Abstract. *This research investigates the role of emotional responses and cognitive structures in attitude formation from product trial experience of hedonic versus utilitarian products, when trial is preceded by different attribute information. The results indicate that, for utilitarian products, cognitive responses and pleasure play an important and distinctive role in post-trial attitude formation, whether search or experience attribute information is provided before trial. For hedonic products, providing search (vs. experience) attribute information prior to trial results in differential effects of emotions and cognitions on attitude formation. Specifically, when search attribute information is included in pre-trial advertisements, cognition and pleasure are* significant *antecedents of post-trial attitude formation. However, when experience attribute information is provided before trial experience, only emotions (pleasure and arousal), but not cognitions, have a significant effect on post-trial product attitudes. Theoretical and managerial implications of the study are provided.*

Keywords: emotions and cognitions; utilitarian and hedonic products; search and experience attributes; trial.

THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS AND COGNITIONS IN POST-TRIAL PRODUCT ATTITUDES: ASSESSING THE EFFECTS OF ATTRIBUTE INFORMATION FOR HEDONIC AND UTILITARIAN PRODUCTS

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1. Introduction

In the U.S., Yoplait sells several varieties of yogurt, including Yoplait Original and Yoplait Light. In promoting Yoplait Original, the claim argues that the yogurt provides "the delicious blended creaminess of Yoplait", whereas when promoting Yoplait Light, the ad claims "it's fat-free and less calories" (http://www.yoplait.com/products_creamy.aspx). How will the emotions and cognitive responses triggered by these advertising messages influence product evaluations after trial? Will the former message which includes information about fat and calorie content, referred to as search attributes (which are easily conveyed by advertisements) result in higher cognition, which will more strongly affect post-trial evaluations? Will the latter message which contains information about taste and creaminess, referred to as experience attributes (which are better judged through product trial) trigger more emotions, which will better explain the post-trial attitude formation? Will these effects be different if claims were promoting a hedonic product, such as chocolate, versus a more functional product, such as yogurt?

The advertising-trial literature provides some insights related to our questions, suggesting that several product and personal/situational characteristics can influence the role of emotions and cognition on post-trial attitude formation (Kempf, 1999; Kempf and Smith, 1998; Kim and Morris, 2007; Park and Kim, 2003). With regard to product characteristics, research has shown that cognitions and emotions play a differential role in explaining attitude formation for utilitarian versus hedonic products (Kempf, 1999). Further, research shows that some situational characteristics, such as involvement, can moderate the effects of emotions and cognitions on post-trial attitude formation (Kim and Morris, 2007; Park and Kim, 2003).

The current research integrates and builds upon this literature to further our understanding of how emotions and cognitions triggered by advertising followed by product trial can influence consumers' post-trial evaluations, in the context of hedonic and functional products. Although several studies have examined the combinatory mechanism of affect and cognition in product trial attitude formation (Kempf, 1999; Kim and Morris, 2007; Park and Kim, 2003), they have not manipulated the pre-trial advertising *content*, to examine any effect that the pre-trial information content may have on post-trial attitude formation. In the light of the wide practice of advertising followed by product sampling in marketing, it is essential to investigate how attitudes are formed when advertising content is varied. Indeed, by knowing how consumers process information from advertising and trial, when the pre-trial advertising provides *different* attribute information, managers could refine their strategies by adjusting the affective or cognitive messages in the pre-trial advertisement.

Thus, the present study advances our understanding of information processing from advertising and trial by varying the pre-trial attribute information. Specifically, it examines consumers' post-trial affective and cognitive responses when the pre-trial

advertising conveys information about either search or experience attributes. Previous research indicates that advertising that includes search-only (versus experience-only) attribute information can differentially affect a subsequent trial evaluation (Micu and Coulter, 2007). Thus considering these attribute types separately in advertising is important. We also examine the effects of affective and cognitive responses in the context of two product types: hedonic and utilitarian. Highlighting the importance of considering the utilitarian and hedonic dimensions, Batra and Ahtola (1990) specifically call for research on the relationship between these dimensions of attitude and affect and cognition.

