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THE EFFECTS OF LIKEABILITY ON CONSUMERS' CHOICE BEHAVIOUR

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masterate of Business Studies at Massey University

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The persuasive abilities of advertising and therefore, advertising effectiveness, have
been discussed extensively in advertising literature. In particular, the components that
make an advertisement effective have intrigued both advertisers and advertising
agencies over the past three decades. Likeability of advertising is suggested to be a
key indicator of advertising effectiveness (Haley & Baldinger, 1991) yet, the literature
in this area concentrates on establishing what likeability is rather than exploring the
effect of likeability on consumers’ behaviour. Given the level of interest that has
been driven by claims that likeability can heighten the persuasiveness of an
advertisement, it seems pertinent to investigate the effect of likeability on consumer
behaviour.

The research reported in this thesis examined the effect of more and less likeable
images on consumers’ choice behaviour. The data for this research was obtained from
a cross-sectional survey in which choice modelling techniques were used to establish
consumers’ choice behaviour. This data was used to investigate the effects of likeable
images on consumers’ choice behaviour for the product category of milk. Overall, it
was found that advertisement likeability had a very weak effect on consumers’ choice
behaviour. Furthermore, it was established that the type of milk variant was the most
influential attribute in determining consumers’ choice behaviour. Price was also an
important factor although this attribute was far less influential than the type of milk
attribute. However, the research found some support for idea that likeability enhances
the salience of advertising, as likeability did improve the salience of the
advertisements for different groups of consumers within the sample.

The main implication that arises from this study is that likeable advertisements do not
necessarily lead to consumers changing their purchasing behaviour. Likeability is one
of many measures of effective advertising and does not appear to command more
attention than any other measure of effective advertising.
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