

Effective Strategies to Utilize Cross-Sexual Advertising Models: Focus on the Types of Advertising Appeal and Characteristics of Models

Seung Yeob Yu¹ and Eun Hee Kim^{2*}

¹Department of Advertising and Public Relations, Namseoul University, Korea; ysyueb@hanmail.net

²Department of Advertising and Public Relations and Journalism, Mokwon University, Korea; eunhee0103@empas.com

Abstract

The present study attempts to propose effective strategies in producing advertisements using cross advertising models. To that purpose, we first identified effective appeal strategies for the gender-specific products and also the characteristics of cross models that influence the effect of advertisements. First, it was found that the advertising attitude was found higher in the ads of men's shaving razors when the models were men than women. A similar result was found in the advertisements of lipsticks: the ad attitude was higher with female models than male ones. Second, it was found that emotional messages were more effective than rational ones in the promotion of gender-specific goods. Third, in the ads using cross-gender models, rational message appeal was more effective than emotional message appeal. Lastly, model characteristics of attractiveness, credibility and familiarity were found exerting a positive effect on the advertising attitude.

Keywords: Cross-Sexual Advertising, Gender-Specific Goods, Message Appeal, Model Characteristics

1. Introduction

What strategies can maximize the effect of an advertisement? How can we effectively deliver the features of a product? Everyone in the advertising field should keep asking these questions to himself or herself. In the world of advertisements, advertisers try a variety of strategies to attract consumers' attention and to maximize the effect of advertisements. One of these might be cross-sexual marketing, which presents a male model for a female product or a female model for a male product. These days, sexy and attractive male models often appear in the advertisements for a female product and also vice versa. This cross-gender marketing has succeeded in appealing to consumers and stimulating their emotions.

Advertising models are closely related with expression strategies. Some advertisements may not call for models depending on their expression types, but it is also true

that well selected models can well enhance the creative effect of the advertisements. Also, the models who succeeded in delivering the product identity can also symbolize that product¹. Consumers, when exposed to a certain advertisement, are faced with a product, models and message appeal types. They form an advertisement using either a single stimulus or a combination of various stimuli presented in the advertisement. To the purpose of investigating the effect of cross-sexual models, the present study intends to identify consumers' advertisement attitude in the interactional relationships of the expressions. The detailed research questions are as follows. First, consumers' advertisement attitudes for the products with obvious sex identity are compared when the models are in the same or cross sex. Second, their advertisement attitudes are compared when the presented message appeals are rational or emotional.

*Author for correspondence

Many everyday products are conceived either as male or female products by consumers². As mentioned above, however, we have witnessed an interesting cross-sexual phenomenon: male advertising models have recently appeared in typical female products and also sex-appealing female models in typical male products. In this context, one of the purposes of the current research is to see if there is any significant difference in the types of message appeal in these cross-sexual ads. Fourth, another question under discussion is what model characteristics influence consumers' advertisement attitude in these cross-sexual ads. The findings of this study are expected to present practical suggestions to the advertisement producers and also academic and theoretical clues to the utilization of cross-sexual models.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

2.1 Advertising Model Effect and the Match-Up Hypothesis

An advertising model is a communication method that is expected to present a particular image of a product, attract consumers' attention, enhance their interest in the brand and eventually lead them to purchase it³. Thus, the roles of an advertising model include support and guarantee the product as well as deliver the information on it. The effect of advertisements often depends on appearing models and this is called the effect of advertising models. Consumers may decide on a product with their sympathy with the product information, but often do so when they feel familiar or favorable with the models appearing in the advertisements of a product⁴. Therefore, selection of a model plays a very important role in maximizing the advertising effect.

Kanungo and Pang⁵ argued that automobiles, which carry masculine images, enjoy more effective advertising effect with male models and sofas carrying feminine images with female models. Such a result supports the match-up hypothesis in that the models and the products should match up in images. Many previous researchers have found the same line of results⁶⁻⁸. Doh and Hwang⁹ also claimed that the sexual images and the gender of models are closely related and the positive effects on the advertisements and the brands are found when they are in the same sex.

However, the recently rising cross-sexual advertising models call for a different perspective and investigation of the match-up hypothesis. Leigh, Rethans and Whitney¹⁰ found that the same sex identity of the role of a model and the subjects exerted a positive effect on the advertisements. Morrison and Shaffer¹¹, on the contrary, found a different result in the advertising effect depending on the sex identity products and models. To the subjects with traditional sex identity, traditional advertisements of products with the same sex identity as models are more effective, while to the nontraditional subjects, those of the products presenting models with an opposite sex identity were more effective. To sum up, an advertisement consists of a variety of elements and the advertising effect depends on the match-up and agreement conditions of these elements. Thus, we have set up the following hypotheses in order to identify consumers' advertising attitude depending on the gender conditions of the products, the models and message appeal types.

