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# An Experimental Study on the Relationship between Consumer Involvement and Advertising Effectiveness

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## Abstract

The level of consumer involvement in a product category is a major variable relevant to advertising strategy. Many researchers segment product category by the level of consumer involvement but do not segment the consumers. However, different involvement clusters have different responses to advertising effectiveness for the same product. This study segmented a market using the consumer involvement degree and explored the characteristics and determined the relationship between advertising effectiveness and the degree of consumer involvement. The result showed that the degree of consumer involvement could effectively segment the market. A positive relationship was shown between the degree of consumer involvement and advertising effect hierarchy. A high degree of consumer involvement directed a high advertising effect. Thus the degree of consumer involvement was an important indication for advertising strategy.

**Keywords:** consumer involvement, advertising effectiveness.

## 1. Introduction

The degree of consumer involvement in a product category has widely been recognized as a major variable relevant to advertising strategy (Laurent and Kapferer 1985, Ray 1982, Rothschild 1979, Vaughn 1980). Thus, to know the level of consumer involvement is very important to a manager. However, how can a manager know whether a group of consumers has high or low involvement in a product category? Many researchers have proposed measurement scales to divide consumers into various levels of involvement with product categories and explored their behavior (Engel and Blackwell 1982, Wright 1973, 1974, Sheth and Venkatesen 1968, Lastovicka and Gardner 1978, Traylor 1981). Some literature has suggested that a person could be involved with products (Howard and Sheth 1969, Hupfer and Gardner 1971). Involvement with products has been hypothesized to lead to a greater perception of attribute differences, greater product importance, and greater commit-

ment to brand choice (Howard and Sheth 1969). Sheth and Venkatesen (1968) measured involvement with products by product rank -or- ordering. Hupfer and Gardner (1971) rated products using an eight-point concentric scale relating the product importance in the subject's life. Other researchers measured the importance of a particular brand or product to the level of involvement (Cohen and Goldberg 1970, Lastovicka and Gardner 1978, Traylor 1981). Zaichkowsky (1985) developed the systematic relative conception and methods and then proposed the PII scale (Personal Involvement Inventory). The PII scale has been successfully used by many researchers to measure the level of consumer involvement since it effectively meets the standards for internal reliability, reliability over time, content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity (Zaichkowsky 1985). Many researchers measured the level of consumer involvement for product categories and divided the products by the various involvement groups (Bowen and Chaffee 1974, Tyebjee 1979, Vaughn 1980, 1986, Bloch 1981, Laurent and Kapferer 1985, Zaichkowsky 1985, 1987, Wells 1986, Zinkhan and Fornell 1989). Few researchers segmented the various consumer involvement clusters for the same product. The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between consumer involvement and advertising effectiveness. This study segmented consumers into various involvement clusters using the PII scale and then explored the differences in the advertising effect with different consumer involvement clusters.

Lavidge and Steiner (1961) developed an effect hierarchy model to describe the steps consumers complete before they purchase a product. The purpose of this model was to determine how consumers used advertising in their purchase processes (Wells and Prensky 1996). The hierarchy model described seven steps in the purchase process: 1. Unawareness, 2. Awareness, 3. Knowledge, 4. Liking, 5. Preference, 6. Conviction, 7. Purchase. These steps can be grouped into three general processes: 1. Gaining awareness and knowledge about a product, 2. Developing an attitude toward the product, and 3. Making a purchase decision. In other words, they are thinking, feeling and doing. Some researchers have criticized the hierarchy of effects model assuming that consumers move in a linear fashion from thinking to feeling to action. In response, researchers have developed other models of the consumer purchase process which build on the same steps but arrange them in a different order or describe the transitions between the steps in a different way (Palada 1966, Smith and Swinyard 1982, Greenwald and Leavitt 1984, Barry 1987). For example, a consumer may make a low involvement purchase based on reference group influence. On the other hand, consumers are more likely to think before feeling and acting in a high involvement purchase process. Consumers might first act and then evaluate their feelings when buying a low involvement product. This study examined if there are significant differences between various consumer involvement clusters in the advertising effect hierarchy. High involvement and low involvement products were ex-

