

# Fun, Fear or Fact?: Effects of Different Advertising Appeals and Other Factors on Filipino Adolescents' Attitudes Towards Responsible Sexual Behavior

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## Abstract

*An experiment was done to study how different advertising appeals and other factors affect the attitudes of adolescents towards responsible sexual behavior. One hundred seven Introductory Psychology students from UP Diliman were pretested to obtain their initial attitudes about responsible sexual behavior as indexed by attitudes towards teenage pregnancy, contraception and premarital sex. Two groups were identified: those who were proattitudinal or who have favorable attitudes and those who were counterattitudinal or who have unfavorable attitudes towards responsible responsible sexual behavior. The results showed that the effect of different advertising appeals differs depending on the initial attitudinal position of the participants.*

## Introduction

An attitude is a "learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object" (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1980). An attitude can serve as a tool to help an individual organize stimuli and make sense of them. When confronted with a stimulus, an individual may call to mind an attitude

about the stimulus in order to figure out the appropriate action. Such attitude guide is the basic concept in attitude research.

Attitude research is particularly helpful in the study of adolescent sexuality. It is important that adolescents be able to form 'correct' attitudes so that they would be guided towards 'correct' behavior. Specifically, a 'correct' attitude towards sexuality translates to adolescents who are capable and well-equipped to handle their own sexuality.

The study of adolescent sexuality is important because it has implications and consequences for both adolescents and their parents or other significant adults. With growing liberalization and more value given to freedom of expression, adolescents are now vulnerable to many influences which may have adverse effects. Whether in print, in broadcast media, and recently, with the advent of electronic communication such as e-mail and the internet, adolescents are exposed to messages that may be distorted and are potentially dangerous, especially for those who have yet to learn dealing with their own sexuality. Pregnancy, contracting sexually transmitted diseases and abortion are some consequences awaiting these youths.

Despite the efforts of adolescent welfare agencies to promote responsible sexual behavior to prevent occurrences of unwanted pregnancies, the percentage of teenage pregnancies is still on the rise. Globally, an estimated 1.5 million teenage girls give birth each year. This accounts for 20 per cent of all births (UNESCO PROAP, 1998).

This may be due to lack of favorable attitude towards responsible sexual behavior among adolescents. Following the concept of attitude-behavior relationship, *having a favorable attitude towards responsible sexual behavior would lead to actual responsible sexual behavior.*

How would adolescents be influenced to adopt favorable attitudes towards responsible sexual behavior? One possibility is through advertising. Advertisements, no matter what form they may take, have the same goal: to persuade or to influence peoples' attitudes. Advertisers want people to have "correct" attitudes so that they would perform the "correct" behaviors – that of patronizing the product, person or ideal that they are promoting. Furthermore, adolescents are heavy media consumers which make advertisements a good medium of influence.

This study focused on the effectiveness of print advertisements in influencing attitude change towards responsible sexual behavior among adolescents. The print medium

has certain advantages that make it a good vehicle for persuasive messages. Print messages (also known as self-paced messages) generally receive greater scrutiny as it is more difficult to thoroughly scrutinize the content of an externally-paced message such as a TV or radio message (Petty and Wegener, 1998). The print medium also provides a fairly permanent record that people can consume at their own pace (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981).

In particular, the study explored the effects of different advertising appeals on message processing and attitude change. The study also recognized that there are other important factors which may affect these processes. Among these factors, are *modes of exposures* or the manner by which recipients are exposed to a message, and *initial attitudinal position* or the recipients' current attitudes during the time of exposure. These factors were also investigated by the study.

### **Review of attitude change literature**

A significant theory about the processes responsible for attitude change and the strength of the attitudes that result from these processes is the *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM). The theory poses that there are two distinct routes to attitude change. The first route, called the *central route*, views attitude change as resulting from a person's diligent consideration of issue-relevant information. The second route, called the *peripheral route*, views attitude change as resulting from various persuasion cues in the situation. The ELM poses that attitude change resulting from the central route is more enduring than attitude change resulting from the peripheral route wherein change is likely to exist so long as the cues remain salient. Enduring attitude change, therefore, appears to depend on the likelihood that an issue or argument will be elaborated upon or thought about (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981).