Hypothesis 1: There will be an interactive effect of the sex identity of a product and the models on consumers' advertising attitude: match-up or cross-sexual.

2.2 Message Appeal Types

Till and Busler⁸ suggested that the match-up hypothesis could apply to other characteristics than physical ones. For example, such questions as who delivers the advertising message and what kind of message is used can be important factors in the advertising effect. The question of what message is delivered can be paraphrased as what type of message appeal is utilized.

In general, message appeal can be classified into rational and emotional messages. The former involves logical process of information and emphasizes the merits of a product to draw positive advertising and purchasing attitude¹². The emotional message appeal, on the other hand, utilizes various atmosphere and images to appeal to consumers' emotion rather than persuade them by using reasonable information¹³. Many researches have been performed as to advertising models and message appeal types. The current research differs from previous ones in that it attempts to identify the correlation between the sex identity of models and consumers' attitude depending on the message appeal types. The following hypotheses were established for investigation.

Hypothesis 2: There will be interactive relationship between the sex of models and message appeal types on the advertising effect.

Hypothesis 3: There will be significant difference in the advertising effect depending on message appeal types in cross-sexual advertisements.

The same advertisement can exhibit different influencing power depending on who appears in it as a model¹⁴. Different characteristics of models may lead to different composing elements of an advertisement. Varying advertising effect depending on the characteristics of models has been much touched in many previous researches. For example, a model with the image of having honesty has a positive influence in persuading consumers by the conceived reliability¹⁵.

The feature of credibility is closely related with consumers' cognitive evaluation of utility products and attractiveness, in turn, plays a key role in their emotional evaluation of pleasure products¹⁶. The expertise comprising credibility refers to a model's knowledge ability and capacity to present a rational argument¹⁷. And the credibility in a model was found to have significant effect on consumers' product attitude and their purchase intentions as well as their advertising attitude. The advertising effect may increase when a model is attractive, credible, and successful or when customers find something common and similar with the model¹⁸. The effect of similarity was identified in¹⁹ experiment: it exerts positive effect on advertising and product attitude, as the acceptance level of messages gets higher with their sympathy with the model.

These previous researches on the advertising effect have reported positive influence of the characteristics of models. As mentioned above, the comprising elements of advertising models vary from different researches and, thus, the advertising effect might vary depending on research structures. That is perhaps because the advertising effect of the same message should depend on the characteristics of models, consumers and situational factors. Thus, the present study set up the following hypothesis in order to identify which one of the model characteristics-credibility, attractiveness, similarity and familiarity-affects advertising attitude in the cross-sexual condition.

Hypothesis 4: The characteristics of cross-sexual advertising models will have a significant effect on consumers' advertising attitude.

3. Method

3.1 Subject of Study

The advertising effect of cross-sexual models under discussion proceeded with a preliminary survey. First, an in-depth interview with 5 experts was conducted in order to select the products and models. The selected products were shaving razors and lipsticks that represent masculine and feminine images. Second, two representative models were selected who marked similar degree of preference in the evaluation of advertising models in the first half of 2013: Mr. Bin Won (19.76%) and Ms. Jihyun Jun (19.67%).

3.2 Experiment Design and Subjects

The experimental design was a 2×2×2 factorial experiments: sex identity (male product, shaver/female product, lipstick) × advertising models (male, Bin Won/female, Jihyun Jun) × message types (rational appeal/ emotional appeal). 42 subjects were randomly assigned to one of the 8 groups, which total 336 people. Out of these subjects, 321 responses were analyzed, excluding 15 containing improper responses.

3.3 Experiment Stimuli (8 Printed Advertisements)

Following Mitchell²⁰, the research used the printed advertisements to which the subjects have never been exposed as the experimental stimuli in order to draw natural responses from the subjects. To that purpose, we asked a group of experts to manufacture brand-new advertisements and messages. The experimental stimuli were 8 printed colorful advertisements made by advertising agencies.

Second, the brand names were also created for the shaver and the lipstick. A group of 5 experts selected the name "Edeka", which carries a neutral image, out of 5 candidates. Third, brand-new advertising messages were also created that have never been used in other advertisements. Professional copywriters were asked to produce rational and emotional messages for the products. Fourth, to exclude the possibility of the influencing power of other extraneous variables, the advertisements were designed

with the same size, font and format: the same size and location of a model, messages, and brand names.

