

# The brand attitude formation process of emotional and informational ads

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## Abstract

This study examines brand attitude formation process by ad execution format (emotional vs. informational). For ads with an emotional ad format, heightening positive feelings and reducing negative feelings enhanced thoughts about credibility of the ad, which in turn affected ad attitudes and brand attitudes. For ads with an informational ad format, enhancing evaluative thoughts about the credibility of the ad enhanced positive feelings and reduced negative feelings. These variables in turn affected brand attitudes, both directly, and through the mediational influence of ad. These results have relevant theoretical implications for studying the various processes by which brand attitudes are formed and have managerially relevant implications regarding advertising copy-testing.

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## 1. The brand attitude formation process of emotional and informational ads

Emerging conceptual and empirical evidence has advanced our understanding of factors that affect brand attitudes (Chandy et al., 2001; MacInnis et al., 2002; Meyers-Levy and Malaviya, 1999; Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999). A number of studies have identified cognitive (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Lutz, 1975; Wright, 1972, 1980) and affective predictors of brand attitudes. In this latter stream, considerable progress has been made in understanding the role of emotions and ad evaluations as predictors of brand attitudes (Brown et al., 1998; Derbais, 1995; Kim et al., 1998; Edell and Burke, 1987; Burke and Edell, 1989; Aaker et al., 1986; Batra and Ray, 1986; Holbrook and Batra, 1987). Unfortunately, our understanding of the potentially complex relationships between feelings, beliefs and evaluations in their impact on brand

attitudes is still limited (Kim et al., 1996; Kim et al., 1998).

Moreover, little is known about how variables under advertisers' control, such as the format of the ad, might moderate the process by which brand attitudes are formed. Advertising agencies have long recognized ad execution format (emotional vs. informational) as a useful tool for strategic advertising management (Vaughn, 1980; Chandy et al., 2001; MacInnis et al., 2002). Consistent with past research (e.g., Golden and Johnson, 1983; Goldberg and Gorn, 1987), we define an emotional ad format as an ad execution designed to appeal to the receiver's emotions by using drama, mood, music and other emotion-eliciting strategies. An informational ad format is defined as an ad execution designed to appeal to the rationality of the receiver by using objective information describing a brand's attributes or benefits.

The purpose of this study is to propose and examine different brand attitude formation processes by ad execution format type (emotional vs. informational). In doing so, we adhere to recent calls toward research that examine a multi-path approach to persuasion in which consumers are proposed to respond to advertisements in different ways (Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999). We suggest that the process,

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by which brand attitudes are formed, depends on the nature of the ad to which consumers are exposed. We begin by describing the theoretical constructs that comprise our ideas.

**2. Constructs and hypotheses**

We anticipate that informational vs. emotional ad formats create very different “routes” to persuasion, though each route depends critically on the evocation of a set of common responses. Fig. 1 identifies these constructs and summarizes our ideas about the different routes to persuasion involved. We define each construct used in the models below and then develop the hypotheses reflected in Fig. 1.

*2.1. Constructs*

*2.1.1. Credibility and meaningfulness thoughts (hereafter credibility)*

Advertising research has long examined the role of evaluative responses or judgments of ads as predictors of brand attitudes (MacInnis et al., 2002; Batra and Ray, 1986; Holbrook and Batra, 1987; Edell and Burke, 1987; Homer and Yoon, 1992; MacKenzie et al., 1986; MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989; Stayman and Aaker, 1988). Indeed, a variety of scales of ad response have been developed to characterize consumers’ evaluations of ads (e.g., Schlinger, 1979; Aaker and Norris 1982). Among the evaluations central to consumers’ ad reactions, included are their assessments of the credibility of the ad and the extent to which it is

meaningful or relevant to them. For example, recent work by MacInnis et al. (2002) shows that ads regarded as credible and meaningful are associated with increasing sales, even after controlling for other variables, including other evaluative thoughts.

*2.1.2. Feelings*

Studies have also focused on feelings (also known as emotions) as predictors of ad attitudes (see review by Brown et al. (1998)). Feelings are defined as acute, transitory and specific affective experiences that occur as a result of some experience (Holbrook and O’Shaughnessy, 1987).

