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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  
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## ABSTRACT

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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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A prevailing belief in consumer behaviour theory is that advertisers can influence consumers' buying behaviour. Researchers have developed many models of information processing to explain how the buyer's decision making process works (Beattie and Mitchell, 1985; Petty & Cacioppo, 1985 & 1986; Alwitt and Mitchell, 1985) and these models form the basis of the decision making process from an advertising perspective.

Such models assume that awareness and attitudes are antecedents of consumer behaviour and these relationships provide the basis for the way that advertising works. It is assumed that responses to advertising follow similar models of consumer behaviour and that purchase behaviour occurs as a result of awareness of the brand and attitudes towards the brand, which then influence behaviour.

One of the main debates in advertising literature is the influence that advertising has on behaviour, that is, whether advertising is strongly persuasive and can act to change behaviour (Joyce, 1967) as suggested by models of consumer behaviour or whether it is a weak predictor of behaviour and merely maintains and reinforces existing behaviour (Ehrenberg, 1974, 1992).

Research indicates that if the advertising can engage the customer to mentally collaborate in processing the message, then the message is more likely to be retrieved (Srull, 1983; Stayman & Batra 1991; Lutz, 1985) and subsequently, likely to be more effective. This is consistent with models of consumer behaviour that assume consumers cognitively evaluate advertising messages. However, researchers have also explored the emotional affect of advertising on consumers processing of information and claim that if the consumer has an emotional response to an advertisement, they are more likely to retrieve the message at a later time (Biel 1990). Attitudes formed through affective processing are also thought to be more enduring (Petty and Cacioppo, 1985 & 1986) and this suggests that appealing to consumer's emotions in advertising could make advertising more effective.

Advertising likeability is one way of appealing to consumer's emotions in advertising and this idea has become more popular since the Copy Research Validity Project (CRVP) research (Haley and Baldinger, 1991) that concluded likeability was a better predictor of sales than any other measure.

There is intuitive appeal in the idea that likeability of advertising could influence consumer behaviour because it can engage the consumer on both an emotional and cognitive level which enhances the likelihood that consumers will attend to an advertisement, remember it and therefore, act on it.

On the basis that advertising works according to the strong theory which posits that advertising influences consumer behaviour through attitude formation (Joyce, 1967) and likeable advertisements enhance the persuasive appeal of the advertisement and influence behaviour, the creative content of the advertisement becomes important since the more liked an advertisement is, the more likely it is to be effective.

However, if advertising works according to the weak theory which suggests that advertising merely reinforces existing behaviour, then the actual content is arguably less important since the content would not necessarily alter behaviour.

While the CRVP study did show likeability as a better predictor of sales, suggesting that likeability can enhance the persuasive of an advertisement as outlined in the strong theory, there is no evidence in the literature that explicitly examines how likeability influences consumer behaviour. The current research aims to examine this relationship and determine if likeability can influence consumer's choice behaviour.

## **1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE CURRENT STUDY**

This research explores how likeability of an advertisement affects consumers' choice behaviour.

Specifically:

1. Examines likeability scores of several advertising images to establish likeability of each image
2. Examines whether the different in likeability scores for each image is reflected in consumers choice behaviour

Chapters two, three and four of this thesis review previous research relating to the way consumers process advertisements, advertising theory and previous research relating to the likeability of advertising and examine the empirical findings which have emerged from this literature. Chapter five outlines the study's methodology and chapter six presents the results and relates them to the findings discussed in chapters two to four. Finally, chapter seven summarises the study's key findings and the implications, which arise from these.

## CHAPTER TWO: INFORMATION PROCESSING

Consumer behaviour literature suggests that there is a strong relationship between advertising and consumer behaviour (Vakratsas, 1999; Stayman and Batra, 1990; Petty and Cacioppo, 1985 & 1986; Beattie and Mitchell, 1985; Lutz, 1985). On the basis that such relationships exist, this chapter explores how consumers process information, and how this process relates to advertising.

Models exploring how consumers process information assume that awareness and attitudes precede consumer behaviour and, it is these relationships that ultimately influence purchase decisions. These relationships are set out in hierarchy of effect models (HOE) that document a cognitive pathway along which consumers move to purchase a brand and these models are examined in this chapter.

This chapter also explores consumers' affective reactions to information (Srull, 1983; Batra & Ray, 1986; Lutz, 1985) and how both affective and cognitive reactions to information influence consumers memories, mood and attitudes, as it is suggested that these elements can influence purchase behaviour (Stayman & Batra, 1990).

The formation of brand attitudes arguably occurs as a result of exposure to an advertising execution and could be influenced by both cognitive evaluation and affective reactions to advertising (Shimp, 1981; Batra, 1986). These views suggest that consumers' attitudes may also be influenced by the likeability of an advertisement and this chapter examines how the different views on attitude and behaviour affect the development of likeable advertising.

### 2.1 MODELS OF INFORMATION PROCESSING

An important component of consumer behaviour is the relationship between *awareness* and *behaviour*. The model of behaviour below suggests that the antecedents of behaviour are awareness and attitude (Ambler & Burne, 1999).

Awareness → Attitude → Behaviour

Source: Ambler and Burne, 1999

There is a large volume of literature examining the relationship between these three elements and the pathway set out has provided a foundation that researchers have used for the study of the effects of advertising on consumer behaviour.

It is suggested that the extent to which consumers process information may affect subsequent attitudes and behaviours (Batra & Ray, 1986) and models of information processing that examine these relationships may help advertising researchers understand how advertising ultimately influences consumer behaviour.

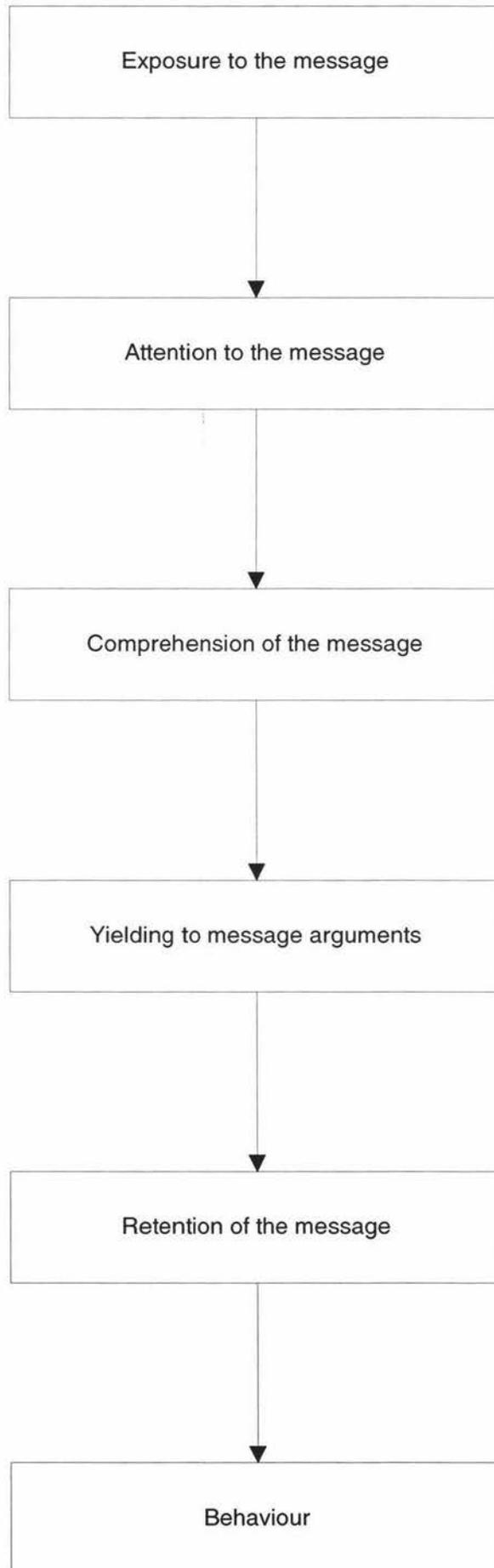
Hierarchy of effect models (HOE) are one example of the models that explore the relationships between attitude and behaviour. HOE models suggest that consumers cognitively or mentally process information in a sequential way and go through a series of stages when evaluating information and these models typically suggest that these stages are represented by cognition– affect – behaviour (Vakratsas, 1999).

These models are relevant in an advertising context, as it is possible that consumers use the same process to evaluate advertisements. Beattie and Mitchell (1985) suggest that when processing an advertisement, consumers rationally evaluate the information presented and, if the advertisement message is not rejected at any stage of processing, behaviour (purchase) is the predicted outcome.

HOE models can be referred to also as *models of persuasion* as it is argued that advertising aims to persuade consumers to buy (Vakratsas, 1999). An example of a hierarchy of effect models is depicted in Figure 1, which illustrates a typical model of the persuasion process. As Figure 1 shows, consumers first become aware of a message and attend to it. Then they understand and accept the message, before finally retaining and acting on it.

In this model, attention to the message, comprehension and retention are considered to be the key ‘stages’ in the processing of an advertisement. For example, if consumers do not attend to the message, then they are less likely to comprehend and retain it and, therefore, less likely to result in purchase behaviour. However, according to HOE models, if consumers do go through each stage of the process, then it is more likely that they will be persuaded by the advertisement and purchase the product.

**Figure 1: Hierarchy of effects model**

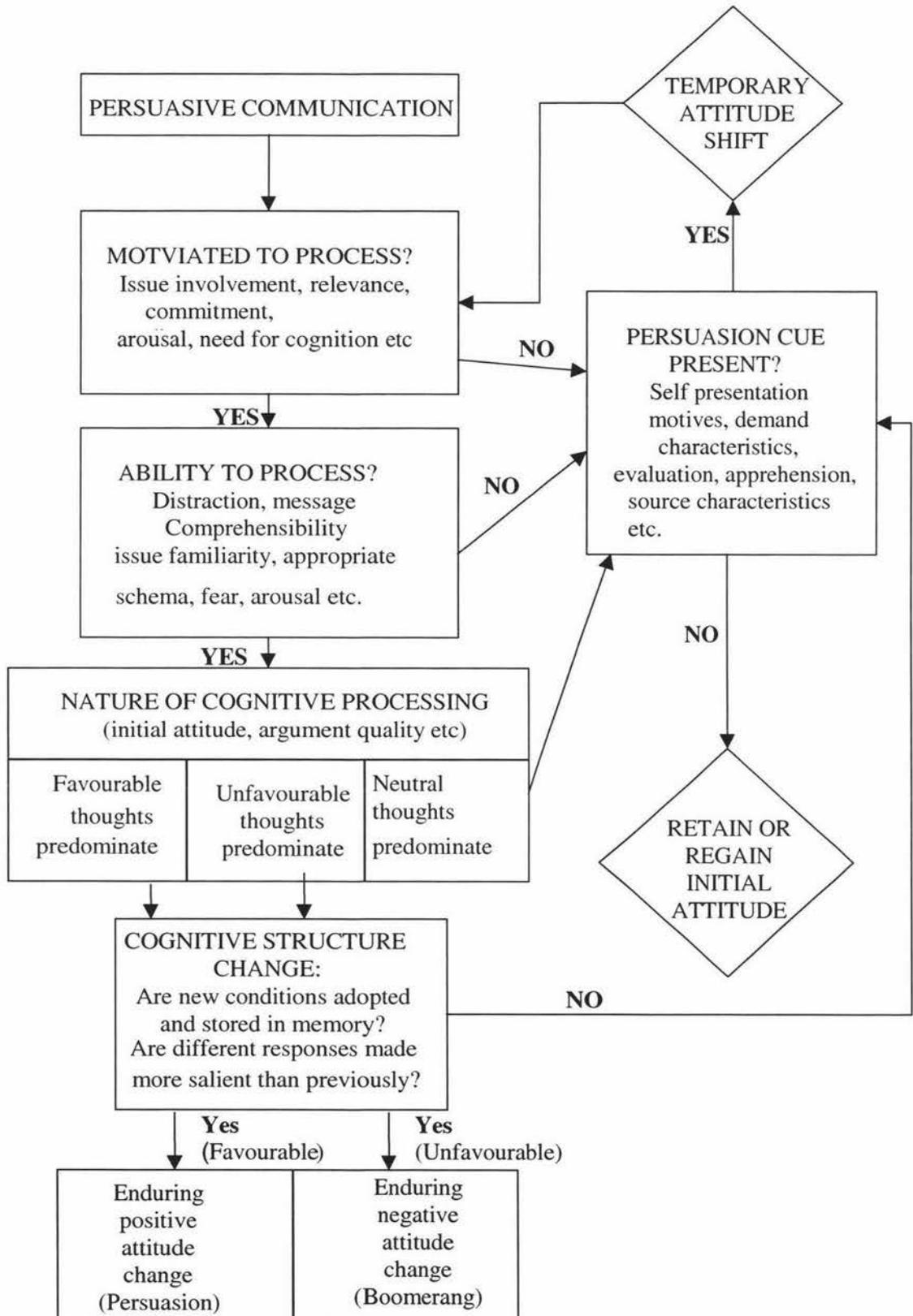


The Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1985 & 1986) is another example of a persuasive model that stresses the cognitive nature of information processing. This model is illustrated in Figure 2 and suggests that consumers respond to advertisements in different ways, depending on their motivations and abilities to process them and, that the level of cognition applied to a communication is dependent on a consumer's willingness and ability to process the message.

The ELM presents two possible routes of consumer processing; a *central route*, and a *peripheral route*. In the central route, the customer goes through extensive 'cognitive elaboration' or thoughtful processing, based on product attributes and features. It is suggested that this forms the basis of attitudinal change that occurs following exposure to advertising. Where the extent of cognitive elaboration is limited, due to lack of ability (i.e distraction) or motivation to process the information (i.e. relevance of the message), the peripheral route is taken. Here, attitudes that are formed are based not on the quality of the product, but on incidental responses to executional cues (Lord, Lee & Paul, 1995). The ELM suggests that the more the change, the more likely the new attitudes persist and influence behaviour (Petty, Heesaker & Hughes, 1997).

Where consumers take the peripheral route of processing, executional elements become important in determining consumers' attitudes, thus components of the advertisement such as likeability become critical in the persuasion process. Because consumers are not processing information such as brand attributes, the advertisement becomes the primary way to influence consumer responses. Hence, developing likeable advertisements could be a way of heightening the persuasive appeal of the advertisement for consumers taking the peripheral route in information processing.

**Figure 2: Elaboration Likelihood Model**



Source: Petty and Cacioppo, 1985

Individual responses to advertising may be influenced also by factors such as mood at the time of exposure, involvement in the product category, ability and motivation to process the advertisement, as well as attitudes towards the advertisement and the brand (Srull, 1983; Petty & Cacioppo, 1985 & 1986; Lutz, 1985). These factors can alter consumers responses (Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999) as consumers who are not interested in the brand being advertised, either become distracted or avoid advertising by tuning out (Biel, 1990), do not pay attention to advertising, and thus are unlikely to remember or retain the information. Hence, not all consumers will follow a persuasive model of evaluating advertising.

An alternative model of processing information suggests that information does not necessarily need to be processed cognitively as in models of persuasion. These models suggest that consumers may have affective or emotional reactions to advertising which are formed by elements such as “liking, feelings or emotions induced by the advertisement...rather than product / brand attribute information” (Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999, p.4).

While models of persuasion suggest consumers respond cognitively to advertising, recent research suggests that affective reactions to advertising cause a more automatic processing of information by consumers, due to their emotional response to the message. The main difference between cognitive and affective responses is that the cognitive response is a conscious processing of executional elements whereas the affect is “non-volitional” (Shimp, 1981, p.10).

Therefore, it is possible that consumers do not cognitively evaluate advertising messages, rather, it is the feelings that consumers associate with the advertisement that affect attitudes and behaviour. This idea is supported by Batra (1986) who believes that consumer responses to advertisement executions go beyond an evaluative reaction toward the commercial that is evoked by message execution style.... “Ads are not merely liked or disliked, they also generate moods and make us feel a certain way. Affective ads make us happy, sad or warm in addition to making us admire and like them” (p.62).

Therefore, the possibility arises that consumers respond to advertisements on two different levels, a *cognitive* level where they evaluate the message, as well as product and brand attributes, and an *affective* level, where they connect emotionally to the advertisement itself and how it makes them feel. Hence, likeability of the advertisement that generates positive feelings can mediate consumers' responses to advertising.

This idea is discussed in traditional cognitive and social literature, although here, it is suggested that the generation of affect is always moderated by cognitive evaluation (Tsal, 1985) and that individuals' affective reactions to advertisements may be determined by the cognitive resources they devote to processing (Mackenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1985). One of the major problems with the ideas advanced here is that it is difficult to establish whether or not a consumer has cognitively evaluated the advertisement. Testing how consumers' cognitive process information and the level of cognitive resources used when processing such information can be complex and it is therefore difficult to determine whether the claim by Tsal (1985) can be supported due to the complexities involved in establish consumer's thought processes.

However, others argue that affective reactions could be evoked before or in the absence of any cognitive processes, that is, *affect* can occur independently of *cognition* (Zajonc & Markus, 1982). In research conducted by Zajonc and Markus, (1982), it is suggested that increased liking of a stimulus as a result of repeated exposure can occur even when consumers don't recognise the stimulus (Zajonc & Markus, 1982).

This view is supported by Krugman (1965) who suggests that there is limited processing of advertising and Ehrenberg (1974) who posits that evaluating an advertisement does not require 'effortful processing'. However, critics of Zajonc and Markus' (1982) research believe that rather than independence of the two dimensions, cognition and affect judgements are simply two different routes by which a stimulus representation could be accessed from memory (Seaman et al. Cited in Tsal, 1985).

The research is inconclusive about whether affect and cognition occur independently or whether one is conditional upon the other. However, the view that consumers have different responses to different advertisements seems to have merit in the context of how advertising is processed. In particular, there is an implication that the likeability of the advertisement can influence consumers' attitudes through the generation of affect when they avoid cognitively evaluating the advertisement.

It is possible that affect judgements also occur at the time that a consumer initially encodes information. According to Stayman and Batra (1991), affect at the time of encoding, not only influences encoding processes, but can also bias subsequent retrieval processes. This idea is supported by Bower (1981) who found that congruence between affect at the time of encoding material and affect at the time of retrieval could have a facilitating effect on memory.

Therefore, from an advertising perspective, memory of an advertisement can be promoted by utilising components in the advertisement itself that generate affective responses. For example, engendering an emotional response to an advertisement could improve awareness and recognition of the advertisement.

According to the views on affect, the likeability of an advertisement may evoke affective responses that are also capable of persuasion, in the absence of- or in addition to-, cognitive evaluation. These views suggest that cognitive evaluation is not necessarily required for an advertisement to be persuasive and is supported by Batra and Ray (1983) who suggest that affective responses may be evoked by more likeable advertisement executions and appear to influence brand attitude significantly.

## **2.2 MEMORY**

It is thought that for advertising to be effective, an advertising message must firstly be remembered by consumers. Thus, advertising researchers have concentrated on the cognitive processing of information to explore how advertising can be remembered and recalled by consumers (Ambler & Burne, 1999).

However, it is also argued that affective processing of advertising may have a more enduring effect on consumer memory than cognitive processing (Biel, 1990; Haley & Baldinger, 1991; Ambler & Burne, 1999).

The literature indicates that both consumers' mood and their memory are key components of effective information processing and therefore, advertising effectiveness (Blaney, 1986; Batra & Ray, 1986; Batra & Stayman, 1990). It is suggested in the literature that the retrieval of information from memory is a strong determinant of subsequent behaviour (Fazio et al. 1989) and that memory sets the context for decision-making (Ambler & Burne, 1999). It is also thought that individual motivations to process information are key determinants of whether or not consumers later recall and act on the information (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). This explains why advertisers are interested in measures of advertising effectiveness such as recall and recognition, which gauge consumers' responses to advertising. Despite the dominance of these cognitive measures in advertising literature, evidence continues to emerge that suggests that affect, rather than cognition, may be the key to enduring memory (Ambler & Burne, 1999).

As mentioned above, a key component of affect as an influence on memory is consumers' mood and it is suggested that consumers are more likely to retain information when in a particular mood (i.e. happy). This idea is also referred to as 'mood congruence' (Blaney, 1986) and assumes that information is more likely to be stored and / or recalled when in certain moods. For example, subjects in positive moods have been shown to perceive and evaluate stimuli more favourably than when in other (negative) moods (Isen & Simmonds, 1978, cited in Batra & Stayman, 1990). If advertising can generate positive moods, then it is thought that this 'mood' will be transferred to the product or brand in the form of an 'attitude' (Batra & Stayman, 1990).

It is also suggested that people in positive moods process messages with less cognitive elaboration (Batra & Stayman, 1990) and this occurs because people in positive moods are motivated to maintain this positive state.

Thus, because cognitive processing requires effort, it disrupts positive moods, therefore, in order to maintain this mood, people avoid cognitive processing (Isen & Levin, 1972, cited in Batra & Stayman, 1990). “Moods appear to not only have peripheral effects on attitudes, but also to have significant effects on and through the cognitive processing of message context” (Stayman & Batra, 1990, p.213).