We next provide a review of the relevant literature in marketing and psychology that investigates consumers' attitude and belief formation from product trial in the context of hedonic versus utilitarian products. We continue with hypotheses development, after which we describe our experiment and the results. Finally, we discuss the findings and their implications, and conclude with limitations and directions for future research.

2. Theoretical underpinnings and hypotheses development

Traditional views of attitude (Zajonc and Markus, 1982) indicate that product trial attitudes may be formed via three evaluative bases: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Although attitudes can be based on all these three components, the combinatory mechanism of the three elements can vary (Petty, DeSteno and Rucker, 2001). Thus, investigating the differential effect of affective and cognitive components on product attitude formation in the context of advertising followed by trial is essential considering that oftentimes consumers are first exposed to an advertisement for a specific product and then they try it.

A small body of research exists in the marketing and psychology literature that investigates consumers' attitude and belief formation from product trial. In general, these studies contrast the strength and confidence of brand beliefs and attitudes formed from product trial with those formed through indirect experience, such as advertising. The findings indicate that trial-only groups, in comparison with ad-only groups, have more positive cognitive responses (stronger and more confidently held beliefs and greater total expectancy value), stronger brand attitudes, and higher attitude-behavior consistency (Marks and Kamins, 1988; Micu, 2004; Smith, 1993; Smith and Swinyard, 1983, 1988). There is also some evidence in the literature of a positive advertising-trial interaction, whereby a pre-trial ad exposure positively biases consumers' interpretations of the subsequent trial experience (Deighton and Schindler, 1988; Hoch and Ha, 1986; Kempf and Smith, 1998; Levin and Gaeth, 1988; Micu and Coulter, 2007).

A review of the literature also shows that that expectancy value (a cognitive component) and pleasure (an affective component) have a positive effect on trial

evaluations for highly diagnostic products – products for which consumers find the trial useful in forming brand evaluations, such as the ones used in our study (Kempf and Smith, 1998). However, in the context of functional products, arousal (another affective dimension) had no effect on highly diagnostic product evaluations, but a negative effect on low diagnostic product evaluations.

Further, with regard to the product type, the results are somewhat contradictory. Whereas pleasure (an affective component) plays an important role in attitude formation for both product types, the results concerning arousal (another affective component) and expectancy value seem to be inconsistent, especially with regard to hedonic products. Specifically, Kempf (1999) found that arousal is an antecedent of post-trial attitude formation for hedonic products, whereas Kim and Morris (2007) found no effect of arousal on hedonic product evaluations. Moreover, expectancy value has been found to explain attitude formation for hedonic products in low involvement conditions in one study (Kim and Morris, 2007), but had no effect on hedonic product attitude formation in another study (Kempf, 1999). We try to explain these inconsistencies by focusing on the advertising content, specifically on providing information about search versus experience attributes, in the context of utilitarian versus hedonic products.

Hedonic or affective products (e.g., candy bars, games, sports cars) are consumed primarily for affective benefits, and provide more experiential consumption, fun, pleasure and excitement, whereas functional or utilitarian products (e.g., hair dryers, washers/dryers, microwaves) deliver more cognitively oriented benefits and are primarily instrumental (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998; Woods, 1960). Considering that utilitarian products are cognitively oriented, it is logical to expect cognitions to play an important role in determining product attitudes, whether the pre-trial advertising provides information about search or experience attributes. Indeed, previous research indicates that, for functional products, cognitions have a significant effect on post-trial product evaluations (Kempf, 1999; Kim and Morris, 2007). Further, pleasure (an emotional component) has also been shown to explain post-trial attitude formation. These results are also supported by Pham et al. (2001) study, which shows that affects are more stable and consistent across individuals and more predictive of the number and valence of people's thoughts.

Finally, with regard to the effect of arousal, we expect differential results based on the pre-trial attribute information. Search attributes are more rational and result in stronger and more confidently held beliefs (i.e., higher expectancy value) than experience attributes (Micu and Coulter, 2007; Wright and Lynch, 1995). On the other hand, experiential claims may evoke imagery about the product consumption experience prior to trial (Hopkinson and Pujari, 1999), which may increase the role of emotions in attitude formation. Further, research on advertising and trial indicated that a pre-trial ad increases consumers' curiosity about the attributes mentioned in the ad,

which will be the focal point during product experience (Smith and Swinyard, 1988). For example, an ad drawing attention to the creaminess of yogurt (an experience attribute) may focus attention to assessing that specific attribute during trial (Dewi and Ang, 2001), which in turn may increase the pleasure one derives from trial.

