

## SLOGANS: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THEIR EFFECTS

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The birth of the slogan dates back to the start of history itself. Today, the slogan remains visible in virtually every segment of society, attesting to its unique staying power. As much as the slogan has been able to influence people throughout the ages, however, very little research has been conducted on the topic. Of the substantive material that does exist, most focuses on slogans used by advertisers, with a few minor exceptions found in the political slogan area (e.g., Sherif, 1937). The purpose of this paper is to trace the empirical work which has been conducted in the area of advertising slogan effectiveness.

Upon reviewing the slogan literature, while it appears that it is the most frequently addressed, slogan effectiveness is still the least understood aspect of sloganism. Specifically, what is the nature of a successful slogan? What are their effects? How do they work?

### Slogan Effectiveness

Historically, the most popular area of slogan effectiveness research is that of the effects of certain variables on slogan awareness. Larson and Wales (1970) conducted a study among a random sample of householders in Chicago, and found that four factors (age, income, sex, and race) could predict a relatively high identification rate of slogans (55%). Further, it was found that: 1) young people were more aware of slogans than older people, 2) higher income groups were more aware of slogans than low income groups, 3) males were more aware of slogans than females, and 4) whites were more aware than non-whites.

Keiser (1975) conducted a similar study concerning slogan and brand awareness, limiting his sample to adolescents. Those predictor variables found mostly related to slogan awareness were exposure to mass media, opinion leadership, social class, and age. The effects of social class and age were consistent with those found by Larson and Wales' with positive and negative correlations respectively.

In both studies, the way in which an individual's slogan awareness was measured was by providing the subjects with a list of slogans and partial slogans; and then asking them to either complete the slogan or to name the company using the slogan.

Katz and Rose (1966) found that there was much consumer confusion for heavily advertised product categories. Slogan recall was not found to be influenced by the sex of the respondent; however, the effects of age and the amount of product consumption were significantly correlated with slogan awareness. The authors concluded that slogan recall was a learned phenomenon.

As an alternative to identifying audience member characteristics that are associated with slogan awareness, the effects of different types of slogans, qualified versus unqualified, on recall of product advertisements have been investigated. An unqualified slogan is one containing arguments that favors only its conclusion, whereas a qualified slogan restricts the main argument (Misra and Jain, 1971). An example of a qualified slogan would be, "You may pay more, but ours is the best toothpaste to prevent cavities;" an unqualified slogan might only suggest, "Ours is the best toothpaste to prevent cavities." Some work in psychology has attempted to investigate the persuasive impact of one-sided communication (unqualified slogans) as opposed to

two-sided communication (qualified slogans), and the attitude-change literature suggests that qualified slogans could prove to be more effective (Johar and Kanungo, 1975).

In their study, Johar and Kanungo supported the hypothesis that qualified slogans are perceived as more believable than unqualified slogans, even for frequently purchased consumer non-durables. Further, they found that qualified slogans increased the credibility of the advertised message; however, the qualification did not significantly effect the other two dependent measures, the liking for the product or the subject's intention to buy it.

In the Jain and Misra (1971) study, brand recall for advertisements with unqualified slogans was found to be slightly higher (but not significantly) than those with qualified slogans. Thus, the researchers were unable to clearly identify the relative impact of qualified and unqualified slogan types.

Moore and Stephens (1975) examined differential processes associated with four measures of consumer learning. These included price accuracy, brand specification, attitudes toward advertising, and slogan recall. The study involved more of an emphasis on adolescent consumer learning than on the slogan recall area itself, however. After testing two different groups, middle and high school adolescents, the researchers found intelligence to be the most significant explanatory variable accounting for differences in slogan recall. Magazine reading and television exposure time also contributed as significant predictor variables.

Finally, Pathak (1974) explained the recognition of advertising slogans by applying the closure principle of learning and the influence of knowledge associated with past experience on perceptions and their commitment to memory. Results showed that the application of the closure principle to advertising needs re-evaluation, since the motivation to form a complete slogan was not found to be an adequate explanation for learning advertising slogans. Major recall differences were mainly due to the past experiences of the individual with the product advertised. Pathak's results also showed that a slogan can be misused through constant repetition to the extent that the audience becomes tired of it (i.e., wearout).

### Conclusion

It is somewhat surprising to find so little research conducted on a device that has been used so extensively among advertisers, politicians, religious leaders and the like for so long. It is unfortunate that so many advertisers, for example, use this tool with virtually no idea why, what characteristics work best, or even if their slogans are effective. On the basis of the historical perspective presented, hopefully the need for further empirical work on the effectiveness of slogans has been made apparent.

References Available Upon Request