Research examining brand attitude found that a positive feeling or ‘mood’ that was evoked through advertising, facilitated brand-attitude change (Batra & Ray, 1986; Edell & Burke, 1987). Batra and Ray (1986) identified three types of positive affective reactions or feelings<sup>1</sup> that explained a small but significant percentage of variance in consumers’ brand attitudes and purchase intentions. Edell and Burke (1987) also found that positive and negative feelings helped to explain variance in both attitude towards the advertisement and attitude towards the brand. These results imply that a consumer’s feelings play an important part in the formation of attitudes both towards an advertisement and a brand, and indicate that it is important to pay attention to, and measure feelings evoked by advertising, in order to measure advertising effectiveness.

Research also suggests that it is possible for an advertising stimulus to evoke a certain ‘mood’ and that, when the stimulus occurs again, retrieval of the ‘mood’ occurs (Bower, 1981). Bower (1981) found that an emotion serves as a memory unit that can enter into associations with coincident events. Activation of this emotion aids retrieval of events associated with it. Consequently, salience and memorability of events were increased (Bower, 1981). This implies that an advertisement which is perceived as likeable or as humorous or entertaining<sup>2</sup> (see chapter three) could create a positive mood in the consumer.

When exposed to the advertisement again, the consumer experiences the same feelings associated with the first execution and this determines future retrieval of the same feelings.

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<sup>1</sup> These were: 1. surgency, elation, vigor/activation (SEVA), 2. deactivation, and 3. social affection.

<sup>2</sup> Humorous and entertaining are some of the attributes identified as constituting ‘likeability’ (see section 3.2)

It is suggested that these feelings engender both memorability and salience of the brand and therefore, it is likely that these feelings will be retrieved when making purchase decisions. Accordingly, there is a greater chance that the consumer will choose the advertised brand.

The main property of *mood* as a determinant of *attitude* is that *mood* is an affective state which is transferred to brand attitudes and that this is an automatic reaction rather than one that is cognitively mediated (Lutz, 1985). As a result of affective processing, more favourable and enduring brand attitudes can result (Petty & Cacioppo, 1985). As a result, several researchers have suggested that a consumer's mood at the time of processing can contribute to the formation of positive attitudes towards advertising (Srull, 1983; Batra & Ray, 1986; Edell & Burke, 1987; Batra & Stayman, 1990).

These views suggest that it would make sense for advertisers to attempt to improve consumers' moods when exposed to an advertisement execution.

Since the executional style and content of the advertisement are key components of influencing consumers' moods and likeability is a key component of this, it would appear that being exposed to a likeable advertisement could influence consumers' moods; this subsequently activates memory and recall of the advertisement, and engenders positive attitudes towards the advertising as well as enhancing brand attitudes.

Evidence to date suggests that *affect* may play a key role in facilitating attitudes towards both the advertisement and the brand. These results raise issues about whether feelings are stored in memory or whether they are recreated with each advertising execution (Edell & Burke, 1989). While the nature of affect (emotional reaction), makes it difficult to measure objectively and independently, it is relatively less complex to establish general positive and negative reactions to advertising through the use of such methods as feelings inventories (Edell & Burke, 1987) or scales of likeability (Haley & Baldinger, 1991). These methods enable researchers to establish feelings along a continuum through the rating of positive and negative responses to advertisements, which allows for more generalisable results.

There is also support in the literature for the role that advertising likeability plays in advertising effectiveness. As suggested in section 2.1 and 2.2, consumers' responses to advertising can take various routes and - in the absence of cognitive processing, - consumers look to other executional cues in order to form attitudes and behaviours. Consumers' memories are facilitated also by advertising that improves their moods, and these ideas suggest that advertising likeability may contribute to the overall effectiveness of advertising by engendering positive feelings or affect.

Research in emotional reactions to advertising suggests that the results discussed may be useful for new advertisements promoting new products and services, where the advertisement itself is distinctive and thus gains attention (Edell & Burke, 1989). However, in real life settings, potential consumers will possibly have more sources of information about the brand than just one particular advertisement, such as prior experience with the product or having heard about the experience of others. Thus, whether or not feelings will exert the same influence in real life settings remains to be established.

Further, the robustness of the influence of feelings evoked by an advertisement on consumer behaviour has yet to be tested fully. While the literature examines mood, memory and attitudes that result from affective reactions to advertising, consumers' feelings in relation to measures such as purchase intent, purchase and repeat purchase have not been explicitly tested. Therefore, there can be no certainty about the influence advertising likeability has on these measures, and ultimately on consumers' behaviour.

### **2.3 ATTITUDE**

HOE models suggest that attitude formation is essentially cognitive, where consumers form attitudes on the basis of information presented.

According to Petty and Cacioppo (1985 & 1986), attitudes formed once the information process has been completed are expected to be more enduring and predictive of subsequent behaviour.

More recent research suggests that attitudes formed on the basis of elements such as likeability of advertising and the feelings and emotions induced by the advertisement are just as likely to be enduring and predictive of behaviour (Lutz, 1985; Shimp, 1981).

Affective responses to advertising can be classified into two types: attitude toward the brand and attitude toward the advertisement or an expression of likeability towards the advertisement itself (Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Shimp, 1981). It is also possible that these attitudes are interchangeable; an attitude towards an advertisement can be transferred to the brand and attitudes towards brands can be transferred to the advertisement (Moore & Hutchinson, 1985; Lutz, 1985).

Individual responses to advertising are mediated by factors such as motivation to process information and a consumer's involvement in the product category (Petty & Cacioppo, 1985 & 1986; Lutz, 1985). Motivation to process information is a similar concept to that of involvement theory (Batra & Ray, 1983), which suggests that the level of involvement a consumer has, determines the extent to which they process information in relation to a brand (Shimp, 1981).

Shimp (1981) suggests that there are four types of potential attitude formation resulting from consumers' processing of an advertisement, which are displayed in Table 1. The first results from high involvement information processing, the second from moderate involvement, the third from strategy-limited low involvement, and the fourth from attention-limited low involvement.

**Table 1: Four Types of Potential Attitude Formation Resulting From Processing an Advertisement**

| Brand information processed? | Non-Brand information processed?  |   |
|------------------------------|---|---|
|                              | Yes   | No  |
| Yes                          | 1. Potential for attitudes to be formed toward brand and toward advertisement | 2. Potential for attitude toward brand only                       |
| No                           | 3. Potential for attitude toward advertisement only                           | 4. No potential for attitude toward either brand or advertisement |

Source: Shimp, 1981

Table 1 suggests that where there is high involvement and consumers process both brand and non-brand information, there is potential for attitudes to be formed towards both the brand and the advertisement. However, where brand and non-brand information are not processed, there is no potential for an attitude to develop towards either the brand or the advertisement. So, where non-brand information is processed such as the likeability of the advertisement, there is potential for the attitude to be formed towards the advertisement. On the other hand, attitude changes do not occur when likeability of the advertisement (non-brand information) is not processed.

Shimp (1981) suggests that only when brand and non-brand information are processed at the same time, will attitudes develop towards both the advertisement and the brand. By implication, this reasoning suggests that non-brand information, such as likeability, is not capable of influencing attitudes toward a brand on its own.

This view of attitude formation is supported by Miniard, Bhatla, and Rose (1990), who found that consumers in higher involvement conditions followed the central route to persuasion and based their brand attitudes on the advertisement claims. Subjects in lower involvement conditions took the peripheral route. In practice, this means that consumers who are in high involvement buying situations process information based on details presented in the advertising, and that there is potential for attitudes to be formed towards both the advertisement and the brand. Consumers in low-involvement buying situations are less likely to process the advertisement and more likely to use other cues for information. In this case, there is little or no potential for the consumer to form an attitude towards either the advertisement or the brand.

The ELM model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1985 & 1986), the brand processing strategy (Shimp, 1981) and the concept of involvement (Miniard, Bhatla & Rose, 1990) are similar concepts which involve multi-path approaches to information processing. Rather than suggesting two different ways of processing information, they suggest that the amount of processing undertaken is dependent on the motivation (or involvement) of the consumer to process information. Thus, the extent to which attitudes are formed are dependent on the extent to which information is processed as well as other variables such as repetition, interest, type of medium and type of appeal (Lutz, 1985).

## **2.4 ATTITUDES AS PREDICTORS OF BEHAVIOUR**

As discussed in section 2.1, it is suggested that attitudes precede consumer behaviour in models of information processing. According to Fazio (1986) “there can be no doubt that attitudes do sometimes relate to subsequent behaviour” (p.206). However, within an advertising context, the influence that advertising has on behaviour is unresolved.

Ehrenberg and Barwise (1985) argue that a consumer’s belief about a particular brand attribute is “at best, a weak predictor of that individual’s buying or usage behaviour of that brand” (p.91). However, Fazio’s (1986) model of behaviour suggests that behaviour is an observed outcome of advertising.

Fazio et al. (1989) view behaviour as “ a function of the individuals immediate perceptions of the attitude object in the context of the situation in which the object is encountered” (p.280). In other words, a consumer’s assessment of a stimulus will occur as a result of exposure to the stimulus and their resulting attitude will influence behaviour. It is suggested that attitudes that are more accessible will have a greater influence on behaviour than attitudes that are less accessible from memory. From an advertising perspective, this means that inducing a positive attitude toward the brand is not sufficient to influence consumer behaviour, as advertisers need also to be concerned with the attitudes’ accessibility from consumers’ memory.

The idea that more accessible attitudes will have a greater influence on behaviour suggests that likeable advertisements could influence consumer behaviour, since likeable advertisements are more likely to be remembered and retrieved (Batra & Ray, 1986), thus creating more accessible attitudes. While Fazio (1986) suggests that behaviour is an observed outcome of advertising, he provides no evidence to support his claim.

While there is a large body of literature that argues for a relationship between advertising and consumer attitudes and behaviour, equally, there is a large body of literature that challenges these arguments and these points of view are examined in chapter three.

## **2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Consumer behaviour literature suggests that consumers respond to information by cognitively processing the information and, as a result, form attitudes, make decisions and perform behaviours.

There are various models of information processing presented in the literature. The most dominant view suggests that consumers undergo a cognitive process, mentally evaluating information through a series of stages and - at each stage, - making a rational decision to progress through the subsequent stages of the model (Beattie & Mitchell, 1985; Petty & Cacioppo, 1985 & 1986).

The resulting attitudes and behaviours are formed on the basis of what information was presented and how the consumer processed it. Some researchers suggest that the extent to which information is processed has an effect on the strength of the attitude, and is predictive of consumers' behaviour (Fazio, 1986), while other researchers suggest that it is consumers' affective responses to information that make their attitudes or behaviours more enduring (Shimp, 1981; Stayman & Batra, 1991).

The information processing models are important in advertising because they describe how consumers process an advertisement and how attitudes and behaviours change as a result of an advertising execution. It is thought that advertising may be more effective if a consumer willingly processes an advertisement rather than avoiding it or not paying attention to it (Biel, 1990). It is thought also that, if an advertisement can achieve both affective reactions and cognitive responses from consumers, then the advertisement is more likely to be recalled and acted upon (Edell & Burke, 1989; Batra & Ray, 1986).

These arguments suggest that advertising is capable of creating new attitudes and behaviours as well as changing existing attitudes and behaviours. While it is suggested that advertising is capable of evoking cognitive and affective reactions, there is little empirical evidence presented either to support these conclusions or to clarify the relationship between cognitive and affective processing.

Overall, the literature suggests that advertisements that consumers are willing to process are more likely to be recalled and remembered. This implies that advertisements that appeal to a consumer may have a better chance of being effective since recall may be a strong determinant of brand choice (Walker & Von Gonten, 1989, from Walker & Dubitsky, 1994).

Accordingly, creating advertisements that appeal to consumers and that they like could enhance advertising effectiveness and it is this idea that has propelled the idea of likeable advertising into prominence.

However, while the literature suggests that likeability can heighten the persuasive ability of an advertisement (Haley & Baldinger, 1991; Biel & Bridgwater, 1991), Ehrenberg (1974, 1992) argues that advertising is not capable of inducing behaviour or creating attitudes, which suggests that improving the appeal of the advertisement would make no difference to the effectiveness of the advertising.

In summary, the importance of understanding consumers' processing of information and therefore, their reactions to advertising, varies depending on which theory is followed. The literature has not conclusively established how advertising is processed and this creates several competing explanations. At present, there is no compelling evidence for either theory, thus, managers do not have either a common approach to advertising or a common understanding of how it works. The debate over how advertising works challenges fundamental beliefs in consumer behaviour, and this debate and its relevance to likeability are discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE: ADVERTISING THEORY

Advertising research suggests that there are two competing theories of how advertising works, which are termed the *strong* and *weak theories of advertising* (Ehrenberg, 1974, 1991; Jones, 1990; Joyce, 1967, 1991). While the strong theory emphasises the causal relationship between consumer *attitude* and *behaviour* and the conversion of consumers from one brand to another (Joyce 1967), the weak theory posits that the role of advertising is more likely to be one of enhancing brand salience and reinforcing existing behaviour (Ehrenberg, 1974; Ehrenberg & Barwise, 1985; Ehrenberg et al.1997).

This chapter examines these two competing views of how advertising works and the criticisms levelled at each. In particular, the strong theory has been criticised for upholding advertising as a persuasive force capable of changing consumer behaviour. These critics suggest that maintenance of brand salience among existing users is the most likely outcome of advertising.

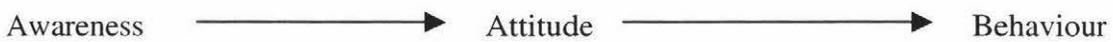
Another criticism of the strong theory is levelled at the causal relationship between attitude and behaviour and questions the claims that attitude causes behaviour, as it is possible that this relationship works in two directions; not only can attitude influence behaviour but behaviour can influence attitudes (Ehrenberg, 1992).

This chapter discusses also the implications for likeability of advertising in light of the two theories and the importance of likeability under each theory. Under each theory – and in particular – the way in which the importance of developing likeable advertisement content varies depending on the theory of advertising to which one subscribes.

The debate over the way that advertising works remains unresolved in the literature, but a growing amount of evidence favours the weak theory of advertising (Jones, 1991). This suggests that the role of advertising, and therefore likeability, is to help reinforce existing behaviours through increasing brand salience rather than relying on likeable advertisements to encourage the adoption of new behaviours.

### 3.1 HOW ADVERTISING WORKS

Traditional advertising theory contends that advertising works by influencing consumers' attitudes towards a brand and, therefore, their behaviour (Miller & Berry 1998; Joyce 1991,1967; Jones 1990). This model of advertising is known as the *strong theory of advertising* (Jones 1990) and is the dominant view of how advertising works. Ehrenberg (1974) describes it as follows:



Source: Ehrenberg, 1974

However, researchers have recently challenged this belief. For example, Ehrenberg and Barwise (1985) have argued that a consumer's belief about a particular brand attribute is "at best, a weak predictor of that individual's buying or usage behaviour of that brand". Instead of stimulating new behaviours, they argue, advertising works to reinforce existing behaviour (Ehrenberg & Barwise, 1985). This view constitutes the *weak theory of advertising*, and it is the distinction between the influence that advertising has on consumer behaviour that underpins the differences between the two theories of advertising.

The strong theory of advertising assumes that a consumer undergoes a cognitive process when evaluating an advertisement. The AIDA (Joyce, 1967) model of advertising (Attention - Interest - Desire - Action) best describes how advertising works according to the strong theory and can refer to either a consumer's response to an advertisement or to a consumer's state of mind regarding the product (Joyce, 1967). Models such as AIDA implicitly assume that consumers rationally evaluate brands on the basis of an advertising execution and make objective purchase decisions.

While there are still arguments about the validity of the pathways or stages through which a consumer passes, the theory supposes that behaviour is a variable, which can be changed through exposure to advertising (Joyce, 1967).

Rather than behavioural change, the weak theory emphasises consumers' trial of a product and the ensuing reinforcement of that trial, and this is best explained by Ehrenberg (1974), as the *ATR model* (Awareness - trial - reinforcement). This view suggests that consumers try a brand and then form attitudes, which are then reinforced post purchase by the experience with the brand. This view suggests that advertising can nudge, maintain and improve salience for a brand (Ehrenberg et al. 1997), and he argues that expectations that people will adopt new behaviours, particularly for low involvement purchases, are unrealistic.

The two theories also outline quite different attribute and behaviour relationships. While the strong theory of advertising suggests that consumers form attitudes as a result of exposure to advertising and ultimately adopt new purchase behaviours (Joyce, 1967), the weak theory supposes that behavioural change may precede attitudinal change (Barwise & Ehrenberg, 1985) and that past behaviours can influence consumers' attitudes (Joyce, 1967). Thus, it is argued that advertising works in both directions as illustrated below, rather than as a one-directional model as posited by the strong theory.



Source: Kennedy and Romaniuk, 1999

### **3.2 THE ROLE PLAYED BY ADVERTISING IN ATTITUDE FORMATION**

It is a common belief in advertising literature that an attitude shift is required prior to purchasing (Jones, 1990; Joyce, 1967; Ehrenberg, 1974). Models such as AIDA, which outline the strong theory, suggest that attitudes in the form of 'desire' determine whether or not consumers go on to purchase the brand. However, supporters of the weak theory challenge the role which attitude is said to play and argue that there is no evidence to suggest that advertising is capable of inducing such strong levels of persuasion or manipulation (Ehrenberg, 1974). Furthermore, they suggest that, in some situations, consumers make purchases without any level of conviction. This implies that advertising can encourage trial of a product and reinforce purchase decisions without necessarily altering consumers' attitudes prior to purchase.

The disagreements over the role which advertising plays in attitude formation cast doubt over the role advertising has on consumers' attitudes overall.

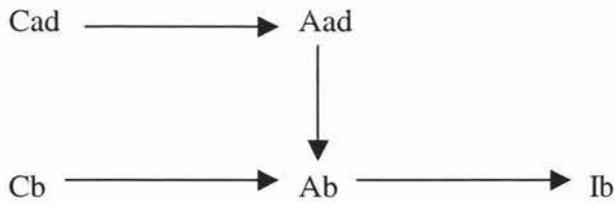
Nevertheless, there is a fundamental belief in the literature that advertising does influence consumers' attitudes and that this occurs prior to purchase. Supporters of this belief suggest that there are two types of attitude that result from advertising: attitude toward the advertisement and attitude toward the brand (Miniard, Batra & Rose 1990; Moore & Hutchinson, 1995; Lutz, 1985; Batra & Stayman, 1990) and it is posited that attitude towards the advertisements mediates brand attitude and purchase intention.

Attitude toward the advertisement can be defined as *a predisposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion* (Lutz 1985 cited in MacKenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1986, pg. 130). In other words, attitudes are developed towards advertising as a result of exposure to a particular advertisement. In addition, researchers suggest that the attitude towards the advertisement influences the consumer's attitude towards the brand being advertised (Shimp, 1981; Biel, 1990). According to this view, the advertisement itself becomes increasingly important because consumers' reactions to the advertisement may determine their attitudes towards the brand and, therefore, their behaviour. Following this reasoning implies that advertising content, which includes the likeability of the advertisement, plays a critical role in the success – or lack thereof - of the brand.

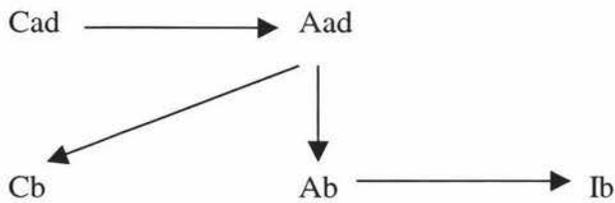
There are a number of hypotheses to explain how attitude towards the advertisement influences attitudes toward the brand and Mackenzie, Lutz and Belch (1986) portray four of these possible hypotheses in the causal role of attitude toward an advertisement in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3: Hypothesis on the casual role of attitude towards the advertisement**

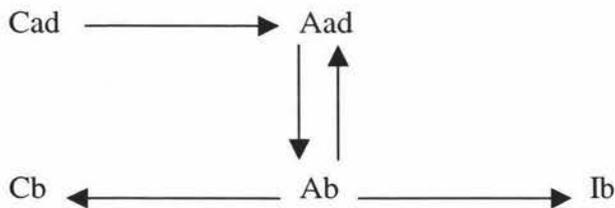
A Affect transfer hypothesis



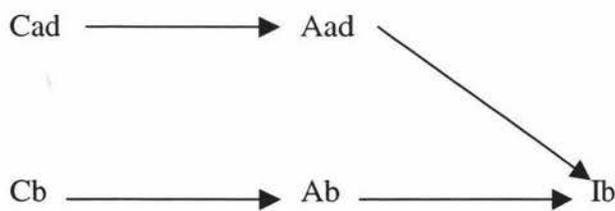
B Dual mediation hypothesis



C Reciprocal mediation hypothesis



D Independent influences hypothesis



Key

Cad represents advertisement cognitions

Cb represents brand cognitions

Aad represents attitude toward advertisement

Ab represents attitude toward brand

Ib represents intention to purchase brand

Source: Mackenzie, Lutz & Belch (1986)

The *affect transfer* hypothesis suggests that consumers' attitudes are transferred from the advertisement to the brand (Moore & Hutchinson 1985; Gardner, 1985; Shimp, 1981; Mitchell & Olson, 1981). This hypothesis has its foundations in classical conditioning and is based on the belief that attitude is transferred to the brand via the feelings that an advertisement elicits. Classical conditioning suggests that these feelings are stored in memory, serve as a conditioning factor and lead to a conditional emotional affect toward the advertised brand (Shimp, 1981). Moore and Hutchinson (1985) suggest that this hypothesis is based on the assumption that brand attitude is a function of information stored in memory, and the more available information is, the more likely it is that it will be used in forming an attitude toward the brand. It is important that this occurs, because most purchase decisions do not occur immediately following exposure to an advertisement. In research conducted by Shimp & Gresham (1985) though, the results failed to provide strong support for this view. They found that only 3 out of 10 of the advertisements tested (15 commercials were shown in total) showed attitude towards the advertisement as a significant independent predictor of brand attitude (Shimp and Gresham, 1985). They suggest that a possible reason for their failure to detect classical conditioning effects was because they tested mature brands with which consumers have considerable experience, and it was more likely that causal flows of influence were from attitude towards the brand to attitude towards the advertisement and not vice versa. Shimp and Gresham (1985) suggest that this hypothesis should not be discounted due to the fact that a further two neutral affect advertisements in addition to the other three supported their hypothesised flow, and suggested that these results (one third of all advertisements) offer support for the hypothesis.