Thus, we argue that, even for a cognitively oriented product such as a functional product, conveying experience attribute information is likely to fuel consumer imaging about specific experience product attributes, which leads to experiencing stronger emotions that will in turn be more predictive of product attitudes. Hence, we hypothesize that:

H1: For utilitarian products, the effect of cognitive responses and pleasure on post-trial product attitude will be greater than the effect of arousal, when the pre-trial ad provides information about search attributes.

H2: For utilitarian products, the effect of both emotions (pleasure and arousal) and cognitive responses on post-trial product attitude will be significant when the pre-trial ad provides information about experience attributes.

Because hedonic products are mainly consumed for affective and sensory gratification purposes (Woods, 1960), it is logical to expect the role of emotions to be more important than the role of cognitions in attitude formation. Indeed, previous research indicates that the effect of emotions is greater than the effect of cognitions on post-trial evaluations for hedonic products (Kempf, 1999; Kim and Morris, 2007). However, we expect the role of cognitive responses to be boosted by providing search attribute information in the pre-trial advertisement. As noted above, pre-trial search attribute information results in more positive cognitive responses than experience attribute information (Micu and Coulter, 2007; Wright and Lynch, 1995). Thus, we argue that, if a pre-trial advertisement provides information about search attributes, the role of cognition will become more important than if the pre-trial ad conveys experience attribute information. For instance, search attributes such as price or heritage of chocolate emphasize cognitively oriented benefits, which will make consumers place less emphasis on the emotions experienced during trial. This should not only increase the role of cognition on attitude formation, but should also decrease the role emotions in post-trial evaluations. However, because affect (pleasure) is an important predictor of attitude regardless of product type (Kempf, 1999; Kim and Morris, 2007; Pham et al., 2001), we expect only arousal to be affected by providing search attribute information in pre-trial ads for hedonic products. Thus, we posit:

H3: For hedonic products, the effect of cognition and pleasure on post-trial product attitude will be greater than the effect of arousal when the pre-trial ad provides information about search attributes.

H4: For hedonic products, the effect of pleasure and arousal on post-trial product attitude will be greater than the effect of cognition when the pre-trial ad provides information about experience attributes.

3. Development of advertising stimuli

To develop our ad stimuli, we conducted a series of pre-tests. Our first pre-tests were designed to identify two highly diagnostic products, one utilitarian and one hedonic. Then, based on our selected products, we conducted another pre-test to identify important search and experience attributes related to choice in the two product categories. Details of the pre-tests follow.

3.1. Product selection

Fifty-four undergraduate students participated in a pre-test designed to identify two highly diagnostic products, one primarily utilitarian and one primarily hedonic. Participants rated 11 products (i.e., pens, soda, chocolate, paper towels, ice cream, perfume, deodorant, energy drinks, facial tissues, body lotion, and air fresheners) on five seven-point semantic-differential items measuring the utilitarian dimension (e.g., not functional/functional) and the hedonic dimension (e.g., not fun/fun) (Voss, Spangenberg and Grohmann, 2003). Based on participant's scores, we identified paper towels as the utilitarian product; it was rated as more utilitarian (M = 6.43) than hedonic [M = 2.85, t (19) = 12.29, $p < .001$]; and chocolate as the hedonic product; it was rated as more hedonic (M = 6.16) than utilitarian [M = 2.97, t (21) = 11.13, $p < .001$]. When answering the diagnosticity question "Overall, if you were able to try the product, how easy do you think would be for you to judge the quality of the product?" (1 = "Very hard," 7 = "Very easy") (Hoch and Ha 1986), participants rated both paper towels (M = 6.00) and chocolate (M = 6.00) as highly (and equally) diagnostic.

