The Effect of Involvement, Arousal, and Pace on Claim and Non-claim Components of Attitude toward the Ad

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This study examined whether structural features of television advertisements (pace and content arousal) have different effects on attitudes toward the ad, depending upon viewers’ level of involvement with the ad message. Results provide some, though limited, support for involvement’s moderating influence on the effect that pace and arousal have on the claim-related component of attitude toward the ad (Aad-c). As expected, involvement did not influence these relationships for the non-claim-related component of Aad (Aad-nc). Practical and theoretical implications of these results are discussed.

Advertisers are constantly looking for the “magic bullet” cues that will capture the target audience’s attention and cognitively involve them in processing the product information presented in an ad. Even the most elaborate, finely tuned

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advertising campaign will not successfully accomplish its objectives if campaign messages fail to engage or cognitively involve the target audience at a significant level. Unfortunately, however, the task of getting audience members to become highly involved or motivated to cognitively process commercial information is becoming increasingly difficult. Many viewers actively avoid advertisements by changing channels or fast forwarding through commercial breaks in recorded programs (Cronin & Menelly, 1992; Gilmore & Secunda, 1993; Heeter & Greenberg, 1985; Lin, 1994; Yorke & Kitchen, 1985). This widespread commercial avoidance behavior seems to be indicative of viewers’ increasingly negative attitudes toward advertising. Alwitt and Prabhaker (1994), for example, found that the percentage of viewers holding negative attitudes toward television advertising has significantly increased over time. Mittal (1994) estimated that as much as one third of the population may consider television advertising totally inessential.

The previously mentioned research indicates that a significant proportion of television advertisements may fail to engage audience members at anything more than a “preattentive” cognitive level, where little more than the fact that the message is an advertisement gets processed by viewers. Advertisers clearly have a difficult task to try to get target audience members to become involved to the degree that attitudes are significantly affected by claims about the advertised product. In today’s cluttered viewing environment, a successful advertising strategy calls for capturing viewers’ attention by using creative executional cues. This call for more effective advertising has led to a heightened interest in the effects of executional features on consumer information processing (MacInnis, Moorman, & Jaworski, 1991) and a challenge for advertisers to find means to successfully “reach” an audience that grows increasingly cynical toward advertising in general (Mittal, 1994).

In response, this study investigates two executional elements—production pace and content arousal—in the context of high- and low-involvement processing. The influence these executional and processing variables have on consumers’ attitudes toward the ad will be the focal point of the investigation.

**BACKGROUND**

Previous research has shown that certain executional styles and techniques can influence consumer response to advertising. Shimp’s (1976) typology categorizes television commercials largely into four styles, depending on whether they are individual oriented (celebrity endorser or spokesperson, for example), story oriented, product oriented, or technique oriented (use of fantasy,
Attitude Toward the Ad

for example). Using this typology of executonal style, Laskey, Fox, and Crask (1994) found a significant relationship between executonal style and comprehension and recall of commercial information. Other researchers have similarly shown that production characteristics or structural features of television messages also affect viewer response (Calvert, Huston, Watkins, & Wright, 1982; Geiger & Reeves, 1993; Gunter, 1987; Lang, 1990; Lang, Geiger, Strickwerda, & Sumner, 1993). Examples of structural features of television messages shown to affect viewers’ cognitive processing include cuts (Basil, 1994) and video graphics (Thorson & Lang, 1992). A viewer’s cognitive processing of television messages such as advertisements appears to be influenced by both content and structural features of messages.

It then appears that by judiciously manipulating the content and structure of advertisements, advertisers may have some control over how viewers process and evaluate advertisements, thus potentially influencing their ad and brand attitudes. Two of the message-related variables that have been of interest to researchers in recent years are production pace and content arousal (Basil, 1994; Calvert et al., 1982; Geiger & Reeves, 1993; Grimes, 1990; Gunter, 1987; Lang, 1990; Lang, Dhillon, & Dong, 1995; Thorson & Lang, 1992). The effects of advertising’s pace or speed (defined as the number of cuts and edits in an ad) has recently received some research attention perhaps because of the increase of the fast-paced MTV-style commercials. In addition, scholars have investigated the effects of advertising’s content arousal on viewers’ memory and attitudes toward the ad. For example, Yoon, Bolls, and Lang (1998) found that fast-paced ads produced more favorable attitudes toward the peripheral components of the ad, such as music or models. They have also suggested that fast-paced ads may produce more favorable attitudes toward the brand and enhance purchase intention, but they result in less favorable attitudes toward the claim-related component of the ad. In addition, Bolls, Yoon, Potter, and Lang (1997) reported that fast-paced ads and arousing ads produced better recall of advertising messages.

