Advertising.***

### **INTRODUCTION**

Advertising is a vital marketing tool utilized by businesses to promote their products and services. Businesses engage in advertising for various reasons, some of which include: to inform the public or their target audience about a new product or service, draw attention to additional features of a product or service, acquire recognition and goodwill in the marketplace, and promote their brand (Nadube, 2021). It is used for communicating business information to the actual and prospective customers. It usually provides information about the advertising firm, its product qualities, place of availability of its products, etc. Advertisement is indispensable for both the sellers and the buyers. However, it is more important for the sellers. In the modern age of large scale production, producers cannot think of pushing sale of their products without advertising these products . Advertising has acquired great importance in the modern world due to tough competition in the market and fast changes in technology.

The main mechanism of market economy – competition has forced organizations to search for factors influencing advertising effectiveness. Rizwan et al., (2013) posits that one of the advertising elements that is said to have influence on the all of the advertising effectiveness aspects (attention, awareness, attitude, and behavior) is advertising appeal. Consequently, choosing the right advertising appeal becomes crucial when creating effective advertising campaigns. Advertising appeals are the persuasive pressures that stimulate a person to buy a product or service by speaking to an individual's needs, interests, or wants. The goal of an ad is to persuade customers, and advertising appeals provide just the right hook to allow persuasion to occur. Advertising appeals are designed to create a positive image and mindset about those who use the product or service, and are a major factor of consideration for advertisers. Companies put a lot of effort into their creative advertising strategies and use various types of appeals to influence purchasing decisions.

An appeal can be described as the persuasive selected by the advertiser to make the product attractive to the customer. It is the specific way in which a commercial relates to certain tastes and preferences of customer. It is connection between the emotions or logic of the advertisement and the consumer's response to the advertisement (Wells, Moriarty and Burnett, 2006) . Both brand attitude and purchase intention are largely determined by the consumers' attitudes towards the commercials.

It is extremely critical for marketers to carefully select the advertising appeals used in their advertisements if they hope to communicate effectively to consumers. Using the right appeals in congruence with the type of product or service being sold, the customer segment being targeted, and through the correct media is of great importance to achieve marketing goals (Hornik *et al.*, 2017). The advertising appeal has been described as the theme of the advertisement. For the audience to receive the intended message, advertisers must choose and implement a compelling persuasive power into the advertisement. This power is the appeal used to deliver the message. Every type of advertising appeal serves as a way to attract and arouse a consumer's desires (Kotler, 1997). Um (2008), found in his study that the effectiveness of appeals depends on the products or services that are advertised, especially considering whether the product is high or low involvement.

In general, the presentation of the promotional message requires that an appeal be made to the target audience. The appeal is important, because unless the execution of the message appeal (the creative) is appropriate to the target audience's perception and expectations, the chances of successful communication are reduced (Nadube, 2022). There are two main factors associated with the presentation. Is the message to be dominated by the need to transmit product – oriented information or is there a need to transmit a message that appeals predominantly to the emotional senses of the receiver? The main choice of presentation style, therefore, concerns the degree of factual information transmitted in a message against the level of imagery thought necessary to make sufficient impact for the message to command attention and then be processed. The focus of this paper is on rational appeal i.e. the emphasis is on the degree of factual information transmitted in message.

