

Overdoing it: Multiple perspectives confuse consumers

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Television commercials for luxury vehicles pack a lot in their 30-second running times: the camera offers quick shots of the soft leather upholstery, the shiny colors, the state-of-the-art entertainment system, and the four-wheel drive. But these multiple angles and shifting perspectives have a negative impact on consumer evaluation of products, according to a new study from a Tel Aviv University researcher.

TAU's Dr. Yael Steinhart and her collaborators Yuwei Jiang of Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Rashmi Adaval of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and Robert S. Wyer Jr. of Chinese University of Hong Kong say that multiple angles and perspectives in

commercials may actually prevent consumers from forming positive associations about the products. The researchers found this to be particularly true for consumers who imagine using the products themselves in the course of evaluating them, according to the study to be published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

"We have shown through four different studies that the perspective shift has a negative effect when consumers conjure personal narratives about the advertised product," said Dr. Steinhart. "On the other hand, the effect of perspective shift may be positive if consumers are only intent on collecting information about the advertised product."

Keeping It Simple

Over a thousand people took part in four separate studies conducted in Hong Kong and the US. Using questionnaires, an eye-tracking system, and a memory-based cognitive study, the researchers measured distinct responses to ads featuring pictures from both similar and multiple angles. They then analyzed the impact of these responses on product evaluation.

In one study, participants were asked to view an ad for a resort hotel and to form a story about their own experience at the resort. There were two type of ads – each consisting of four photos. In one type of ads the images were from the same perspective, and in the other the images were from multiple angles. Participants who viewed the photos from different perspectives expressed more difficulty in conjuring a narrative and were also more likely to form a negative impression of the resort.

"There are practical implications for this research," said Dr. Steinhart. "Marketers want to provide as much information as possible about a product, but we have shown that the default strategy of consumers is to construct a personal narratives when forming their evaluation, and too

much information from multiple perspectives may backfire."

Stay Focused

"The best thing a company can do is allow the consumer to imagine himself in a scene with the product, without providing too much distracting stimuli – or information from too many perspectives," Dr. Steinhart advised." The consumer finds it too difficult to move from one perspective to another, remembers less about the product and – ultimately – likes the product less."

Dr. Steinhart, an expert on consumer psychology, is currently working on various research projects, such as the effect of "brand arrogance," possible biases in financial decisions, and the tendency of early adopters to "share" and "scare" others about the innovations they adopt.

Provided by Tel Aviv University

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