A second hypothesis termed the *dual mediation hypothesis* (Mackenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1986) suggests that attitude toward the advertisement (Aad) influences brand attitude indirectly via its impact on brand cognition (Shimp & Gresham, 1985). This hypothesis suggests that a consumer's affective reaction to the advertisement influences the "propensity to accept the claims made in the advertisement on behalf of the brand" (Mackenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1986, p. 132). Thus, advertisement affect can enhance the persuasive abilities of advertising.

This study by Mackenzie et al. (1986) found that attitude towards the advertisement exerts strong positive influence on attitude toward the brand (p.140) although they note also that there is some degree of shared method variance in their results that may account for a portion of the relationship. This means that advertisements, which generate extreme affective reactions, could influence a portion of the relationship on attitude towards the brand.

Miniard et al. (1990) also supports the mediating role of attitude towards the advertisement on attitude towards the brand. In examining consumer response to soft drinks advertising, they used both images and product relevant copy to establish consumer response. They found that in an advertisement involving an unfamiliar brand, and by manipulating the claims and pictures in the advertisement, there was a strong influence on both attitude towards the advertisement and brand attitude. They concluded that attitude towards the advertisement serves as a significant antecedent of brand attitude, and this was found regardless of which persuasion route was operator (see ELM model of persuasion, Petty & Cacioppo, 1985 & 1986).

Gardner (1985) also found support for this hypothesis. Investigating attitudes towards the advertisement and brand under both brand and non-brand set conditions<sup>3</sup>, it was found that attitude towards the advertisement mediates brand attitude under both set conditions, and the findings indicated that attitude towards the advertisement was a significant mediator of purchase attitudes ( $p < .05$ ) – which suggests that well-liked advertisements may lead to the formation of more favourable brand attitudes than disliked advertisements (Gardner, 1985).

The dual mediation hypothesis was found to be a superior explanation of the causal mediating role of attitude towards the advertisement (Mackenzie, Lutz & Belch 1986).

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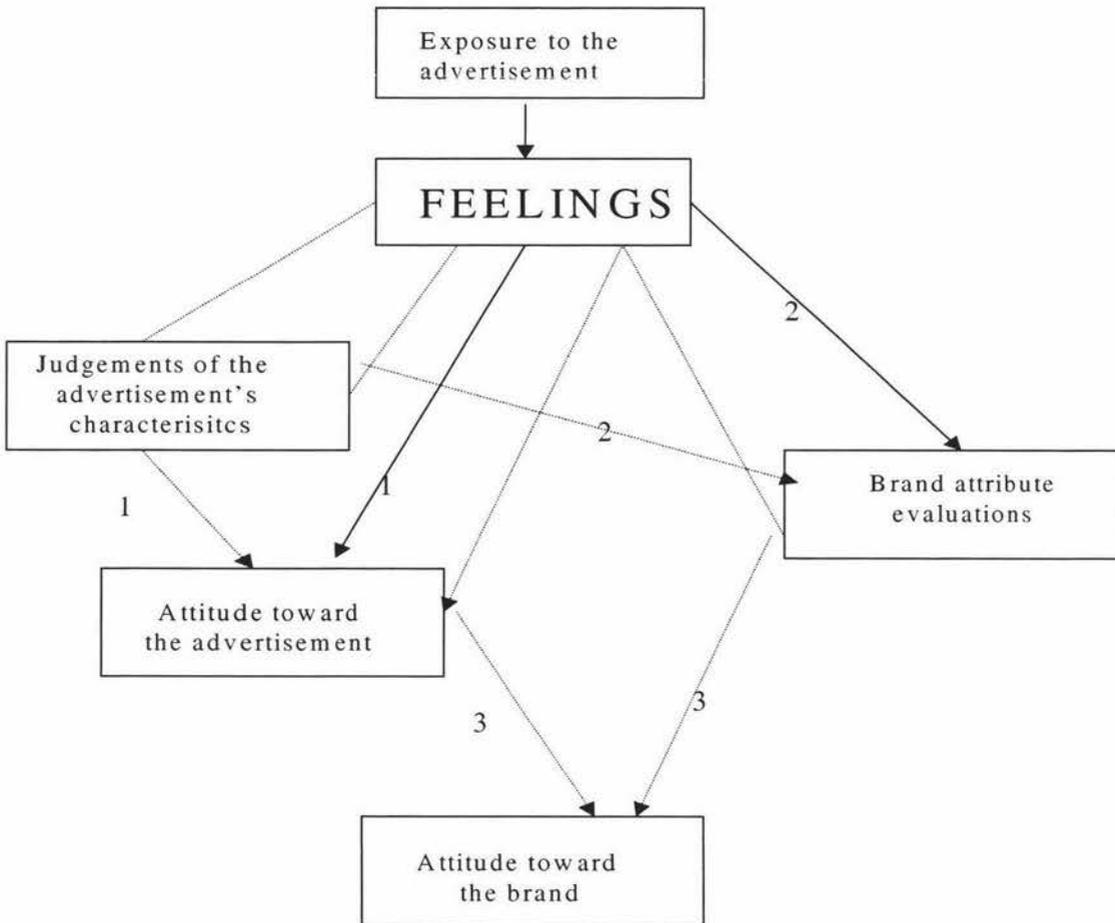
<sup>3</sup> Explanation set is a task upon exposure to the advertisement, brand set is defined as directed towards evaluation of the advertised brand, non-brand set is defined as directed towards some other goal - i.e., evaluation of the advertisement for its own sake).

In particular, they found that attitude towards the advertisement positively influences brand attitude, but also affects the favourability of cognitive responses to the brand. Thus, there are two dimensions to consumers' reactions to advertising, which are termed cognitive evaluation and affective reaction (Mackenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1985). Other researchers agree that a conceptual distinction between *cognitive evaluation* and *affective reaction* can be demonstrated in advertising response (Mackenzie, Lutz & Belch 1985; Thorson, 1991). This issue was discussed in chapter one.

It is possible that these different evaluations of advertising cause influence consumer attitudes and behaviour in different ways. For example, Edell and Burke (1987) found that feelings contributed to predictions of both attitude towards the advertisement and attitude towards the brand - and also that the feelings and judgements (cognitive response) act differently on consumers and may represent "qualitatively different responses to ads" (p. 430). They also support the idea that advertisements influence attitude towards the brand both directly and indirectly.

Figure 4 illustrates how exposures to advertising and the feelings evoked by the advertisement can influence attitudes towards both the advertisement and the brand. This figure suggests that the feelings evoked by an advertisement directly and indirectly impact upon both attitude toward the advertisement and attitude toward the brand.

**Figure 4:** Model of the effect of feelings on attitude toward the brand



**Key**

- > Indicates a direct effect
- > Indicates an indirect effect

**Effect**

- 1. Feelings ———> Aad  
Directly; indirectly via judgements of the characteristics of the advertisement
- 2. Feelings ———> Brand attitude  
-----> Attribute evaluations  
Directly; indirectly via judgements of the characteristics of the advertisement
- 3. Feelings -----> Ab  
Indirectly via attitude towards the advertisement; Indirectly via brand attribute evaluations

Source: Edell & Burke, 1987

A further hypothesis in the literature on attitude is the theory of *reciprocal causation* or the *balance theory* (MacKenzie, Lutz & Belch 1986; Shimp & Gresham, 1985) which suggests the possibility that attitude toward the advertisement (Aad) and attitude toward the brand (Ab) are mutually exclusive. This suggests that 'cognitive consistency' can be accomplished by holding a favourable (or unfavourable) attitude toward both the advertised product and the advertisement itself. This theory predicts that the consumer will attempt to achieve a balanced view by either liking or disliking both the advertisement and the brand (Mackenzie Lutz & Belch, 1986). However, it is also predicted that the strength of the flows between each can vary depending on both consumers and situations (Mackenzie et al. 1986).

Research exploring the influence of attitude towards the advertisement on brand attitudes concentrates on demonstrating that there is a causal relationship between attitude towards the advertisement and attitude towards the brand - although the evidence which suggests there is a significant influence is scant. In one study arguing for a relationship, Shimp and Yokum (cited in Shimp, 1981) found that the more favourable consumer evaluations of the advertisement, the greater the frequency of purchasing the advertised brand. Despite this, the research does not necessarily demonstrate the direction of causation - which is a limitation in much of attitude research. Thus, it cannot be guaranteed that the favourable consumer evaluations actually caused higher purchase frequency. The alternative weak theory, that usage causes attitudes, remains equally plausible.

While there is a considerable body of literature that examines how attitude towards the advertisement might influence brand attitude in pre-test situations, there is no evidence that it occurs in 'real life' scenarios. It is possible that the attitudinal responses in test situations may be different because information is processed differently in test cases compared with at 'point of sale' (Lutz, 1985). This is because test cases present the advertisement in isolation from other factors that may influence purchase decisions, such as price, shelf height, packaging and promotional activity in the product category. Consumers in real life situations may also have been exposed to advertisements for other brands, to prior experience and the experiences of others.

Excluding these variables in test cases makes it easy to measure attitudinal response to an advertisement and resulting brand preference, but they do not account for other variables that affect the purchase behaviour of consumers. Therefore, it is not possible to rely on results obtained in these situations as being necessarily generalisable to 'real life' purchase situations.

### **3.3 THE ROLE OF ADVERTISING IN PERSUASION**

A further challenge to the strong theory's relevance is whether consumers' behaviour can actually be changed or altered through advertising. While the strong theory suggests that advertising is persuasive in that it can convert consumers from one brand to another (Jones, 1991), Ehrenberg (1974) argues that advertising merely reinforces existing purchase behaviour (Ehrenberg, 1974) and improves consumer salience of the brand (Ehrenberg et al, 1997). This view suggests that advertising can not change consumers' behaviour, rather, it maintains existing behaviour.

Some researchers suggest that consumers have a repertoire or a consideration set of brands (Ehrenberg et al.1997; Ehrenberg, 1974; Jones, 1991), which forms the basis of their purchase decisions. Ehrenberg et al. (1997) suggest that advertising is more likely to influence consumers' consideration sets, which thus improves their propensity to purchase that brand (Ehrenberg et al. 1997). A possible reason for this is that consumers tend to be less involved in brand choice decisions (compared with being highly involved with the product category), so that the role of advertising is to create awareness of the brand so that it nudges purchase, rather than to convert non-users of the product category (Ehrenberg, 1992). Therefore, according to the weak theory, the role of advertising is to improve the salience of the brand so that it gains inclusion in the consumers' consideration set rather than to persuade them to purchase the brand. These sentiments are quite similar, and it could be argued that the outcome is the same. However, the key difference between the two theories is that the strong theory contends that consumers' attitudes change prior to purchase, while the weak theory suggests that attitude change does not necessarily occur prior to inclusion in consumers' consideration sets.

It is thought also that advertising could work in a persuasive way for high involvement products and new brands (Jones 1991). In this case, a consumer would form attitudes about the new brand and purchase the brand. Although Ehrenberg (1992) contends that, even when new brands are promoted, consumers rarely make a new trial purchase.

The underlying view of consumer choice in the weak theory is that consumers have “certain propensities to buy certain brands....which are largely stable” (Ehrenberg, 1992, p.168). This implies that a consumer’s consideration set is largely stable, but that awareness of the brand through advertising may ensure that a brand is included in the consumer’s brand repertoire. Therefore, the weak theory rejects the notion of advertising being persuasive in consumer choice in all buying situations.

Overall, questions surrounding the persuasive ability and role of advertising remain unresolved in the literature. Ehrenberg (1992) argues that a major problem with the strong theory of advertising is that it does not consider the role of repeat purchase, which is argued to be the only guarantee of a brand’s success (Ehrenberg, 1992) and it is the role of advertising to reinforce these repeat purchase decisions. Indeed, it is suggested that the only predictor of long-term behaviour is the longer-term behaviour itself (Foxall, 1983). This view suggests that the role of advertising in influencing behaviour is limited, and that the key influencer of behaviour is prior behaviour. On this basis, the role of advertising would be to reinforce existing behaviour as suggested by the weak theory.

### **3.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR LIKEABILITY AND HOW IT FITS INTO BOTH THEORIES**

The strong and weak theories present different views of the role that advertising plays in the development of consumers’ attitudes and on the ability of an advertisement to persuade consumers - which therefore suggest different roles for the advertisement itself.

The strong theory posits that an advertisement can influence brand attitude and be persuasive, thus, the content of the advertisement and the general likeability of the advertisement are important - since the more likeable an advertisement is, the more likely it is to be able to influence a consumer's purchase behaviour (Biel 1990; Haley & Baldinger, 1991).

However, the content and likeability of the advertisement become less important under the weak theory of advertising because consumers' attitudes are more likely to be influenced by existing purchase behaviour rather than by the advertisement itself. In this situation, the role of advertising in developing brand attitudes is limited, although it could be argued that the salience of a brand is improved by likeable advertising, and that likeable advertising is an important maintenance factor in brand salience.

Thus, these two different views on advertising content provide inconclusive direction for advertisers who are developing new advertisements. They are meaningful only if one subscribes to a particular theory of how advertising works.

There is a growing amount of support in the literature for the weak theory of advertising (Jones 1991) which means that advertising likeability becomes less important in effective advertising, and that other marketing activities - such as publicity, sponsorship and promotions - as well as advertising should be emphasised, as it is the combination of all marketing activities that maintains brand salience (Miller & Berry, 1998).

### **3.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Many advertising researchers argue that advertising works by influencing consumers' behaviour through the formation of attitudes (Joyce, 1967; Jones, 1990; Ehrenberg, 1974). This belief is demonstrated by models of persuasion such as AIDA (Joyce, 1967), which suggest that consumers sequentially process an advertisement and that an attitude shift is required prior to purchasing (Miller & Berry, 1998).

Alternative models such as the ATR model (Ehrenberg 1974) suggest that consumers do not form strong convictions about brands and that attitudes do not necessarily precede behaviour and posit that it is possible for behaviour to influence attitude.

There are several criticisms of the strong theory of advertising. These mainly question the assumed causal relationship between *attitude* and *behaviour* and the role advertising has in stimulating persuasion. These arguments are based on the fact that there is no evidence to suggest that advertising works by any strong form of persuasion or manipulation (Ehrenberg, 1974).

There is an extensive body of research supporting the belief that advertising influences attitude, however, there is limited evidence supporting the causal relationship between attitude and behaviour. Thus, the arguments about how advertising works have not been resolved in the literature. Consequently, it has not become any easier for advertisers to determine the most effective content for an advertisement. The literature suggests that likeability of an advertisement enhances the persuasive powers of an advertisement and therefore its effectiveness. The advertisement content, therefore, becomes important - as the more liked an advertisement is, the greater the likelihood is that a consumer's behaviour can be changed.

The content of the advertisement becomes less important if, as the weak theory suggests, attitudes do not influence behaviour. These differing views on how advertising, and therefore likeability, might work mean that there is no overall direction for the content of an advertisement. Rather, advertisers' belief in one or the other theory will determine the content of an advertisement.

Thus, the literature provides guidance for advertising content in terms of the two different perspectives about how advertising works, but does not provide conclusive evidence for either theory. Jones (1991) suggests that market research is necessary to help illuminate both the strong and weak theories, and this requirement is still valid - along with explicit evidence providing the context for how advertising works from new products through to higher involvement classes.

The challenge for advertising theorists is to test both theories in order to develop more definitive direction for advertising content, so that advertisers can develop more effective advertising in the future.

## CHAPTER FOUR: LIKEABILITY

Advertising likeability has been highlighted in the literature as a key indicator of advertising effectiveness (Haley & Baldinger, 1991). However, *likeability* as a construct is not fully understood nor is it clear what relationship it has with other constructs such as *attitude* and *behaviour* (Kennedy, 1999).

This chapter examines the attributes associated with likeability, how likeability is measured and the role it is thought to play in advertising effectiveness. Particular attention is paid to the Copy Research Validity Project (Haley & Baldinger, 1991), and to the criticisms levelled at this.

This chapter begins by locating likeability within the models of behaviour that were discussed in chapter two and also examines the attributes associated with likeability. This chapter then reviews advertising theory in relation to likeability in order to establish how likeability works to enhance advertising effectiveness, and thus how likeability is measured in an advertising context.

In relation to the impact of likeability on persuasion, the CRVP (Haley & Baldinger, 1991) is examined in detail due to the contribution that this research has made to understanding of likeability and its effects on persuasion. The criticisms levelled at the CRVP research are also discussed in order to understand the key implications of likeability for advertising effectiveness.

Finally, this chapter discusses the implications of likeability research for advertising from both a content and a measurement perspective. The chapter concludes that likeability is an important component of advertising effectiveness, although, the extent of this must be tempered by the fact that there is little empirical evidence that likeability of an advertisement influences purchase behaviour.

#### **4.1 WHAT IS LIKEABILITY?**

As the literature has developed, the debate over cognitive and affective responses to advertising has intensified. Conventional approaches to advertising posit that cognitive information processing dominates the way consumers evaluate advertising. As advertising literature has evolved, affective responses to advertising are being considered as an alternative, and perhaps a more enduring, way of effective advertising (Lutz, 1985, Edell & Burke, 1987).

Cognitive processing models assume that consumers' decisions are made on a rational level, while affective models focus on the affective responses - the emotions that advertisements may evoke. According to models of affect, consumers form their preferences on the basis of elements such as liking, and feelings and emotions induced by the advertisement, rather than on the product/brand attribute information (Batra & Ray, 1986; Shimp, 1986; Srull, 1983; Zajonc & Markus, 1982). Affective responses to advertising can be further classified into two types: one leads to the formation of an attitude toward the brand, and one leads to the formation of an attitude toward the advertisement, or an expression of the likeability of the advertisement itself (Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Shimp, 1981).

Likeability of advertising has been a long-held objective for advertisers, as it seems obvious that, if an advertisement is liked, there is a greater chance that a consumer will remember it and act on it. Some researchers have gone on to argue that consumers form a positive attitude toward the brand because they like the advertising (Murphy & Tang, 1998). There is an underlying implication that consumers' behaviour could also change because they like the advertising and, as a result, will be more likely to purchase the advertised brand.

Literature exploring likeability concentrates on the attitudes formed as a result of advertising - rather than on the behavioural aspects of likeability. In particular, researchers have argued that likeability is an important causal mediator of advertising's impact on brand liking (Thorson, 1991; Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Shimp, 1981).

Researchers first suggested a link between likeability and persuasion when it was found that “people who liked a commercial ‘a lot’ were twice as likely to be persuaded by it than people who simply felt neutral towards the advertising” (Biel & Bridgwater, 1990, p. 38). Biel (1990) concluded also that the more people like an advertisement, the more they are persuaded by it. However, it was the conclusion that likeability was a better predictor of sales than any other measure (Haley & Baldinger, 1991), which provided the strongest evidence in the literature that likeability enhanced the persuasive appeal of an advertisement.

The CRVP study (Haley & Baldinger, 1991) concluded that there was a strong relationship between the likeability of the copy and its effect on sales, and that overall attitude toward the commercial was better than any other single measure in discriminating between ‘winners from losers’ in terms of sales effectiveness.

The relationship between *likeability* and *persuasion* and *likeability* and *attitude* has become one of the most debated issues within likeability literature. It is suggested that likeability plays a key role in determining both attitudes towards an advertisement and subsequent behaviour (Biel & Bridgwater, 1991; Thorson, 1991; Haley & Baldinger, 1990). While there is no consensus in the literature as to the causal direction of attitude and behaviour, the possibility that this occurs forms the basis of debate in advertising literature (see chapter 2).

A key assumed benefit of likeability is its ability to enhance the persuasive nature of an advertisement, thus, there are several attempts within the literature to define the construct of *likeability* (Wells, 1971; Schlinger, 1979; Biel & Bridgwater, 1990, Aaker & Stayman, 1990).

Table 2 reviews five separate studies and their conclusions about the attributes that constitute likeability (cited in Leather, McKechnie & Amirkhanian, 1994).

**Table 2: Likeability Attributes**

| 1971 Wells et al. | 1979 Schlinger                          | 1981 Aaker & Bruzzone | 1990 Biel & Bridgwater | 1990 Aaker & Stayman                                |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------|------------------------|---|
| Humorous          | Entertaining                            | Entertaining          | Ingenuity              | Amusing/clever                                      |
| Relevant          | Relevant                                | Relevant              | Energy                 | Informative/<br>effective                           |
| Irritating        | Alienating                              | Irritating            | Rubs wrong<br>way      | Irritating / silly                                  |
| Sensual           | Empathetic<br>Familiar<br><br>Confusing | Warm                  | Warm                   | Warm<br>Familiar<br>Believable<br>Confusing<br>Dull |
| Vigorous          | Brand<br>reinforcing                    |                       |                        | Lively  |
| Unique            |   |                       |                        |   |

Source: Leather, McKechnie and Amir Khanian, 1994

In addition, du Plessis (1994) believes that likeability can be created by high entertainment, empathy or relevant news, but that it is negatively influenced by familiarity, confusion or alienation.

