

EFFICACY OF ADS WITH SHORT MESSAGE SERVICE (SMS) COPY

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ABSTRACT

Although text message argot has permeated all digitally based written communications, its efficacy in ads—especially ads embedded in video games—is unknown. To help close this research lacuna, we develop two between-subject experiments grounded in distinctiveness theory and communication trust theory. The results suggest that ads with SMS-type copy outperform ads with traditional copy on viewers' responses about ad novelty, attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, emotions toward the ad, perceived brand trust, ad persuasiveness, and intent to purchase the advertised brand.

INTRODUCTION

Because the efficacy of ads with SMS-type copy—especially ads embedded in video games—is unknown despite the growing use of SMS argot by consumers, ad researchers have called for its study (Leung and Wei 2000). In addition, in-game advertising (IGA) researchers have called for further inquiry into IGA effects (Lee and Faber 2007). Thus, we ran two between-subjects experiments. Study #1 compares viewers' responses to an ad with SMS-type copy to the same ad with traditional copy on ad hipness (Ad_{HIP}), ad novelty (Ad_{NOVEL}), attitude toward the brand (A_B), attitude toward the ad (A_{AD}), emotional response toward the ad ($Emot_{AD}$), and intent to purchase the advertised brand (PI_B). Study #2 relied on the same experimental design, but varied the sport video game, ad design, and SMS-type copy while assessing several additional constructs: perceived brand trust (Per_{TRUST}), ad persuasiveness (Ad_{PER}), and attitude toward product placement (A_{PLACE}).

METHOD AND RESULTS

Study 1: Millennials frequently send text messages and play sport video games; hence, they constitute an appropriate population for study. In accord, 112 undergraduate business students enrolled in a southwestern U.S. university were solicited. To minimize hypothesis-guessing bias, data from the five participants who correctly guessed the main research question were purged, leaving data from 107 participants ($M_{AGE}=21.79$; gender split evenly; Whites=69%, Hispanics=26%).

Each participant was randomly assigned a binder containing two filler ads and either the ad with SMS-type copy ($N=54$) or the ad with traditional copy ($N=53$). Ad presentation order was counterbalanced. Subjects received only 45 seconds to evaluate the ad booklet; then, they responded to a questionnaire containing the aforementioned multi-item close-ended scales.

MANOVA was used to test response differences between the ad with SMS-type copy and the ad with traditional copy. Participants in the SMS-type copy group responded more positively to all six assessed constructs. The MANOVA exhibited a positive overall effect, with Hotelling's $T^2=0.210$, $F(6, 100)=3.51$, $P<0.01$, Wilks' $\lambda=0.826$, $\eta^2=0.174$, and $P_{POWER}=0.937$. Participants who viewed the ad with SMS-type copy showed higher levels or more favorable responses for Ad_{HIP} , Ad_{NOVEL} , A_B , A_{AD} , $Emot_{AD}$, and PI_B . These data offer support for H1–H6.

Study 2: Ninety-nine undergraduate business students enrolled in a mountain-west U.S. university were solicited. To minimize hypothesis-guessing bias, data from the six participants who correctly guessed the main research question were purged, leaving data from 93 participants ($M_{AGE}=25.99$; males=82%; Whites=91%).

Study #2 relied on the same filler ads, procedure, and cover story as Study #1. Each participant was randomly assigned a binder containing two filler ads and either the ad with SMS-type copy ($N=52$) or the ad with traditional copy ($N=41$).

MANOVA was used to test response differences between the ad with SMS-type copy and ad with traditional copy. Participants in the SMS-type copy group responded more positively to all six assessed constructs. The MANOVA exhibited a positive overall effect, with Hotelling's $T^2=0.169$, $F(6, 86)=2.43$, $P<0.05$, Wilks' $\lambda=0.855$, $\eta^2=0.145$, and $P_{POWER}=0.797$. Participants who viewed the ad with SMS-type copy showed higher levels or more favorable responses for Ad_{NOVEL} , A_{AD} , $Emot_{AD}$, Per_{TRUST} , Ad_{PER} , and A_{PLACE} . These data offer support for H7–H12.

References available upon request.