Advertisements can affect attitudes, but the mechanism driving the effects is believed to be different under conditions of low versus high involvement (Greenwald & Leavitt, 1985; MacKenzie & Spreng, 1992; Madden, Allen, & Twibble, 1988; Muehling, Laczniaik, & Stoltman, 1991; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Yoon, Laczniaik, Muehling, & Reece, 1995). Given that, it is important to examine the role viewers’ involvement with the ad message plays in moderating the relationship between content and structural features of television advertisements and viewers’ attitude toward the ad. If different processes drive the effects of advertising under various conditions, then advertising theory and
practice can be advanced by searching for features of messages that have different effects under conditions of low versus high involvement. This study will examine how conditions of high and low involvement affect the relationships between production pacing, content arousal, and attitude toward the ad.

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE AD

Of the advertising constructs researched in the recent past, perhaps no other has received more attention than attitude toward the ad (Muehling & McCann, 1993). Lutz (1985) defined attitude toward the ad (Aad) as a "predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion" (p. 46). In contrast to attitudes toward advertising in general, Aad represents a viewer's response to a particular ad. Several researchers (e.g., Gardner, 1985; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986; Miniard, Bhatla, & Rose, 1990; Muehling & Laczniak, 1988) have found empirical support for the notion that Aad influences brand attitude and/or purchase intentions. In addition, attitude toward the ad has become an integral component of various advertising processing models associated with cognitive responses, brand beliefs, and brand attitudes (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; Muehling, Laczniak, & Stoltman, 1991; Yoon et al., 1995). Many of these models have examined attitude toward the ad's role in influencing brand attitudes under high- versus low-involvement conditions.

Although Aad has often been treated as a unidimensional construct representing a consumer's overall evaluation of an ad, many researchers (Batra & Ahtola, 1991; Madden et al., 1988; Shimp 1981) have conceptualized the construct as two dimensional. One stream of research in this vein has referred to cognitive and affective dimensions of Aad, with the cognitive component typically representing consumers' deliberate, effortful evaluations of the ad, and the affective component representing a less effortful, feeling-based ad evaluation. Other researchers (e.g., Miniard et al., 1990; Yoon et al., 1995) have elected to decompose Aad by considering the target of consumers' processing attention. This stream has led to a claim-/non-claim-related dichotomy, where the claim component of Aad represents consumers' evaluation of the central message of the ad, and the non-claim component represents consumers' evaluation of the more peripheral components of the ad, such as illustrations, music, and background. The claim component of Aad has been shown to represent "central" processing mechanisms, whereas the non-claim component has been shown to represent "peripheral" processing mechanisms (Yoon et al., 1995). Consistent
with this recent theorizing, the present study utilizes a claim-/non-claim conceptualization and operationalization of Aad.

PRODUCTION PACE AND CONTENT AROUSAL

Despite the fact that fast production pace and arousing content are techniques advertisers frequently use, only a limited amount of research has investigated these effects in an advertising (as opposed to a television-viewing) context. Production pace has been defined by the presence or absence of cuts and edits (Reeves, Thorson, & Schleuder, 1986; Watt & Krull, 1977). Content arousal has been conceptualized as how calm or exciting the content of a message is perceived to be (Lang et al., 1995). Of the limited amount of research conducted, findings indicate that both content arousal and production pace may affect viewers’ cognitive processing of television advertising messages (Bolls et al., 1997; Lang, Newhagan, & Reeves, 1996).