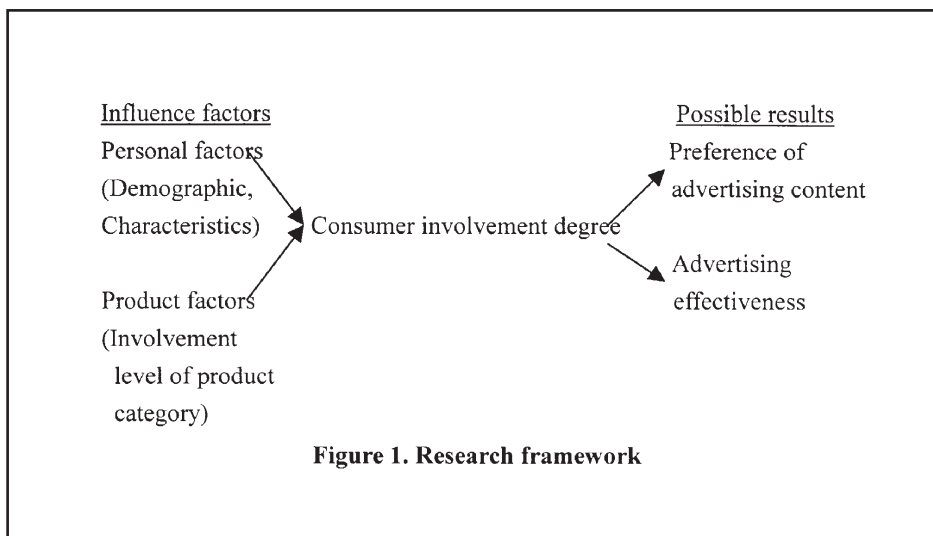
amined to explore the relationship between consumer involvement and advertising effectiveness.

## 2. Methodology

### *Framework*

The variables proposed to precede involvement may be categorized into three factors (Zaichkowsky 1986). The first factor relates to the characteristics of the individual shopper. The second factor relates to the physical characteristics of the stimulus. The third factor impacting on the involvement was the purchasing situation. These factors will influence the level of involvement with the product, advertising or purchase. The advertising effectiveness is proposed to result from this involvement. Many literatures have detailed evidence of these three factors influencing the consumer's level of involvement or the way the consumer responds to advertising, products and purchase situations (Houston and Rothschild 1978, Bloch and Richins 1983). Zaichkowsky (1985) proposed that different people perceive the same product differently and have inherently different levels of involvement with the same product. Andrews etc. (1990) suggested that involvement was influenced by personal needs, goals, characteristics, and situational and decision factors then directed to the search behavior, information processing and persuasion. In this study, since the consumer involvement degree and advertising effectiveness are the main variables, this study used the conception of Zaichkowsky and Andrews etc. The conceptualization of the involvement construct is shown in Figure 1. This particular framework of involvement is affected by personal and product factors. The behaviors proposed to result from involvement in the advertising are determined as a preference for the advertising content and advertising effect. The personal factors are consumer

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**Figure 1. Research framework**

characteristics that include personal needs, goals, activities, interstices and demographics. The product factors involve the product characteristics. The advertising contents may consider a number of operational variables such as the type of media, the degree of repetition, the length of the message, the tone of the message, and the quantity of information (Tyebjee 1979). Those contents can reinforce the advertising effect. Finally, except the non-effective factor, unawareness. The advertising effectiveness in this study includes a six-step hierarchy of effect model: awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction, and purchase.

### *Hypotheses*

According to this framework, the high degree of involvement cluster will attach much importance to advertising content items over direct advertising effectiveness. The high degree of involvement will show a high effect in the advertising effect hierarchy. The following hypotheses are offered with assumed consumer' evaluations of the relationship between the degree of consumer involvement and the other advertising variables.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a positive relationship between the degree of consumer involvement and advertising content importance.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a positive relationship between the degree of consumer involvement and the advertising effect hierarchy.

### *Data collection*

Griffin and Hauser (1993) suggested that a focus group could identify most of the customer perceptions. This study reviewed consumer perceptions of the advertising content by conducting focus groups. The advertising content preferences included: plot, slogan, representative person, product introduction, expression, map and print. The questionnaire included eight parts: demographic, AIO (Actives, Interests, Opinions), advertising content importance, advertising effect hierarchy and consumer degree of involvement in a high involvement product, automobile, low involvement product and shampoo. Five hundred consumers were selected using a random sampling survey. At the end of the sampling period, 489 questionnaires were returned, for a response rate of 97.8 percent. The effective research data error was less than 0.04 with a confidence coefficient of 95 percent. The importance of advertising content preference and advertising effect hierarchy were measured using the five-point Likert scale. The demographics were collected using a nominal scale. The degree of consumer involvement on automobiles and shampoo used the PII (Personal Involvement Inventory) scale. The five-point Likert scale of AIO was used to measure the consumer characteristics. Lifestyle and psychographics is the study of the way consumers express their culture and values, demographics, and personality. The most common approach to measuring lifestyle and psychographics is a survey questionnaire that asked a

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large number of detailed questions about the activities, interests, and opinions (AIO) of the targeted group (Wells and Tigert 1971).