While a common definition has not emerged in the literature, there are common themes in likeability research, which suggest likeability comprises dimensions of entertainment, relevance, warmth/empathy and non-irritation (Leather, McKechnie & Amir Khanian, 1994) or in other words, reflects a “global positive response” to advertising (Dubitsky & Walker, 1994, p.18).

However, there is also some confusion in the literature about the dimensions of likeability (Kennedy & Romaniuk, 1999). For example, Hollis (1995) argues that *liking* is just one facet of a more complicated construct of *involvement*. Hollis (1995) suggests that *involvement* is a critical factor governing the communication efficiency of an advertisement as distinct from advertising effectiveness. Rather than likeability, Hollis (1995) suggests that consumers' involvement with the advertisement is predictive of whether an advertisement is remembered. Hollis (1995) found that involvement could be separated from *enjoyment* (a surrogate for *likeability*) in examining consumer response to advertising. In particular, Hollis (1995) found a high correlation between involvement and the level of awareness generated for advertising, and suggests that this confirms that involvement has a role to play in advertising.

It is possible that the construct of *involvement* does influence consumer response. In fact, consumer behaviour literature suggests that consumers' level of involvement does contribute to the decision to cognitively process information (see Chapter One). On the other hand, other researchers suggest that the level of involvement is more of a link between *liking* and *persuasion* (Biel & Bridgwater, 1990). Rather than *liking* being a separate construct as suggested by Hollis (1995), it is argued that *involvement* is influenced by *liking* an advertisement and therefore enhances persuasion (Biel & Bridgwater, 1990). There is no empirical evidence for either of these views.

Du Plessis (1994b) believes that *involvement* is one dimension of *likeability* suggesting that the degree of likeability of an advertisement is dependent to some extent, on consumers' level of involvement. However, Thorson (1991) argues that likeability affects brand attitude (and therefore persuasion) under virtually all involvement conditions and likeability is an important determinant of an advertisement's impact regardless of the involvement level of the product.

All of these arguments suggest that there is some kind of relationship between *likeability* and *involvement*, and that involvement could play a role in determining the likeability of an advertisement.

However, this relationship has not been examined explicitly and therefore the extent of the relationship between the two constructs is ambiguous and requires further examination.

Researchers contend also that it is important to distinguish *likeability* from pure entertainment value. While it is commonly believed that likeability implies 'entertainment' or humour (du Plessis, 1994a), consumers' responses to questions about likeability come just as much from the persuasiveness or informative nature of the advertisement as from its entertainment value (Greene 1992). Greene (1992) found that adjectives associated with likeability were generally associated with the communication or information ability of the advertisement, rather than those concerned with entertainment values. This means that consumers responded to the advertisement's content rather than to its overall form (Greene, 1992).

Further research has found that advertisements that were considered entertaining were not getting high likeability scores, and others, which were not rated entertaining, were achieving high likeability ratings (du Plessis 1994a). This implies that the rating of *entertaining* did not alone constitute likeability and that, if an advertisement is entertaining, then this does not necessarily mean it will be likeable. While Hollis (1995) suggests that the measurement of *enjoyment* could be substituted for *likeability*, it could be argued that the construct of enjoyment is potentially measuring different attributes from those of *likeability* as defined earlier.

As suggested by Greene (1995), likeable advertisements include other attributes besides entertainment, and this could also be argued in the case of enjoyment. Similar sentiments on the entertainment value of an advertisement were expressed in the CRVP Validity project where the authors suggested that "likeable ads are just as apt to be informative as they are to be entertaining" (Haley & Baldinger, 1991, p. 29) and, that commercial liking of an advertisement goes far beyond mere entertainment (Biel & Bridgwater, 1990).

Greene (1995) suggests that there is almost a preconditioned belief to think of likeability as entertainment and further, that entertaining advertisements lead to more effective advertising.

The literature suggests that developing advertisements that encompass other attributes of likeability are just as important as the entertainment value of an advertisement.

According to the research presented, the content of an advertisement should constitute elements of liking such as *relevant information* and *empathy* as well as endeavouring to be *entertaining*. Advertisements that are perceived to be entertaining, but which do not contain other elements of likeability may not be effective in generating acceptable consumer responses.

Finally, the literature posits that *likeability* is a function of product category.

Researchers have found that consumer responses to advertising are more positive in the area of fast moving consumer goods (FMCG). Biel and Bridgwater (1990) found that food and beverage commercials were better liked than other categories. A possible reason for this is that evaluation of product attributes in FMCG categories is less important, and, therefore, consumers are more likely to respond to the emotional component of an advertisement, i.e. the likeability of the advertisement (Biel & Bridgwater, 1990).

Research in the area of likeability has concentrated on FMCG categories, so it is difficult to judge whether or not this finding is correct. There are suggestions in advertising literature that advertising is more effective in FMCG categories (Jones, 1991), however, there is no evidence to suggest that likeability works in these categories only.

The literature highlights a common misconception that *entertainment* equates to *likeability* in advertising and suggests that there are several attributes that constitute likeability. This has implications in the development of an advertisement where the content of an advertisement needs to be meaningful and relevant as well as entertaining in order to achieve high likeability scores. In addition, the content should not create negative perceptions such as irritation in order to maintain likeability. Overall, the literature suggests that it is important not to rely on one component of likeability in either the development or the measurement of advertisements, as the effectiveness of the advertisement may be compromised.

## 4.2 HOW LIKEABILITY WORKS

Researchers exploring likeability follow a traditional view of advertising. For example, they suggest that likeability works in a cognitive paradigm; consumers respond to likeable advertisements by paying attention to them and comprehending them, which in turn leads to greater awareness of the brand, or to a change in purchase behaviour (Biel, 1990; Biel & Bridgwater, 1991; Walker & Dubitsky, 1994;).

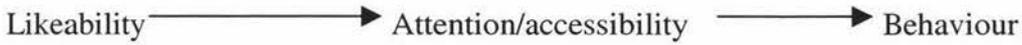
The literature suggests that it is reasonable to expect that brand choice is primarily driven by consumers' beliefs and attitudes which they associate with the brand. The weak theory of advertising suggests that likeability increases the salience of a brand, and therefore that this awareness would be used in brand choice should the advertisement be recalled. The strong theory posits that likeability directly affects a consumer's brand choice by changing the attitude of the consumer toward the brand.

There are a number of hypotheses that attempt to explain how likeability works (Biel, 1990; Walker & Dubitsky, 1994; Kennedy & Romaniuk, 1999) however, there are two dominant views explaining how *liking* might contribute to advertising effectiveness (Walker & Dubitsky 1994).

The first view relates to the amount of attention consumers' pay to a likeable advertisement and their response to it. While still cognitive in nature, it does not make any assumptions about attitude to behaviour links (Kennedy 1997). According to Biel (1990), if consumers like the advertisement, they are more likely to notice and pay attention to it. This leads to enhanced awareness or salience, which - in turn - reinforces the brand to current users who repeat-purchase it. This view follows the weak theory of advertising as discussed in chapter two, whereby *salience* and *awareness* are purported to be the main outcomes of advertising.

The hypothesis that likeable advertisements gain better attention suggests that through likeable advertisements, consumers pay more attention and would therefore be better able to recall and recognise the advertisement (Biel, 1990). Consequently, the advertisement is likely to be more effective in driving sales.

This relationship can be described as:



Source: (Kennedy and Romaniuk, 1999).

While the literature suggests that there is a relationship between advertising and attention / accessibility, only tenuous evidence is outlined in support of this relationship. If *liking* is an indicator of advertising effectiveness, as suggested by the CRVP research, (Haley & Baldinger, 1991), then a significant relationship between liking and recall would be expected. It would be expected that likeability improves attention and accessibility and therefore, the memorability of the advertisement, which is measured by recall.

Attention is generally measured by testing recall of the advertisement, which, at its basic level, is measuring the memorability of the advertisement. Previous work (Walker & Von Gonten, 1989) has established that recall of an advertisement is dependent on two elements: attention to the advertisement at the time of exposure, and linkage between the advertisement itself and the advertised brand (Walker & Dubitsky, 1994). While *recall* is conceded to be a necessary condition for advertising effectiveness (Dubow 1994 cited in Stone et al. 2000), some researchers have argued that recall of, or attention to, an advertisement does not guarantee either persuasion or advertising effectiveness (Beattie & Mitchell, 1985) and this argument questions the link between *likeability*, *attention* and *behaviour*.

Despite this, there is a degree of support for the link between *liking* and response measures such as *recall* and *persuasion*. Walker & Dubitsky (1994) found that “at the very least, ads that are better liked are more likely to be noticed and remembered” (p. 16). In particular, their results showed a correlation of *likeability* with *recall* and *attention*. This research evaluated two primary copy-test measures, which were *recall* and *persuasion*. Through the use of the five-point scale (Biel & Bridgwater, 1991; Haley & Baldinger, 1991), the likeability of a series of advertisements was established which was then used to examine the effect of likeability on various response measures.

The research found correlations of .41 for measured attention and .27 for recall, suggesting that advertisements that are liked are more likely to be attended to and remembered - although the correlation scores are not necessarily conclusive. However, the same research found less support for the link between *likeability* and *persuasion*, as correlations were high for purchase intent both for pre-exposure levels as well as post-exposure levels. This suggests that prior brand attitude had as much to do with the level of persuasion indicated, as did exposure to the advertisement. It is possible that prior brand attitude influences the degree to which an advertisement is liked, which could have an effect of improving the likeability scores for brands that are liked. "It is less clear whether liking is associated with incremental persuasiveness above norm or only with favourable brand attitudes conducive to persuasion" (Walker & Dubitsky, 1994, p. 15).

Further research in the area of *liking* and *recall* found that people were more likely to recall a liked advertisement than a disliked one, and that recall is related to the memorability of the advertisement itself irrespective of prior brand attitudes (Stone, Besser & Lewis, 2000).

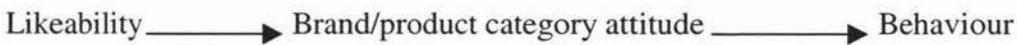
However, Kennedy (1999) – while he concluded that there is no clear relationship between likeability and recall - does not discount the idea of likeability being a 'hygiene' factor, in that likeability is a precursor, but not necessarily an indicator, of advertisement effectiveness.

Kennedy (1999) explored the relationship between *likeability* and *attention* and found support for the notion that liking and attention are related. She concluded that attention relates to an increase in brand salience, which - in turn - influences consumers' purchase behaviour.

Brand salience relates to how many people are aware of the brand, have it in their consideration set, buy it or use it and so on (Ehrenberg, Barnard & Scriven 1997). Some researchers suggest that it is the level of salience that a brand has, rather than a consumer's attitude or feeling towards the brand, that can be developed, maintained and / or nudged by advertising (Ehrenberg et al. 1997).

In this respect, *likeability* may increase *salience for a brand* due to the appealing nature of the advertisement, which leaves a longer-term memory trace for the brand. Thus, the brand is added to the consumer's consideration set of brands and there is a higher probability of purchase. This is the relationship to which Kennedy (1999) alludes to when suggesting that *liking* improves attention to an advertisement and thus leads to *brand salience*.

A second hypothesis relates to the theory of 'affect transfer' that suggests that if viewers experience positive feelings toward the advertising, then they will associate those feelings with the advertiser or the advertised brand (Walker & Dubitsky, 1994). This relationship is illustrated by Kennedy and Romaniuk (1999) as:



This view suggests that consumers consciously evaluate an advertisement, although their responses may be both affective and cognitive in nature. The positive feelings evoked by the advertising 'rub off' on the brand (Biel 1990) and this results in positive attitudes towards the brand which encourage purchase behaviour (Thorson, 1991; Biel, 1990; Walker & Dubitsky, 1994). This second theory follows the strong theory of advertising which suggests that advertising can lead to more favourable brand beliefs (McKenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1986) and therefore may have a more persuasive effect on choice outcome.

Kennedy (1999) found little empirical evidence to suggest that there are relationships between *likeability* and *attitude* and *persuasion*, and argued that there is no evidence to suggest that attitudinal transfer occurs. While Appel (1992) agreed with the CRVP findings, and found similar significant relationships between liking and disliking of an advertisement and the persuasion scores, Hollis (1995) argued that, while liking may contribute to the overall effectiveness of the advertisement, other factors - such as involvement in the product category - are just as important.

In addition to these dominant views of how likeability works, there are several other hypotheses describing how likeability might contribute to advertising effectiveness.

According to Biel (1990) it is possible that advertisements that are liked get better exposure. That is, consumers are less likely to avoid or 'zap' a commercial that is liked, instead, they are more likely to process the information being presented in the advertisement. This hypothesis is similar to the first, in that once an advertisement has been processed, it is more likely that the information is retrieved from memory and acted upon - thus enhancing awareness of the advertisement and its effectiveness.

Biel (1990) suggests also that likeability is a gatekeeper to further processing. Consumers are more likely to continue and process an advertisement that is liked more fully than an advertisement that is disliked. This hypothesis implies that likeability acts as a determinant of whether or not the consumer continues to process the advertisement. If the advertisement is liked, then it is more likely to be processed than if it is disliked.

A third hypothesis is that advertisements are seen as brand personality attributes, particularly where functional characteristics of different brands are perceived to be very similar (Biel 1990). The advertisement itself constitutes part of consumers' perception of a brand, which implies that a likeable advertisement can differentiate a product from other products in the same category, just as much as a physical product attribute can. According to this hypothesis, it may be possible for a likeable advertisement to be the differentiating factor in competitive product categories, especially in FMCG categories.

A further hypothesis suggests that liking of an advertisement acts as a surrogate for cognitive processing (Biel, 1990). This idea relates to cognitive response literature and suggests that when consumers actively process messages, they are more likely to act on them when they are positively received. Accordingly, a likeable advertisement can evoke positive responses from consumers in the form of emotional connections that are more likely to influence purchase behaviour. This hypothesis places *likeability* in a cognitive paradigm, which suggests that likeable advertisements influence consumers' cognitive processing of information.

A final hypothesis suggests that liking evokes a gratitude response from consumers (Biel, 1990).

This hypothesis is not very clear - although one possible interpretation is that consumers who are 'entertained' by an advertisement feel a sense of obligation, which increases the chances that they will buy the brand. This hypothesis has not been explored further in the literature. There is no support therefore for this hypothesis.

### 4.3 LIKEABILITY AND PERSUASION

The research maintains that likeable advertising has positive effects on consumers' attitude towards both an advertisement and a brand, and there is growing evidence in the literature that likeability heightens the persuasive appeal of an advertisement. Some studies suggest that likeability is an antecedent to attitude toward the advertisement and a mediator of attitude towards the brand (Moore and Hutchinson, 1985), therefore likeability is an important mediator of message effects and a powerful predictor of advertisement impact (Thorson, 1991).

It is contended also that *liking* is highly correlated with *persuasion* (Greene, 1992). Greene (1992) found that the measure of "brand rating" as described in the CRVP study<sup>4</sup> had a positive correlation of +.66 with liking, indicating a significant relationship between these two constructs. The association between likeability and persuasion is best supported in the conclusions from the CRVP study (Haley & Baldinger, 1991), who found that likeability was a better predictor of sales than any other measure. These results suggest that likeability of an advertisement had a significant influence on consumers' purchase behaviour, as likeability of an advertisement predicted sales more frequently than did any other measure.

In this project, six different copytesting methods were examined to determine which measures<sup>5</sup> predicted differences in sales for paired commercials.

Table 3 illustrates each measure and the percentage of time that 'winning' commercials<sup>6</sup> were chosen by the respondents.

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4 Brand Rating in the CRVP study was determined by the question "based on the commercial you just saw, how would you rate the brand in the commercial on an overall basis" and using a 6 point rating scale from poor to excellent.

In order to determine the impact of each pair of advertisements, the respondents were asked to rate the advertisements on six general types as discussed above. *Persuasion* measured brand choice and purchase interest, and examined overall brand rating. *Saliency* measured top of mind awareness as well as unaided and aided awareness. *Recall* measured the recall from a number of different cues such as product category cue and brand cue as well as the full set of cues. *Communication* examined the main point of the advertisement, advertisement situation and visuals and the overall main point of the communication. *Commercial reaction or liking* examined whether it was one of the best advertisements seen recently as well as whether the advertisement was liked or disliked, and *commercial diagnostics* examined the positive and negative aspects of the advertisement such as whether it was informative and enjoyable or not informative, and boring.

The results show that overall liking of a commercial was the best predictor of that commercial's achieving high sales.

**Table 3: Percentage of the time that winning commercials were picked**

| Measure                                    | Percentage of the time that winning commercials were picked (80% confidence level) |
|--|--|
| Impression of commercial (liking, average) | 60%  |
| Recall from product category view          | 47%  |
| Main point of communication                | 40%  |
| Overall brand rating                       | 37%  |
| Top of mind awareness (Saliency)           | 32%  |

Source: Haley and Baldinger, 1991

<sup>5</sup> Measures examined were: persuasion; brand saliency; recall; communications (playback); overall communication reaction (liking) and commercial diagnostics.

<sup>6</sup> Defined in the research as commercials that were producing significantly more sales than the other (Haley & Baldinger, 1991).

The research, therefore, strongly suggests that advertisements that are liked outsell those that are not (Haley & Baldinger, 1991).

A major criticism of the CRVP research was the number of advertisements tested (Rossiter & Eagleson, 1994; Appel, 1992). The research examined five pairs of TV advertisements, thus Rossiter and Eagleson (1994) argued that the small number of pairs “leaves acceptance of these measures as a risky proposition” (p.28).

Haley and Baldinger (1994) agree that the principal limitation of the research is the sample size of ten commercials, but acknowledge that the research represents a sizeable effort. Indeed, Rossiter and Eagleson (1994) acknowledge that the CRVP study is the most comprehensive investigation of the predictive validity of TV commercials ever conducted. Nevertheless, they query the robustness of the conclusions drawn.

A second criticism of the study arises from the statistical techniques used in the analysis. Rossiter and Eagleson (1994) believed that the research results purposely avoided ‘rigorous scientific testing’ in favour of using more basic statistical methods. In the CRVP study, two different decision rules were used to decide on the number of correct predictions for each pair of advertisements. The pragmatic rule took the higher scoring commercial for each measure as the predicted ‘winner’, while the scientific rule involved a computation of a *t*-statistic between the means and the winner was the commercial which had a sufficiently higher score on each measure than the other, which was detectable by a *t*-test at the 80% confidence level.

Rossiter and Eagleson (1994) suggest that these results are subject to random error and that the CRVP study does not make sufficient allowance for this randomness. Further, it is suggested that the results are not precise because there were too few tests performed on each measure. These factors have led to “superficial and misleading interpretations, especially regarding which measure or measures did best and regarding which measures fared poorly” (Rossiter & Eagleson, 1994, p.24).

Haley and Baldinger (1994) defended their choice of technique and argued that their intention was to “strike a balance between clear communication and statistical rigor with emphasis on the former” (p. 33). This would be an acceptable argument if using different statistical techniques resulted in the same conclusions.

In fact, re-analysis of the data from Rossiter and Eagleson (1994) found that 4 of the 7 single item measures they identified (‘liking’ (average), ‘liking’ (top box), ‘one of the best’ (average) ‘this advertising is enjoyable’) involved *likeability*. Rossiter and Eagleson (1994) used a 90/50/10 decision rule, which adopted a 90% predictive accuracy standard, which specifies a minimum standard of predictive accuracy of 90%, a 10% confidence level of significance (compared with 20% in the CRVP) and rejected any measure that did not achieve at least 50% accuracy. Rossiter and Eagleson (1994) re-evaluated the 35 copy testing measures in the CRVP study and found that only 7 single item measures survived their decision rule. In addition, five two-variable measures also survived the decision rule. These measures are listed in Table 4.

**Table 4: Re-evaluation of CRVP copy test measures**

| Measure   | Provisionally accepted | Rejected | Number of tests (K) |
|---|------------------------|----------|---------------------|
| Single item measures  | YES                    | NO       | 19                  |
| Overall brand rating (average)                                    |                        |          |                     |
| One of the best (average)   | YES                    | NO       | 15                  |
| Liking (average)  | YES                    | NO       | 15                  |
| Liking (top box)  | YES                    | NO       | 15                  |
| Recall brand from product category cue                            | YES                    | NO       | 15                  |
| Told me something new about the product that I didn't know before | YES                    | NO       | 15                  |
| This advertising is enjoyable                                     | YES                    | NO       | 15                  |
| Top of mind awareness: pre/post                                   | YES                    | YES      | 5                   |
| Definitely will buy: pre/post                                     | YES                    | YES      | 5                   |
| Two item multiplicative measures                                  | YES                    | NO       | 15                  |
| Recall brand from PC Cue x liking (average)                       |                        |          |                     |
| Recall brand from PC cue x main point                             | YES                    | NO       | 15                  |
| Recall brand from PC cue x brand rating                           | YES                    | NO       | 15                  |
| Not boring x brand rating (average)                               | YES                    | NO       | 15                  |
| Liking (average) x brand rating (average)                         | YES                    | NO       | 15                  |

Source: Rossiter and Eagleson, 1994

Rossiter and Eagleson (1994) suggest that these results indicate that it is not justifiable to conclude that *liking* is the single best measure, rather it was among the best. The authors go on to say that if the re-analysis had adhered to a 10% criterion, then all the observed best measures in the CRVP report would have been rejected.