Of relevance to the present study, one stream of advertising research has focused on the use of emotional appeals in advertising. This line of research has concluded that emotional advertisements result in more positive attitude toward the ad and in significantly less viewer wearout, compared to nonemotional advertisements (Edell & Burke, 1987; Hitchon & Thorson, 1995; Holbrook & Batra 1987; Thorson & Friestad, 1989). Results of research on emotional appeals in advertising seem to be consistent with research indicating that viewers tend to like fast-paced, arousing television messages in general (Kawahara et al., 1996).

It is important to note that just because a viewer may like a fast-paced, arousing advertisement, it cannot be assumed that he or she is investing more mental effort in cognitively processing the advertisement. Although cuts and content arousal (the elements of fast/arousing messages) have been found to increase attention allocated to a message (Lang, Newhagan, & Reeves, 1996), there may be a point at which these features interfere with cognitive processing (Stewart & Koslow, 1989). In fact, limited-capacity theory (Lang, 1995) suggests that viewers’ capacity for encoding and storing message information in memory may become overloaded by the combination of fast production pace and highly arousing content. This theory seems to be consistent with the findings that memory for claim components of television advertisements is significantly greater for slow paced, calm advertisements compared to fast paced, arousing advertisements (Bolls et al., 1997). Additional research has suggested that fast (compared to slow) production pace may lead to more favorable attitudes toward “non-claim” components of the ad and less favorable attitudes toward “claim” components of the ad (Yoon, Bolls, & Lang, 1998).
THE MODERATING ROLE OF INVOLVEMENT

Involvement and attitude change have been important topics in social psychology for more than half a century (see Johnson & Eagly, 1989, for a review). Consumer researchers have also extensively investigated the relationship between involvement and consumers' reactions to advertising (e.g., Batra & Ray, 1985; Gardner, Mitchell, & Russo, 1985; Gill, Grossbart, & Laczniak, 1988; Park & Young, 1986; Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983).

Researchers in this field have utilized several different conceptualizations and operationalizations of involvement (cf. Muehling, Laczniak, & Andrews, 1993). For example, Batra and Ray (1983) suggested that at a broad level most consumer research has used the term involvement to describe one of two phenomena: involvement with a product class (Lastovicka & Gardner, 1979; Zaichkowsky, 1985) or involvement with an advertising message (Andrews, Akhter, Durvasula, & Muehling, 1992; Greenwald & Leavitt, 1985; Muehling & Laczniak, 1988; Park & Young, 1986; Petty, Cacioppo, & Shumann, 1983). In either case, personal relevance seems to be an important factor in determining consumers' level of involvement with products and/or advertising messages (Park & Young, 1986; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

In an ad-processing context, advertising message involvement considers the amount and type of mental effort or attention consumers are willing to invest in cognitively processing and storing commercial information in memory (Gardner et al., 1985). For example, watching television commercials may involve the real-time allocation of attention to the message during exposure. As such, message involvement tends to be a more transitory, situational, state variable (Batra & Ray, 1983), as opposed to the more enduring, trait-like, product class involvement. Involvement with an advertising message, therefore, is often characterized as a motivational state that can be influenced by both individual and message characteristics (Bloch & Richins, 1983; Day, Stafford, & Camacho, 1995; Zaichkowsky, 1986). The literature seems to suggest that advertising message involvement can be an outcome variable as well as a moderating variable. Given the nature of the present investigation and its emphasis on advertising processing, we chose to focus on message involvement as the involvement construct of interest, and specifically involvement as a moderator of ad processing.
HYPOTHESES

Models of cognitive processing of advertising, (e.g., Muehling, Laczniak, & Stoltman, 1991) as well as Lang's (1995) limited-capacity theory of television viewing (noted earlier), suggest that viewer involvement may have an impact on how various ad features (messages and executional elements) are processed and evaluated. This impact may result in different processing outcomes (specifically, different levels of attitudes toward claim- and non-claim-related components of the ad).