### **Appeal used in message presentation**

The type of appeal used in presenting a message is an important matter in the persuasion process. Sometimes, objective, factual appeals are more effective in persuading a target audience. A study exploring the perceived effectiveness of international AIDS campaigns found that advertisements presenting hard facts were most effective while complex and emotional campaigning techniques drew negative responses (Baggaley, 1988). Sometimes, however, emotional appeals are more effective. In general, logical appeals are more effective in persuading educated or

analytical people, and emotional appeals are more effective in persuading less-educated or less critical people (Cacioppo, Petty and Morris, 1983) and that reasoned arguments are more influential for highly involved people than for less involved people (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981).

Gardner (1994) found in her study that informative advertisements were more effective in negative mood-inducing contexts. This is probably because people tend to scrutinize information more when they are in bad mood. When people are in a good mood, they are not likely to systematically process information possible because they do not want anything to disrupt their happy mood. On the other hand, emotional appeals, according to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, are significant determinants of attitude change when the ability or motivation to process issue-relevant information is low (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981).

The fear appeal is a type of emotional appeal used in health campaigns, politics and advertising. The assumption in using fear appeal is that by making message recipients afraid is one way to persuade them to take the proposed action such as stopping drinking, voting for a politician or buying a product (Gleicher and Petty, 1992).

Some researchers have found a negative relationship between the intensity of fear appeals and their ability to persuade, so that strong fear appeals tend to be less effective than mild fear appeals. This was demonstrated in a study by Janis and Feshbach (1953), pioneers of studies on fear appeals. In their study, they showed high school students a film that emphasized the importance of brushing one's teeth three times a day, after every meal. High fear was aroused by showing pictures such as of badly decayed teeth and gums. Less frightening pictures were used in the mild-fear condition. A control group was not shown pictures at all. Results showed that there was more message agreement among the subjects under the high fear condition. However, a week later, the control subjects were found to have changed their behavior more. The seemingly little effect the message had on subjects under the high-fear condition was attributed to defensive avoidance aroused by too much fear. They simply stop paying attention to the message.

Keller and Block (1995) found support to the expectation that a high level of fear interferes with message processing because subjects deny the message's claims. They also found that when they keep participants from elaborating on the harmful consequences, there is less denial of the message's claims. Participants are the less resistant to processing the message.

Others have found a positive relationship between fear and persuasiveness. However, they downplay the fear and focus on controlling the danger. They believe that when individuals focus on controlling the danger rather than controlling the fear, there is a greater probability of their accepting the message's recommendation. When solutions are provided, coupled with reassurances of the efficacy of these solutions, individuals are more likely to yield (Gleicher and Petty, 1992).

The humor appeal is another type of emotional appeal. Many advertisers use humorous appeals in the belief that humor will increase the acceptance and persuasiveness of their message. Studies have found that humor interacts with message characteristics. Clisse and Kellaris (1999) found that humorous advertisements engender more positive attitudes when they employ weaker arguments and less positive attitudes when they use stronger arguments. This is probably because when there are weak arguments, subjects engage in peripheral processing and thus evaluate the advertisement based on humor and not based on its merits. Audience characteristics also interact with humor. Humor is more effective for individuals with low need for cognition, also because they are more likely to engage in peripheral processing (Zhang, 1996). The relevance of humor to the advertised message should be noted, however. Relevant humor increases patronage, but humor not relevant to the object of the advertisement has either no impact or has a negative impact (Bednall, et al., 1997).

#### **Mode of exposure to the message**

In experimental studies about attitude change, there are two ways by which messages are presented. Subjects are exposed either actively or passively to these messages. Active exposure entails engaging a subject to actively participate in the message presentation. For instance, having subjects role-play is an example of active exposure (King and Janis, 1956). Passive exposure, on the other hand, just asks a subject to read or listen to a message. It is important to note that most advertisements are passively presented to viewers.