These arguments are difficult to defend in the absence of the data used to conclude these results. Rossiter and Eagleson (1994) do not present the results in a form that can be re-analysed, and therefore it is difficult to assess the work they concluded. On the basis of the results presented and the number of *likeability* measures that survived their decision rule, it could be argued that even upon re-analysis, *likeability* remained an important factor.

Another factor in the critical analysis of this research is the fact that the research itself was retrospective in the sense that it measured behaviour that had already occurred in an existing market with existing sales results. While the copy was tested in areas where it had not been seen before, no new products were included. This could be seen as a somewhat soft measure of sales, that of claimed retrospective purchase behaviour in the respect that the likeability measure predicted sales of products that were already in the market place. Consumers may have already had prior experience with the brands advertised and this may have contributed to the likeability scores recorded as well as to the other measures of effectiveness. Therefore, it cannot be assumed these same results could be replicated either for new advertisements or for new products.

While the criticisms of the study draw attention to the statistical rigour of the research and the other limitations discussed, the second analysis conducted by Rossiter and Eagleson (1994) found different emphasis on measures of likeability and these results point to the need to explore likeability further, rather than to reject the validity of the original conclusions entirely.

Other research in likeability (Biel & Bridgwater, 1991; Greene, 1992) also deliberately chose advertisements that were rated considerably differently with respect to their likeability. While this is acceptable from a research point of view in order to be able to determine the likeability effect on attitudes and persuasion, it may not necessarily reflect a real world situation. It is possible that purchase decisions based on two brand alternatives are not so clear-cut (in terms of the advertisement) in real life situations.

There is a considerable amount of research that examines *likeability*, however, the majority of it relates to the attributes that make up *likeability* rather than to its effects on consumer choice behaviour.

Despite the amount of research examining *likeability*, “it remains difficult to generalise about liking from studies using different methods and measures, some of which may not even tap into the same underlying construct” (Walker & Dubitsky, 1994, p10).

#### 4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

On the whole, there is a lack of empirical evidence in the literature supporting the idea that *likeability* is an indicator of advertisement effectiveness. Despite the lack of evidence for *likeability*, there is a general suggestion in the literature that it is, at the very least, an important component of advertising effectiveness.

Overall, the literature presents more examination of what constitutes *likeability* (du Plessis, 1994a, 1994b; Aaker & Stayman, 1990; Leather et al. 1994; Greene, 1992; Thorson, 1991; Biel & Bridgwater, 1990) than it provides support for its impact on advertising effectiveness.

It can be seen from this concentration of literature, there is a degree of consistency in this area. Common themes included in the definition of *likeability* are *entertaining*, *relevant*, *warm/empathetic* and *not irritating* (Leather et al. 1994). In addition, it is generally accepted that measurement of *likeability* can be achieved by using the 5-point scale first presented by Haley and Baldinger (1991) and this is demonstrated by the number of studies which have adopted this measurement tool (Leather et al. 1994; Kennedy, 1999; Biel & Bridgwater, 1990).

Two dominant approaches have emerged to explain how *likeability* contributes to advertising effectiveness. Both are cognitive in nature, but each posits a different route of persuasion - (attention getting vs. attitudinal transfer).

However, there is little empirical evidence supporting either approach, and while research such as the CRVP (Haley & Baldinger, 1991) study suggests that liking is an indicator of advertising effectiveness, no other researchers have been able to replicate these results and uniformly agree with their conclusions.

There is a limited amount of evidence supporting the influence of *likeability* on response measures such as *recall* and *persuasion* - although the role of *likeability* in advertising effectiveness has not been discounted. While likeability may not have a direct effect on behaviour, it could be a hygiene factor for effective advertising (Kennedy and Romaniuk, 1999).

Ultimately, the literature suggests that *likeability* is one component of effective advertising and, while it should not be considered as a stand-alone measure of advertising effectiveness (Haley & Baldinger, 1991), it should be considered a valid measure of effective advertising.

The challenge for researchers in *likeability* is to increase the amount of research on the relationships between *likeability* and *attitude and behaviour* - in particular, to explicitly examine the role that *likeability* plays in purchase intent, purchase and repeat purchase.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY**

This research examined the effect that likeability of an advertisement (image) had on consumers' choice behaviour in a generic FMCG category. More specially, the research investigated:

1. The effect of more and less likeable images on consumers' choice behaviour.
2. Whether image likeability varied according to the product variant consumers' chose.

Firstly, a product was selected to test in the research. Milk was chosen because it is a generic product with very little differentiation between brands i.e. full fat milk has identical attributes irrespective of the brand. As such, it seemed more open to differentiation via advertising and would be more likely to reveal advertisement likeability effects. Milk is also a low involvement product, a characteristic that Belch and Belch (1998) associated with stronger likeability effects.

To identify differences in likeability, six different images were developed and tested. A graphic designer created six different advertisements, intended to vary in likeability, for milk; these images were tested with a small group and were then refined to highlight specific features which the group associated with likeability.

The advertisements were print advertisements rather than television advertising, so that they varied in visual content but used the same copy, which was a headline for the print advertisement. These modified versions were then tested on a convenience sample of 37 respondents. A copy of the questionnaire used is reproduced in Appendix A.

### **5.1 PILOT STUDY**

When investigating the effects of advertising likeability on behaviour, the likeability of the advertisements tested should differ as much as possible so that effects on choice behaviour become easier to detect.

To identify advertisements that did vary greatly in their likeability, the modified advertisement versions were tested on 37 respondents using variables identified in Haley and Baldingers' (1991) research. The attributes tested were 'stands out', 'encourage me to buy', 'encourage people to buy', 'easy to remember' and 'likeability'. (See appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire).

The attributes were rated on a 5-point rating scale as used in Haley and Baldinger (1991), Biel and Bridgwater (1991) and Kennedy (1999), where the higher the score the higher the level of agreement with the statement tested. Table 5 below contains the results of this preliminary experiment.

**Table 5: Attribute scores of advertisement versions**

| Statement/ Attribute     | Advertisement version |      |      |      |      |      |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                          | A                     | B    | C    | D    | E    | F    |
| Stands out               | 3.56                  | 2.39 | 3.00 | 2.97 | 3.97 | 2.83 |
| Encourages me to buy     | 2.67                  | 1.78 | 1.97 | 2.28 | 3.25 | 2.22 |
| Encourages people to buy | 2.89                  | 2.19 | 2.31 | 2.61 | 3.50 | 2.47 |
| Easy to remember         | 3.71                  | 2.36 | 2.58 | 2.86 | 3.17 | 2.58 |
| Overall likeability      | 4.47                  | 2.58 | 2.78 | 3.11 | 4.83 | 3.61 |

In the pilot study, version E was the most likeable advertisement tested, the most encouraging for consumers to buy (both the respondent and people in general) and also stood out more than all the other advertisements. Version B however was the least liked and recorded the lowest score on all of the other advertisement attributes.

In order to determine the extent of the differences between versions E and B, paired mean tests were conducted. Table 6 contains the results of this analysis.

**Table 6. Comparison of Versions E and B**

| Attribute               | Advertisement version |      | T     | Signif |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|------|-------|--------|
|                         | B                     | E    |       |        |
| Stands out              | 2.39                  | 3.97 | -7.64 | .000   |
| Encourage me to buy     | 1.78                  | 3.25 | -6.92 | .000   |
| Encourage people to buy | 2.19                  | 3.50 | -6.71 | .000   |
| Easy to remember        | 2.36                  | 3.17 | -2.92 | .006   |
| Likeability             | 2.58                  | 4.83 | -6.73 | .000   |

This table shows the least liked and most liked advertisements differed significantly for each of the attributes examined. Although the pilot study sample was small, these tests suggest that the differences observed were robust enough to explore further.

These two advertisement versions were distinctly different enough in their likeability values as well as the other attributes to include in the main study. Version E, the most liked advertisement is referred to as the photo advertisement, which for the purposes of the main study is re-named Version A. Version B, the least-liked advertisement is referred to as the bones advertisement and retains the label Version B in the main study. (Refer to Appendix D and E for copies of the advertisements).

## 5.2 SAMPLE

The data for this research were obtained from a cross-sectional survey involving 330 face-to face mall intercept interviews conducted within a random sample of shoppers to the Plaza, a major shopping mall, over the period 28-30 July, 2000. The response rate was 42% (see Appendix F for calculation of response rate). The interviews were conducted by, fully trained and experienced graduate and final year undergraduate students.

Mall intercepts were used for several reasons. Firstly, they allowed respondents access to the visual stimuli for the research; this method is also a timely method to conduct the interviews of the general public within a limited period of time.

Finally, mall intercept interviews allow for responses from a wide cross-section of the general public.

### **5.3 INSTRUMENT**

To ensure only people who bought or drank milk were surveyed, the questionnaire began with two screening questions, which established that respondents were milk drinkers and that they had at least equal responsibility for household shopping. Eligible respondents were then administered the full questionnaire, which began with the choice modelling sequence. Respondents were presented with a series of fifteen showcards (refer to Appendix C), each of which contained three product feature combinations: one of the two advertisements, one of three prices, and one of four fat and calcium content descriptions, and were asked to identify which option they would select if they had gone to a supermarket intending to purchase milk. A fractional factorial design was employed to reduce respondent fatigue while maintaining a balanced research design. Interviewers rotated the showcard at which this section commenced to equalise any order effects. A sample show card is shown below.

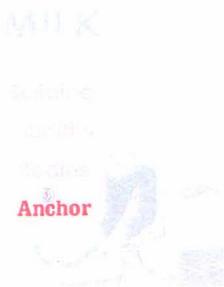
Figure 5: Showcard A

## Showcard A

*Option 1*

\$3.10

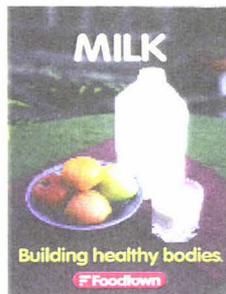
Light blue top  
(1.5% fat content)



*Option 2*

\$3.10

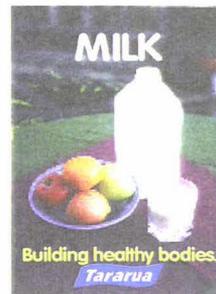
Yellow or lilac top  
(0.1% fat content  
and extra calcium)



*Option 3*

\$2.80

Green top  
(0.2% fat content)



Respondents were then administered items from Haley & Baldinger's (1991) likeability scale to ascertain whether the differences between the advertisements' appeal found in the pilot study sample were also present in the larger group. Finally, details of respondents' current brand repertoires and demographics were collected. A copy of this questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix G.

## CHAPTER SIX: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the main study analysis relating the effect of likeability on consumers' choice behaviour are presented and discussed in this section. The first analysis presented examines the entire data set; subsequent analyses examine the behaviour of specified clusters to explore whether or not these are consistent.

### 6.1 CONSUMERS' CHOICE BEHAVIOUR

The current research examined consumers' choice of milk when asked to trade off varying product attributes. To establish the relative effect of each attribute on consumers' choice behaviour, the proportion of deviance for which each attribute accounted for was analysed.

**Table 7. Effect of product attributes on consumers' choice behaviour**

| Attribute             | Proportion of Deviance |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Type of Milk          | 68.3                   |
| Price                 | 9.9                    |
| Ad*Price              | 8.1                    |
| Brand                 | 7.0                    |
| Brand*Price           | 5.7                    |
| Advertisement version | 1.0                    |
| Total                 | 100.0                  |

As Table 7 shows, the type of milk was a much more important influence on respondents' choice behaviour than were the other attributes tested. The price, ad-price, brand and brand-price interactions all accounted for a significant proportion of the model's deviance although their influence is relatively weak compared to that of the type of milk. The advertisement version accounted for the lowest proportion of deviance in the model and this suggests that the advertisement version had little effect on consumers' choice behaviour.

Since the type of milk was so influential in consumers' choice behaviour, respondents' choices were divided into sub-groups, according to the type of milk they normally bought. These groups are thus: *Full fat*, *Calci-trim*, *Semi-skim* and *Skim* and each is examined individually to establish the relative importance of the different variables within each group.

Table 9 shows that the type of milk was the main influence in consumers' choice behaviour, and that the other attributes had little effect on choice behaviour. By separating respondents according to the type of milk they mainly used, the relative importance of the other attributes tested can be examined further. The following sections contain analyses, which explore sub-groups of respondents, classified according to the type of milk they chose.

## 6.2 FULL FAT MILK CLUSTER

This section analyses responses from respondents who identified themselves as chiefly users of full fat milk (n = 127).

Table 8 below shows that the brand, milk and price variables accounted for a significant proportion of respondents' choice behaviour, as indicated by the change in chi square figures. The brand-by-price interaction and advertisement effects are also significant, but account for a much smaller proportion of consumers' choice behaviour. The ad-by-price interaction is not significant in this model, so was dropped from subsequent analyses.

**Table 8. Main effects model: full fat milk cluster**

| (n = 127)          | Chi-Square | Df | Sig   |
|--------------------|------------|----|-------|
| Brand, Milk, Price | 1463.1     | 7  | 0.000 |
| +Brand-by-price    | 1477.1     | 11 | 0.007 |
| +Ad                | 1485.3     | 12 | 0.004 |
| +Ad-by- price      | 1487.8     | 14 | 0.287 |

Table 9 examines the parameter estimates and standard errors for the attributes identified in Table 8 and these results are shown below.

**Table 9. Attribute effects: full fat milk cluster**

| Variable          | Parameter estimate | Standard Error |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Foodtown          | 0.00               |                |
| Anchor            | 0.10               | 0.164          |
| Tararua           | 0.40               | 0.143          |
| Skim              | 0.00               |                |
| Calci-trim        | 0.11               | 0.124          |
| Semi-skim         | 0.97               | 0.113          |
| Full              | 2.48               | 0.121          |
| \$2.80 (baseline) | 0.00               |                |
| Foodtown \$2.9    | -0.73              | 0.167          |
| Foodtown \$3.1    | -1.18              | 0.170          |
| Anchor \$2.95     | -0.21              | 0.225          |
| Anchor \$3.1      | -0.30              | 0.248          |
| Tararua \$2.95    | -0.20              | 0.218          |
| Tararua \$3.10    | -0.78              | 0.223          |
| Bones Ad          | 0.00               |                |
| Photo Ad          | -0.21              | 0.073          |

Table 9 shows that the Tararua brand had the largest utility in this cluster, followed by the Anchor, then the Foodtown brand. As would be expected for buyers of full fat milk, the full fat milk is the most preferred type, followed by the semi-skim; calci-trim and skim milk are the least preferred variants.

The price-brand interaction results indicate that the Foodtown brand is much more sensitive to price than are the Anchor and Tararua brands. The Foodtown brand shows high price elasticity as the utilities for the Foodtown brand decrease markedly as the price increases. The Tararua brand has moderate price sensitivity again illustrated by a decrease in utility for the brand as the price increases. However, the Anchor brand shows little price sensitivity and, although there is a small decrease in utility for the brand as the price increases, the difference is minimal. The price sensitivities illustrated in Table 11 follow a general pattern of price elasticity where utilities for brands decrease with an increase in price. While the Foodtown brand has a high degree of price elasticity, the Anchor brand has a much more stable response to price increases.

The advertisement version variable indicates that the advertisement version preferred by this cluster, was actually the version least preferred in the pilot study. Despite this, the overall effect of the advertisement on consumers' choices was not large, as the difference between the two co-efficients was not significant, as Figure 6 reveals.

**Figure 6: Full fat cluster utilities**

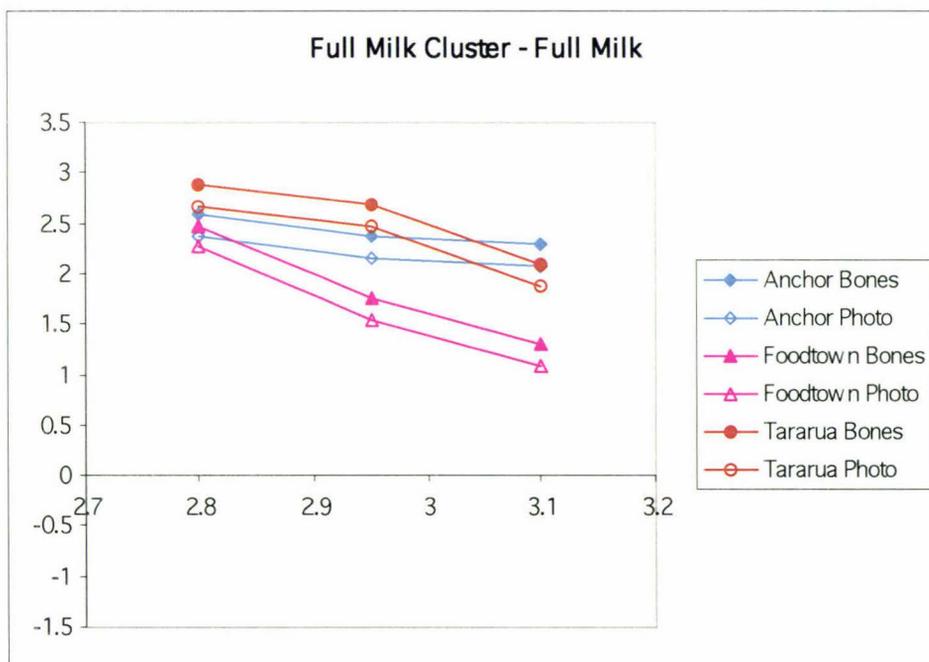


Figure 6 illustrates the utilities of the group of respondents who normally purchase full fat milk, for the full fat variant. The Bones advertisement has larger utilities for all brands, indicating the overall preference for this advertisement in this cluster. Indeed, at the \$2.80 price point, the Bones advertisement has increased the utility of the Foodtown brand so that it is slightly preferred to the Anchor brand, if this is promoted using the less-liked Photo advertisement. However, this preference is not sustained once prices start to increase and both the Foodtown and the Tararua brands' utilities decrease as price increases. The Anchor brand is much less price sensitive than the other two brands.

A possible explanation for these differences in price sensitivity may result from the emphasis placed on price for 'store brands' such as Foodtown. Store brands often provide little product information and the brand is deliberately priced below other brands in this case, Tararua and Anchor. Thus, when the store brand is associated with higher price points, its utilities predictably drop sharply.

The higher utility associated with the Bones image was not expected based on the pilot study results. Analysis of this cluster's responses to the likeability statements revealed some rather contradictory results, which are presented in Table 10. Table 10 contains the mean scores for each attribute of the two different advertisements.

**Table 10. Likeability attribute scores: full fat milk**

| Attribute            | Version A <sup>7</sup><br>(Photo) | Version B<br>(Bones) | T     | Sig  |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-------|------|
| Cleverness           | 3.02                              | 2.51                 | 3.99  | .000 |
| Poor Taste           | 2.11                              | 2.80                 | -5.72 | .000 |
| Artistic             | 3.31                              | 2.44                 | 6.62  | .000 |
| Amusing              | 2.26                              | 3.27                 | -6.64 | .000 |
| Boring               | 2.93                              | 3.37                 | -3.58 | .000 |
| Just creates image   | 3.48                              | 2.58                 | 6.48  | .000 |
| Enjoyable            | 3.01                              | 3.31                 | -4.37 | .000 |
| Insults intelligence | 2.08                              | 2.29                 | -1.96 | .053 |
| Learnt a lot         | 2.24                              | 2.39                 | -1.47 | .145 |
| Likeable             | 2.94                              | 2.84                 | 1.28  | .202 |

While the utility for what was expected to be the least liked advertisement - version B (the Bones advertisement) - was larger than that of the better liked Photo advertisement, responses to the likeability statements varied. For example, respondents felt that version A (Photo advertisement) was clever and artistic but that it also just created an image while version B (Bones advertisement) was considered to be in poor taste, boring and insulting to the intelligence, but was also more amusing and more enjoyable than version A. These results show that consumers' responses to these statements varied and although there are some significant differences in the attribute scores for each advertisement, these were not consistent over all three clusters. The same statements were not consistently rated the same across all three clusters. However, despite these differences, the overall likeability scores of the advertisements for all clusters were very similar.

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<sup>7</sup> Attributes were tested using a five-point agree-disagree scale; the higher the score, the higher the level of agreement with the attribute.

The likeability results are contrary to the pilot results where the two advertisement versions had very different likeability scores. In fact, the least liked advertisement in the pilot study (Bones) had the highest utility in the full fat cluster, but this was not reflected in the attitude scores for the advertisements where the overall likeability was very similar.

One explanation for the preference of the Bones advertisement could be due to the age characteristics of the cluster. It is possible that older people drink full fat milk and therefore relate better to the Bones image as well as the portrayal of elderly people presented than to the Photo advertisement. Rossiter and Percy (1980) suggested that salience of the visual image is important in establishing consumer attitudes and hence likeability. Research by Shepard (Rossiter & Percy, 1980) posits that consumers associate themselves with images presented in advertisements and this serves to improve attitudes towards the product. Thus, if the mean age of full fat milk drinkers was higher, the demographics of the cluster might provide a possible explanation of the unexpected advertisement evaluations.