*2.1.3. Beliefs and ad attitudes (Aad)*

Many long-standing models of persuasion (e.g., Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Lutz, 1975; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Petty and Wegener, 1993; Meyers-Levy and Malaviya, 1999) hold that persuasion is contingent on a communication’s capacity to alter consumers’ beliefs. Beliefs are defined as the strength with which a consumer associates a brand with a certain attribute or outcome (e.g., how strongly they believe that a product has a whitening ingredient or that it makes teeth 50% whiter than regular toothpaste brands). Notably, although beliefs are clearly linked to persuasion (e.g., Mick, 1992; Smith and Swinyard, 1982; Deighton, 1984), they are not the only predictor of brand attitudes (MacKenzie et al., 1986). Indeed, when involvement in a purchase decision or product category is low, consumers’ brand attitudes may be more affected by their overall attitude toward (or global liking for) the ad than

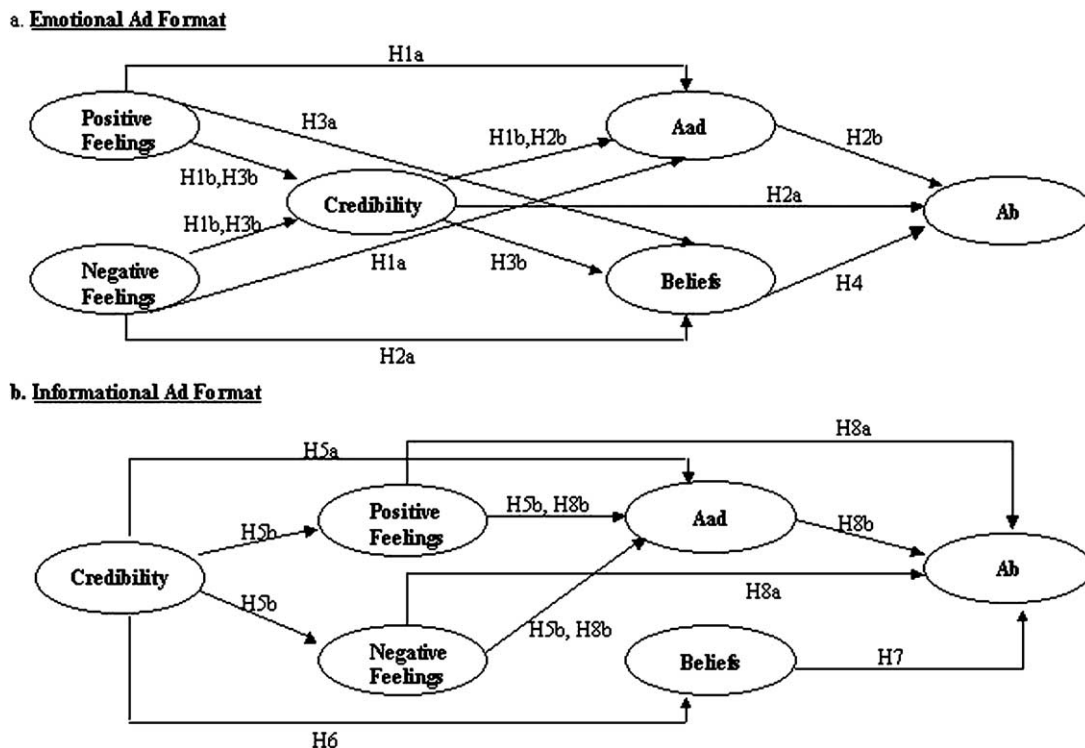


Fig. 1. Hypotheses and structural model.

by beliefs engendered from the communication (e.g., [Batra and Stephens, 1994](#); [MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989](#); [Drodge, 1989](#); [Mitchell and Olson, 1981](#)).

## 2.2. Brand attitude formation process using an emotional Ad format

When the ad execution format is emotional, the primary responses to advertising exposure are likely to be feelings—as the ad execution is designed to appeal to the viewer's emotions. Feelings evoked in response to emotional ads are hypothesized to influence Aad in two ways. First, they may do so directly, through an affective transfer mechanism. Past research is consistent with this proposed effect (e.g., [Janiszewski, 1988](#)). For example, the literature on mood states indicates that mood can bias evaluations and judgments in mood congruent conditions ([Gardner, 1985](#); [Isen, 1989](#)). Second, the impact of feelings on Aad may also be mediated by thoughts about the ad's credibility. Emotional ads may draw the consumer into the ad and allow them to experience vicariously the experiences of the actor ([Batra and Stayman, 1990](#); [MacInnis and Stayman, 1993](#)). To the extent that feelings associated with the actor(s) can be experienced by the viewer, the ads may be seen as more convincing ([Bagozzi and Moore, 1994](#)). Ads regarded as convincing should in turn be better liked. Hence part of the effect of feelings on Aad may be mediated through thoughts about the ad's credibility. Relatedly, prior research suggests that positive feelings induced by mood can create more cognitive flexibility, allowing consumers to draw associations and see things as meaningful that might not have been seen in the absence of such a mood (e.g., [Lee and Sternthal, 1999](#); [Barone et al., 2000](#)). Since meaning of the ad is enhanced by mood-induced cognitive flexibility, we would expect that positive feelings induced by an ad would lead to a view of the ad as meaningful and that responses about meaningfulness would induce more favorable attitudes toward the brand. Thus we propose that:

**H1.** When the ad execution is emotional, feelings influence Aad (a) directly and (b) indirectly through the mediating influence of credibility thoughts.