Hovland et al. (1953) and Janis and King (1954, 1956) were the first to study active versus passive exposure to messages. Their studies show that active exposure to messages was relatively more superior to passive exposure (cited in Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). There are various explanations given as to why active exposure to a message can be more persuasive. Cognitive dissonance theorists attribute the effect to the greater amount of effort spent by active participants. Because they

continued to participate despite the effort demanded for them, one way for them to achieve consonance is to think that they approve of the message. It can also be explained using a learning theory perspective. Active exposure is more effective because of the increased likelihood that the message recipient will attend to and comprehend the message (Rosnow and Robinson, 1967).

### **Initial attitudinal position of message recipients**

Another factor that affects persuasion is whether a person agrees or disagrees with a message. It has been proposed that attitude change should be an increasing function of how far the message position is from one's own attitude (Petty and Wegener, 1998).

According to ELM, attitudinal position could play in several roles. When the elaboration likelihood is low, it could serve as a simple cue. Agreeable sounding messages would be accepted and disagreeable sounding ones rejected. This is done with little message scrutiny. When the elaboration likelihood is moderate, attitudinal position will determine, in part, the extent of message processing. For example, counterattitudinal messages might receive greater scrutiny than proattitudinal messages. When the elaboration likelihood is high, people will engage in negatively biased processing of counterattitudinal messages, but will engage in positively biased processing of proattitudinal messages (Petty and Wegener, 1998).

Research evidence supports the proposition that counterattitudinal messages receive greater scrutiny than proattitudinal messages. In an early study, recipients generated a greater number of counterarguments as the message became more counterattitudinal (Brock, 1967). A more recent study showed the same results. Arguments that were incompatible with participants' prior beliefs were scrutinized longer and subjected to more extensive refutational analyses (Edwards & Smith, 1996).

### **Processing the persuasive message**

Attitude change that occur via the central route is preferable because it is relatively more enduring. The extent to which participants process centrally can be examined by assessing their *cognitive responses* or the thoughts they generate while being exposed to a persuasive message. The thoughts participants generate are obtained through the *thought-listing task* introduced by Anthony Greenwald and Timothy Brock as a means of assessing cognitive responses. Recipients of a message are merely asked to list down the thoughts they had while viewing the message (Brock,

1967). The amount and nature of cognitive responses can, in turn, indicate the magnitude and direction of attitude change. An advertisement that elicits mostly favorable thoughts should be persuasive while an advertisement that elicits mostly unfavorable thoughts should decrease persuasion or may even result in attitudes that are less favorable than the recipients' prior attitudes (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993).