Assuming that ads are intended to make cogent and persuasive arguments (and not prompt substantial counterargument), it is expected that the resulting attitude toward claim-related aspects of the ad would be relatively positive. Given that high involvement is consistent with elaborative processing of the claim of the ad (Buchholz & Smith, 1991; Greenwald & Leavitt, 1985; MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), it also seems reasonable to expect that ad claims processed under high-involvement conditions would be evaluated more favorably than similar claims evaluated under conditions of low involvement. The reason for this is that high involvement is expected to facilitate the processing of these persuasive arguments, whereas in low-involvement conditions, attention to and evaluation of the these claims is likely to be minimal (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Similarly, there is literature (Lang, Dhillon, & Dong, 1995; Yoon, Bolls, & Lang, 1998) that suggests that a calm ad may facilitate the evaluation of advertising claims, whereas an arousing ad is more likely to detract from the focal point of the ad, thus resulting in a less favorable attitude toward ad claims (Aad-c). In a somewhat related context, several studies have indicated that arousing television programs have a distracting effect on the processing of commercial messages (Mundorf, Zillmann, & Drew, 1991; Pavelchak, Antil, & Munch, 1998). These findings suggest that a calm ad, processed under high-involvement conditions, may result in more favorable ad claim evaluations, more so than would an arousing ad viewed under similar conditions. In other words, we would expect arousal and involvement to have an interactive effect on individuals' attitude toward ad claims.

H1: Involvement will interact with arousal such that (a) involvement enhances Aad-c for calm ads, whereas (b) involvement has no differential effect on Aad-c for arousing ads.
In a similar vein, one might expect a slow-paced ad to result in more favorable Aad-c because of the opportunity such an ad affords the viewer to process the persuasive claims. A fast-paced ad, on the other hand, is likely to diminish the processing activity of the viewer and thereby reduce the propensity of the persuasive claims to be evaluated fully and favorably. For slow-paced ads, the resulting Aad-c should be more favorable under high- than under low-involvement conditions for the same reason as noted earlier. That is, a slower pace may facilitate ad claim evaluation (which is more likely to be prevalent in high-involvement processing conditions). A fast-paced ad, on the other hand, would likely impede processing of an advertising claim (and its resulting favorable ad evaluation) even when viewers are in a high-involvement state.

H2: Involvement will interact with pace such that (a) involvement enhances Aad-c for slow ads, whereas (b) involvement has no differential effect on Aad-c for fast ads.

Given that involvement is characterized in our study as involvement with the central message of the ad, we would not expect this involvement to differentially affect viewers’ reactions to or evaluations of the non-claim-related (more peripheral) elements of the ad (Aad-nc; cf. Andrews & Durvasula, 1991; Muehling, Stoltman, & Mishra, 1990). Consistent with this logic, Aad-nc should be no more or less favorable in high- versus low-involvement conditions because attention to and involvement with the non-claim elements of the ad is expected to be no different for high than for low message-involvement viewers. However, one might expect that an arousing ad would be more appealing to a viewer (Lang, 1990) and as a result might yield more favorable attitudes toward the non-claim elements of the ad than would a calm ad.

For a similar reason, it is likely that a fast-paced ad would result in a more favorable Aad-nc than would a slow-paced ad, with involvement having no differential effect on this non-claim evaluation. A fast-paced ad, being more dynamic, may be more appealing and entertaining to a television viewer (cf. Kawahara et al., 1996). Because it is more appealing, the executonal non-claim aspects of the ad may be evaluated in a more favorable manner.

H3: Involvement will play no significant role in influencing the effect arousal or pace has on Aad-nc; however (a) arousing ads and (b) fast-paced ads will result in more favorable Aad-nc, than calm and slow-paced ads.
METHODOLOGY

Design

A 2 (Production Pace: fast/slow) x 2 (Content Arousal: arousing/calm) factorial design experiment was conducted, with the third independent variable (involvement: high/low) formed as the result of a median split for each ad. (Order of presentation was also considered in the original experiment; however, subsequent analyses indicated it had no measurable impact on the study’s findings and was therefore eliminated from further consideration and discussion). Production pace and content arousal were within-subjects factors.