### 3. Results

#### *Segmentation*

Consumers were segmented separately using the PII scale toward the level of consumer involvement on automobiles and shampoo. Because the PII distribution scores were the two ends 20 and 140, and the mean consumer involvement score for automobiles was 99.37, the consumers were thus divided into two involvement clusters on automobiles. The low involvement cluster for automobiles was defined as scores ranging from 20 to 99.37. The high involvement cluster for automobiles was defined as scores ranging from 99.37 to 140. The distribution was used for the development of a two-group classification. Both two groups were 50 percent of the distribution for the low involvement and high involvement clusters. The mean score for consumer involvement on shampoo was 97.88, which divided the consumers into two involvement clusters. The low involvement cluster for shampoo was defined as scores ranging from 20 to 97.88. The high involvement cluster for shampoo was defined as scores ranging from 97.88 to 140. The members of the two low involvement clusters for automobiles and shampoo were not the same. Members of the two high involvement clusters were also not the same.

The data measured by AIO was submitted to a principal component factor analysis with a varimax rotation. Using an eigenvalue greater than 1 selection criterion, six factors emerged. These were fashion factor, cheaper price factor, conservative factor, self-confidence factor, tradition factor and advertising confidence factor. These six factors accounted for 60.32 percent of the variance. The Cronbach's alpha for all factors was greater than 0.53. Through analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Chi-square test, the characteristics of the four involvement clusters are as follows:

*The high involvement cluster for automobiles:* They considered the fashion factor to be more important than other factors and paid attention to the self confidence factor and the cheaper price factor. Most consumers were 18-29 (33.1%) and 50 above (21.2%) years old, with 52.7 % male. The education level was 62.4% high school and junior college. Twenty-three point three percent held jobs in commerce and 18.0% were students. Their income was higher than the low involvement cluster for automobiles.

*The low involvement cluster for automobiles:* They considered the conservative factor to be more important than other factors and paid attention to the tradition factor and the advertising confidence factor. Most were 18-29 (33.2%) and 40-49 (20.9%) years old, with 52.2% male, and 57.4% with a college education. Nineteen point three percent held jobs in commerce and 14.3% worked in industry. Their income was lower than the high involvement cluster for automobiles.

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*The high involvement cluster for shampoo:* They considered the self-confidence factor to be more important than the other factors and paid attention to the fashion factor and the advertising confidence factor. Most 18-29 (35.5%) years old, 64.0% were female and 43.4% had a junior college level education with 20.7% graduated from high school. Nineteen point four percent held jobs in commerce, with 21.5% students and 12.8% were housewives. Their income was higher than the low involvement cluster for shampoo.

*The low involvement cluster for shampoo:* They considered the tradition factor to be more important than the other factors and paid attention to the conservative factor. Most of them were 18-29 (30.8%) and 30-39(28.7%) years old with 58.7 % male, and 55.9% with a college education. Twenty-three point one percent held jobs in commerce and 13.8% worked in industry. Their income was lower than the high involvement cluster for shampoo.

The above results show that the personal factors and product factors have a significant influence on the degree of consumer involvement and the different involvement clusters have a significant difference on the personal characteristics and product category.

#### ***Analysis of difference and relationship***

Analysis of variance was used to show the difference between four of the involvement clusters on the importance of the degree of advertising content. The result showed that there were five items of advertising content that had a significant difference between the high and low involvement clusters for automobiles. These items were plot, slogan, product introduction, expression, map and print (see Table 2). Apparently, the high involvement cluster for automobiles attached more importance to these five items than the low involvement cluster for automobiles. With the shampoo product, the same five items of advertising content had significant differences between the high and low involvement clusters for shampoo. The high involvement cluster for shampoo attached more importance to these five items (see Table 3). The representative person item showed no significant difference for both automobile and shampoo products and the importance score was lower than the other five items. The high degree of involvement clusters was significantly higher in importance than the low degree of involvement clusters for the advertising content items. Thus, there is a positive relationship between the degree of consumer involvement and the advertising content importance.  $H_1$  was substantiated.

The importance score for all of the hierarchy effect items was higher than three, which showed they were all important. However, only four items in the advertising effect hierarchy had a significant difference in the high and low automobile involvement clusters. These items were awareness, knowledge, conviction, and purchase (see Table 4). Apparently, the automobile high involvement cluster attached more importance to these four items

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than the automobile low involvement cluster. All of the advertising effect hierarchy items had a significant difference in the high and low shampoo involvement clusters. The shampoo high involvement cluster attached more importance to all of the advertising effect hierarchy items than the low shampoo involvement cluster (see Table 5). This showed that there was a positive relationship between the consumer involvement degree and the advertising effect hierarchy. Thus,  $H_2$  was substantiated.