When the ad execution is emotional, we also expect that positive evaluative thoughts generated about the credibility of the ad will contribute to consumers' attitudes toward the ad. Given that past research has found a strong relationship between ad and brand attitudes under a variety of conditions, we expect that positive evaluative thoughts will affect brand attitudes in part through the mediational influence of Aad ([Brown and Stayman, 1992](#)). Considerable research has shown that attitudes toward ads are more positive for ads regarded as convincing and believable (e.g., [Schlinger, 1979](#); [Plummer, 1971](#); [Aaker and Norris, 1982](#)). However, credibility may also directly affect brand attitudes. Moreover, this direct effect may not operate through beliefs. Specifically, because an emotional ad contains less factual

information and because information is less directly stated, beliefs may be weak and play a less powerful role than Aad in affecting brand attitude. Although beliefs may be weakly established in this emotional format condition, when an emotional ad creates strong feelings and creates favorable thoughts about the ad's credibility and meaningfulness, it creates a sense that the brand is “for them” independent of specific attribute-oriented beliefs. Thus, we expect that:

**H2.** When the ad execution is emotional, thoughts about the ad's credibility influence brand attitudes (a) directly and (b) indirectly through the mediating influence of Aad.

If an ad is regarded as more meaningful and relevant to the self, consumers may form stronger beliefs about the product's ability to deliver its claims. [Edell and Burke \(1987\)](#) and [Burke and Edell \(1989\)](#) found that feelings and ad evaluations influenced beliefs and that feelings influenced beliefs directly and indirectly through ad evaluations. We expect that for ads with an emotional format this same route occurs. Beliefs may be inferred based on the emotional ad content and the associated feelings and evaluations it produces. For example, based on an emotional ad, which shows a daughter talking to her father on the telephone, a consumer may believe that a long-distance phone service helps bring people closer together. Feelings of warmth from the commercial may engender such beliefs. Thus we propose:

**H3.** When the ad execution is emotional, feelings influence beliefs (a) directly and (b) indirectly through the mediational influence of credibility.

**H4.** When the ad execution is emotional, beliefs influence brand attitudes.

## 2.3. Brand attitude formation process using an informational ad format

An informational ad execution is designed to appeal to the rationality of the audience ([MacInnis et al., 2002](#); [Vaughn, 1980](#)). Hence, as [Fig. 1](#) suggests, we expect that the primary response of audience concerns evaluative thoughts regarding the ad's credibility. Credibility thoughts may in turn affect consumers' feeling responses. For example, an ad perceived as credible is less likely to make consumers feel skeptical, irritated or annoyed. Likewise, when the ad execution is informational, consumers should like ads that are convincing and meaningful. Moreover, to the extent that consumers feel less skeptical, irritated, and annoyed, they should like the ad better. Thus, positively valenced credibility thoughts may also affect ad attitudes by reducing the negative feelings consumers have from the ad. Notably, although feelings have typically been modeled as antecedents to ad evaluations, here we propose that credibility evaluations drive feeling responses. Given that informational ads are unlikely to elicit much emotion from their

content directly, it seems reasonable that aroused emotions result from evaluation of the ads, as opposed to the execution. Combined, our reasoning suggests that:

**H5.** When the ad execution is informational, credibility thoughts affect Aad (a) directly and (b) indirectly through their mediational effect on feelings.

Another aspect of evaluative thoughts is that when the ad execution is informational, it should affect beliefs. For example, the more credible the ad execution is, the stronger consumers' beliefs about the brand are likely to be (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989). Since the information provided by beliefs may provide the opportunity for consumers to form relatively strong brand beliefs, beliefs may be an important predictor of brand attitudes (see Lutz, 1975). Thus we propose that:

**H6.** When the ad execution is informational, thoughts about the ad's credibility influence beliefs.

**H7.** When the ad execution is informational, beliefs influence brand attitudes.

As noted above, informational ads can influence feelings by affecting the credibility thoughts consumers have towards ads. These feelings may, in turn, influence how much consumers like the ad. Thus, consumers are unlikely to like ads that make them feel irritable, skeptical, or annoyed. We expect, then, that feelings influence ad attitudes and that they affect brand attitudes through the mediational influence of Aad. Thus we propose that:

**H8.** When the ad execution is informational, feelings influence Ab (a) directly and (b) indirectly through mediational influence of Aad.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Stimulus selection

To experimentally manipulate emotional and informational ad execution format and examine their effects on the brand attitude formation processes noted above, we pretested the informational and emotional ad format of fourteen commercials using forty subjects. All commercials were for a long-distance telephone company. Subjects were asked to view the ads and rate the extent to which they seemed to characterize an emotional vs. informational ad execution format. Several 7-point Likert scaled items were used to measure emotional ad format ('this ad appeals to my emotion', 'this ad creates a mood') and informational ad format ('this ad appeals to my rationality', 'this ad provides a lot of information'). One ad typified the emotional ad format (mean emotionality score of 5.07) and was regarded as relatively weak on informationality (mean informationality score of 2.45). This commercial shows a daughter

talking to her father over the phone about how much she misses him.