### **The Concept of Rational Appeal**

Rational advertising stems from the traditional information processing models of decision making where the consumer is believed to make logical and rational decisions; such approaches are designed to change the message receiver's beliefs about the advertised brand and rely on their persuasive power of arguments or reasons about brand attributes. Such appeals relate to the audience's self-interest by showing product benefits (Kotler & Armstrong, 1994). Hornik *et al.*, (2017) also share similar view when they posit that rational appeals intend to change the consumer's thoughts about a specific brand based on thorough arguments and reasoning. It highlights the product as the main purpose and emphasizes the functions of that product or service's utilitarian or functional benefits such as quality, value, performance, reliability, and price (Johar & Sirgy, 1991). Keshari & Jain (2014) further stated that an advertisement cannot be considered rational if it does not contain at least one of the following pieces of information regarding the product or service: price, quality, function, where to purchase, material, research, or packaging. Grigaliunaite & Pileliene, (2016), argued that advertisers typically use rational appeals to convince consumers that their product will satisfy all their needs as it is the best product or service available. Rational appeal advertisements can be categorized in the following classifications: one-sided, two-sided, or comparative. One-sided advertisements only present one attitude, while two sided present an argument along with its counterargument.

Furthermore, informational/rational appeals focus on the consumers' practical, functional, or utilitarian need for the product or service and emphasize features of a product or service and / or the benefits or reasons for owning or using a particular brand. The content of these messages emphasizes facts, learning, and the logic of persuasion. Rational-based appeals tend to be informative, and advertisers using them generally attempt to convince consumers that their product or service has a particular attribute(s) or provides a specific benefit that satisfies their needs. Their objective is to persuade the target audience to buy the brand because it is the best available or does a better job of meeting consumers' needs (Belch & Belch, 2004).

Davies (1993) stated, that informational/rational appeals reflect the relationship between price and value, to provide special offers, guarantees (elements of sales promotion). Albers-Miller and

Stafford (1999) concluded that rational appeal advertising reduces consumers' doubts and uncertainty about the service. Specifically, it has been advocated that rational advertising appeals should be used when marketing high involvement products, such as a car or house etc. This is because rational appeals are more effective in this case since the risk associated with high involvement products is very high and consumers, therefore, need detail information to be persuaded with logical arguments (Sadeghi *et al.*, 2015). A rational appeal uses logical arguments and factual evidence to persuade individuals to behave in a particular way that is of interest to the organization. Rational appeals deal with the mind and cognition of the target audience. The rational approach uses marketing to try to prove the product's quality and usefulness by listing the product's benefits, or quoting facts or statistics.

Yoo and MacInnis, (2005), defined rational advertisement appeal as "Ad execution designed to appeal to the rationality of the receiver by using objective information to describe brands attributes or benefits". Rational advertisement appeals convey the basic functioning and advantages of the product or service (Pang, Keh & Peng, 2009). Such appeals alter the attitude of the customers receiving the message regarding the product and are based on the power to persuade related to the features of the product. Information, reason and logical arguments are the means by which rational appeals motivate the customers to make right decision (Behboudi *et al.*, 2014). In rational advertisement appeal, products features and advantages are presented to the customer. These appeals are associated with products that are complex and with business to business advertisers. They require great amount of attention and involvement of the customers. Holbrook (1978) says that consumers will have highly favorable beliefs due to the reliability of the facts presented by rational advertisement appeal. Advertisement is used by marketers to compete by acquiring brand new customers and by keeping the customers they already have. Advertising appeals such as rational/logical are utilized by marketers in order to communicate information to users and for achieving the required goals and objectives of the marketing firm (Wang, Qiu, Kim, & Benbasat, 2016).

Stern and Resnik (1977) developed a classification system for advertising based on rational content (informative), composing a list of 14 possible categories of useful information for the consumer. Thus, this model recommends matching the appeals to the attitude toward the product, i.e., based on rational appeals for products in which consumer attitude is predominantly cognitive. According to Stern and Resnik (1977), to be considered rational (informative), a notice must contain at least one of the 14 items. The fundamental principles of this perspective are twofold. First, advertising works to provide information about products that allow consumers to compare products on a price basis, leading to better economic information in favour of the consumer. Second, informational advertising makes it possible the entry of new competitors. According to Man So (2004), the rational content (information content) is defined as the degree to which the publicity focuses on practical, functional or utilitarian needs of the consumer regarding the product. Receiving different levels of information, consumers can make smart purchasing decisions, choosing between different alternatives. Also others scholars have argued that the additional information raises the level of awareness of customers regarding products or brands. The content providing information that differentiates a brand from its competitors tends to increase the process of remembrance, understanding and persuasion. In short, the information content in advertising is an important influence on consumers in response to advertisements and brand awareness. Resnik and Stern (1977) recognize that in real sense, the information is "in the eye of the beholder", but note that an operational definition of content of reliable information can be useful for partnerships with advertisers, with the public and other stakeholders.