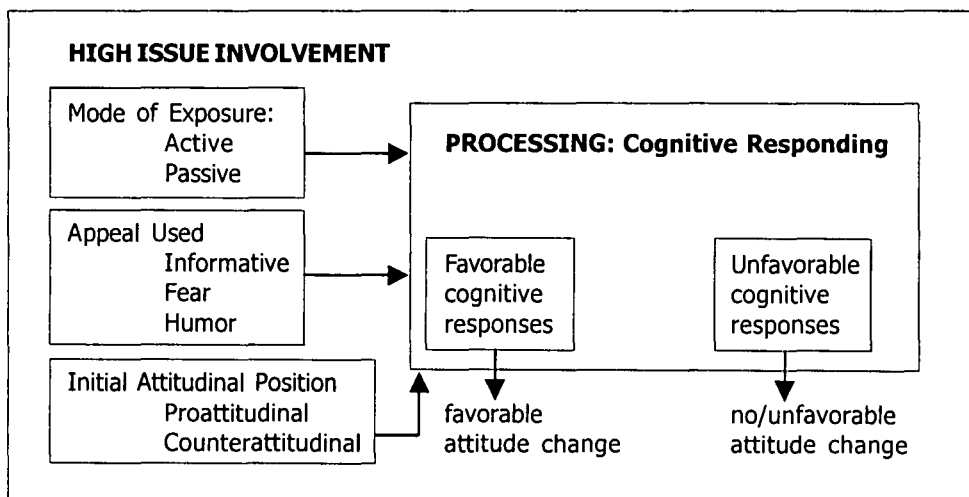
### Study overview

The present study explored the effects of different advertising appeals on adolescents' processing of a print advertisement about responsible sexual behavior and its consequent effects on their attitudes. The study also examined the role of mode of exposure and initial attitudinal position on processing and attitude change. These factors were investigated under a high level of issue involvement to elicit central processing. The topic of responsible sexual behavior ensures that a high involvement is in effect among the participants because it is a very important topic for them. Adolescents are at the stage when they are just beginning to be aware of and deal with their own sexuality.

Below is a schematic diagram of the conceptual framework.

**Figure 1.**

Factors affecting processing of a print advertisement under high issue involvement.



This study was anchored on the premise that a high degree of involvement facilitates central or detailed processing of a message. This, in turn, facilitates enduring attitude change.

The study posed the following hypotheses: (1) Different advertising appeals are expected to have different effects on cognitive processing and attitude change. The humor appeal is expected to result in greater central processing and greater attitude change than the factual and fear appeal. The use of humor is more likely to catch participants' attention that would lead to processing. Also, the fear appeal might pose a threat or make the participants feel scared that they would not choose to process the advertisement. (2) Because the issue is highly involving, mode of exposure is expected to have no significant effects. (3) Participants who have different initial attitudinal positions will process a persuasive message differently. Thus, the effect on attitudes will also be different. (4) Various interaction effects are expected to occur, affect processing, and influence attitude change.

### **Independent Variables**

*Appeal used.* Participants were exposed to one of three print ads advocating responsible sexual behavior. The three ads were constructed using a informative (factual), funny and fear-arousing appeal, respectively.

*Mode of exposure.* For participants in the active mode condition, they were asked to write a letter relevant to the ad they viewed. This is to make them process the ad in more detail, thus, central processing. Participants were instructed to write a letter to fellow teenagers to encourage them to practice responsible sexual behavior. Those who were passively exposed to the print ad were asked to compose a letter irrelevant to the message of ad viewed.

*Initial attitudinal position.* The participants' initial attitudinal position was based on a pre-test administered three weeks before the experiment proper. Proattitudinal participants expressed moderate agreement to a statement advocating responsible sexual behavior and counterattitudinal participants expressed moderate disagreement to a statement advocating responsible sexual behavior.

### **Dependent Variables**

*Attitude measures.* There were two attitude measures. The first was a pretest measure which obtained the participants' initial attitudinal positions. Because the



topic of responsible sexual behavior is quite broad, focus was given to its smaller components: *premarital sex, contraception, and pregnancy*. Three statements constructed to measure attitudes towards responsible sexual behavior were embedded in a 25-item questionnaire and rated on a scale from 1-5. The three statements are as follows:

1. Teenagers my age are not yet ready to take on the responsibilities of pregnancy.
2. It is okay for teenagers my age to engage in premarital sex.
3. Teenage couples must have access to contraception.

The second attitude measure was the post-test which obtained participants' attitudes immediately after exposure to the print ad. The post-test contained only the three statements on teenage pregnancy, contraception, and premarital sex, respectively.

*Cognitive response measure.* After completion of the post-test scale, participants were given 5 minutes to list the thoughts they had while viewing the print advertisement. Two independent judges rated the cognitive responses. The cognitive responses were classified into three groups: message-related or thoughts about the message in the ad; ad-related or thoughts about the ad itself or its external attributes; and neutral or thoughts which are not relevant at all to the message or the ad. The message-related and ad-related cognitive responses were then classified according to whether they were favorable or positive (+) or unfavorable or negative (-).