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The lines in Figure 2 show the degree of importance trend and the difference between the high and low automobile involvement clusters in the importance level for every advertising content item. Both of the high and low automobile involvement clusters attached more importance to product introduction and map and print. The representative person was the least important item. The lines in Figure 3 show the difference between the high and low automobile involvement clusters for the response to the advertising effect hierarchy. The most effective item in the hierarchy was knowledge. Second, the high involvement cluster was purchase and the low involvement cluster was conviction. Figure 4 shows the difference between the high and low shampoo involvement clusters for the importance level for every advertising content item. Both of the high and low shampoo involvement clusters attached more importance to product introduction, expression and map and print. The least important item was plot. Figure 5 shows the difference between the high and low shampoo involvement clusters for the response to advertising effect hierarchy. The most effective item in the hierarchy was knowledge and purchase in the high involvement cluster and conviction and knowledge in the low involvement cluster.

#### **4. Conclusion and discussion**

The level of consumer involvement influenced the advertising effectiveness. The level of consumer involvement in a product category was as a major variable relevant to advertising strategy. Many researchers segment product category by the level of consumer involvement but do not segment the consumers. However, different involvement clusters have different responses to advertising effectiveness for the same product. This study segmented the market by the consumer involvement degree and explored the characteristics. Experiments were conducted on the relationship between advertising effectiveness and consumer involvement degree. The result showed that the degree of consumer involvement could effectively segment the market. There was a positive relationship between degree of consumer involvement and advertising content importance. Similarly, there was a positive relationship between degree of consumer involvement and the advertising effect hierarchy. A high degree of consumer involvement directed a high advertising effect. Thus, the degree of consumer involvement was an important indication for an advertising strategy.

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For the high involvement product such as automobiles and high degree involvement consumer cluster, the advertising manager should put attention toward product introduction, the map and print of the advertising content and then use these items to satisfy the consumer knowledge requirement and direct them to purchase. This target market includes commerce workers and students who have high incomes and a life style involving fashion, self-confidence, and seeking cheaper prices. When a product is low involvement such as shampoo, to the high degree of involvement consumer cluster, the advertising manager should put attention to product introduction, map and print and expression of advertising content. This target market includes commerce workers, students and housewives who have high incomes and a life style involving self-confidence, fashion, and advertising confidence. The product category involvement level is not the main important influence factor on advertising effectiveness. The degree of consumer involvement in the same product is the most important factor. The manager should use other communication methods to take the place of advertising to attract low involvement consumers. This study used a high involvement product, automobiles, and a low involvement product; shampoo, to determine the relationship between consumer involvement and advertising effectiveness. Both of these products are only a small part of the many product categories. Future research will use other products or variables to determine the existing relationship and produce more effective results.



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<b>Table 1.</b> <b>The characteristics of involvement cluster</b>				
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Automobile involvement</b>		<b>Shampoo involvement</b>	
	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>
Sex	Male(52.7%)	Male(52.5%)	Female(64.0%)	Male(58.7%)
Age	18-29(33.1%) 50~ (21.2%)	18-29(33.2%) 40-49(20.9%)	18-29(35.5%)	18-29(30.8%) 30-39(28.7%)
Education	Junior college (40.0%) High school (22.4%)	College (57.4%)	Junior college (43.4%) High school (20.7%)	College (55.9%)
Occupation	Commerce (23.3%) Student (18%)	Commerce (19.3%) Industry (14.3%)	Commerce (19.4%) Housewife (12.8%) Student (21.5%)	Commerce (23.1%) Industry (13.8%)
Income	High	Low	High	Low
Life style	Fashion Self-confidence Cheaper price	Conservative Tradition Advertising confidence	Self-confidence Fashion Advertising confidence	Tradition Conservative

<b>Table 2.</b> <b>The variance analysis of automobile involvement cluster on advertising contents</b>				
<i>Advertising content</i>	<i>High involvement</i>	<i>Low involvement</i>	F	P
Plot	3.51	3.22	7.44	0.00*
Slogan	3.54	3.29	5.76	0.02*
Representative person	3.11	3.13	0.01	0.91
Product introduction	4.29	3.94	14.18	0.00*
Expression	3.95	3.62	12.82	0.00*
Map and print	4.05	3.71	13.38	0.00*
*: significant difference				