3.4 Measurement Variables and Operational Definition

3.4.1 Sex Identity of the Products

A female product carries a feminine image and is used by ladies and a male product is defined as one carrying a masculine image and used by men.

3.4.2 The Sex Identity Condition

The sex identity condition is based on whether the sex identity of a product and a model is the same. Thus, the match-up condition refers to a case where the two are in the same sex and the cross-sexual condition with different sex identity.

3.4.3 Message Appeal Types

Message appeal is a method of communication that is expected to persuade consumers, evoke their motives and emotions and lead them in a direction advertisers want. The two messages types were presented: rational and emotional. Rational messages present objective information of a product, while emotional ones express the emotional feeling obtained from using it.

3.4.4 Characteristics of Advertising Models

The characteristics of advertising models were defined as consumers' perception of the models that perform the role of attracting their attention and providing information of the products. To measure these features, a slightly revised version of the scales used in Lee and Chung²¹ and Ohanian²². The reliability test of the selected 17 items found the value of Cronbach's α .900.

3.4.5 Advertisement Attitude

The advertising attitude refers to a consumer's feeling when faced with a particular advertisement. To measure the attitude, a set of 6 items adopted in Lee²³ was used: the advertisement meets my eyes, the advertisement attracts interest, the advertisement is understandable,

the advertisement is enjoyable, the advertisement is interesting, and the advertisement is joyful. The value of Cronbach α was obtained at .834 in the reliability test of these items. Both the model characteristics and the advertising attitude were measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

3.5 Data Analysis

To identify the advertising effect of cross-sexual models, the program of SPSS Windows 18.0 version was employed. First, ANOVA analysis was used to identify if there is any significant interactive relationship between the product identity, the gender of models and message appeal types. Second, a t-test was conducted to see if message appeal types affect advertising attitude in the condition of cross-sexual models. Third, a Factor analysis and a Regression analysis were used to see if model characteristics influence advertising attitude in the condition of cross-sexual models. Fourth, Cronbach's α coefficient was obtained to verify the internal consistency of the scales used in this study.

4. Data Analysis

The current research investigates the use of models in gender-specific products and aims to identify the advertising attitude in the conditions of match-up and cross-sexual models (Hypothesis 1). The effect of the sex of models and message appeal types were also under discussion (Hypothesis 2). A 3-Way ANOVA analysis was conducted and the results were illustrated in Table 1. Tables 2 and 3 exhibit the mean and standard deviation.

4.1 Advertising Attitude Depending on the Match-Up of the Product Identity and the Gender of Models

The test of Hypothesis 1 found the result illustrated in Table 2 and Figure 1. The hypothesis was that consumers' attitude will be interactively affected by the sex identity of products and the match-up or cross-sexual models. It was found that their attitude was higher with a male model ($M = 2.78$, $SD = .59$) in the shaving razor advertisements than with a female model ($M = 2.50$, $SD = .77$). In the case of lipstick advertisements, a similar effect of cross-sexual models was found: a female model ($M = 2.76$, $SD = .67$) was more effective than a male model ($M = 2.61$, $SD = .81$).

These differences were statistically significant ($F = 7.233$, $p < .01$). However, no significant difference in their attitude was found in terms of the product identity and the gender of models. Thus, it can be concluded that the main effect was not obtained. To summarize, the product identity and the sex of models was present, which supports Hypothesis 1.

First, it was found that emotional messages ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .71$) led to higher attitude than the rational ones ($M = 2.54$, $SD = .70$). The difference was statistically significant: $t = -3.196$, $p < .01$, which might mean that there is a main effect. The interaction effect between the message appeal types and the sex of models was identified. When a male

Table 1. 3-way ANOVA analysis of advertising attitude depending on the product identity, gender of models and message appeal types

Source	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F
Product identity	.119	1	.119	.239
Gender of models	.287	1	.287	.578
Message appeal types	5.066	1	5.066	10.204**
Product identity × Gender of models	3.591	1	3.591	7.233**
Product identity × Message appeal type	.284	1	.284	.573
Gender of models × Message appeal	.001	1	.001	.002
Product identity × Gender of models × Message appeal	1.050	1	1.050	2.115
error	155.413	313	.497	
total	2441.556	321		

Table 2. Means and standard deviation of advertising attitude depending on the product identity and the gender of models

Sex Identity of Products Gender of Models	Shaver	Lipstick
	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)
Male model(Mr. Bin Won)	2.78(0.59)	2.61(0.81)
Female model(Miss Jihyun Jun)	2.50(0.77)	2.76(0.67)

4.2 Advertising Attitude Depending on the Gender of Models and Message Appeal Types

The interaction effect of these two variables on the advertising effect was analyzed. The results of the mean and standard deviation (SD) are found in Table 3 and Figure 2.