However, an examination of the mean age of the full fat cluster compared with the whole sample revealed that there is very little difference in the mean age of the two groups (whole sample mean age = 38 cf. full fat cluster = 34). In fact, the mean age of the full fat cluster is lower than the whole sample dispelling the idea that full milk drinkers are likely to be older than other milk drinkers.

Therefore, it would appear that preferences for the advertisements couldn't be explained by the age of the respondents.

The type of milk variant emerged as a very important factor in respondents' choice of milk. This variant over-rides other product attributes, such as brand and the advertisement version, which had virtually no influence on consumers' choice behaviour. Price also emerged as an important consideration in the choice decision, as indicated by the price sensitivities shown in Table 11 and Figure 4.

The lack of advertising effect is unexpected because prior research suggests that as milk is a generic fast-moving consumer good, it is more likely that likeability could enhance consumers' attitudes towards the brand (Biel & Bridgwater, 1990).

In addition, a likeable advertisement could be expected to be the differentiating factor in competitive product categories where there is little differentiation.

Nevertheless, the results of the full fat analysis show that likeability scores were not consistent with the pilot study results and the utilities for likeability were not large, so even in a product category where a likeable advertisement might provide the point of difference between very similar brands, the advertisement didn't appear to do this.

### 6.3 CALCI-TRIM MILK CLUSTER

The calci-trim cluster includes all respondents who normally purchase calci-trim milk rather than other milk variants (n = 136). The choice behaviours of this group of customers have been modelled to examine whether there were different behaviours in this group compared to the other groups.

**Table 11. Main effects model: Calci-Trim milk**

|                    | Chi-Square | Df | Sig   |
|--------------------|------------|----|-------|
| Brand, Milk, Price | 2284.9     | 7  | 0.000 |
| +Brand-by-price    | 2288.2     | 11 | 0.509 |
| +Ad                | 2293.1     | 12 | 0.027 |
| +Ad-by- price      | 2294.9     | 14 | 0.407 |

Table 11 shows that the brand-milk-price interaction again accounted for a significant proportion of respondents' choice behaviour, which is consistent with the findings in the full fat cluster. The advertisement effect is also significant but accounts for a much smaller proportion of respondents' choice behaviour. The ad-by-price interaction was not significant in this model and was dropped from subsequent analysis.

On the basis that the interactions of brand-milk-price, brand-price and ad interactions were significant, the utilities for consumers' choice behaviour are examined in Table 12.

**Table 12. Attribute effects: Calci-trim**

| Variable        | Parameter estimate | Standard Error |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Foodtown        | 0.00               |                |
| Anchor          | 0.11               | 0.132          |
| Tararua         | 0.26               | 0.226          |
| Skim            | 0.00               |                |
| Calci-trim      | 1.69               | 0.09           |
| Semi-skim       | -0.94              | 0.101          |
| Full            | -2.35              | 0.170          |
| \$2.80          | 0.00               |                |
| Foodtown \$2.95 | -0.18              | 0.210          |
| Foodtown \$3.10 | -0.39              | 0.189          |
| Anchor \$2.95   | -0.21              | 0.198          |
| Anchor \$3.10   | -0.47              | 0.240          |
| Tararua \$2.95  | -0.07              | 0.286          |
| Tararua \$3.10  | -0.45              | 0.274          |
| Bones Ad        | 0.00               |                |
| Photo Ad        | 0.19               | 0.085          |

This table shows that the Tararua brand had the largest utility in the calci-trim cluster followed by Anchor and Foodtown brands. As expected, respondents in this cluster preferred calci-trim milk followed by skim; semi-skim and full fat milk were the least preferred variants.

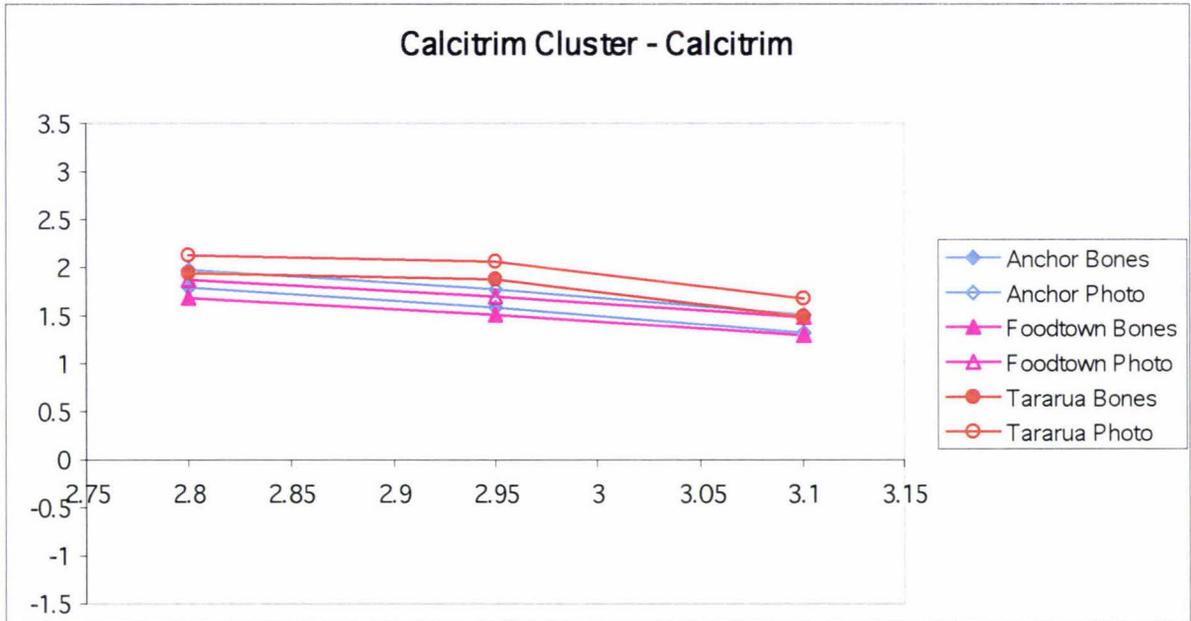
The brand by price interaction results indicate a general pattern of price elasticity where as price increases, the overall utility of the brand decreases. At the lowest price point, the Tararua brand's utility is largest while respondents preferred the Foodtown brand at the highest price point.

The Anchor brand remains that most stable in response to price increases, while the Foodtown and Tararua brands have moderate sensitivity to price. In this cluster, the utilities for the Foodtown brand are larger than those of the other brands, which is not consistent with the utilities found in Cluster one. This could indicate that calci-trim users are not as 'brand conscious' as full fat milk drinkers.

The advertisement version variable with the highest utility in this cluster is the Photo advertisement, which is consistent with the findings in the pilot study. However, the overall effect of the advertisement on consumers' choice behaviour is not large relative to the other attributers examined, as the difference between the two coefficients was not significant, as Table 12 shows.

Figure 7 illustrates the utilities of the group of respondents who normally purchase calci-trim milk, for the calci-trim variant.

**Figure 7: Calci-trim cluster utilities**



The Photo advertisement has the highest utility for both the Foodtown and Anchor brands. At the \$2.80 price point, the Photo version for the Foodtown brand has lifted the Foodtown brand's utility above the Anchor brand, when this is promoted using the Bones advertisement. This suggests that the advertisement version was able to lift the utility of the store brand to above that of a more established brand. Similar effects can be seen for the Anchor brand, which has a higher utility than the Tararua brand, if it is promoted using the Photo advertisement and the Tararua brand is promoted using the Bones image. This suggests that the advertisement can increase the attractiveness of a brand, but it does not do so consistently.

Figure 7 illustrates that all of the brands have similar price sensitivities as all of the utilities predictably drop at higher price points. However, the calci-trim cluster appears less price sensitive compared to the full fat cluster where price increases caused much sharper drops in each brand's utility. This could indicate that calci-trim drinkers are used to paying a slightly higher price for milk than those in the full fat cluster.

The higher utility associated with the Photo image is consistent with the pilot study results. However, analysis of this cluster’s response to the likeability statements revealed contradictory results, similar to those found in Cluster one. Table 13 contains the mean scores for each attribute of the two advertisements.

**Table 13. Likeability attribute scores: Calci-Trim**

| Attribute            | Version A<br>(Photo) | Version B<br>(Bones) | T     | Sig  |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------|------|
| Cleverness           | 2.99                 | 2.48                 | 4.18  | .000 |
| Poor Taste           | 2.07                 | 2.77                 | -5.91 | .000 |
| Artistic             | 3.20                 | 2.45                 | 6.43  | .000 |
| Amusing              | 2.22                 | 3.25                 | -8.65 | .000 |
| Just creates image   | 3.59                 | 2.63                 | 8.05  | .000 |
| Enjoyable            | 3.06                 | 3.37                 | -4.83 | .000 |
| Boring               | 3.06                 | 3.29                 | -1.93 | .056 |
| Likeable             | 2.96                 | 2.84                 | 1.64  | .103 |
| Insults intelligence | 2.29                 | 2.35                 | -.49  | .620 |
| Learnt a lot         | 2.26                 | 2.30                 | -.42  | .677 |

This table shows the mean scores for each attribute of the two different advertisements. Overall, the calci-trim cluster found the Photo advertisement (Version A) more likeable and respondents also thought that the Photo advertisement was more clever, artistic but also that it just created an image. It was less likely to be considered boring or insulting to the intelligence, but was also less enjoyable than the Bones version. These results indicate that consumers’ responses to these statements were varied and somewhat inconsistent. Table 10 and Table 13 show that there were some significant differences in some of the attribute ratings between clusters, but despite these differences, the overall likeability scores were very similar.

The likeability results for the advertisements were also very similar to the findings for Cluster one. Despite cluster one respondents having a preference for the Bones advertisement, both clusters have very similar likeability scores, despite different utilities evident in the choice modelling results.

As discussed in section 6.2, a possible explanation for the preference for the Photo advertisement in Cluster two could be due to the demographic characteristics of the cluster. Due to the specific benefits of calci-trim, in particular, added calcium and less fat, it is possible that calci-trim milk drinkers could comprise of a younger age group and relate better to the Photo image. As discussed in section 6.2, the visual image of an advertisement is important in establishing consumers' attitudes and likeability (Rossiter & Percy, 1980). However, an examination of the mean age of the calci-trim cluster compared with the whole sample revealed that there is little difference between the two groups (whole sample mean age = 38, cf. calci-trim cluster = 41) and in fact, the mean age of the calci-trim cluster is slightly higher than the whole sample. There is a bigger difference in the mean ages between the full fat cluster and the calci-trim cluster (calci-trim cluster mean age = 41, full fat cluster mean age = 34) indicating there is a small age difference in the two clusters, which could explain the different preferences for the two advertisements.

Once again, the type of milk variant has emerged as the main influence on consumers' choice behaviour with price remaining an important factor in choice decisions. While the Photo advertisement increased utilities for all of the brands, the overall effect on choice behaviour was very weak.

The analysis for Clusters one and two indicate that while the overall likeability for each advertisement type is similar, the images preferred by each cluster differ. It is possible that the different advertisements present more salient images to the respective clusters due to the differences in age characteristics for the two groups.

One explanation is therefore that different advertisement versions were more and less salient to each cluster, causing a subconscious preference for the image, while the respondents' rational evaluation of the two advertisements resulted in similar likeability scores. This reinforces suggestions in the literature that the processing of advertising does not require cognitive evaluation (Shimp, 1981; Batra, 1986) or effortful processing (Ehrenberg, 1974) and that a conscious evaluation of the likeability of an advertisement may not necessarily relate to consumers' choice behaviour.

However, research by Haley and Baldinger (1991) found that the overall liking of an advertisement was the best predictor of the commercials achieving high sale, a conclusion that is not supported by these results.

#### 6.4 SEMI-SKIM MILK CLUSTER

This section analyses responses from respondents who identified themselves as chiefly users of semi-skim milk (n = 51).

**Table 14. Main effects model: semi-skim milk**

|                    | Chi-Square | Df | Sig   |
|--------------------|------------|----|-------|
| Brand, Milk, Price | 804.4      | 7  | 0.000 |
| +Brand-by-price    | 809.0      | 11 | 0.331 |
| +Ad                | 809.0      | 12 | 1.000 |
| +Ad-by- price      | 812.8      | 14 | 0.150 |

This table shows that the brand-milk-price interaction accounted for a highly significant proportion of respondents' choice behaviour, as indicated by the chi-square results, though it is important to note that the small sample size could affect the degree of significance shown in this model. The brand-by-price, ad-by-price and ad interaction were all non-significant in this model, and these were all dropped from subsequent analyses.

With the brand-milk-price variant the only significant interaction, the following table examines the extent of these variables on consumers' choice behaviour.

**Table 15. Effects of attributes on choice behaviour: Semi-skim**

| Variable   | Parameter estimate | Standard Error |
|------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Foodtown   | 0.00               |                |
| Anchor     | -0.21              | 0.156          |
| Tararua    | -0.15              | 0.170          |
| Skim       | 0.00               |                |
| Calci-trim | 0.17               | 0.168          |
| Semi-skim  | 2.91               | 0.180          |
| Full       | 0.13               | 0.190          |
| \$2.9      | 0.00               |                |
| \$3.1      | 0.29               | 0.172          |
| \$2.95     | 0.04               | 0.188          |

Table 15 shows that the Foodtown brand had the largest utility for the semi-skim milk cluster followed by the Tararua and Anchor brands, while the Tararua brand had the largest utility in Clusters one and two.

As expected, semi-skim milk was clearly the most preferred milk type followed by full, calci-trim and skim although all three were far less preferred to semi-skim milk. Because the brand-by price, ad and ad-by-price interactions were not significant, the price effect only has been reported in the co-efficient table. As expected, the lowest price had the highest utility and the highest price the lowest utility. The advertisement version interaction was not significant in the main effects table, so Figure 8 illustrates both advertisement version utility scores for each brand.

**Figure 8: Semi-Skim cluster utilities**

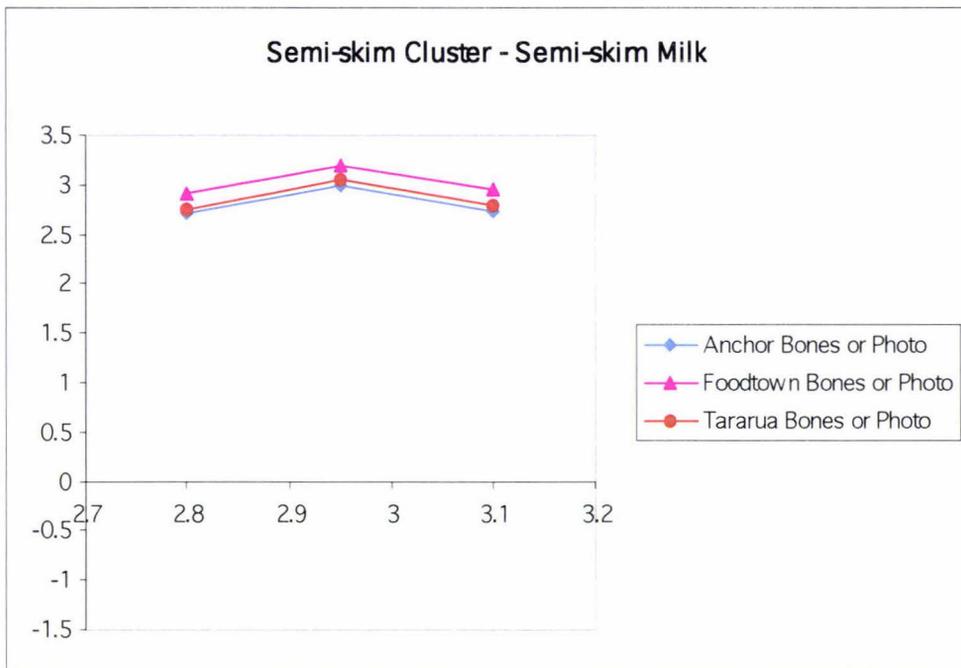


Figure 8 indicates that the Foodtown brand had higher utilities than the other brands, followed by Tararua and Anchor as shown on the co-efficients table.

At the \$2.80 price point, the Foodtown brand had the highest utility and this trend is consistent at all price points. Interestingly, utilities increase in all cases for the mid-price point and drop again for the highest price point, which suggests respondents' preference improves at the mid-price point. A possible explanation for this price sensitivity is that semi-skim milk drinkers may be conditioned to pay a higher price for semi-skim milk, and this is reflected in the higher utilities at the mid-price point.

The brand effects in Cluster three differ quite markedly from the effects seen in Clusters one and two. While the utilities for the brands drop sharply with higher prices in Cluster one, the brand effects in Cluster two are slightly more constant. While Clusters one and two share similar price sensitivities in that the utilities for all brands drop at higher points, Cluster two and three appear to have more tolerance for higher prices than Cluster one. This could indicate calci-trim and semi-skim drinkers are used to paying slightly higher prices for milk while full fat milk drinkers are conditioned against paying higher prices for standard milk.

While the main effects model showed non-significant advertisement effects, it is still possible to measure the likeability for both advertisements for this cluster and these are contained in Table 16.

**Table 16. Likeability attribute scores: Semi-skim**

| Attribute            | Version A | Version B | T     | Sig  |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-------|------|
| Cleverness           | 3.12      | 2.39      | 3.95  | .000 |
| Poor Taste           | 2.10      | 2.98      | -4.66 | .000 |
| Artistic             | 3.25      | 2.37      | 4.66  | .000 |
| Insults intelligence | 2.10      | 2.82      | -3.78 | .000 |
| Just creates image   | 3.29      | 2.51      | 3.91  | .000 |
| Amusing              | 2.25      | 3.00      | -3.56 | .001 |
| Enjoyable            | 3.02      | 3.41      | -3.61 | .001 |
| Boring               | 2.69      | 3.27      | -2.66 | .010 |
| Likeable             | 3.24      | 3.00      | 2.28  | .027 |
| Learnt a lot         | 2.43      | 2.59      | -.88  | .382 |

This table illustrates the mean scores for each attribute of the two different advertisement versions. Overall, the semi-skim cluster found the Photo advertisement (Version A) more likeable and respondents also thought that the Photo advertisement was more clever, more artistic as well as being more enjoyable. It was less likely to be considered boring or insulting to the intelligence, but was also less likely to be considered amusing. As with Clusters one and two, these results indicate that consumers' responses to these statements varied and were somewhat inconsistent. Despite some significant differences in some attributes measured, the overall likeability scores were very similar.

The likeability results for the advertisements were also very similar to the findings for Clusters one and two despite the smaller sample size in Cluster three. Although Clusters one and two had different advertisement preferences, all three clusters have very similar likeability scores, although the difference between the two advertisements for Cluster three is larger than for the other clusters.

This could indicate that the difference in the statement scores is significant, but this is not apparent in the choice modelling results.

An examination of the mean age of the semi-skim cluster compared with the other clusters revealed that there is very little difference in the mean age of the two groups (whole sample mean age = 38 cf. semi-skim cluster = 41). Although, the mean age of the semi-skim cluster is the same as the calci-trim cluster, indicating that a slightly older age group drink milk with less fat than drink full fat milk (full fat mean age = 34, semi-skim and calci-trim cluster = 41). Thus, the demographics of the clusters could be a possible explanation for Cluster one's preference for the Bones advertisement and Clusters two and three's preferences for the Photo advertisement.

Overall, the type of milk attribute was the most important factor in respondents' choice behaviour and this attribute overwhelmed the effect of any other attribute such as brand, price and advertisement version. However, price was another important factor in consumers' choice behaviour as indicated in sections 6.2 and 6.3.

## **6.5 EXPLANATIONS FOR THE RESULTS**

The preceding analyses have shown that the advertisement version did not have any influence on consumers' choice behaviour. Further, that the two advertisements tested were considered to be very similar in terms of likeability. This section examines the findings in the current research.

Chapter four discussed that likeability has been highlighted as a key indicator of advertising effectiveness (Haley & Baldinger, 1991). Advertising literature also suggests that likeability enhances the persuasive appeal of an advertisement (Biel, 1991; Haley & Baldinger, 1991). Researchers suggested that the more, people like an advertisement, the more they are persuaded by it (Biel, 1991), and that there is a strong relationship between likeability and its effect on sales (Haley & Baldinger, 1991). Although persuasion was not explicitly tested in the current research, the idea that likeability enhances persuasion was not supported in the current research.

Overall, consumers' choice behaviour was generally not affected by the advertisement variable as shown in Table 9 and these results were consistent across all three respondent clusters indicating that the advertisement did not affect consumers' choice decisions. This finding could indicate that advertising works according to the weak theory of advertising. While the strong theory suggests that advertising heightens the persuasive abilities of the advertisement and is therefore able to change consumer behaviour (Jones, 1991), the weak theory posits that advertising re-inforces existing behaviour (Ehrenberg, 1974).

Since the current research findings indicate that consumer choices were not affected by the advertisement, it is possible that the advertisements worked to reinforce existing behaviour as suggested by Ehrenberg (1974). Although the current research did not explore existing purchase behaviour so does not provide conclusive support for the weak theory, the results do indicate that advertising did not work according to the strong theory, as the advertisements had little influence on consumers' choice behaviour.