### Dimensions of Rational Appeal

Several scholars have shown several indices or dimensions or executional styles of rational advertising appeals. Fill, (2006) cited in Nadube, (2021), outlined some dimensions of rational advertising appeal which includes, factual, slice-of-life, demonstration and comparative advertising. It is worthy of note that while, we classified slice-of-life as rational appeal, Blakeman, (2007) and Koekemoer, (2004) classified it as emotional appeal. Note that there are some similarities between advertising appeals and the executional styles. These dimensions are briefly examined.

**Factual:** Sometimes referred to as the 'hard sell', the dominant objectives of these appeals is to provide information (Nadube, 2021, Fill, 2006). Informative ads present information to the audience in a straightforward manner. This type of appeal is commonly associated with high-involvement decisions where receivers are sufficiently motivated and able to process information. Persuasion, according to the elaboration likelihood model (ELM), is undertaken through the central processing route. This means that advertisements should be rational and contain logically reasoned arguments and information in order that receivers are able to complete their decision-making processes. As a result, the informative framework continues to be a popular approach for business-to-business advertisers.

The informational appeal offers facts and information to help the target audience make a purchasing decision. It tries to generate attention using rational arguments and evidence to convince consumers to select a product, service, or brand. Appeal based on facts means to appeal to the audiences' sense of reason or logic. To use logos, the advertiser makes clear, logical connections between ideas, and includes the use of facts and statistics. A logical appeal definition (or appeal to reason definition) is the use of logic, reason, data, statistics, or factual evidence to persuade an audience. The logical appeal is also called the logos appeal.

Informational advertising appeals seek to reach the target audience's intellect by transmitting a series of logical information relevant to them and making a direct presentation of the facts to appeal to reason, thinking and awareness, without any kind of emotion present in the message (Flora & Maibach, 1990). Rational advertising appeals present information that is immediately important to the target audience and data that they accept as true. The provision of information about the problem and the presentation of solutions is the main characteristic of the informational tone on advertisements (Helmig & Thaler, 2010). Informational appeals use logic, facts, and data to convince consumers to buy products, and are often found in advertisements for medications, cookware, and cleaning products. They focus on the consumers' practical, functional need and utility for the product or service.

**Slice of Life:** The establishment of credibility is vital if any message is to be accepted. One of the ways in which this can be achieved is to present the message in such a way that the receiver can identify immediately with the scenario being presented. This process of creating similarity is used a great deal in advertising and is referred to as slice-of-life advertising (Nadube, 2021, Fill, 2006). In slice-of-life commercials, advertisers attempt to provide solutions to the everyday problems faced by consumers or businesses. A slice-of-life advertisement is a kind of ad appeal that utilizes everyday scenarios to integrate a product into the daily dynamics of consumers. With this kind of ad, advertisers try to provide solutions or introduce efficiency using the product to the daily common concerns of people. These advertisements normally show common things people experience, especially the problems they encounter. Then, the product is made available to solve the problem.