Stimulus Messages

One of the researchers viewed 60 television advertisements and selected twenty-four 30-second ads that met the criteria for being fast paced (11 or more cuts in 30 seconds) or slow paced (3 or fewer cuts in 30 seconds) and appeared to be very calm or arousing. These 24 advertisements were shown to a group of eight undergraduate students selected from a similar pool of students used in the main experiment. The eight students were instructed to rate (using the SAM scale discussed later) how excited or calm each ad made them feel immediately after viewing it. Based on the students’ ratings, the three most arousing and three least arousing ads at both levels of production pace were chosen for the stimulus tape.

As a manipulation check of content arousal, participants in the experiment reported their level of arousal immediately after viewing each advertisement. Self-reported arousal for the arousing ads ($M = 4.32$) was significantly higher than self-reported arousal for the calm ads ($M = 2.17; F(1,44) = 4.23, p < .002$), providing some justification for the ads chosen. In addition, to make certain that our fast-paced ads were no more arousing than our slow-paced ads, a statistical test using the SAM scale was conducted. Results produced no significant differences on arousal for the fast versus slow ads, $F = 1.83, p > .05$.

All ads were of a positive nature (i.e., none contained fear or potentially negative appeals). The final stimulus tape contained three fast/arousing, three fast/calm, three slow/arousing, and three slow/calm 30-second television advertisements.
Participants and Procedure

Participants for the main experiment were 47 undergraduate students attending a large northwestern university. Given the within-subjects nature of the study (see Reeves, 1989), the sample of 47 students generated 564 (47 participants x 12 ads) data points (responses) to be analyzed. All respondents viewed each of the twelve ads. They viewed the stimulus tape seated in a reclining chair positioned approximately 5 feet from a 19-inch color television. Respondents were given instructions regarding how to complete the SAM scale and involvement and attitude measures. Once the researcher was relatively certain participants understood the instructions, the stimulus tape was shown. To facilitate the recording of responses, the researcher paused the stimulus tape after each advertisement while respondents completed the measures, then restarted the tape when participants indicated they were ready to proceed to the next ad.

Independent Variables

Production Pacing. One approach to defining production pace has been to group several executional features such as cuts and edits together to obtain an overall indication of pace (Reeves, Thorson, & Schleuder, 1986). However, grouping executional features together to define production pace is problematic because not all executional features of television advertisements are equal in the mental effort they require from viewers. Cuts (defined as a camera change from one visual scene to a completely different visual scene) and edits (defined as a camera angle change within the same visual scene) present different amounts of new information to the viewer (Bolls et al., 1997). An advertisement with a lot of cuts requires more mental effort from viewers to be thoroughly encoded and stored in memory than an advertisement with a lot of edits (Geiger & Reeves, 1993), primarily because it presents more new information. Given the higher demand cuts place on cognitive processing of television advertising, it is arguably better to define production pace by the presence or absence of cuts.

In this study, Production Pace was defined as the number of cuts in a 30-second advertisement. Fast pace was defined as 11 or more cuts in 30 seconds, and slow pace was defined as 1–3 cuts in 30 seconds. These levels were chosen, consistent with previous research investigating the effects of pacing on cognitive processing (Bolls et al., 1997; Kawahara et al., 1996).

Content Arousal. Arousal has been defined as an emotional state existing on a continuum ranging from exciting to calm (Mehrabian, 1980). Content arousal,
conceptualized as how exciting or calm the content of a message is perceived to be, was measured in this study using the SAM (self-assessment mannequin) scale (Bradley, 1994). SAM is a 9-point pictorial scale designed to measure three dimensions of emotional state: arousal, valence, and dominance. The SAM scale has been accepted as a valid measure of self-reported arousal in response to television messages including advertisements (Lang et al., 1995; Morris, 1995). Consistent with the focus of the current study, the arousal subscale of SAM was used to assess this advertising component.

Involvement. Consistent with the conceptualization of message involvement presented earlier, involvement in this study was assessed with a four-item, 7-point scale adapted from Andrews and Durvasula (1991) and Muehling and Laczi

Responses to the items were summed and averaged to form an involvement index. The Cronbach alpha of .87 and subsequent analysis of the interrelationships among the items indicated that the index was unidimensional.