One of the dominant views on how likeability works suggests likeability improves the amount of attention consumers pay to the advertisement (Biel, 1990) and this leads to enhanced awareness or salience of the brand. While the current research did not examine levels of attention paid towards advertising, the findings provide some support for the idea that advertising improves consumers' salience of the brand (Ehrenberg et al. 1997). As discussed in sections 6.2 and 6.3, the salience of the image in the advertisement is an important factor in changing consumer attitudes and therefore behaviour (Rossiter & Percy, 1980). The findings indicate that Cluster one had preferences for the Bones advertisement while Cluster two preferred the Photo advertisement. Although these preferences did not affect choice behaviour, the findings show that the two advertisements appealed differently to the two groups. While it is possible that these differences could be explained by age, it is also possible that the salience of each image to each group was responsible for the differences found.

As discussed in section 6.3, it is also possible that these differences can be explained by a subconscious preference for the respective advertisements due to the salience of the images to each cluster, which could support suggestions that advertising does not require cognitive evaluation (Shimp, 1981; Batra, 1986) or processing (Ehrenberg, 1974).

Ehrenberg et al. (1997, 1992) and Jones (1991) suggest that consumers have a repertoire or consideration sets of brands that determine consumers' purchase decisions. It is possible that the images in the two advertisements improved the salience of the brands and that the brands were included in the consumers' consideration sets as per the weak theory of advertising (Ehrenberg, 1992, 1974). In this instance, we would expect to see a trial purchase of the more salient brand at some time in the future rather than in the choice decisions seen in the current study. Again, it is difficult to determine whether this explanation is plausible in the current research, but there are indications that this could have occurred due to the different advertisement preferences identified by Clusters one and two.

Literature in likeability also suggests that likeability of an advertisement can enhance consumers' attitudes toward the advertisement, which is subsequently transferred to the brand (Biel, 1990; Shimp, 1981). The findings in the current research indicate that in some instances, the advertisement did increase the attractiveness of the brand. In Clusters one and two, the advertisement type was able to increase the utilities of some brands although the price elasticity had a substantial impact on this effect (see Figures 6 and 7). Although some brands were less price sensitive than others (i.e. Anchor vs. Foodtown), the advertisement effect was not sustained for higher price levels and was not consistent either by brand or by cluster. While these results refer to respondents' preferences for the advertisement rather than the likeability ratings, the results do not support the idea that consumer preference for an advertisement can consistently enhance consumer attitudes towards the brand.

## **6.6 EXPLANATIONS FOR THE LACK OF LIKEABILITY EFFECTS**

Table 9 has shown that the advertisement version accounted for the lowest proportion of deviance and this suggests that the advertisement version had little effect on consumers' choice behaviour. This section examines the possible explanations for the lack of likeability effects in the current research.

According to models of affect, consumers form attitudes towards a brand based on feelings induced by the advertisement or the liking of the advertisement, rather than product or brand attribute information (Biel & Bridgwater, 1990; Batra & Ray, 1986; Shimp, 1981). Research in likeability also suggests that advertisements are seen as brand personality attributes, particularly when the characteristics of the brands are perceived to be very similar (Biel, 1990). So, one would expect that in product categories such as milk, where the product characteristics are very similar, that a likeable advertisement could influence consumers' responses so that they based their purchase decisions on their feelings about the advertisement, rather than the product attributes. However, the findings in the current study provide no evidence that likeability had any effect on consumers' choice behaviour, despite the generic nature of the product category. In fact, the type of milk attribute emerged as the most influential variable in consumers' choice behaviour.

A possible explanation for the lack of likeability effect is the product category (milk) studied. While milk is a fitting choice based on arguments that likeability works best in low involvement product categories (Biel & Bridgwater, 1990; Haley & Baldinger, 1991; Belch & Belch, 1998) and food and beverage categories had the highest likeability scores (Biel & Bridgwater, 1990), it has been suggested that investigating responses to visual images may best be achieved in product categories where consumption or use is an enjoyable experience (Percy & Rossiter, 1980). It is also possible that likeability works better for new products and services as suggested by Edell and Burke (1989).

There is a possibility that consumers' involvement with the milk category is as an 'everyday' good, seen as a basic 'needs' purchase rather than a product that fulfils a particular 'want' and this limits the 'enjoyment' of the product. For these reasons, respondents may be almost immune to advertising for this product category. This could explain why the two advertisements were rated so similarly by the respondents. The respondents may have had very little involvement in both the product category and the two advertisements, explaining why the attribute statement results were so different across the clusters and the likeability ratings were so similar.

The lack of likeability effect is also influenced to a degree by the likeability scores attributed to the two advertisements. While the pilot study identified the Photo advertisement and Bones advertisement as being most liked and least liked respectively, the likeability scores in the main study were very similar. This similarity could negate any likeability effect since both advertisements were considered equally likeable, possibly neutralising the likeability effect. Notwithstanding this possibility, the choice modelling results clearly show that the advertisement did not affect choice behaviour, therefore, the results do not support claims that low involvement product categories are more receptive to likeable advertising. Therefore, it is possible that likeability is a function of the product category as suggested by Biel and Bridgwater (1990), but that, low involvement products, with low consumer interest fall outside of this claim. In these instances, likeability might be nothing more than a hygiene factor in advertising effectiveness (Kennedy, 1999).

Another possible explanation for the absence of a likeability effect in the current study could be the consumers' prior attitudes and beliefs towards the brands examined. Some researchers suggests that brand attitudes are weak predictors of behaviour (Ehrenberg & Barwise, 1985) however, Walker and Dubitsky (1994) suggest that it is possible that prior brand attitude influences the degree to which an advertisement is liked.

It is possible that beliefs about the brands examined influenced the likeability scores of the two advertisements. While the brand variable was not identified in the main effects model (Table 10) as having a great impact on choice behaviour, the brand-milk-price interactions were particularly influential in consumers' choice behaviour.

However, it is difficult to establish whether prior brand attitudes had any effect on the findings as they were not measured and the absence of a brand effect in the data suggests that this might not be the case. Therefore the research does not offer support for the idea that beliefs about particular brands had any effect on choice behaviour.

The weak theory of advertising also suggests that past behaviour is the most influential factor in consumers' choice behaviour (Joyce, 1967) and that advertising does not influence purchase decisions (Ehrenberg, 1974). It is possible that these results reflect that advertising in general, works according to the weak theory and that it was the respondents current purchase patterns that were reflected in the choice modelling results.

The literature suggests that likeability is an important component of advertising effectiveness, despite this, the current research does not find support for this view.

Overall, the type of milk variant emerged as the most significant influence of consumers' choice behaviour. Despite clustering the data into 'type of milk' groupings, this variant accounts for a significant proportion of consumers' choice behaviour. Price is also an important consideration when choosing milk and the analyses indicates that the price sensitivities evident over-ride respondents' preferences for both the brand and the advertisement version.

## **6.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

By clustering the data into three separate groups based on milk type that is chiefly used, 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.

The preceding analysis shows that within the milk product category, advertisement likeability had only a small effect on consumers' choice behaviour. Although, it is possible that likeability improved the brand's salience and also increased the attractiveness of the brand, although this was not a consistent finding.

The product category or indifference to the product could explain the lack of likeability effect in general. It is also possible that likeability works better for new products and services (Edell & Burke, 1989) and higher involvement goods (Jones, 1990) or that, consistent with the weak theory of advertising, existing purchase behaviour is the only factor in consumers' choice behaviour (Ehrenberg & Barwise, 1985).

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS**

### **7.1 CONCLUSIONS**

It has been suggested that the likeability of an advertisement can create more favourable consumer attitudes, make an advertisement more persuasive and therefore, improve advertising effectiveness. However, the ability of an advertisement to change consumer attitudes and behaviour has been debated within marketing literature for some time. A review of this literature suggests that there is inconclusive support for the role that advertising may play in altering consumer behaviour and no evidence to suggest that likeability is any more important than other measures of advertising effectiveness.

This research did not find support for claims that likeability has positive effects on consumers' attitude towards both an advertisement and a brand, or that likeability heightens the persuasive appeal of an advertisement. Specifically, for the product category studied, the likeability of an advertisement had little effect on consumers' choice behaviour. Other variants examined, such as type of milk and price, were overwhelmingly more influential in consumers' choice behaviour.

### **7.2 IMPLICATIONS**

There are several findings that arise from this study that have implications for the importance of likeability in advertising effectiveness.

The main implication of this study is that creating likeable advertisements does not necessarily lead to consumers changing their purchasing behaviour, as argued by supporters of the strong theory of advertising (Jones, 1990, 1991). Therefore, suggestions that more emphasis should be placed on likeability (Haley & Baldinger, 1991; Biel, 1990) are not supported. Ehrenberg (1974, 1992) argues that advertising is a maintenance factor for most products and services and it is possible that likeability is also a maintenance factor for brands in low involvement, low consumer interest product categories such as milk. In this instance, expenditure on advertising could be reallocated to product attributes such as quality, rather than concentrating on advertising to achieve marketing objectives.

Indeed, it was the product attributes that most influenced consumer choice behaviour in this research. Further, it is possible that other marketing activities such as point of sale merchandise and shelf height in the supermarket are more likely to capture the attention of a disinterested consumer in these product categories. Claims that likeability might be a hygiene factor (Kennedy, 1999) namely, a maintenance activity for a brand, suggest that likeability's role in advertising effectiveness is limited.

Another important implication of this study is that likeability potentially enhances the salience of the advertisement. This finding supports the idea that likeability is potentially a maintenance activity for the brand. It is suggested that likeability could lead to enhanced awareness or salience of the brand (Biel, 1990) and indeed, the weak theory posits that advertising's role is more likely to be one of enhancing brand salience and reinforcing existing behaviour (Ehrenberg, 1974; Ehrenberg & Barwise 1985; Ehrenberg et al. 1997). In this instance, it may be prudent for marketers to attempt to create a certain level of likeability in advertising since not only could it be a hygiene factor, but it may aid the level of attention paid to the brand's advertising and the awareness of the brand which could potentially lead to consumers including the brand in their consideration sets.

However, it is the combination of all marketing activities that maintains brand salience (Miller & Berry, 1998) and determine inclusion in a consumer's brand repertoire. This means that other marketing activities such as publicity, sponsorship, promotions as well as advertising should be emphasised. Likeability is possibly one component of a large marketing effort required to maintain brand salience.

One of the difficulties associated with establishing whether an advertisement is likeable or not is the measurement of likeability and an important implication that arises from this study is that the measurements of likeability are misleading. That is, differences are found when comparing different advertisement versions, but not when they are put in the context of other attributes. Similar problems have been found when trying to define the construct of likeability (Walker and Dubitsky, 1994).

Researchers attempting to define likeability have not established a common definition for likeability, nor are the dimensions of likeability agreed upon (Leather, McKechnie & Amirhanian, 1994). This means that difficulties are encountered when trying to establish what likeability is and how to measure it.

Although it is suggested that likeability can be measured using a 5 point rating scale (Green, 1992; Haley and Baldinger, 1991; Biel and Bridgwater, 1990;) and this is adequate for the purposes of comparing advertisement versions, it does not appear to be appropriate when other attributes are also being measured. In order to ensure likeability scores are not misleading, additional measurement tools may be needed to clarify and measure likeability.

Finally, the findings from this study imply that the effects of likeability on behaviour over all product categories should not be discounted altogether. In some instances, the advertising was able to increase the attractiveness of the brand. While this was not consistently demonstrated, it does indicate that in situations where other factors such as price are omitted from the evaluation of the brand, likeability can make the brand more attractive (although this effect is not necessarily sustainable). This suggests that likeability could differentiate brands in various product categories, thus, creating likeable advertisements could improve brand ratings and awareness.

Therefore, while likeability might be a component of advertising effectiveness, likeable advertising does not necessarily prevail over other components of effective advertising or over product attributes such as quality or in this case, type of milk, as these are more likely to influence consumers' choice behaviour than likeability.

### **7.3 SUMMARY**

Overall, likeability has limited influence on advertising effectiveness. Likeability is more likely a maintenance factor for low involvement / low interest product categories rather than a key indicator of advertising effectiveness. Although, in some instances, likeability may enhance the salience of the brand and in conjunction with other areas of the marketing mix, ensure inclusion in consumers' consideration sets. Likeability is one of many elements of effective advertising and does not necessarily command more attention than any other attributes of effective advertising.

### **7.4 LIMITATIONS**

A limitation associated with this study was the fact that respondents-unlike those in the pilot study did not find the two advertisement types significantly different. This could have had an effect on the influence that the advertisements had on choice behaviour. If the respondents had rated one advertisement significantly higher than the other, as in the pilot study, it is possible that an advertising effect would have emerged. This would have produced a more conclusive result. Further, this limitation highlights that likeability may be measured in a misleading way when measured with other attributes, which could explain why the two advertisements were rated so similarly.

A further limitation could be the lack of examination of respondents' current beliefs about the brands and existing behaviour patterns. Since the advertisements were always paired with a brand, it may have been useful to examine brand beliefs and purchase behaviour for each brand to establish if these had any effect on likeability scores. For example, consumers' who believed that the Foodtown brand was inferior and did not currently purchase the Foodtown brand could have consistently rated the advertisements as being disliked, when paired with the Foodtown brand. Alternatively, if a consumer believed that the Anchor brand was superior and currently used Anchor products, they could have consistently rated advertisements paired with anchor higher than the other brands. Consequently, the results would not represent the true likeability of the advertisement. Establishing consumers existing beliefs and current behaviour patterns about the brands would have identified any influences that these might have had on the likeability scores.

A *potential* limitation that is associated with this study is the choice of a generic product such as milk.

While the research indicated that likeability is more likely to be effective in low involvement categories (Haley & Baldinger, 1991; Biel & Bridgwater, 1990), milk could be considered as a low involvement and low interest product category, and as such, consumers only responded to the type of milk and the price. Therefore, any likeability effects that might have appeared in other product categories may not have been evident in this research.

## **7.5 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Several possible directions for future research have emerged from the findings, implications and limitations of this study.

First is the examination of the salience of the images in the advertisements to the target audience and their subsequent inclusion in consumers' brand repertoires; specifically, examining choice behaviour of the product category over a period of time with exposure to the same advertisements, thus establishing whether or not the brand is purchased subsequently, indicating whether or not it has been included in consumers' consideration set.

Future research could also investigate alternative product categories to fast-moving consumer goods. It is possible that likeability effects could be found in categories such as services and higher involvement consumer goods. These studies would enable marketers to understand the longer term effects of likeability on behaviour as well as on alternative product categories, and give practical guidance to brand managers on the importance or otherwise of developing likeable advertisements.

In addition, future research could measure the effects of likeability on other variables, such as persuasion and repeat purchase. This would help to clarify if likeability has any effect on consumers' longer term buying behaviour.

These measures are important in establishing whether likeability could have lasting effects on consumer's purchase decisions and therefore, provide guidance to marketers on the value of creating likeable advertising content in order to achieve more enduring consumer behaviour.

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# **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A - PILOT STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

| <b>ADVERTISEMENT A</b>                                |                               |   |   |   |   |                              |   |
|---|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|------------------------------|---|
|   | <b>Strongly<br/>Disagree</b>  |   |   |   |   | <b>Strongly<br/>Agree</b>    |   |
| This advertisement stands out                         | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |                              |   |
| This advertisement would encourage me to buy milk     | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |                              |   |
| This advertisement would encourage people to buy milk | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |                              |   |
| This advertisement would be easy to remember          | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |                              |   |
|   |                               |   |   |   |   |                              |   |
|   |                               |   |   |   |   |                              |   |
|   |                               |   |   |   |   |                              |   |
| How much do you like this advertisement?              | <b>Do not like<br/>at all</b> |   |   |   |   | <b>Like it<br/>very much</b> |   |
|   | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                            | 7 |

| <b>ADVERTISEMENT B</b>                                |                               |   |   |   |   |                              |   |
|---|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|------------------------------|---|
|   | <b>Strongly<br/>Disagree</b>  |   |   |   |   | <b>Strongly<br/>Agree</b>    |   |
| This advertisement stands out                         | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |                              |   |
| This advertisement would encourage me to buy milk     | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |                              |   |
| This advertisement would encourage people to buy milk | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |                              |   |
| This advertisement would be easy to remember          | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |                              |   |
|   |                               |   |   |   |   |                              |   |
|   |                               |   |   |   |   |                              |   |
|   |                               |   |   |   |   |                              |   |
| How much do you like this advertisement?              | <b>Do not like<br/>at all</b> |   |   |   |   | <b>Like it<br/>very much</b> |   |
|   | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                            | 7 |

**ADVERTISEMENT C**

|   | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> |   |   |   |   | <b>Strongly Agree</b> |   |   |   |    |
|---|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|-----------------------|---|---|---|----|
| This advertisement stands out                         | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                     | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| This advertisement would encourage me to buy milk     | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                     | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| This advertisement would encourage people to buy milk | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                     | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| This advertisement would be easy to remember          | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                     | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

|  | <b>Do not like at all</b> |   |   |   |   | <b>Like it very much</b> |   |   |   |    |
|--|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|--------------------------|---|---|---|----|
| How much do you like this advertisement? | 1                         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                        | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

**ADVERTISEMENT D**

|   | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> |   |   |   |   | <b>Strongly Agree</b> |   |   |   |    |
|---|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|-----------------------|---|---|---|----|
| This advertisement stands out                         | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                     | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| This advertisement would encourage me to buy milk     | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                     | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| This advertisement would encourage people to buy milk | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                     | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| This advertisement would be easy to remember          | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                     | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

|                           | <b>Do not like at all</b> |   |   |   |   | <b>Like it very much</b> |   |   |   |    |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|--------------------------|---|---|---|----|
| How much do you like this | 1                         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                        | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

**ADVERTISEMENT E**

|   | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> |   |   | <b>Strongly Agree</b> |   |  |
|---|--------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|---|--|
| This advertisement stands out                         | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |  |
| This advertisement would encourage me to buy milk     | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |  |
| This advertisement would encourage people to buy milk | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |  |
| This advertisement would be easy to remember          | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |  |

|  | <b>Do not like at all</b> |   |   |   |   | <b>Like it very much</b> |   |
|--|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|--------------------------|---|
| How much do you like this advertisement? | 1                         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                        | 7 |

**ADVERTISEMENT F**

|   | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> |   |   | <b>Strongly Agree</b> |   |  |
|---|--------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|---|--|
| This advertisement stands out                         | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |  |
| This advertisement would encourage me to buy milk     | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |  |
| This advertisement would encourage people to buy milk | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |  |
| This advertisement would be easy to remember          | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |  |

|  | <b>Do not like at all</b> |   |   |   |   | <b>Like it very much</b> |   |
|--|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|--------------------------|---|
| How much do you like this advertisement? | 1                         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                        | 7 |

Which advertisement do you like the most?

- Brand A            1
- Brand B            2
- Brand C            3
- Brand D            4
- Brand E            5
- Brand F            6

Which advertisement so you like the least?

- Brand A            1
- Brand B            2
- Brand C            3
- Brand D            4
- Brand E            5
- Brand F            6

# APPENDIX B - MAIN STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

CONFIDENTIAL

ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer Initial \_\_\_\_\_

## MASSEY UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MARKET

### Survey on milk

AUGUST 2000

---

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I'm a researcher from Massey University and I'm conducting a short survey as part of an important project. Could you help me by answering a few questions please, it'll take about 10 minutes of your time. Do you have time to help us now please?

**IF NO, RECORD ON CONTACT RECORD SHEET AS REFUSAL (R)**  
**IF YES, BEGIN**

#### STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY MUST BE READ

Before we start, I want to assure you that this interview is confidential and completely voluntary. If I should come to any question you don't want to answer, please let me know and I'll go on to the next question.

Before we begin, I just need to ask you a quick question to ensure that you meet the requirements of the research.

1. Do you buy or drink milk?

Yes.....1 GO TO Q2

No.....2 THANK AND END

2. PRESETN SHOWCARD A. Please look at this card and tell me which of these categories best describes your involvement in your household's grocery shopping.

I do all my household's grocery shopping

1 GO TO Q3

I do most of my household's grocery shopping

2 GO TO Q3

I am equally responsible for my household's grocery shopping

3 GO TO Q3

Another member of my household is mainly responsible for the grocery shopping

4 THANK AND END

3. Now, I'd like to show you a series of cards with a range of different choices. I want you to assume that you have just entered a store to buy a two litre bottle of milk and the only options available are the ones on these showcards.

**USE CHOICE MODELLING SET OF CARDS. START AT HIGHLIGHTED SHOWCARD. YOU MUST PRESETN ALL SHOWCARDS. PRESETN SHOWCARD AND SAY....**

If you had to choose one of these options, which would you choose? **CODE ONLY ONE FOR EACH SHOWCARD**

|   |              |              |              |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| A | Brand 1<br>1 | Brand 2<br>2 | Brand 3<br>3 |
| B | Brand 1<br>1 | Brand 2<br>2 | Brand 3<br>3 |
| C | Brand 1<br>1 | Brand 2<br>2 | Brand 3<br>3 |
| D | Brand 1<br>1 | Brand 2<br>2 | Brand 3<br>3 |
| E | Brand 1<br>1 | Brand 2<br>2 | Brand 3<br>3 |
| F | Brand 1<br>1 | Brand 2<br>2 | Brand 3<br>3 |
| G | Brand 1<br>1 | Brand 2<br>2 | Brand 3<br>3 |
| H | Brand 1<br>1 | Brand 2<br>2 | Brand 3<br>3 |
| I | Brand 1<br>1 | Brand 2<br>2 | Brand 3<br>3 |
| J | Brand 1<br>1 | Brand 2<br>2 | Brand 3<br>3 |
| K | Brand 1<br>1 | Brand 2<br>2 | Brand 3<br>3 |
| L | Brand 1<br>1 | Brand 2<br>2 | Brand 3<br>3 |
| M | Brand 1<br>1 | Brand 2<br>2 | Brand 3<br>3 |
| N | Brand 1<br>1 | Brand 2<br>2 | Brand 3<br>3 |
| O | Brand 1<br>1 | Brand 2<br>2 | Brand 3<br>3 |

4. I'd like you to look at an advertisement for milk

PRESENT ADVERTISEMENT A: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO READ THIS BRIEFLY.  
TURN TO SHOWCARD B IN SMALL SHOWCARD SET

I'm going to read you some statements which people have used to describe their opinions and feelings about advertisements and I'd like you to tell me how much you agree or disagree with these statements.

