



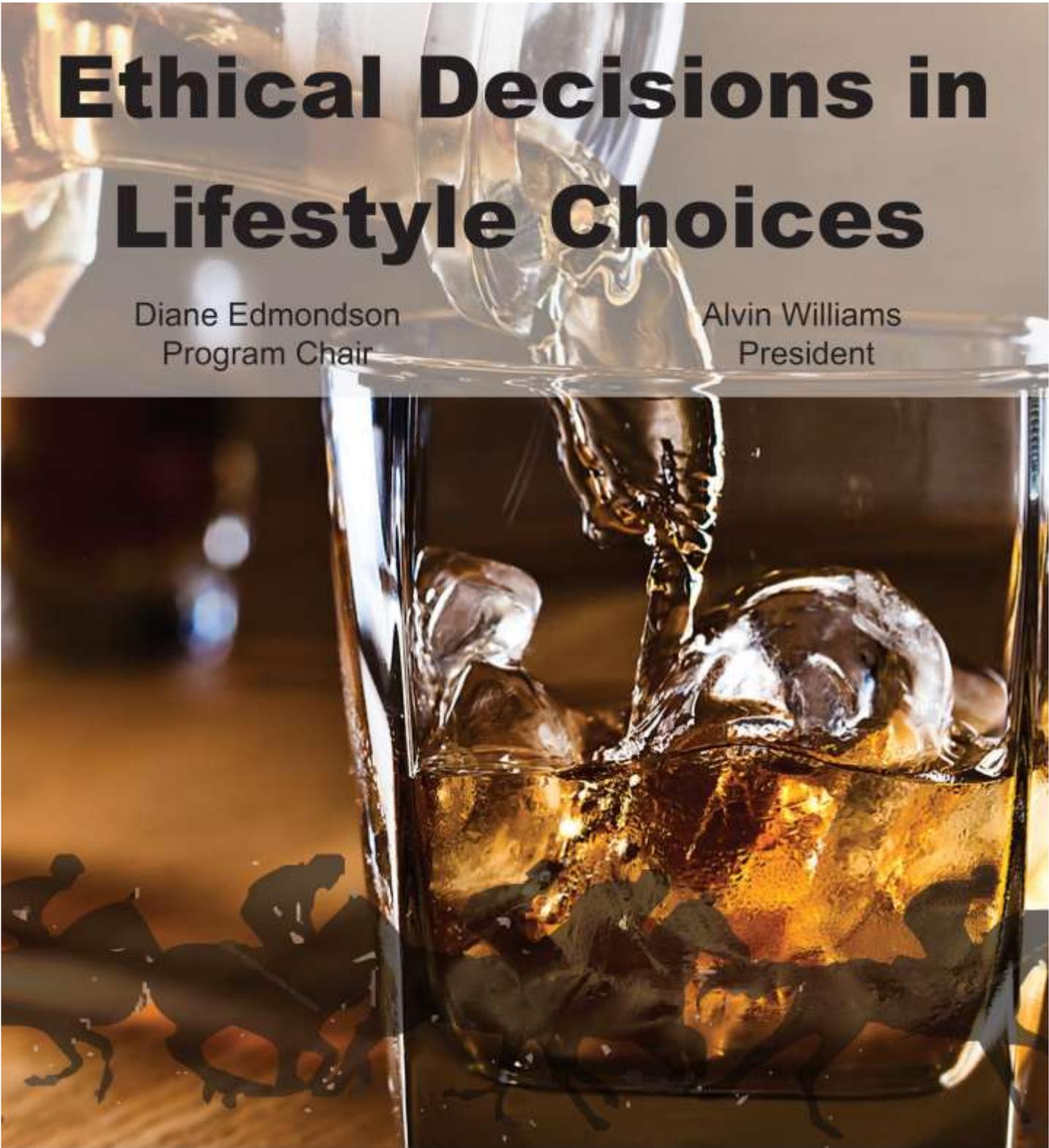
Advertising Rhetoric And Positive Versus Negative Emotions In Health Promotions

By: **Pia A. Albinsson**, Bruce A. Huhmann, and Bidisha Burman

Abstract

The current study integrates and applies advertising rhetoric and appraisal theory of emotion in preventive health promotions. The experiment was designed to test the effects of advertising rhetoric in conjunction with emotional appeals in a public service announcement (PSA) promoting the USDA food pyramid website. The study demonstrates that the combination of advertising rhetoric (a rhyme scheme and a metaphor trope) and emotional appeals (pride and shame) can influence ad-processing outcomes in print advertising. In particular, results show that the emotion pride is more effective in combination with a trope than the emotion shame in combination with a trope on readership of copy, attitude towards the ad, and behavioral intention. When paired with a scheme, pride did not differ from shame in its effect on advertising outcomes.