Also referred to as the problem/solution approach, slice-of-life advertisements present an everyday situation where a person is faced with a consumption problem that occurs in daily life (Belch & Belch, 2007). The problem is then solved by using the advertiser's product. Generally, it depicts a social scenario where people discuss a specific problem, and then someone provides a solution in

the form of the advertised brand. The brand is then tried out and the results are always positive. Arens *et al.* (2011) advised that the secret to successful slice-of-life advertisements is simplicity – the advertisement should focus on a key benefit that is presented in a realistic and memorable manner. The slice-of-life approach adds feelings and recognition to the basic provision of facts and allows the audience to identify with the situation (Ouwensloot & Duncan, 2008). Many household cleaning products are advertised using this approach. For example, an OMO washing detergent commercial shows a little girl twirling in the garden. She falls into a flowerbed, thereby staining her white dress. The mother washes the dress using OMO, and all the stains are removed. Again, many washing powder advertisers use a routine that depicts two ordinary women (assumed to be similar to the target receiver), invariably in a kitchen or garden, discussing the poor results achieved by one of their washing powders. Following the advice of one of the women, the stubborn stains are seen to be overcome by the focus brand. The overall effect of this appeal is for the receiver to conclude the following: that person is like me; I have had the same problem as that person; he or she is satisfied using brand X, therefore, I, too will use brand X.

The most common slice-of-life format has four components, namely, encounter, problem, interaction and solution. In print advertisements, slice-of-life frameworks are more difficult to prepare. The slice-of-life executional framework has become popular in recent years because it is easily adapted and allows the advertisers to highlight how their products can meet business needs. Slice-of-life executional frameworks are possible in most media, including magazines or billboards, because a single picture can depict a normal, everyday situation or problem.

**Demonstration:** A similar technique is to present the problem to the audience as a demonstration. The focus brand is depicted as instrumental in the resolution of a problem. An advertisement using the demonstration appeal framework is designed to show how a product works. A demonstration appeal is an effective way to communicate the attributes of a product to viewers. Demonstrations are often presented in business-to-business ads. They allow a business to show how a product can meet the specific needs of another business. Demonstration-type ads are especially well suited to television. To a limited extent, the print media can feature demonstrations, especially when a series of photos shows the sequence of product usage. The demonstration framework shows the actual working of the product. The advantages and ease of consumption of the product can be shown clearly, as well as its effectiveness (Koekemoer, 2004a:). Accordingly, many household appliance companies make use of it. In such a commercial, the character in the advertisement is generally the user. Headache remedies, floor cleaners and tyre commercials have traditionally demonstrated the pain, the dirt and the danger respectively, and then shown how the focus brand relieves the pain, (Panadol), removes the stubborn dirt (Harpic) stops in the wet on a coin (or the edge of a rooftop–Continental tyres). Whether the execution is believable is a function of the credibility and the degree of lifelike dialogue or copy that is used.

**Comparative Advertising:** Comparative advertising entails the advertiser favourably comparing its brand with that of competing brands; and it allows the advertiser to focus on attributes of the brand that are superior to those of competitors' brands (Wells *et al.*, 2006). It is a popular means of positioning brands. Messages are based upon the comparison of the focus brand with either a main competitor brand or all competing brands, with the aim of establishing and maintaining superiority (Fill, 2006). The comparison may center upon one or two key attributes and can be a good way of entering new markets. Entrants keen to establish a presence in a market have little to lose by comparing themselves with market leaders. However, market leaders have a great deal to lose and little to gain by comparing themselves with minor competitors. Finally, comparative advertisements directly compare the attributes of the company's product or service against one of its main competitors (Sadeghi *et al.*, 2015).

## CONCLUSION

Advertising appeals are the persuasive pressures that stimulate a person to buy a product or service by speaking to an individual's needs, interests, or wants. The goal of an ad is to persuade customers, and advertising appeals provide just the right hook to allow persuasion to occur. Advertising appeals are designed to create a positive image and mindset about those who use the product or service, and are a major factor of consideration for advertisers. Companies put a lot of effort into their creative advertising strategies and use various types of appeals to influence purchasing decisions.

Rational appeals use logic, facts, and data to convince consumers to buy products; they focus on the consumer's practical, functional need and utility for the product or service. It emphasizes on either product features or its functional benefits or its problem removal or problem avoidance attribute.

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