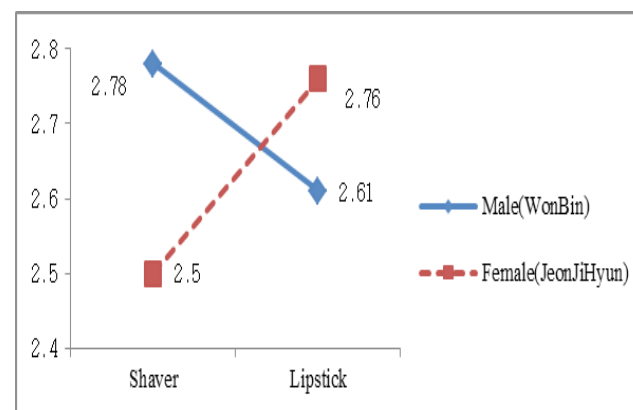


Figure 1. The interaction effect of advertising attitude between the product identity and the gender of models.

model appeared in the advertisements, the emotional messages ($M = 2.82$, $SD = .70$) led to higher advertising effect than the rational ones ($M = 2.58$, $SD = .70$). The same tendency was found in the case of a female model: the emotional messages ($M = 2.76$, $SD = .72$) were higher than the rational ones ($M = 2.50$, $SD = .72$), which indicates that no interaction effect was found. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was rejected.

Table 3. Means and standard deviation of advertising effect depending on the gender of models and message appeal types

Message Appeal Types Gender of Models	Rational Message	Emotional Message
	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)
Male(Mr. Won Bin)	2.58(.70)	2.82(.70)
Female(Ms. Jun Ji-hyun)	2.50(.72)	2.76(.72)

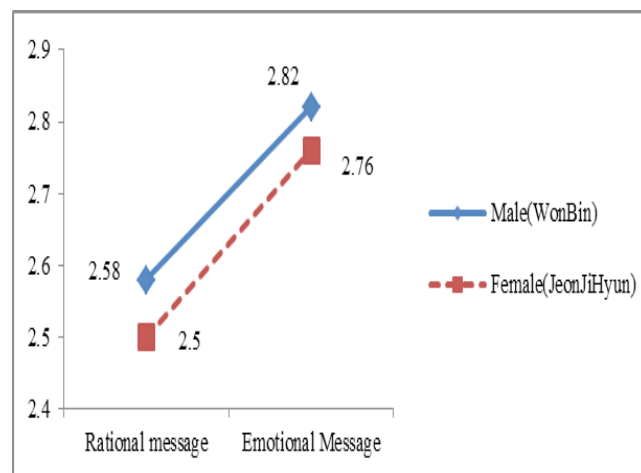


Figure 2. Interaction effect on the advertising attitude between the gender of models and message appeal types.

4.3 Advertising Attitude Depending on the Message Appeal Types in the Cross-Sexual Model Condition

A t-test was conducted to see if there is significant difference in the advertising attitude depending on the message types in the advertisements of gender-specific products. The result is illustrated in Table 4. When using cross-sexual models, the consumers' attitude was found to be higher with emotional messages ($M = 2.74$, $SD = .79$) than with rational ones ($M = 2.37$, $SD = .75$). The difference was statistically significant: ($t = -3.07$, $p < .01$). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was accepted.

Table 4. Advertising attitude depending on the message appeal types in the cross-sexual models condition

Dependent Variable	Appeal Type	N	Mean	SD	t
Attitude of Ad	Rational	81	2.37	.75	-3.07**
	Emotional	80	2.74	.79	