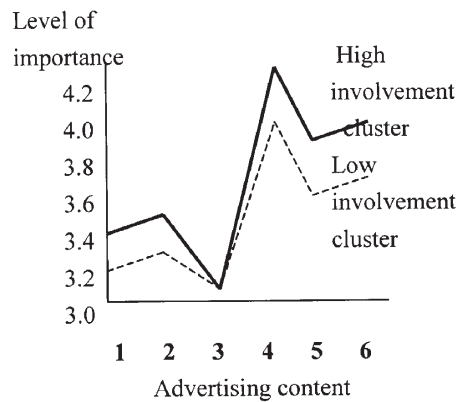
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<b>Table 3.</b> <b>The variance analysis of shampoo involvement cluster on advertising contents</b>				
<i>Advertising content</i>	<i>High involvement</i>	<i>Low involvement</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Plot	3.36	3.11	5.89	0.02*
Slogan	3.64	3.28	13.62	0.00*
Representative person	3.43	3.33	1.01	0.32
Product introduction	4.29	3.69	42.18	0.00*
Expression	3.95	3.52	22.07	0.00*
Map and print	3.96	3.51	24.24	0.00*
*: significant difference				

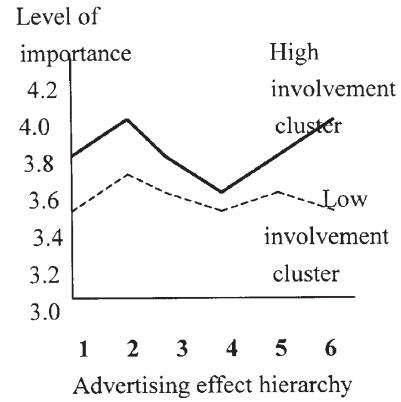
<b>Table 4</b> <b>The variance analysis of automobile involvement cluster on advertising effectiveness</b>				
<i>Effect hierarchy</i>	<i>High involvement</i>	<i>Low involvement</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Awareness	3.90	3.58	11.29	0.00*
Knowledge	4.03	3.68	14.39	0.00*
Liking	3.78	3.60	3.37	0.07
Preference	3.69	3.57	1.37	0.24
Conviction	3.88	3.61	7.92	0.01*
Purchase	3.93	3.49	19.34	0.00*
*: significant difference				

<b>Table 5</b> <b>The variance analysis of shampoo involvement cluster on advertising effectiveness</b>				
<i>Effect hierarchy</i>	<i>High involvement</i>	<i>Low involvement</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Awareness	3.91	3.32	44.27	0.00*
Knowledge	4.04	3.43	48.35	0.00*
Liking	3.78	3.29	31.95	0.00*
Preference	3.74	3.32	18.95	0.00*
Conviction	3.90	3.44	24.78	0.00*
Purchase	4.04	3.36	51.73	0.00*
*: significant difference				

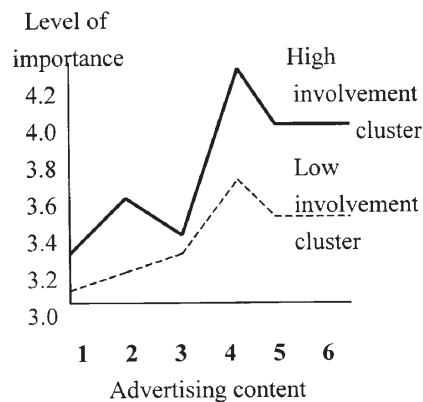
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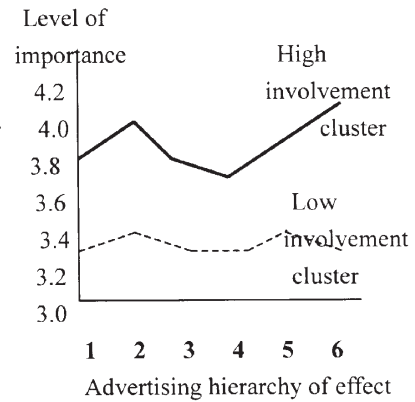
**Figure 2. Advertising content importance for automobile**



**Figure 3. Advertising effect hierarchy for automobile**



**Figure 4. Advertising content importance for shampoo**



**Figure 5. Advertising effect hierarchy for shampoo**

(Advertising content: 1. Plot, 2. Slogan, 3. Representative person, 4. Product introduction, 5. Expression, 6. Map and print)

(Advertising effect hierarchy: 1. Awareness, 2. Knowledge, 3. Liking, 4. Preference, 5. Conviction, 6. Purchase)