3.2. Attribute type identification

We conducted a content analysis of print ads in popular magazines and informally solicited opinions about the important search and experience attributes when buying paper towels and chocolate. Then, in a pre-test with 45 undergraduate students, we assessed the importance of eight attributes for each product [on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = "Not at all important," 7 = "Very important") (Darley and Smith, 1993)] and the extent to which trial would enable participants to judge the attributes. Results identified six paper towel attributes (number of sheets per roll, sheet size, package size, absorbency, softness, and strength) and six chocolate attributes (tradition, calorie content, type of flavour, taste, silkiness, and flavourful) that scored above the midpoint on the importance scale. Two independent judges identified the search attributes for paper towels (number of sheets per roll, sheet size, package size) and chocolate (tradition, calorie content, type of flavour) and the experience attributes for paper towels (absorbency, softness, and strength taste) and for chocolate (taste, silkiness, and flavourful comfort), which were further included in stimulus advertisements. Further, pre-test results indicate that these attributes were regarded in the same

categories by student consumers; participants indicated that that trying the product would enable them to judge the experience attributes more than the search attributes, both for paper towels [M = 5.23 vs. M = 2.77, t (19) = 6.81, p < .001] and for chocolate [M = 5.33 vs. M = 3.05, t (21) = 7.79, p < .001].

The advertising messages emphasized either search attributes of paper towels (e.g., these paper towels come in two different sheet sizes, so you can choose what size paper towel you need depending on the size of the job) or chocolate (e.g., with only 60 calories per bar, this chocolate offers you a guilt-free indulgence), or experience attributes of paper towels (e.g., soft to the touch like a cloth, these towels work hard to handle even the largest clean-up jobs) or chocolate (e.g., in each piece of chocolate, you will discover fascinating flavours and gracefully rich, silky textures).

4. Experimental procedure

Upon recruitment, 215 participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions, [2 (product: hedonic vs. utilitarian) x 2 (attribute type: search vs. experience). Our experimental procedures mirrored those of Smith and Swinyard (1983). Upon arrival at the experimental session, participants were told that the marketing department was consulting with a well-known market research company to test a new brand of paper towels/chocolate, and they were instructed not to communicate with one another during the session. Consistent with past ad-trial research (Deighton, 1984; Kempf and Smith, 1998; Marks and Kamins, 1988), participants were first exposed to one of the advertising messages. Next, participants responded to questions about the product and the ad and then they tasted a sample of chocolate (or tried the paper towels to wipe up spilled water). After the trial, participants completed dependent measures, manipulation checks, and demographic information.

5. Measurements

5.1. Confound check - Perceived diagnosticity

Overall diagnosticity was assessed for the purpose of a confound check via two items (the item used in the pre-test and "Overall, how helpful would you rate the trial experience you just had in judging the quality and performance of this product?" measured on a scale of 1= "Not at all helpful" to 7= "Extremely helpful"). The two items were combined to yield a diagnosticity score ($r_{\text{paper towels}}$ = .65, p < .001; $r_{\text{chocolate}}$ = .59, p < .001). A 2 (product type) x 2 (attribute type) ANOVA with diagnosticity as the dependent variable indicates no significant main or interaction effects. Both paper towels (M = 6.17) and chocolates (M = 6.20) were perceived as having the same (high) diagnosticity level across experimental conditions.

5.2. Manipulation checks

5.2.1. Product type

To assess the hedonic (utilitarian) nature of paper towels and chocolate, we created an unweight average of the hedonic items and the utilitarian items (Cronbach's $\alpha_{\text{paper towels}}$ = .81 and .85, respectively; Cronbach's $\alpha_{\text{chocolate}}$ = .60 and .93, respectively). Results of t-tests indicate that paper towels are significantly more functional (M = 6.68) than hedonic [M = 3.37, t (87) = 22.11, p < .001]; chocolate was rated significantly more hedonic (M = 6.12) than functional [M = 3.03, t (82) = 16.16, p < .001]

5.2.2. Attribute type

To assess the experiential aspect of the attributes, participants used a 7-point scale to rate the extent to which trial enabled them to judge the attributes mentioned in the ad (1 = "Trial did not enable me to judge this attribute;" 7 = Trial completely enabled me to judge this attribute"). Participants evaluated the experience (vs. search) attributes as being easier to assess during trial for paper towels [M = 6.51 vs. M = 2.23, t (86) = 26.72, p < .001] and for chocolate [M = 6.58 vs. M = 3.26, t (82) = 29.36, p < .001].