** $p < .01$

4.4 The Effect of Features of Cross-Sexual Models on Consumers' Attitude

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to identify the features of cross-sexual models. To that purpose, the Varimax rotation was employed. An item was judged as significant if the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) measurement is greater than 0.624, the Eigen value is greater than 1.0 in factor extraction and the commonality is greater than 0.425. The reliability was also verified to identify the internal consistency of each factor. A factor analysis under these criteria was performed to a set of 18 items and four factors were extracted. The results of the test were as follows: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) measurement at .871, Bartlett's test value at $\chi^2 = 1849.000$ ($df = 136$, $p = .000$), and the whole variance explanation power at 72.884%. The first factor consists of 6 items including trust, honest, and belief and is named 'credibility'. The test of internal consistency of the items found Cronbach's Alpha coefficient at .878. The second factor consists of 6 items including attractiveness, classiness and sexiness of models and is named 'attractiveness'. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was obtained at .913. The third factor consists of 3 items representing the similarity and sympathy with the advertising model and is called 'similarity'. The test of reliability found the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient at .868. The fourth factor represents the familiarity with the model and consists of 2 items. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was obtained at .775. These items were found to be valid: the commonality at .4 and the factor load at .6. The effects of these 4 factors of credibility, attractiveness, similarity and familiarity on the advertising attitude were analyzed. Table 5 illustrates the result of regression analysis of Enter style. A regression analysis found that the factor of attractiveness had the greatest effect followed by credibility and familiarity. All these factors were found exerting a positive effect. However, the factor of similarity did not have a significant effect.

Table 5. Effect of characteristics of cross-sexual models on the advertising attitude

Characteristics of Models	Non-Standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t
	<i>B</i>	<i>Standard error</i>	<i>Beta</i>	
credibility	.187	.090	.182	2.073*
attractiveness	.194	.083	.214	2.332*
similarity	-.023	.082	-.022	-.284
familiarity	.184	.089	.170	2.055*

$R^2 = .200$, $F = 9.578$, $p < .001$, * $p < .05$,

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The advertising industry has long tried to figure out effective strategies to maximize the advertising effect. Cross-sexual models have recently been utilized in order to effectively deliver the messages and information of a product. In other words, some products with obvious gender identity are advertised by using models of an opposite sex. The present study attempted to present effective strategies in using cross-sexual models by identifying the effect of the product identity and message appeal types on consumers' advertising attitude and also the effect of model characteristics on their advertising attitude. The findings of the study can be summarized as follows. First, we could not find a main effect in terms of the product identity and the match-up and cross-sexual identity of models. However, an interaction effect was found between cross-sexual models and the advertising attitude in both male and female products. The advertising attitude was found higher in the male product of shaving razors when a male model appeared in an ad and also in the female product of lipsticks with a female model. Such a result can be interpreted in such a way that consumers conceive the advertisements presenting a model of match up sex condition more joyful and pleasant. Other researches including Doh and Hwang⁹ similar findings in their investigation of the relationship between the sex identity of products and the gender of their users. The controversial use of cross-sexual models has been positively evaluated in the advertising industry in recent years. The current research did use printed materials, which contains the limitation of simple two-dimensional flat surface. TV commercials, in contrast, present various audio and visual images to help consumers better understand the advertising concepts.

Thus, advertisers should take the characteristics of different media into careful consideration in arousing interest, delivering messages and making the advertisements well understood.

Second, it was found that emotional messages are more effective than rational ones in advertising gender-specific products. The present experiment identified consumers' advertising attitude to the products with obvious gender identity using male and female models. Thus, in advertising gender-specific male or female products, it is recommended that advertisers use emotional messages containing images that can appeal to emotions and feelings rather than rational ones focusing on the features and functions of a product. Both male and female models were more effective when delivering emotional messages than rational ones. It can be assumed that consumers feel more joyful and pleasant and eventually understand the advertisements with emotional message appeal better than rational ones. Third, also in the advertisements using cross-sexual models, it was found that rational messages containing product information and logical reasoning were found less efficient than emotional ones presenting sexiness and emotional feelings. Thus, an effective strategy using cross-sexual models is to stay away from logical thinking and to stimulate consumers' emotions. Fourth, a set of 4 characteristics of advertising models were extracted: credibility, attractiveness, similarity and familiarity. It was found that the factor of attractiveness representing stylishness and sexiness had the greatest impact on the advertising attitude followed by the factor of credibility representing the model's reliability, honesty and professionalism. The factor of familiarity was next in order. These 3 factors were found to have a positive effect on the advertising attitude.

However, the factor of similarity was not found to have a significant effect. Thus, advertisers should take these characteristics into consideration when designing and planning an advertising strategy of models. I conclude with admitting a set of limitations of the present study and suggestions for further researches. First, it was not easy to investigate the model's delivery of emotional messages due to the limitation of printed advertisements. Second, the effect of cross-sexual models was not found, but it is clearly worthwhile to see if the same result holds for audio-visual advertisements. Third, the present study was confined to shavers and lipsticks only, thus, it is not safe to generalize the results to all products.

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