## Method

### Preliminary test

Sixteen Psychology 101 sections from the University of the Philippines Diliman during the First Semester of Academic Year 2000-2001 were administered a 25-item pretest scale to obtain initial attitudes about teenage pregnancy, contraception and premarital sex. Each item on the scale was rated from 1 to 5 where 5 indicated strong agreement and 1 indicated strong disagreement. Participants were classified according to whether they were extremely proattitudinal, moderately proattitudinal, neutral, moderately counterattitudinal and extremely counterattitudinal. Those who had extreme attitudes were excluded since their attitudes were expected to be firmly held, thus, resistant to change. Only those who were moderately proattitudinal or counterattitudinal were included because they were more likely to display significant shifts in attitude. Because those who had a neutral opinion were very few, they were not included as well.

### Design and Procedure

One hundred seven undergraduate students selected from the preliminary test participated in order to earn credit for their Psychology 101 course. The design was a 2 (mode of exposure: active or passive exposure) x 3 (appeal used: informative or funny or fear-arousing appeal) x 2 (attitudinal position: proattitudinal or counterattitudinal position) between-subjects factorial design.

The experiment was conducted individually for each participant. First, participants were shown the print advertisement. Second, they were asked to write a letter to fellow teenagers to practice responsible sexual behavior (active mode) or to spend more time studying their lessons (passive mode). Third, they were asked to rate a 3-item questionnaire containing the three items/statements on teenage pregnancy, contraception, and premarital sex that were originally in the pretest scale. This is the immediate attitude measure to gauge if the participants had significant changes in attitude after being exposed to the advertisement. Fourth, cognitive responses were obtained by having the participants list all the thoughts they had while viewing the ad. Lastly, they were asked to fill out the manipulation checks questionnaire.

### Results

#### Attitude change

The posttest attitude scores of the participants are presented in Table 1. Proattitudinal participants have a baseline attitude score of 4 and counterattitudinal participants have a baseline attitude score of 2.

**TABLE 1.** Mean posttest attitude scores

Type of Ad	Proattitudinal			Counterattitudinal		
	Active	Passive	Total	Active	Passive	Total
Informative	4.40	4.20	4.20	2.50	2.38	2.44
Funny	4.40	4.30	4.35	3.25	2.43	2.87
Fear-arousing	3.60	3.70	3.65	3.00	3.50	3.25
Total	4.13	4.07	4.10	2.92	2.78	2.85

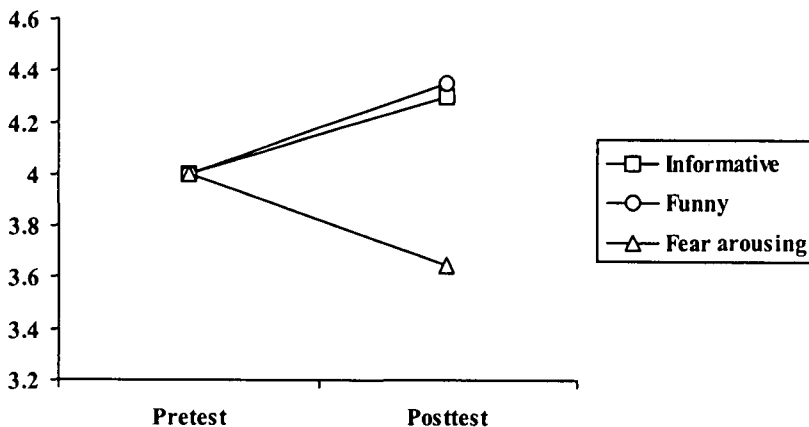
It was expected that the attitude shift of participants would differ as a function of having different starting points on the attitudinal continuum. A 2 x 3 x 2 analysis of variance on the participants' post-test attitude scores showed a significant difference between the attitudes of proattitudinal participants and those of counterattitudinal participants,  $F(1,95)=65.822, p<.01$ .

A significant attitudinal position x appeal used interaction  $F(2,95)=8.172, p<.01$ , further supported the hypothesis. For counterattitudinal participants, regardless of the appeal used in the advertisement they were exposed to, participants displayed shifts towards the proattitudinal direction with those exposed to the fear-arousing ad exhibiting the greatest amount of shift. For the proattitudinal participants, however, the attitude scores of the participants also exhibited a shift towards an even more proattitudinal position except for those exposed to the fear-arousing advertisement whose attitude scores shifted in the opposite direction. Figures 2 and 3 show an illustration of the trend of attitude shift for proattitudinal and counterattitudinal participants, respectively.