5.3. Post-trial product attitude

Participants responded to five seven-point semantic-differential attitudinal items (poor/excellent, one of the worst/one of the best, inferior/superior, poor/good value, low/high quality) (Marks and Kamins, 1988). An unweight average product attitude score was calculated for paper towels and chocolate (Cronbach's α = .94 for both products).

5.4. Cognitive measure

We assessed participants' post-trial attribute-specific belief strength for each performance attribute (see the pretest for attributes) (i.e., "How likely do you think it is that this product has Attribute X?" 1 = "Zero likelihood" to 7 = "Completely certain"), as well as their post-trial belief confidence (i.e., How confident are you that the likelihood estimates you just provided in the question above for each of the product attributes is accurate?" 1 = "Not confident at all" to 7 = "Extremely confident") (Smith and Swinyard, 1988). The cognitive measure is reflected in the expectancy value (EV) score, which is calculated by multiplying the attribute-specific belief strength by the confidence rating for each attribute and then averaging across the attributes.

5.5. Emotions

Mano and Oliver (1993) advocate a two-dimensional affect construct for measuring emotional responses to consumption experiences: pleasant-unpleasant, and arousal-quietness. These were also the emotional dimensions used in Kempf's (1999) study. The specific scale items for pleasure were three semantic differential items: unhappy/happy, annoyed/pleased, and unsatisfied/satisfied (Cronbach's α = .78 for paper towels and .80 for chocolate). The arousal scale items used were calm/excited, relaxed stimulated, and unaroused/aroused (Cronbach's α = .81 for paper towels and .84 for chocolate). Factor analysis showed these items to load cleanly on the two factors: pleasure and arousal.

6. Results

To test our hypotheses, regression analyses were performed in which the post-trial product attitude was regressed on its antecedents: arousal, pleasure, and expectancy value. Separate regression equations were estimated for the paper towels and the chocolate, as well as for the search and experience attribute conditions. The standardized regression coefficients from the four regression equations, along with the t-values and the significance levels, are shown in Table 1. The coefficients of determination are as follows: .67 and .71 for the paper towels in the search attribute, respectively experience attribute condition; .66 and .38 for the chocolate in the search attribute, respectively experience attribute condition.

Table 1

The effect of expectancy value, pleasure and arousal on post-trial product attitude by experimental condition

	Search attribute condition			Experience attribute condition		
	URC[1]	t-value	p-value	URC[1]	t-value	p-value
Utilitarian product						
EV	.38	3.72	.001	.53	4.97	<.001
Pleasure	.60	5.59	<.001	.45	4.54	<.001
Arousal	-.05	-.46	.65	.04	.39	.702
Hedonic product						
EV	.33	3.24	.002	.14	.95	.35
Pleasure	.54	4.54	<.001	.41	2.61	.01
Arousal	.11	1.08	.29	.28	1.81	.08

[1] Unstandardized regression coefficient (URC).

The results show that the antecedents of post-trial product attitudes differ dramatically, depending on whether the product is hedonic (chocolate) or functional (paper towels) in nature, and depending on whether the pre-trial ad conveys information about search or experience attributes. Consistent with H1, we found that, when search attribute information is provided in pre-trial advertisements for utilitarian products, the expectancy value (cognition) and pleasure are significant antecedents of post-trial attitudes, whereas arousal is not.

In H2, although we expected pre-trial experience attribute information to boost the effect of arousal, we replicated the results from H1. Specifically, whether the pre-trial ad for the utilitarian product provided search or experience attribute information, the post-trial product attitudes were a function of the rational beliefs and pleasure, but not of arousal derived from trial.

For the hedonic product, when search attribute information was provided in pre-trial advertising, both the rational beliefs (EV) and pleasure were significant antecedents to product attitudes, but arousal was not. Thus, the type of attribute information may explain the inconsistent findings from previous studies with regard to the effect of arousal on post-trial attitude formation. It appears that consumers experiencing a trial of a hedonic product after being exposed to a search attribute advertisement will switch their focus from the emotional charge the experience gives them to the rational beliefs about the attributes of the chocolate. This makes arousal have a less important and distinctive role in attitude formation, providing support for H3.