Responses to the involvement scale for each of the 12 commercials were collected and used to form high- and low-involvement groups. A median involvement score was determined for each ad, allowing participants' responses to be placed in either a high or low involvement group for that ad. As such, information about participants' involvement with the advertising message was gathered and analyzed at the ad level (thereby, allowing a participant to be placed in a high-involvement group for one ad and a low-involvement group for another ad), consistent with the transitory, trait-like characteristics of message involvement.

Dependent Variables

Attitude Toward the Ad. Participants' attitude toward the ad was measured using a scale similar to the one used by Miniard, Bhatia, and Rose (1990) and Yoon et al. (1995) to separately assess attitudes toward the claim- (Aad-c) and non-claim- (Aad-nc) related components. The following introduction was used with the measures: "In obtaining your reaction to the commercial, we would like for you to distinguish between two basic components of the ad. The first component involves the claims made about the product. The second component involves the remaining elements within the ad such as the format, scenes, models, music, colors, type, style, and so forth. Concerning the first component, how would you evaluate the claims made about XXX?"
Attitude toward claim components (Aad-c) was measured with three 7-point semantic differential items (persuasive–unpersuasive, informative–uninformative, and believable–unbelievable), which were summed and averaged to form an index ($\alpha = .98$).

Using the following stem statement, three 7-point bi-polar adjective items (positive–negative, good–bad, and favorable–unfavorable) were used to measure respondents' attitude toward non-claim components (Aad-nc): “Concerning the second component, how would you evaluate the remaining elements (everything except the claims) within the XXX ad?” Responses to these three items were summed and averaged to form an Aad-nc index ($\alpha = .99$).

Analysis

The hypotheses were tested using repeated-measures analysis of variance. Planned follow-up tests of significant findings were conducted via ANOVA and/or $t$ tests.

RESULTS

Hypotheses 1 and 2 focus on the role that involvement plays in moderating the effects of content arousal and production pace on viewers’ attitudes toward the claim-related components of the ad. Contrary to our general expectations (i.e., that involvement would have a moderating effect on consumers’ Aad-c), tests of the Involvement x Production Pace x Content Arousal three-way interaction were not significant, $F = .92$, $p > .05$. In addition, when the interactive effects of involvement on pacing and arousal were considered separately (i.e., collapsing across pacing or arousal), neither two-way interaction (Involvement x Pace or Involvement x Arousal) reached statistical significance as reported later.

Consistent with earlier theorizing, however, calm ads yielded more favorable attitudes toward the claim-related component of the ad than did arousing ads, $F = 16.70$, $p < .01$. However, contrary to H1, the level of favorability for calm (vs. arousing) ads was not differentially enhanced by respondents’ involvement with the message (Involvement x Arousal interaction, $F = .01$, $p > .05$). Instead, both the calm ($t = 1.70$, $p < .05$) and the arousing ads ($t = 1.75$, $p < .05$) resulted in more favorable Aad-c when viewed in a high-involvement (vs. low-involvement) context, rather than just calm ads (see Figure 1). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 did not receive statistical support.

With regard to the effect of pacing on Aad-c, slow-paced ads were evaluated no more favorably than were fast-paced ads, $F = .02$, $p > .05$. And, tests of the
Involvement x Pacing interaction on Aad-c did not reach statistically significant levels, $F = 1.71, p > .05$, which would suggest that H2 was not supported. However, $t$ tests for slow- and fast-paced ads in high- versus low-involvement conditions indicated that involvement did enhance Aad-c for slow-paced ads, $t = 2.02, p < .01$, but had no measurable effect on fast-paced ads, $t = 1.32, p > .05$, consistent with our expectations (refer to Figure 1).

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 1.** Influence of involvement on the relationship between arousal or pace on Aad-c.

Consistent with the proposed relationships stated in Hypothesis 3, when the evaluation of the ad concerns itself with the non-claim components, advertising message involvement neither enhances nor diminishes the effects of pacing or arousal on participants' responses. The Involvement x Pacing x Arousal three-way interaction, with Aad-nic as the dependent variable, was not significant, $F = .19, p > .05$.