**Figure 2.**

Attitude shift of proattitudinal participants exposed to different appeals.

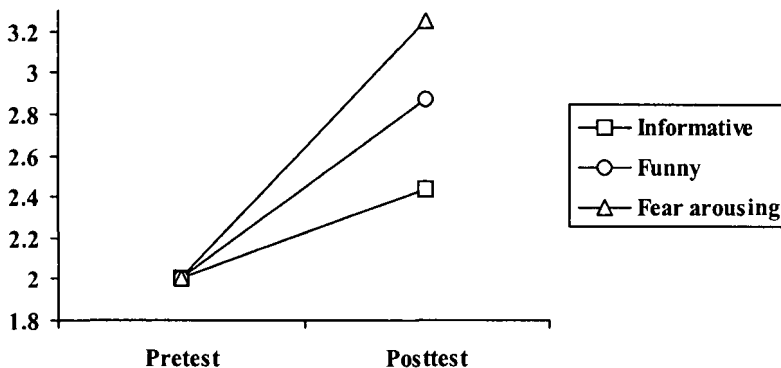
The graph shows the shift towards a more extreme position of those exposed to the informative and funny ads and the shift of those exposed to the fear-arousing ad to a less proattitudinal position.



**Figure 3.**

Attitude shift of counterattitudinal participants exposed to different appeals.

The graph shows that for counterattitudinal participants, their attitude shift was towards a more proattitudinal position, opposite of their original position.



**Cognitive Responses**

**TABLE 2.** Percentages of positive and negative cognitive responses generated

	Message-related	Ad-related	Neutral	Total
Positive	51.4	3.2		
Negative	24.4	2.6		
Total	75.8	5.8	18.4	100

The majority of the cognitive responses generated were favorable message-related cognitive responses which were expected to facilitate favorable attitude change. Seventy-six (76) percent of the total cognitive responses generated were message-related suggesting that central processing occurred.

**Table 3.** Means of message-related cognitive responses generated

Type of Ad	Positive	Negative
Informative	3.62	2.58
Funny	3.93	1.79
Fear-arousing	4.86	1.64
Total	4.14	2.00

Correlations between the amount of attitude change (post-test attitude score – initial attitude score) and the amount of cognitive responses generated yielded no significant relationships.

#### **Manipulation Checks**

*Advertisement effects.* Participants rated on a 5-point scale how informative, funny, or fear-arousing they found the advertisement they were exposed to. The results showed that all three advertisements were perceived to be moderately informative. Second, the informative advertisement, was to some extent, perceived as fear-arousing. However, informativeness was still most salient for the informative advertisement; humor was still most salient for the funny ad; and fear still the most salient for the fear-arousing advertisement. The manipulation for Type of Appeal, therefore, appeared to be adequate.

*Issue Importance.* Participants rated on a 5-point scale how important they perceive the issue of responsible sexual behavior to be. The mean rating of the participants on how important they perceive the issue is 4.82. This indicated that the participants certainly regarded the issue as highly important or involving.

#### **Discussion**

The results provide support to the hypotheses posed. First, mode of exposure did not significantly affect processing and attitude change. Participants actively and passively exposed to an advertisement displayed no differences in amount of processing and attitude shift. This is likely because the issue of responsible sexual behavior is highly

involving for all of them. Actively or passively exposing adolescents to a print advertisement about responsible sexual behavior did not matter. They all gave detailed thought about the issue. Second, there was indeed a difference between the attitude shift of pro- and counterattitudinal participants, with the counterattitudinal participants displaying a bigger shift. The attitude shift displayed by counterattitudinal participants is of greater importance since they were the ones whose attitudes needed to be influenced. The significant effect of initial attitudinal position is qualified by the significant interaction effect between initial attitudinal position and appeal used. Different appeals had different effects on attitude change, but the effects depended on the initial attitudinal position of the participants, suggesting that certain types of advertisements work best depending on the initial attitude of the person.

