

THE EFFECTS OF EVALUATIVE CRITERIA AND OCCUPATIONAL ROLE IN
THE EVALUATION OF ADVERTISING IN A CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT

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Most of the current literature on evaluative criteria and the purchase decision, relates a person's environment and background to the formation of guidelines used in the evaluation of products. There does not, however, appear to be extensive marketing research in the area of evaluative criteria in relation to a corporate environment. It was because of this that the occupational role within a corporate structure was manipulated along with specific advertisements aimed at that role. The hypothesis was that with a high quality industrial good, management would be more influenced to support a product with advertisements stressing a low purchase price and operating cost, which is in direct contrast to workers who would be more influenced to support a product with advertisements stressing environmental improving features.

A total of 20 subjects were selected on a voluntary basis for the experiment. Role taking was used where the assumed role was anchored to the subject's real-life occupation. Ten randomly selected senior and intermediate studio accountant auditors assumed the role of a motion picture studio corporate purchase manager and 10 randomly selected studio set construction workers assumed the role of a studio worker, placing the subjects under cost constraints and comfort constraints, respectively. Role taking was necessary due to the difficulty of obtaining a large number of studio corporate purchase managers for the experiment. The accountant auditors were used in this study because of their real-life, cost-oriented, occupational similarity to studio corporate purchase managers. The experimental environment used for the role-taking exercise was one in which a price-quality relationship was not strong. After reading a description of their environment and assigned role, 5 "cost" oriented advertisements and 5 "no heat and environment" oriented advertisements were randomly issued to each group. Subjects evaluated the "cost" oriented advertisement or the "no heat and environment" oriented advertisement in terms of cognitive, conative, and affective components of attitude. A 2 X 2 factorial design with both independent factors between groups was used where the independent variables were the advertisements to be evaluated and the roles assigned. The dependent variable was a measure of attitude toward the product.

An analysis of variance was done in order to test the hypothesis that management would be more influenced to support a product stressing a low purchase price and operating cost, while construction workers would be more supportive of advertisements stressing

environment improving features. The role of studio corporate purchase manager differentially affected the responsiveness of subjects on all dependent measures for the low price and operating cost advertisement. Conversely, the role of studio worker differentially affected the responsiveness of subjects on all dependent measures for the no heat and environment advertisement.

The results provided support for the hypothesis concerning the relationship between environment, evaluative criteria, and selective perception as applied to the evaluation and support of product and advertising. Within the experimental corporate environment and assigned role constraints, the attitude rating of those subjects assuming the role of a studio corporate purchase manager was higher toward the "cost" oriented advertisement than toward the "no heat and environment" oriented advertisement. The reverse was observed with those subjects assuming the studio worker role.

People function and interact within many different environments. While this paper focused only on a corporate environment, all possible environments place constraints on an individual's attitudes, beliefs, actions, perceptions, and evaluations. Because the consumer's evaluative criteria must be accepted as a given by the marketer, it is essential that the business firm adapt the product advertisements to the actual decision maker's important evaluative criteria as determined, and reinforced, by his or her environment.