None of the pretested ads typified an informational ad execution. To create an informational ad execution, we replaced the audio of the emotional ad with a voice-over, which stated attribute information about the long-distance company (e.g., operation service, quality of sound, and etc.). The visual aspects of the ad (with the girl talking to her father over the phone) were unchanged.

Before manipulating the informational ad format condition, we reviewed informational type of the AT and T ads. Typical type of the informational ad was to explain excellent operation service, sound quality, 24 h service and etc. with a talking scene. Therefore, we expected that we can create typical type of informational ad by replacing audio of the emotional ad.

Moreover, keeping the visual aspects of both ads constant across both ad execution conditions allowed us to control for potentially confounding factors that might be involved with the use of totally different ads. Ads in both conditions began with the same introductory song, followed by the narration (conversation of girl with her father; announcer's statement of brand benefits). Both ended with the logo and announcement of the company name. The visuals, announcer, music, logo, ad sequence and ad length are thus identical in the two ads.

An additional pretest with forty consumers was conducted to assess the success of the informational ad execution manipulation. The mean emotionality and informationality scores of this new ad were 2.98 (emotionality score of original emotional ad: 5.07) and 4.23 (informationality score of original ad: 2.45). We found significant mean differences between emotional and informational ad with respect to emotionality and informationality scores ( $p < .001$ ).

Because we are interested in the processes by which brand attitudes are *formed* and because we wished to create homogeneity across consumers in the nature of the exposure and processing task, we wanted to expose consumers to a novel ad for a novel brand. For both the informational and emotional commercials, the original telephone company's logo and signature were removed and were replaced by a novel company name and logo. The introductory song was also replaced with new music, as the original song is likely to have cued the company name. As described below, our analyses included only subjects who reported unfamiliarity with the commercial and had no prior association of it with the original commercial.

#### 3.2. Subjects, design and procedures

Two hundred two students were randomly assigned to either the informational or emotional ad execution condition. In each exposure setting, subjects watched the designated commercial twice with a 10-s lag between exposures. Questionnaires were administered immediately following the second exposure and measures of Ab and Aad



were collected. Consumers subsequently indicated their feelings, evaluations of the ad, and beliefs about brand attributes. Since some customers may have been familiar with the commercial even with these changes, we checked familiarity of the ad using five-point scale (not familiar at all–very familiar) at the end of the study. We retained one hundred ninety subjects who indicated 1 or 2 on the familiarity scale in subsequent analyses.

#### 4. Measures

Aad and Ab were each measured by four items (like–dislike, positive–negative, good–bad, and favorable–unfavorable) designed to assess consumers' attitudes toward the brand and commercial, respectively. Each item was scored on a seven-point semantic differential scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .96$  and  $.93$ , respectively).

Feelings were assessed by a twenty-one item-scale. Subjects were told, "We are interested in your reactions to the ad, not how you describe it. Did this commercial make you feel ...?" Responses to the twenty-one items were scored on a seven-point scale (not at all–very much). Scale items were derived from cognitive response data collected in a pilot study and feelings generated from Edell and Burke's (1987) feeling scales. Specifically, the items were designed to represent Edell and Burke's upbeat (e.g., delighted, elated, and stimulated), negative (e.g., sad, sorrowful, distressed, irritated, angry, annoyed, offended, and depressed), and warm (e.g., sentimental, affectionate, warmhearted, touched, and moved) feelings factors.

Subjects were also asked to indicate their evaluations of the ad. Twenty items were designed to indicate ad evaluations. Subjects were told, "Now we are interested in your evaluations or judgments about the ads, not just your feelings from the ad." Subjects indicated on seven-point agreement scales the extent to which they agreed that the adjective characterized the commercial. Items included Edell and Burke's (1987) evaluation (e.g., realistic, convincing, meaningful, valuable, and informative), activity (e.g., exciting, energetic, amusing, playful, unique, and imaginative), and gentleness (e.g., soothing, tender, lovely, and gentle) factors.

Exploratory factor analysis (principal component analysis) of feelings and evaluations revealed three factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The first factor was comprised of positive emotions and emotion like evaluations that load on Edell and Burke's activity and gentleness scales (e.g., soothing and amusing). The second represented negative emotions and negative emotion-like evaluations (e.g., sad, sorrowful, distressed, irritated, angry, annoyed, offended, and depressed). The factors are subsequently labeled positive feelings and negative feelings. Notably, sad and sorrowful feelings loaded on the positive feelings factor. We return to this issue subsequently. The last factor is indicated by a set of items reflecting Edell and Burke's evaluation

judgment scale. Notably, these items are more "cognitive" in nature, as they reflect judgment of the ad's credibility and relevance (e.g., believable, realistic, valuable, and informative). As such, we regard them as indicators of our "credibility" construct.