The informative or factual advertisement appeared to work better with proattitudinal participants. This might be because the message in the advertisement was consistent with proattitudinal participants' beliefs and people are generally more willing to process information consistent with their beliefs. Research on attitudinal selectivity indicate that attitudes produce congeniality effects whereby cognitive processing favors attitudinally-congruent information (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). With the counterattitudinal participants, the informative advertisement was able to induce only a small amount of change and this is only marginally significant. The study was premised on the assumption that favorable cognitive responses will lead to favorable attitude change. The cognitive responses generated by the participants exposed to the informative advertisement seem to reflect the weakness of this appeal in changing the counterattitudinal participants' attitudes. In comparison to those exposed to those exposed to the two other advertisements, participants exposed to the informative advertisement generated the least number of positive message-related cognitive responses and the most number of negative message-related cognitive responses, which might have kept them from being influenced to take on a more proattitudinal position.

The fear-arousing advertisement, however, seemed to have the opposite effect. It appeared to work very well in influencing attitude change with counterattitudinal participants. This is supported by the cognitive responses generated by those exposed to this advertisement. Participants exposed to the fear-arousing advertisement generated the most number of positive message-related cognitive responses and the least number of negative message-related cognitive responses.

The fear-arousing advertisement did not seem to work well with already proattitudinal participants. A possible explanation is the *psychological reactance* which might

have been elicited by this advertisement. The theory of psychological reactance was introduced by Jack Brehm (1954). This theory asserts that when individuals perceive that their freedom to engage or not in some behavior is threatened or eliminated, they experience reactance or a state of motivational arousal that leads them to attempt to restore their threatened or lost freedom. The theory assumes that people have a desire to feel free to adopt particular positions on issues or not to adopt any position at all (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993).

In this case, proattitudinal participants exposed to the fear-arousing advertisement might have felt that since they were already in agreement with the advertisement's message, they do not need to be scared into agreeing with it. They did not adopt a more extreme position as aimed by the study. But they did stay proattitudinal, although displaying a slight decrease in their attitude scores from 4 to 3.65.

It is interesting that the fear-arousing advertisement should possibly evoke reactance in proattitudinal participants but not with counterattitudinal participants. After all, it is those who do not agree with the issue who are being made to change their positions. It is possible that for counterattitudinal participants, the advertisement elicited a sufficient amount of fear for them to thoroughly process the advertisement's message and consequently, be persuaded to change their attitudes. The proattitudinal participants, on the other hand, probably already have a certain level of fear about the issue of teenage sexual behavior. Exposing them to the fear-arousing advertisement might have increased this fear to a level that is high enough to elicit reactance. For the counterattitudinal participants, the level of fear evoked by the advertisement was probably just enough to make them pay attention to it and realize the merits of the message. Furthermore, the cognitive response view holds that when participants are presented a message that is counter to their position, but this message is difficult to counterargue, participants who are highly involved are likely to be persuaded (Petty and Cacioppo, 1979). Since it appears that the participants are highly involved, this view is one possible explanation for why counterattitudinal participants changed their position.

In contrast to the informative and fear-arousing advertisements, the funny advertisement seemed to work well, regardless of the initial attitudinal position of the participant. The cognitive responses generated by the participants exposed to this advertisement also provided support to the more proattitudinal shift they displayed. Participants generated a substantial amount of positive message-related cognitive responses and a considerably less amount of negative message-related cognitive responses.

Breckler and Wiggins (1991) cited Zajonc (1980) and Zajonc and Marcus (1984) that the initial response to a stimulus event is assumed to be an emotional or affective one and this may or may not be followed by higher order elaborations such as cognitive responses. This could possibly provide an explanation to why the three advertisements have different effects on cognitive responses, and consequently, on attitudes.