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Ethical Decisions in Lifestyle Choices

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Summary Brief

Advertising Rhetoric and Positive versus Negative Emotions in Health Promotions

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The current study integrates and applies advertising rhetoric and appraisal theory of emotion in preventive health promotions. The experiment was designed to test the effects of advertising rhetoric in conjunction with emotional appeals in a public service announcement (PSA) promoting the USDA food pyramid website. The study demonstrates that the combination of advertising rhetoric (a rhyme scheme and a metaphor trope) and emotional appeals (pride and shame) can influence ad-processing outcomes in print advertising. In particular, results show that the emotion pride is more effective in combination with a trope than the emotion shame in combination with a trope on readership of copy, attitude towards the ad, and behavioral intention. When paired with a scheme, pride did not differ from shame in its effect on advertising outcomes.

Introduction

This study builds on previous research that has combined two research streams in preventive health promotions namely appraisal theories of emotions and advertising rhetoric. Recently the Emotional Appraisal and Reactions Model (EARM) that integrates appraisal theories of emotions in preventive health advertising campaigns (Block and Keller 1998, Eppright et al. 2002) and advertising rhetoric was posited (Albinsson 2009). The model focuses specifically on verbal rhetoric although recent research on advertising rhetoric also include the effects of visual rhetoric on advertising effectiveness (McQuarrie and Mick 2003, Phillips and McQuarrie 2004, Mothersbaugh, Huhmann, and Franke 2002). Until recently, most research focused solely on cognitive aspects of advertising rhetoric; therefore, limited research has combined emotional appeals and advertising rhetoric when studying processing outcomes (Huhmann 2008; Albinsson 2009). We therefore respond to recent calls for research to explore combinations of advertising rhetoric and emotions of different valence to find ways to develop effective health promotion advertisements. Specifically, in this research we investigate how the emotions of pride and shame work in combination with schemes and tropes in print advertisements. Schemes are rhetorical figures, such as rhyme or alliteration that attract attention and provide emphasis through repetition of sounds or words. Tropes are rhetorical figures, such as metaphors or hyperbole that require self-generated meaning to decode a literally impossible or false statement. For example, “Red Bull Gives You Wings” does not literally imply that a can of Red Bull energy drink will cause the drinker to sprout wings. Instead, this hyperbole should encourage ad elaboration. Further, elaboration tied to a positive emotion should be more enjoyable than elaboration tied to a negative emotion. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H1: Use of advertising rhetoric will increase readership of ad copy when combined with pride, a positive emotion more than when combined with shame, a negative emotion. This difference is likely to be higher for advertising rhetoric such as tropes as compared to advertising rhetoric such as schemes.

H2: Use of advertising rhetoric will increase attitude towards the advertisement when combined with pride, a positive emotion more than when combined with shame, a negative emotion. This difference is likely to be higher for advertising rhetoric such as tropes as compared to advertising rhetoric such as schemes.

H3: Use of advertising rhetoric will have a positive effect on behavioral intention when combined with pride, a positive emotion more so than when combined with shame, a negative emotion. This difference is likely to be higher for advertising rhetoric such as tropes as compared to advertising rhetoric such as schemes.

Method and Results

This study used a mock public service announcement (PSA) campaign for a governmental website promoting healthy eating. An experiment manipulating the type of emotional appeal and verbal rhetorical figure in a PSA was conducted. A 2x2 between-subjects experimental design was used with four headlines containing emotions (pride/shame) and advertising rhetoric (scheme (rhyme)/trope (metaphor)). The target audience was college students. Besides the emotional appeal and the verbal rhetorical figure, all other elements of the target communication were

held constant across conditions. Data was collected via an online survey using SurveyMonkey (N=324), extra credit was offered for participation. Participants were business students from two large public universities. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with the dependent variables of readership of ad copy, attitude towards the ad, and behavioral intention. We found support for all three hypotheses.

Discussion

Emotional appeals and in particular pride were found to increase perceived level of processing and attitude towards the ad when combined with advertising rhetoric, especially in the trope condition (metaphor). The results for pride as a potential motivator in health prevention mirrors previous research findings on other positive emotions (e.g., hope) (Albinsson 2009; de Mello et al. 2007). This finding warrants further research in examining if specific tropes and other positive emotions such as joy, warmth, and humor work even better to motivate processing and readership. Previous research has shown that negative framing/or the use of a negative appeal is more often efficient in health prevention, however the use of shame was not as efficient as the use of pride in the current context.

Conclusion

Overall, our study extends existing knowledge on the effectiveness of advertising rhetoric from both theoretical and practical standpoints. Our study finds that the effectiveness of tropes is higher when a positive emotion such as pride, is used than a negative emotion, such as shame. Further, schemes have no differential effect on the depth of ad processing or persuasion reactions with use of either pride or shame. This examination of the combined ad execution of advertising rhetoric and emotional appeals provides important insights on consumer ad processing and reactions to health messages. Future research may need to study similar ad executions in different contexts and extend these findings to the use of other/additional ad stimuli to cope with unfavorable consumer reactions. Finally, examining cognitive processing in further depth will enhance current understanding of effectiveness of ad executions combining emotional appeals and advertising rhetoric.

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