Belief strength (the  $b_i$  factor) was also assessed. Consumers' perceptions that the brand possessed five brand-relevant attributes were measured on a 7-point scale ranging from "extremely unlikely" to "extremely likely" ( $b_i$ ). Thus, subjects rated the extent to which the advertised phone service (1) offered high quality service, (2) had 24-h operator service, (3) entailed considerable coverage across service areas, (4) offered a discount price, and (5) offered refunds for wrong calls. Evaluations of salient attributes of the advertised brand (the  $e_i$  factor) were also assessed via 7-point scales ranging from "extremely good" to "extremely bad" (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). The belief strength indicators represented a formative scale and the items were summed to form a composite index.

#### 5. Analysis and results

##### 5.1. Manipulation check

As might be expected from the manipulation of ad execution format, an analysis of mean differences revealed that consumers exposed to the emotional ad execution had significantly more positive feelings ( $X = 4.82$ ) than consumers exposed to the informational ad execution ( $X = 3.12$ ;  $t = 6.32$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Moreover, consumers had significantly stronger beliefs when exposed to the informational ad ( $X = 98.45$ ) vs. the emotional ad execution ( $X = 72.84$ ,  $t = 4.08$ ,  $p < .05$ ). These were the only variables for which significant differences across the two experimental groups were observed. Tests for homogeneity of variance showed that the variances of each variable across the two ad conditions did not differ.

##### 5.2. Measure validation

The model in Fig. 1 was analyzed by a maximum likelihood estimation procedure using LISREL 8 (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1996). Because retaining each item as a reflective indicator of its constructs would result in identification problem, we used an adaptation of Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach to structural equation modeling.

First, we estimated a confirmatory measurement or factor analytic model (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1996), including constructs of positive feelings, negative feelings, credibility, and beliefs. Summary statistics of confirmatory factor analyses are summarized in Table 1.

Second, we estimated the overall structural model. Because retaining each item as a reflective indicator would result in identification problems, we combined items into a

Table 1  
Standardized LISREL estimates

Emotional ad format	Coefficient	t-value	Informational ad format	Coefficient	t-value
$\gamma_{11}$ (PF→Credibility)	.35	2.80*	$\gamma_{11}$ (Credibility→PF)	.43	3.51**
$\gamma_{12}$ (NF→Credibility)	-.27	-2.18***	$\gamma_{21}$ (Credibility→NF)	-.40	3.18**
$\gamma_{21}$ (PF→Beliefs)	.07	.45	$\gamma_{31}$ (Credibility→Beliefs)	.10	.96
$\gamma_{22}$ (NF→Beliefs)	.09	.69	$\gamma_{41}$ (Credibility→Aad)	.02	.06
$\gamma_{31}$ (PF→Aad)	.14	1.22	$\beta_{41}$ (PF→Aad)	.49	3.66**
$\gamma_{32}$ (NF→Aad)	-.26	-2.12***	$\beta_{42}$ (NF→Aad)	-.29	-2.41*
$\beta_{21}$ (Credibility→Beliefs)	.37	2.67*	$\beta_{51}$ (PF→Ab)	.25	2.06***
$\beta_{31}$ (Credibility→Aad)	.35	2.45*	$\beta_{52}$ (NF→Ab)	-.13	-1.25
$\beta_{41}$ (Credibility→Ab)	.34	3.45*	$\beta_{53}$ (Beliefs→Aad)	.25	2.25*
$\beta_{42}$ (Beliefs→Ab)	.23	2.23	$\beta_{54}$ (Aad→Ab)	.32	2.96*
$\beta_{43}$ (Aad→Ab)	.30	3.06*			
$\phi_{12}$ (PF↔NF)	.08	-.58			

$\chi^2$ (df=46)=35.92, $p$ =.201	$\chi^2$ (df=48)=64.72, $p$ =.084
GFI=.950	GFI=.916
AGFI=.926	AGFI=.863
RMSR=.047	RMSR=.056
CFI=.972	CFI=.952
PNFI=.646	PNFI=.665

PF=positive feeling.  
 NF=negative feeling.  
 \*  $p < .01$ .  
 \*\*  $p < .001$ .  
 \*\*\*  $p < .05$ .

single indicator measure (see MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) or the advantages of a single indicator). Constructs were not assumed to be perfectly indicated. The measurement error terms were fixed at one minus the square root of their reliability coefficients (Hayduk, 1987). We tested models in Fig. 1 by ad execution conditions.

Overall fits of the models for the emotional ad execution ( $\chi^2$  (46)=35.92,  $p < .201$ ; GFI=.950; AGFI=.926; RMSR=.047; CFI=.972; PNFI=.646) and model for informational ad execution ( $\chi^2$  (48)=64.72,  $p < .084$ ; GFI=.916; AGFI=.863; RMSR=.056; CFI=.952; PNFI=.665) were acceptable. The Q Plot, the low number of high normalized residuals (i.e., only two exceed 2.0), the  $t$ -tests, and range of values (e. g., no negative variances) suggest that each model is acceptable. Thus the hypothesized model appears to fit the data. Structural equation model estimates are summarized in Table 2.