Further analysis of the two-way interactions (collapsing across pace or arousal) yielded similar findings. Neither the Involvement x Pace ($F = 1.26, p > .05$) nor the Involvement x Arousal ($F = 1.21, p > .05$) two-way interactions were significant when Aad-nic was the dependent variable. A subsequent analysis and plot of the means indicates that whereas fast-paced ads yielded more favorable Aad-nic than did slow-paced ads ($F = 13.64, p < .01$), involvement neither enhanced nor diminished this effect. $T$ tests for fast and slow ads in the high-versus low-involvement conditions produced nonsignificant results ($t = .45, p > .05$ for fast ads, and $t = 1.53, p > .05$ for slow ads).

Similarly, although arousing ads yielded no more favorable Aad-nic than did calm ads, $F = .12, p > .05$, the relationship between arousal and Aad-nic appeared to be unaffected by involvement (see Figure 2). $T$ tests for calm and arousing ads in high- vs. low-involvement conditions supported these findings ($t = 1.45, p > .05$ for calm ads, and $t = .81, p > .05$ for arousing ads).
**DISCUSSION**

This study was designed to investigate the moderating influence advertising message involvement has on the relationship between executional elements (content arousal and production pace) and individuals' attitudes toward an ad, more specifically, their attitudes toward the claim- (Aad-c) and non-claim- (Aad-nc) related components of an ad. Our expectation was that message involvement would enhance the effect calm ads have on individuals' Aad-c, while having little or no influence on the effect arousing ads have on individuals' Aad-c. In addition, we expected a similar involvement influence for slow- versus fast-paced ads, with involvement enhancing the effect slow-paced ads have on Aad-c, while having limited influence on the effect fast-paced ads have on Aad-c. These expectations were based on the assumption that some executional elements, namely fast-paced and arousing ads, may introduce processing difficulties (interferences) for individuals, even when these individuals are motivated to evaluate the ad's information (i.e., in high-involvement conditions). When ads are presented in a calmer, slower manner, the differential impact involvement has on individuals' evaluation of the ad's message should become more pronounced, primarily because these executional features would not serve to interfere with individuals' intended processing of persuasive ad claims.

However, we found only limited support for our hypotheses related to involvement's moderating influence on Aad-c. More specifically, our findings tend to suggest that involvement's influence as a moderator of effects for Aad-c is not as strong as expected. Although involvement did appear to enhance
individuals’ Aad-c, its impact on Aad-c was not significantly greater for calm than for arousing ads. There appears to be some (though limited) support for its moderating effects when pace is considered, with Aad-c being enhanced for slow-paced ads viewed in a high- versus low-involvement condition, but not significantly enhanced for fast ads viewed in high-/low-involvement conditions.

We speculate that one of the reasons involvement may have had minimal moderating influence on Aad-c for calm versus arousing ads is because of the strong direct effect these executional components and involvement had on Aad-c. Calm ads resulted in significantly more favorable attitudes toward the claim component of the ad than did arousing ads, as did ads viewed in high-involvement versus low-involvement conditions. In situations where the direct effects were less pronounced (i.e., in the slow- versus fast-pace condition), some evidence of involvement’s moderating effect on Aad-c emerged.

An alternative explanation for our nonsignificant findings deals with the level of arousal evoked by the ads used in our study. Given that the mean arousal score was near the scale midpoint, the arousing ads (as compared to the calm ads) might not have possessed high enough arousal to produce the expected distracting effect on ad processing. A similar argument could be made for our treatment of involvement. Given that involvement levels were measured rather than manipulated, our high- and low-involvement groups, although significantly different, may not have been different enough to produce a strong involvement effect.

For attitudes toward the more peripheral, non-claim component of Aad, we expected no message-involvement effect, that is, we proposed that involvement would neither diminish nor enhance the effects executional elements have on individuals’ Aad-nc. Such a notion is consistent with the central- versus peripheral-based processing tendency of individuals in high- versus low-involvement conditions. The hypothesis focusing on Aad-nc was supported.