WRITE ONE NUMBER FOR EACH STATEMENT IN ADVERT A COLUMN

|   | ADVERT A | ADVERT B |
|---|----------|----------|
| This advertisement is clever  |          |          |
| This advertisement is in poor taste                                 |          |          |
| This advertisement is artistic                                      |          |          |
| This advertisement insults the intelligence of the average consumer |          |          |
| I learned a lot from this advertisement                             |          |          |
| This advertisement is amusing                                       |          |          |
| This advertisement is boring  |          |          |
| This advertisement doesn't give any facts, it just creates an image |          |          |
| This advertisement is enjoyable                                     |          |          |

5. TURN TO SHOWCARD C IN SMALL SET OF SHOWCARDS. Thinking about this advertisement, which of the statements on this card best describes your impression of it? RECORD ANSWER UNDER SHOWCARD COLUMN BELOW

|                         | ADVERT A | ADVERT B |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|
| Liking of advertisement | _____    | _____    |

GIVE RESPONDENT ADVERTISEMENT B AND REPEAT QUESTIONS, CODE ANSWERS IN COLUMN HEADED ADVERT B

6. I'm going to read you the names of some brands of milk. Please tell me if you have ever bought or drunk these brands. **CODE ALL MENTIONED. START AT HIGHLIGHTED BRANDS AND READ UNTIL BRANDS HAVE BEEN READ.**

|                              | Bought or drunk | Main brand |
|------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Anchor                       | 1               | 1          |
| Tararua                      | 1               | 2          |
| Pams, Foodtown, First choice | 1               | 3          |
| Other                        | 1               | 4          |

7. Now I'd like you to tell me which one of these brands you buy or drink most often?

**CODE ONE ONLY IN MAIN BRAND COLUMN**

Now just to make sure my sample is representative, I'd like to ask a couple of questions about you.

8. **PRESENT SHOWCARD D.** Which of these numbers best describes the highest level of formal education you have had?

**CIRCLE ONE ONLY**

---

|  |   |
|--|---|
| No formal schooling                            | 1 |
| Primary school (including intermediate)        | 2 |
| Secondary school for up to 3 years             | 3 |
| Secondary school for 4 years or more           | 4 |
| Some university, polytechnic or other tertiary | 5 |
| Completed university of polytechnic degree     | 6 |

---

9. **PRESENT SHOWCARD E.** Which of these numbers best describes your highest formal qualification?

**CIRCLE ONE ONLY**

---

|  |   |
|--|---|
| No formal qualification  | 1 |
| School qualifications only (Proficiency, School C, UE Bursary) | 2 |
| Trade certificate  | 3 |
| Professional certificate                                       | 4 |
| Diploma below Bachelor's level                                 | 5 |
| Bachelors degree   | 6 |
| Post-graduate or higher qualification                          | 7 |

---

10. In what year were you born? Year born: 19\_\_\_\_\_

11. Record respondent's gender

Male.....1  
Female.....2

## APPENDIX C - SHOW CARDS FOR MAIN STUDY

### SHOWCARD A

|   |   |
|---|---|
| I do all of my household's grocery shopping                                   | 1 |
| I do most of my household's grocery shopping                                  | 2 |
| I am equally responsible for my household's grocery shopping                  | 3 |
| Another member of my household is mainly responsible for the grocery shopping | 4 |

### SHOWCARD B

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Strongly disagree          | 1 |
| Disagree                   | 2 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 3 |
| Agree                      | 4 |
| Strongly Agree             | 5 |

### SHOWCARD C

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| I disliked it very much           | 1 |
| I disliked it                     | 2 |
| I neither liked it or disliked it | 3 |
| I liked it                        | 4 |
| I liked it very much              | 5 |

#### SHOWCARD D

|  |   |
|--|---|
| No formal schooling                            | 1 |
| Primary school (including intermediate)        | 2 |
| Secondary school for up to 3 years             | 3 |
| Secondary school for 4 years or more           | 4 |
| Some university, polytechnic or other tertiary | 5 |
| Completed university or polytechnic degree     | 6 |

#### SHOWCARD E

|   |   |
|---|---|
| No formal qualification                                   | 1 |
| School qualifications (Proficiency, School C, UE Bursary) | 2 |
| Trade Certificate   | 3 |
| Professional Certificate                                  | 4 |
| Diploma below bachelor's level                            | 5 |
| Bachelor's degree   | 6 |
| Post-graduate or higher qualification                     | 7 |

APPENDIX D - BONES ADVERTISEMENT

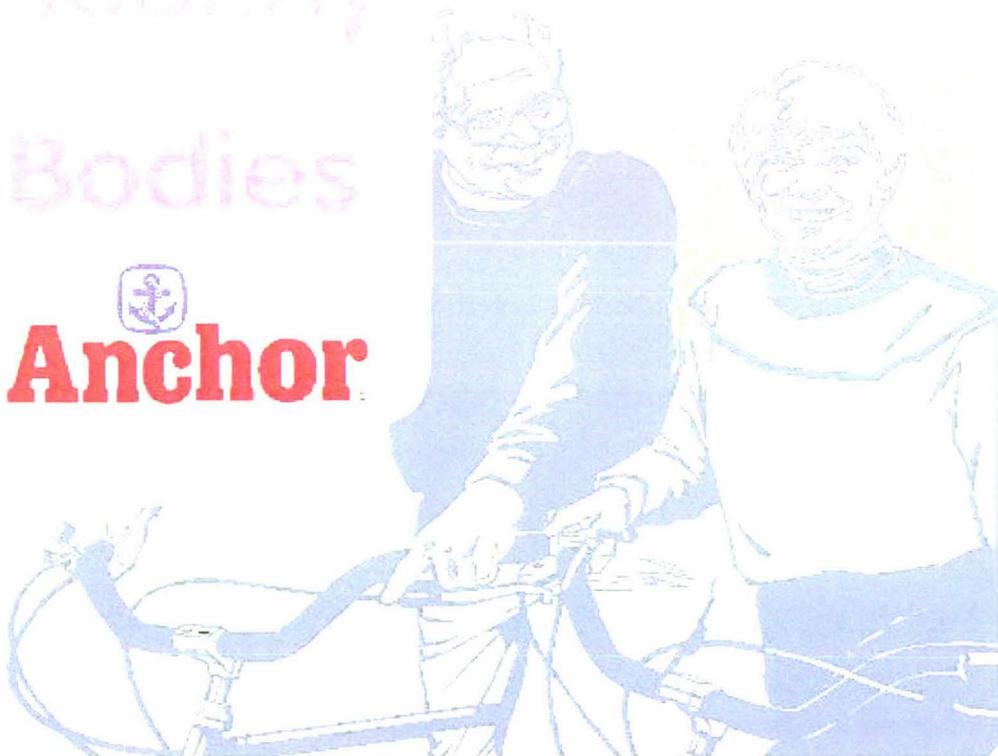
MILK

Building

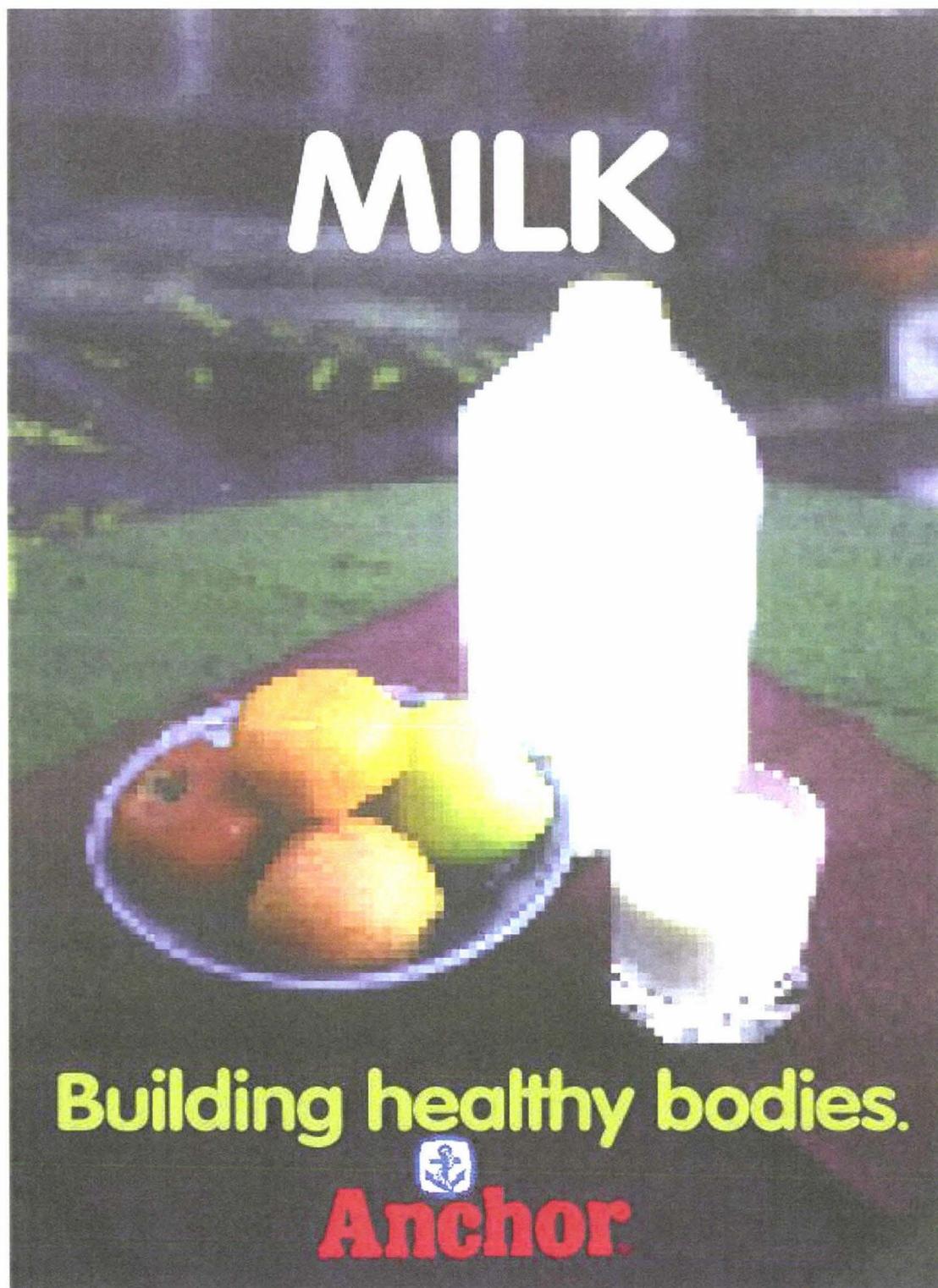
Healthy

Bodies

  
**Anchor**



APPENDIX E - PHOTO ADVERTISEMENT



## APPENDIX F - RESPONSE RATE

---

|                |       |
|----------------|-------|
| Total contacts | 868   |
| Refusals       | 431   |
| Non-qualifiers | 82    |
| Interviews     | 330   |
| Response rate  | 42.0% |
| $330/(868-82)$ |       |

---

# APPENDIX G - SHOWCARDS FOR FULL QUESTIONNAIRE

## Showcard A

### Option 1

\$2.95

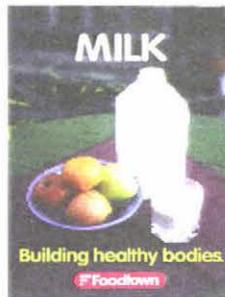
Green top  
(0.2% fat content)



### Option 2

\$3.10

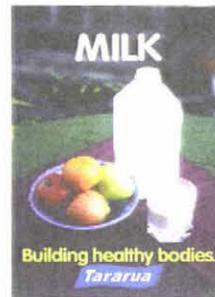
Light blue top  
(1.5% fat content)



### Option 3

\$2.95

Yellow or lilac top  
(0.1% fat content  
and extra calcium)



## Showcard B

### Option 1

\$2.80

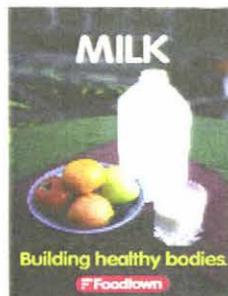
Yellow or lilac top  
(0.1% fat content  
and extra calcium)



### Option 2

\$2.80

Dark blue top  
(3.3% fat content)



### Option 3

\$3.10

Light blue top  
(1.5% fat content)

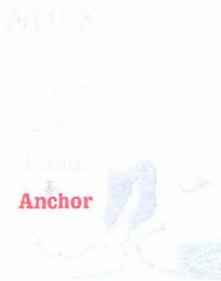


## Showcard C

### Option 1

\$2.80

Light blue top  
(1.5% fat content)



### Option 2

\$3.10

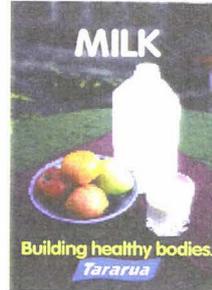
Green top  
(0.2% fat content)



### Option 3

\$3.10

Dark Blue top  
(3.3% fat content)

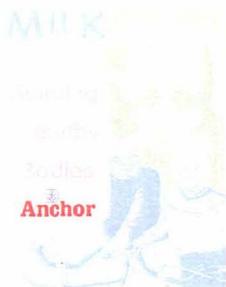


## Showcard D

### Option 1

\$2.80

Green top  
(0.2% fat content)



### Option 2

\$2.95

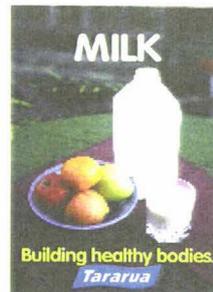
Light blue top  
(1.5% fat content)



### Option 3

\$2.80

Yellow or lilac top  
(0.1% fat content  
and extra calcium)



## Showcard E

### Option 1

\$2.95

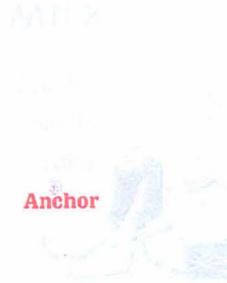
Yellow or lilac top  
(0.1% fat content  
and extra calcium)



### Option 2

\$2.80

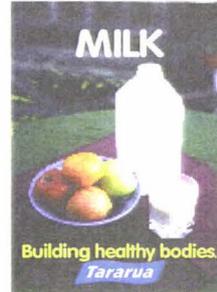
Dark blue top  
(3.3% fat content)



### Option 3

\$2.95

Green top  
(0.2% fat content)

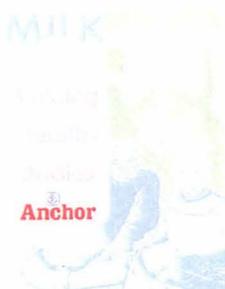


## Showcard F

### Option 1

\$2.80

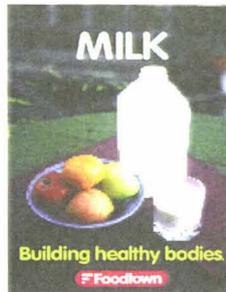
Green top  
(0.2% fat content)



### Option 2

\$2.80

Yellow or lilac top  
(0.1% fat content  
and extra calcium)



### Option 3

\$2.80

Dark blue top  
(3.3% fat content)



## Showcard G

### Option 1

\$3.10

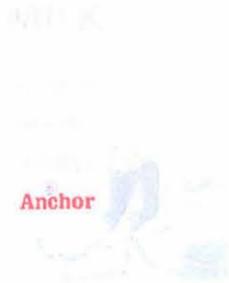
Yellow or lilac top  
(0.1% fat content  
and extra calcium)



### Option 2

\$2.95

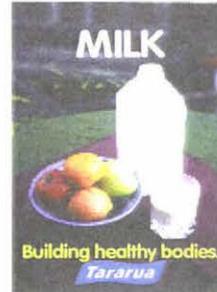
Dark blue top  
(3.3% fat content)



### Option 3

\$3.10

Light blue top  
(1.5% fat content)



## Showcard H

### Option 1

\$3.10

Light blue top  
(1.5% fat content)



### Option 2

\$2.95

Yellow or lilac top  
(0.1% fat content  
and extra calcium)



### Option 3

\$2.95

Dark blue top  
(3.3% fat content)



## Showcard I

### Option 1

\$2.80

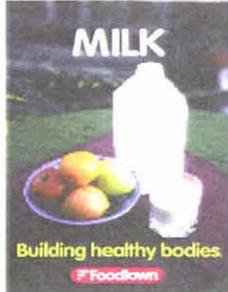
Light blue top  
(1.5% fat content)



### Option 2

\$3.10

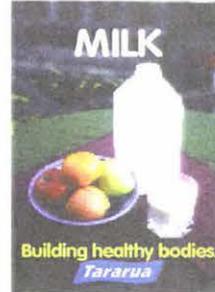
Dark blue top  
(3.3% fat content)



### Option 3

\$2.80

Green top  
(0.2% fat content)



## Showcard J

### Option 1

\$2.95

Dark blue top  
(3.3% fat content)



### Option 2

\$3.10

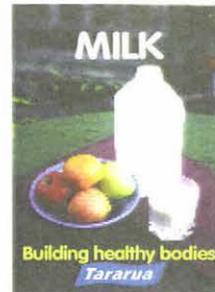
Yellow or lilac top  
(0.1% fat content  
and extra calcium)



### Option 3

\$2.80

Light blue top  
(1.5% fat content)

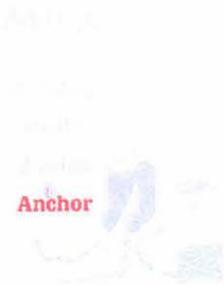


## Showcard K

### *Option 1*

\$2.80

Dark blue top  
(3.3% fat content)



### *Option 2*

\$2.95

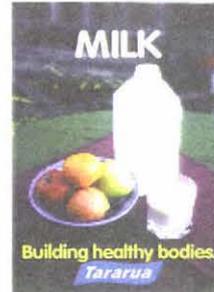
Yellow or lilac top  
(0.1% fat content  
and extra calcium)



### *Option 3*

\$2.95

Green top  
(0.2% fat content)



## Showcard L

### *Option 1*

\$2.95

Light blue top  
(1.5% fat content)



### *Option 2*

\$2.95

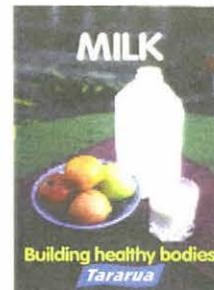
Yellow or lilac top  
(0.1% fat content  
and extra calcium)



### *Option 3*

\$3.10

Green top  
(0.2% fat content)



## Showcard M

### Option 1

\$3.10

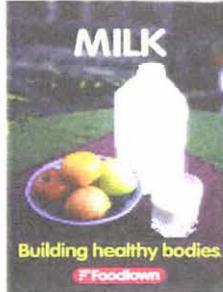
Light blue top  
(1.5% fat content)



### Option 2

\$2.95

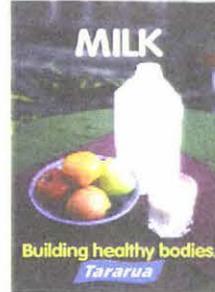
Dark blue top  
(3.3% fat content)



### Option 3

\$3.10

Green top  
(0.2% fat content)



## Showcard N

### Option 1

\$3.10

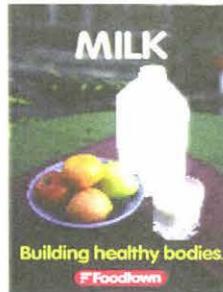
Light blue top  
(1.5% fat content)



### Option 2

\$3.10

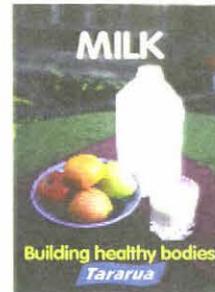
Yellow or lilac top  
(0.1% fat content  
and extra calcium)



### Option 3

\$2.80

Green top  
(0.2% fat content)



## Showcard O

### *Option 1*

\$3.10

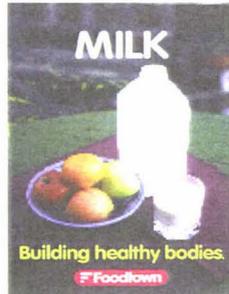
Dark blue top  
(1.5% fat content)



### *Option 2*

\$2.95

Light blue top  
(1.5% fat content)



### *Option 3*

\$2.80

Yellow or lilac top  
(0.1% fat content  
and extra calcium)