5.3. Test of hypotheses

We tested our hypotheses using structural equations methodology by ad execution condition. Results are summarized in Fig. 2.

5.3.1. Emotional ad execution condition

Consistent with H1b both positive feelings ( $\gamma_{11}$ =.35,  $p < .01$ ) and negative feelings ( $\gamma_{12}$ =-.27,  $p < .05$ ) significantly affect credibility. Credibility, in turn, influences Aad ( $\beta_{31}$ =.35,  $p < .05$ ). Thus H1b is supported. Negative feelings also influence Aad directly ( $\gamma_{32}$ =-.26,  $p < .05$ ). However, positive feelings have no direct effects on Aad

( $\gamma_{31}$ =.14,  $p$ =ns). Thus, the results support H1a only for negative feelings.

Consistent with H2a and H2b, credibility thoughts significantly affected Aad ( $\beta_{31}$ =.35,  $p < .01$ ) and Ab ( $\beta_{41}$ =.34,  $p < .01$ ). Aad also significantly affected Ab ( $\beta_{43}$ =.30,  $p < .05$ ). Consistent with H3a, credibility thoughts have a significant positive effect on beliefs ( $\beta_{21}$ =.37,  $p < .05$ ). However, no significant effects of positive or negative feelings on beliefs ( $\gamma_{21}$ =.07,  $p$ =ns;  $\gamma_{31}$ =.15,  $p$ =ns) emerged. Thus, feelings seem to influence beliefs only through the mediational effect of credibility. Beliefs significantly influence brand attitudes ( $\beta_{42}$ =.23,  $p < .05$ ), supporting H4.

Table 2  
Summary results of confirmatory factor analyses

Constructs	No. of items	Reliability (variance extracted estimate)	Lowest t-value (average of $\lambda$ )
Positive feelings	14	.88 (.588)	3.64 (.69)
Negative feelings	7	.92 (.641)	4.01 (.76)
Credibility thoughts	6	.89 (.639)	4.23 (.74)
Beliefs	1		

Phi-values (standard error of the estimates)

	1	2	3	4
1. Positive feelings	–			
2. Negative feelings	-.253 (.060)	–		
3. Credibility thoughts	-.521 (.048)	-.239 (.061)	–	
4. Beliefs	-.276 (.077)	-.234 (.079)	.379 (.075)	–

Overall fit indices:  $\chi^2$  (345)=480.42 ( $p < .000$ ).  
 Comparative fit index=.952.

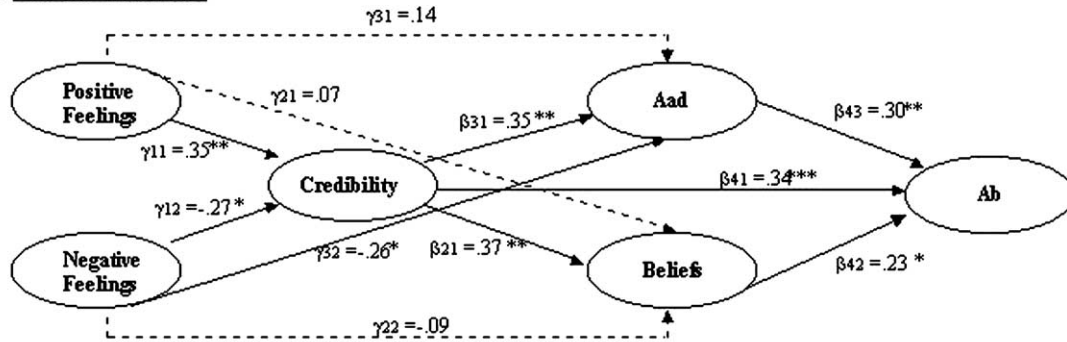
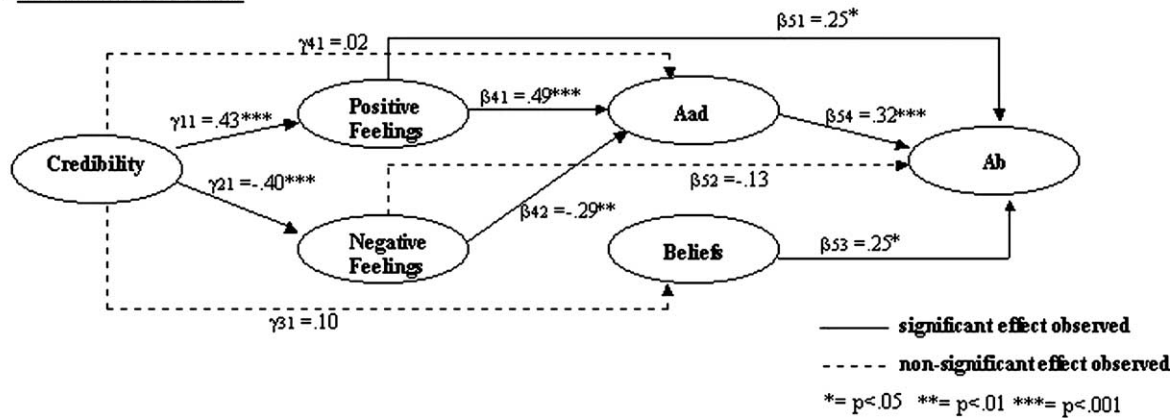
a. **Emotional Ad Format**b. **Informational Ad Format**