However, when experience attribute information is provided in a pre-trial advertisement for a hedonic product, the only significant antecedents of product attitude are pleasure and arousal, whereas EV loses its significant effect. Perhaps drawing attention to hedonically oriented benefits such as exquisite taste and silky texture helped participants more easily immerse in the trial experience, which increased the role of the pleasure derived from trial in product evaluations.

7. Discussion and implications

This research integrates and extends past findings by examining both cognitive and affective antecedents of consumers' evaluations of a product after trial. Past studies have tended to focus on these responses to post-trial consumption without manipulating the pre-trial advertising content. In the context of the wide practice of advertising followed by product sampling in marketing, understanding how the role of emotions and cognitions change because of different information provided to consumers before product trial is essential.

For utilitarian products, our results show that both brand beliefs (cognitions) and pleasure are significant antecedents of post-trial attitudes, whether the advertisement provides search or experience attribute information. However, arousal is not an important determinant of the utilitarian product evaluations. These results

support earlier work done by Mano and Oliver (1993), suggesting that arousal is significantly related to hedonic evaluations of a product, but not to functional evaluations. Thus, marketers should emphasize both the affective dimension of product-trial sales promotions and the cognitively-related dimensions to generate a good product attitude. With regard to advertisements, the emphasis should be on cognitively-oriented benefits, as well as affectively-oriented benefits, but perhaps not hedonically-oriented benefits, such as fun and excitement that are more likely to lead to arousal, which was a non-significant predictor of attitudes.

For hedonic products, the role of emotions and cognitions differ depending on the information provided before trial. When search attribute information precedes trial, the attitude dimensions will be adequately captured in cognitive-belief structure measures as well as pleasure derived from trial, but not in the arousal dimension. However, when the information provided before trial includes experience attributes, hedonic products are evaluated primarily on affective dimensions (pleasure and arousal). Since experience is so important in evaluating hedonic products (Hirshman, 1980), marketers may want to emphasize experience attributes in pre-trial advertisements, which will fuel consumers' imagery and will increase the role of emotions in post-trial attitude formation. Thus, in purchasing a chocolate, consumers may be better persuaded by emphasizing experiential benefits, such exquisite taste and fascinating flavors. However, when hedonic brands have important search attributes, advertisers may want to emphasize those in pre-trial advertisements. Indeed, if search attributes are superior, consumers may be better persuaded by cognitive messages, emphasizing, for example, the chocolate's heritage or calorie content.

Some limitations should be noted. We have only investigated the role of emotions and cognitions in the context of paper towels and chocolate. Although we believe that the results can generalize to other product types, past research has shown that post-trial attitude formation is different for low versus high involvement products. Thus, future studies could benefit from examining products that have a higher level of involvement, such as perfumes or amusement parks. Second, sampling only college students limits the ability to generalize to other populations. However, because students are consumers of the product categories examined in this study, they are an appropriate sample. Indeed, Royne (2008) argues that, when the stimuli/product being tested is either used by or targeted to members of the student sample, students are an appropriate subject pool. Last, we were interested in cognitions and emotions that were formed during trial, but our survey was conducted after trial was complete, which may have produced some confounding effects of post-hoc assessments in the results.

In spite of these limitations, our study helps advance our understanding of information processing of product trials. Specifically, the findings in the current study support the recommendation that researchers studying product trial should make it a practice to collect measures of affective as well as cognitive responses to product trial

when trying to predict brand attitudes, and that these responses may play different roles in attitude formation depending on product type and pre-trial advertising information. Marketing practitioners, as well, would benefit by measuring both affective and cognitive responses to a product test when trying to predict brand attitude. Further, when creating free sampling campaigns, marketers need to understand the major role of pleasure for any product, whether hedonic or utilitarian, as well as the different roles of emotions and cognitions, depending on the pre-trial advertising campaign, to make the promotion more effective and precise in persuading consumers.

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