As a result, the findings provide some support for the central/peripheral nature of ad processing when attention to the claim and non-claim elements of the ad are investigated separately. Involvement appears to have little if any moderating influence on the relationship between executional elements and the non-claim component of Aad. This finding perhaps serves as a manipulation check for our “message-focused” operationalization of involvement, in that we expected and found some involvement influences for the more central (claim-related) component of Aad and found minimal involvement influences for the peripherally based (non-claim) component of Aad. In addition, the findings support the notion that the effects that production pace and/or arousal have on Aad-nc are largely uninfluenced by individuals’ involvement with the message.
The results of this study may also suggest that alternative explanations for involvement's role be considered. Perhaps involvement is not so much a moderator of executional elements' effects on ad attitude, as it is an outcome of these executional effects. More specifically, production pace and arousal may directly affect individuals' involvement with the ad's message.

One might assume, for example, that a slow-paced ad may encourage individuals to attend to the ad's message (perhaps because a slow-paced ad offers a better "opportunity" to process its contents). Similarly, although an arousing ad may have more "attention-getting" qualities, a calm ad may be perceived by viewers as more worthy of deeper processing, thereby positively impacting individuals' involvement with the advertised message. Given that our data were in a form that provided us with an opportunity to explore this notion further, a post-hoc analysis was undertaken, whereby pace and arousal were treated as independent variables, but Involvement was viewed as a dependent (outcome) variable rather than a moderating variable.

The results of this analysis produced no significant main effect for either pace ($F = 2.85, p > .05$) or arousal, $F = 3.33, p > .05$, but did produce a significant Pace x Arousal interaction, $F = 13.88, p < .01$. A plot of the means (shown in Figure 3) suggests an interactive effect consistent with the reasoning noted previously. Calm/slow ads produced the highest levels of advertising message involvement.

![Figure 3. Effect of pace and arousal on message involvement.](image)

Given the popularity of the MTV-influenced ads of today with their arousing, fast-paced nature, such a finding should give advertisers reason to pause and reflect on the potential effectiveness of such ad executions. Our findings tend to
suggest that advertisers may be better able to enhance viewers' involvement with an ad's message by producing advertisements utilizing calmer (less arousing) and slower-paced formats. Of course, if mood enhancement or affect transfer is the objective, rather than enhancing message involvement, an ad that tends to entertain and/or excite viewers may be more appropriate.

In addition, if viewers' reactions to the ad (more specifically, their attitudes toward its claims) are of primary concern, the findings of this study tend to suggest that executional features such as production pace and content arousal may influence how these claims are evaluated. And, although calm and slow ads appear to have the greatest potential in generating positive attitudes toward the claim-related components of the ad, the involvement individuals have with the ad (either due to some pre-existing condition or as a result of the ad's contents and executional elements) may moderate this influence.

LIMITATIONS AND EXTENSIONS

The usual limitations of laboratory research apply to this study, although an attempt was made to increase external validity by using actual (rather than fictitious) television advertisements. An additional limitation of the study—not unlike many others found in the literature—is that viewer responses were collected after a single exposure to the ads. Replications of this study, using multiple-exposure conditions, would certainly be worthwhile.

In addition, although attitude toward the ad is a construct with both theoretical and practical importance, the findings of the current study could be enhanced by focusing on several other important ad-processing outcomes. Brand-related beliefs, brand attitudes, purchase intention, and purchase behaviors are all variables worthy of further investigation in the context of arousal and pace effects. Furthermore, our treatment of and measures used to tap constructs of interest (specifically, involvement and attitude toward the ad), although consistent with the literature, are not the only conceptualizations and operationalizations currently receiving research attention. Utilizing a manipulated (rather than measured) involvement construct, as well as having measures of Aad that more specifically address its cognitive and affective dimensions, would provide additional insight into the dynamics at work here. Our research could also be extended by considering individual-difference factors (e.g., gender, age, or mood) in addition to message involvement.

Nonetheless, we believe that the current study offers some interesting insight regarding how involvement may influence the effects of executional elements on consumers' responses to advertisements. It should serve as a springboard for further investigation of these relevant and timely topics.
REFERENCES


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