Fig. 2. LISREL results: standardized estimate.

5.3.2. *Informational ad execution condition*

H5 states that Aad is influenced by credibility thoughts both directly and indirectly through the mediating influence of feelings. The results support the mediational effect (H5b). Specifically, credibility influenced both positive feelings ( $\gamma_{11} = .43$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and negative feelings ( $\gamma_{21} = -.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Moreover, both positive and negative feelings, in turn, had significant effects on Aad ( $\beta_{41} = .49$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\beta_{42} = -.29$ ,  $p < .01$ , respectively). However, there is no evidence for a direct effect of credibility on Aad ( $\gamma_{41} = .02$ ,  $p = ns$ ).

H6 states that credibility thoughts influence beliefs. The effect of credibility thoughts on beliefs is not significant ( $\gamma_{31} = .10$ ,  $p = ns$ ). Hence, H6 is rejected. The effect of beliefs on brand attitudes is significant ( $\beta_{53} = .25$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and thus H7 is supported. These results were particularly interesting because beliefs were formed regardless of ad evaluations on credibility. In other words, the credibility influenced brand attitude through emotional routes (i.e., feelings and Aad). These results suggest message itself and message execution style are two independent factors in ad effects.

H8a and H8b state that feelings influence brand attitudes both directly and indirectly through the mediating influence of Aad. The results support these hypotheses. Consistent with H8a, positive feelings have a direct effect on Ab ( $\beta_{51} = .23$ ,  $p < .05$ ), however negative feelings did not have a direct effect on Ab ( $\beta_{52} = -.13$ ,  $p = ns$ ). Positive feelings

( $\beta_{41} = .49$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and negative feelings ( $\beta_{42} = -.27$ ,  $p < .01$ ) also affect Aad and Aad, in turn, affects Ab ( $\beta_{54} = .32$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These results are consistent with H8b, suggesting that beyond their direct effects, positive and negative feelings also affect brand attitudes indirectly through their mediating influence on Aad.

5.4. *Effects of discrete negative feelings on Aad and Ab*

The ad used to represent the emotional ad execution condition shows a daughter talking on the phone to her father, telling him how much she misses him. This commercial may arouse feelings of sadness or sorrow. These items have typically been categorized as negative feelings in the literature. However, these negative feelings may lead the viewers of this commercial to form favorable ad and brand attitudes because they are relevant to the advertising message. To test this probable positive effect of feelings of sadness and sorrow on Aad and Ab, simple regression analyses were conducted by advertising execution condition. As expected, Aad and Ab are positively influenced by sad (Aad:  $\beta = .38$ ,  $p < .01$  and Ab:  $\beta = .32$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and sorrowful feelings (Aad:  $\beta = .43$ ,  $p < .01$  and Ab:  $\beta = .39$ ,  $p < .01$ ) in the emotional commercial. On the other hand, the same items negatively influenced Aad (sad:  $\beta = -.57$ ,  $p < .01$  and sorrowful:  $\beta = -.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Ab (sad:  $\beta = -.45$ ,  $p < .01$  and sorrowful:  $\beta = -.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ) in the informational commercial. These results indicate that the effects of negative feelings on Aad

and Ab can be positive when these negative feelings from the ad are relevant to the commercial's goals. Or the sad and sorrowful may provide viewers warmth feelings in this context.

### 5.5. Comparison of fits by ad execution condition

Because our idea is that ad execution format moderates the brand attitude formation process, we ran two separate models—one for the emotional ad execution and one for the informational ad execution, with paths corresponding to those shown in Fig. 1. For each execution, we tested the paths shown in Fig. 1a and b. That is, we tested the extent to which the data from the emotional ad execution condition fit the brand attitude formation process specified in Fig. 1a and b. We also tested the extent to which the data from the informational execution condition fit the brand attitude formation process specified in Fig. 1a and b. When we conducted the test, we included only significant paths in Fig. 2.