The informative advertisement was textual, citing bare facts. The funny advertisement had a cartoon on it and the fear-arousing advertisement had a picture of a teenage father. The participants, who were teenagers, probably disliked the informative advertisement as they perceived it boring or dull. In fact, some of the cognitive responses show this dislike. For instance, one participant wrote of the informative advertisement: *This ad is boring*. This dislike could have prompted the participants exposed to it to generate more negative than positive cognitive responses.

The funny advertisement was perceived likable by those exposed to it as shown by the positive cognitive responses they generated about the ad itself (i.e., *The cartoon was cute; Ad is cute, drawing is expressive*). In fact, the funny advertisement generated a significantly greater amount of positive ad-related cognitive responses than the informative and fear-arousing advertisements. Liking the advertisement could have influenced positive thoughts about it which in turn, could have influenced a favorable attitude shift.

When the amount of attitude shift, however, is correlated with the amount of cognitive responses generated, no significant relationships were found. It was shown that among the participants, there were no differences in the amount to cognitive responses generated. About 76 percent of these cognitive responses were message-related, indicating that they engaged in central processing. This large proportion of message-related cognitive responses must have been due to the high level of involvement evoked by the issue of responsible sexual behavior.

Although each participant may have thought about the message in the advertisement he or she saw as much as another participant, the amount of attitude change generated for each one is different. It is possible that because the topic was highly involving for the participants, they might have had preconceived beliefs and notions that could have limited attitude change. Thus, the amount of thoughts the participants generated was not indicative of the amount of resulting attitude change. Also, because participants are highly involved, it is likely that the quality of thoughts generated instead of the quantity that affected the participants' attitudes.



In sum, the results appeared to show that with a highly involving issue such as responsible sexual behavior, teenagers gave much thought to the message they were presented regardless of whether they were actively or passively exposed to it, and regardless of whether they were pro or against a message. It also seemed that even if they generated similar amounts of thoughts or cognitive responses, the amount of resulting attitude shift may be varied.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Responsible sexual behavior is a delicate issue among teenagers. Getting them to form "correct" attitudes about it will require a careful balance of education, persuasion and freedom to form their own opinions.

The study showed that the funny advertisement seemed promising in encouraging attitude change among young people. The funny advertisement generated considerably more favorable cognitive responses which are thought to facilitate favorable attitude change.

The study also indicated that the effects of initial attitudinal position must be carefully considered as they have a significant impact on cognitive processing and attitude change. It was found that whether or not an individual agrees with a certain issue to begin with can affect how much and how carefully he will think about it and consequently, how much he will be persuaded. Creators of persuasive communications might find it more advantageous to tailor their messages while keeping in mind their target audience's current beliefs and attitudes about an issue.

Advertisers might find it beneficial to be mindful of the recipients' existing attitudes so that the persuasive messages to be created should not be extremely discrepant with their stand as this will make them hold on to their attitudes more firmly and hinder attitude change.

Furthermore, determining the initial attitudinal position of message recipients matters because it affects the effectiveness of different advertising appeals. The study showed that when participants are already proattitudinal, the humor appeal works well. But when participants are counterattitudinal, the fear appeal was better able to change the participants' attitudes .

Finally, the study indicated the significance of print advertisements as a good vehicle for persuasive messages. However, the creation of print advertisements must be done carefully, especially if the target audience consists of young people whose

attention generally can not be caught by plain and monotonous print advertisements. Since the country's population of young people is rapidly rising, this would pose important implications in the creation of print advertisements. Advertisers should be mindful of the elements that would be effective with a relatively young generation.

#### **Policy implications and suggestions for future research**

The insights gained from the study may be used to support attitude change programs, particularly reproductive health programs for young people to help empower them in terms of successfully dealing with issues of sexuality.

The study was not able to explore gender differences in adolescents' attitudes. This factor may also be an important element in the study of adolescent sexuality. Males and females seem to differ in terms of sexual activity. Between them, it seems to be the females who are more at risk, especially since they are the ones who get pregnant. Knowledge of the differences between their attitudes may help in tailoring reproductive health programs that would suit their needs.

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