

How do creative ads shake up the way we think?

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Innovative ads can help creative consumers break away from their existing thought patterns, according to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*. These creative stimuli can affect the way consumers process information about different products.

"Creative marketing [stimuli](#) are pervasive in the [marketplace](#) as marketers and advertisers scramble to break through the clutter to attract consumers' attention and win their approval," write authors Xiaojing Yang (University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee), Torsten Ringberg (Copenhagen Business School), Huifang Mao (University of Central Florida), and Laura A. Peracchio (University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee).

The authors found that exposure to creative messages, designs, or brand logos induced consumers to think more creatively, which in turn affected the way they processed unrelated ads. They looked at the way consumers with a creative mindset are persuaded by advertising claims that operate at different levels—abstract vs. concrete. For example, abstract ads for a tablet computer could focus on its convenience and elegance, whereas concrete ads could elaborate on features such as the touch capability or the GPS. Generally, people who tend to think at an abstract level respond better to abstract claims, and vice versa.

In their experiments, the authors found that creative stimuli reversed the usual pattern of persuasion. "Respondents who viewed three creative ads first were more persuaded by ad claims portrayed in a way that was incompatible with their own thinking," the authors write. In other words,

abstract thinkers found concrete ad claims more appealing, and vice versa.

"The findings of this research accentuate the need to reconsider some of our existing marketing practices," the authors write. "Though it still makes sense to target consumers segments with ad campaigns that tap into their way of thinking, marketers should be aware that this practice is most effective for consumers with a less creative mindset. To target those [consumers](#) with a creative mindset, marketers might actually augment their [advertising](#) effectiveness if their ad messages involve some kind of creative departure from the segment's common way of thinking."

More information: Xiaojing Yang, Torsten Ringberg, Huifang Mao, and Laura A. Peracchio. "The Construal (In)compatibility Effect: The Moderating Role of a Creative Mindset." *Journal of Consumer Research*: December 2011 (published online April 6, 2011). Further information: ejcr.org

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