Overall fit for emotional ad execution model with the data from the emotional ad execution ( $\chi^2(46)=42.04$ ,  $p=162$ ; GFI=.952; AGFI=.930) is better than with the data from the informational ad execution condition ( $\chi^2(49)=81.82$ ,  $p=.030$ ; GFI=.868; AGFI=.824). When the data from informational ad execution condition was applied to emotional ad execution model, the path from credibility to beliefs becomes insignificant. Also, overall fit for informational ad execution model with the data from the informational ad execution ( $\chi^2(50)=65.32$ ,  $p=.088$ ; GFI=.920; AGFI=.878) is better than with the data from the emotional ad execution condition ( $\chi^2(50)=62.84$ ,  $p=.072$ ; GFI=.878; AGFI=.805). When the data from informational ad execution condition was applied to emotional ad execution model, the path from negative feelings to Aad becomes insignificant. These results indicate that we need to run two separate models by ad execution conditions.

## 6. Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that the brand attitude formation process depends on whether ads use an emotional or information executional format. When the commercial uses an emotional format, brand attitudes are apparently driven through feeling responses. Positive feelings enhance evaluations of the ad's credibility, while most negative feelings result in negative evaluations of the ad and brand. Interestingly, however, some negative feelings, which appear relevant to the communication, exhibit a positive influence on ad evaluations. Because the arousal of positive feelings and appropriate negative feeling makes the ad more appealing, those feelings positively influence ad attitudes through the mediational effect of evaluative thoughts. Negative feelings unrelated to the message, however, exert a direct negative effect on ad attitudes. Apparently some

types of cues in ads are not mediated through an evaluative system, but are direct in their effect. Aad, in turn, strongly predicts brand attitudes. While attitudes are not belief-based, they do seem to be directly affected by evaluative aspects of the ad that are not mediated through Aad.

When the ad execution is informational, the creation of positive brand attitudes appears to lie in creating favorable evaluative thoughts and forming strong beliefs. Interestingly, while each influences brand attitudes, favorable evaluative thoughts do not influence brand attitudes through the mediational influence of beliefs. Aad regarded as meaningful and credible also produce more positive and fewer negative feelings. Such ads also influence ad attitudes through the mediational influence of feelings. Moreover, Aad mediates the effect of feelings on brand attitudes. Interestingly, the brand attitude formation process for ads using informational appeals does not appear to represent the viewer as a purely rational and emotionless information processor. While such ads are designed to appeal initially to the viewer's rationality and while brand attitudes are affected by beliefs, feelings also play a dominant role in the brand attitude formation process. Likewise, the brand attitude formation process for ads using an emotional appeal does not appear to be purely affect-driven. More cognitive-driven outcomes like evaluative thoughts play an important role in the ad effectiveness of emotional appeals, despite these ads' initial appeals to the viewer's emotions.

If these results are generalizable, a key managerial take-away is that if the ad execution is emotional, it is critical that it be exceptionally emotionally evocative, as responses later in the ad persuasion process are contingent on the nature and level of emotional responses generated. If, on the other hand, the execution is designed to be informational, it is critical that the ad be regarded as credible and meaningful. From a pretesting standpoint then, our research identifies that different criteria are primary to ad pretesting, depending on whether the ad is emotional or informational.

Our results also suggest that while certain variables may be critical assessment tools, one should not assume that feeling ads are devoid of cognitive influences on persuasion or vice versa. Feelings- and credibility-related responses were related to Aad and Ab regardless of whether the ad was emotional or informational. Hence, while certain variables may be critical to diagnosing the likely success of emotional and informational ads, success of both ad format types is contingent on providing favorable feelings and evaluations of the ad as credible.

### 6.1. Limitations and future research directions

Although this research had some control over ad-related execution variables, generalizations from this study are limited given the single ad, single product category used in the study. Exposure is also artificial as subjects were instructed to watch ads as opposed to having ads placed in a normal exposure context. Moreover, the emotional vs.



informational ad execution manipulation, though successful, is relatively weak since the latter ad contained the same images as the former. Because we artificially changed emotional ad to informational ad by replacing audio with voice-over, potential interactivity of message and visual may influence brand attitude formation process in case of informational ad condition. Another important limitation of this research involves the regression modeling methodology, which cannot unambiguously assess causality.

On the other hand, the findings of this study suggest several useful research directions. First, this study clearly shows different brand attitude formation processes, depending on the ad execution condition. Second, while prior research has suggested that the brand attitude formation process is contingent on antecedent consumer states such as consumers' motivation, ability and opportunity to process brand information in an ad, the potentially interactive role of these antecedent consumer states with ad execution needs to be investigated. For example, when consumers' motivation, ability, and opportunity to process brand information are high, evaluative thoughts and beliefs may play a more dominant role than when such antecedent states are low. Thus, even when the ad execution is emotional, beliefs may directly affect brand attitudes.

The study's findings coupled with the above issues suggest that much remains to be known about the role of managerially relevant advertising strategy and decision variables on brand attitude formation processes and the role of negative feelings responses as elements of these processes.

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