

Analyzing the Effectiveness of Refined Premium Printed Ads

Hans H. Bauer, Daniel Heinrich University of Mannheim

Stefan Hampel, Hajo Hippner, University of Bayreuth*

Abstract

Although marketers are increasingly using premium printed ads, yet no empirical study has addressed their effectiveness. Therefore our (2x2) experimental study investigates the effects of premium printed ads on key behavioral constructs of advertising impact. The results show a more unique and prestigious perception of the premium printed ad in comparison to a non-premium printed version. The use of premium printed ads further boosts consumers' attitudes toward the ad as well toward the brand. Moreover premium print leads to higher purchase intention, positive word of mouth, and consumers' willingness to pay a price premium.

Keywords: print, advertising, advertisement, communication, consumer behaviour, media

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Introduction

In 2008 about 133 out of 295 billion USD advertising expenditures had been invested in US-print media. Although the revenues are high, the Industry is facing a rough competition with new media forms (Gallagher, Foster, and Parsons, 2001; Kanso and Nelson, 2004). Due to „the sheer volume of visual stimuli that simultaneously call for attention surpasses the processing capacities” consumers are becoming increasingly resistant to traditional advertising forms (Pieters and Wedel, 2007, p. 225). Hence, advertisers seek new possibilities to reach consumers and shift media budgets away from traditional above-the-line media like TV or print to new media like the internet. Consequently, the print advertising industry is looking for ad innovations, which can secure the attraction of consumers and therefore increase the effectiveness of printed advertising campaigns (Weilbacher, 2003).

Such an innovation is the premium printed ad (e.g. in terms of special ad designs). We define it as a norm diverging formal scope of design which is characterized by the use of at least two of the following premium printing cues: (a) haptic cues which are tactile and tangible shapes, forming or blankings of the used paper (e.g. raised reliefs); (b) a high-gloss optic of the advertisement by the use of special printing-technology (e.g. metalized paper surface); (c) special paper quality by the use of paper in an extra high density (e.g. nearly card or board paper density).

The verification of the effectiveness of premium printed ads in terms of more favorable consumer evaluations or higher response rates is of utmost importance to the print advertising industry. Advertisers are not likely to book premium print ad techniques until their effectiveness is validated. Although, scientists already assume, that “in a context of overabundant ads and saturated consumers, message format is crucial in developing effective advertising campaigns” (Decrop, 2007, p. 505), to our best knowledge no empirical study has verified this assumption in the context of premium printed ads.

Concerning other scopes of design for print ads, research has already testified the positive impact of print ads in terms of consumer behavior and financial outcomes like attitudes toward the ad or purchase intentions by using colored print (e.g. Fernandez and Rosen, 2000; Grønhaug, Kvitastein, and Grønmo, 1991; Lohse, 1997; Lohse and Rosen, 2001; or Meyers-Levy and Peracchio, 1995) or pictures (e.g. Babin and Burns, 1997; Bolls and Muehling, 2007; Mitchell and Olson, 1981; Pieters and Wedel, 2004; Singh et al., 2000).

To clarify whether the use of premium print is also advantageous to increase selected constructs of advertising impact, a complex system of research hypotheses is generated next.

Research Hypothesis

Tian et al. (2001, p. 50) describe uniqueness as “differentness relative to others“. In context of uniqueness Snyder (1992, p. 9) mentions “a sense of specialness“. Differentiating or unusual designed advertisement characterize Wells, Leavitt, and McConville (1971, p. 13) as ”distinguished from the run of the mill“. To the perception of unordinary styled advertisement (U_{qAD}), like it is presumed for the premium printed ads, they postulate: “Consumers recognize this unordinary quality when it appears, and they respond it by rating commercials that have it as: Novel, Imaginative, Ingenious, Unique and Original” (Wells, Leavitt, and McConville, 1971, p. 13). Due to the use of haptic cues, a glossy print design and high paper density we expect the premium printed ads to be unordinary, hence:

H₁: *The use of premium printed ads will result in a more unique perception of the ad than the use of traditional printed ads.*

The prestige of the ad (Pres_{AD}) and the prestige of the brand (Pres_{BR}) are defined as perceived exclusivity or luxury of the advertisement or the brand (Kirmani, Sood, and Bridges, 1999; Park, Milberg, and Lawson, 1991). Ackerberg (2001, p. 317) proclaims for a prestigious designed advertisement: „advertising can itself create prestige, differentiation, or association that may change the utility a consumer obtains from consuming a product.“ Lohse and Rosen (2001) verify a status enhancement due to the use of color in advertisements. Because of the premium printing cues like gloss and haptic cues, which make the ad a kind of exclusive and prestigious, a status enhancement in perception of the premium printed ads can also be assumed, by which advertisers can highlight exclusivity (Amaldoss and Jain, 2005). Thus we formulate the following hypothesis:

H₂: *The use of premium printed ads will result in a more prestigious perception of the ad than the use of traditional printed ads.*

According to Dahlén's (2005, p. 90) congruity principle “the medium and the advertised brand converge and become similar in consumers' minds.“ Assmuss (1978, p. 4) names this “vehicle source effects”. By the use of value expressive advertising forms, like we assume it for the premium print, advertisers can build up or increase a prestigious image of their brand (Johar and Sirgy, 1991). We therefore presume:

H₃: *The use of premium printed ads will result in a more prestigious perception of the brand than the use of traditional printed ads.*

We introduce a new marketing construct named the Perceived Wow (Wow) which we define as the emotional arousal due to impression, fascination, novelty, or surprise. We use the Perceived Wow to assess the affective effectiveness of the advertisement. Therefore, Edell and Burke (1987, p. 430) postulate “feelings matter in assessing the effectiveness of advertising”. The possibility of emotional impression, fascination or surprise due to an advertising stimulus is stated quite often (e.g. Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer, 1999; Holbrook and Batra, 1988), but it was never measured by an own selective construct to identify the wow and impression due to the stimulus. For a veritable emotional impression Ang and Low (2000, p. 837) demand for a stimulus „a divergence from the norm- and a sense of uniqueness or originality“. Holbrook and Zirlin (1985, p. 21) define the consequence of viewing such a stimulus as an “experience that is enjoyed purely for its own sake without regard for other more practical considerations“. Since we assume for the premium print design a divergence from the norm which pleases the recipients, we propose:

H₄: *The use of premium printed ads will result in a higher Perceived Wow than the use of traditional printed ads.*

Generally, the attitude toward the ad (Att_{AD}) is defined as “an individual's evaluation of and/or affective feelings about an advertisement” (Park and Young, 1986, p. 12). Lutz (1985, p. 46) describes the Att_{AD} as “predisposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion”. Analogous the attitude toward the brand (Att_{BR}) is understood as an individual's evaluation of the advertised brand (Mitchell and Olson, 1981).

The ad perception constitutes a major indicator for the attitude toward the ad within the Attitude toward the Ad-Model (ATTA-Model) (e.g. MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989) and is defined as “a multidimensional array of consumer perceptions of the advertising stimulus, including executional factors[...]“ (MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989, p. 51). The premium printed cues embody such executional factors which lead in accordance with the ATTA-Model to a more positive attitude toward the ad than traditional designed advertisements (Shimp, 1981). Empirical research concerning classical communication instruments confirms a strong influence of the attitude toward the ad to the attitude toward the brand, which is also postulated in the ATTA-Model (e.g. Brown and Stayman, 1992; Mitchell, 1986). Sicilia, Ruiz and Reynolds (2006, p. 141) proclaim: “a consumer who enjoyed (did not enjoy) a particular advertisement is likely to hold a favourable (unfavourable) attitude towards the brand advertised.” Experimental results of Lohse and Rosen (2001) show a significant more favourable attitude toward the ad due to the use of advertisements printed in colour and photo quality as opposed to non-coloured line-art graphics advertisements. In consideration of that, we hypothesize:

H₅: The use of premium printed ads will result in a more favourable attitude toward the ad than the use of traditional printed ads.

H₆: The use of premium printed ads will result in a more favourable attitude toward the brand than the use of traditional printed ads.

Purchase Intention (Pi) is a “common effectiveness measure and often used to anticipate a response behavior“ (Li, Daugherty, and Biocca, 2002, p. 48). It is defined as the individual purpose of a consumer to buy a certain product or brand in the future (Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal, 1991; Young, DeSarbo, and Morwitz, 1988). Krishnan and Jain (2006, p. 1957) describe advertising as “one of the key marketing tools managers have at their disposal to influence their customers into purchasing.“ In research for advertising impact it’s often stated that the use of extraordinary advertising cues improves the purchase intention for the advertised brand, as described below. Experimental results of Schlosser (2003) indicate a higher purchase intention due to the formal structuring with interactive cues as opposed to no cues on a website. Bolls and Muehling (2007) state a higher purchase intention by the use of high vs. low imagery advertisements. Because the premium printing is also a formal structural element of the ad we propose:

H₇: The use of premium printed ads will result in a higher purchase intention, than the use of traditional printed ads.

Arndt (1967, p. 90) defines word of mouth advertising (WoM) as “oral, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver concerning a brand, a product, or a service offered for sale”. Keller (2007, p. 452) describes traditional media like print advertisement as “important ”input” tools [...] in driving WoM”. Results of Graham and Havlena (2007) imply the possibility to influence word of mouth communication positively by advertising. Therefore announces Haywood (1989, p. 57) “advertising can be designed to trigger word of mouth”. Empirical evidence for higher W_{OM} due to a perceived novelty provides Bone (1992). We assume a perceived novelty for premium printed ads because of its uncommonly use. Hence:

H₈: The use of premium printed ads will result in a higher word of mouth communication, than the use of traditional printed ads.

The willingness to pay a price premium (WPP) implies the amount a customer is willingly to pay over and above the fair price for a product, or a comparable product of the same size/package quantity (Netemeyer et al., 2004; Rao and Bergen, 1992). The exclusive value principle from Groth and McDaniel (1993) contains an exclusive value premium due to a marketing strategy which differentiates a firm from competitors. Groth and McDaniel (1993, p. 16) postulate therefore “one can achieve prestige pricing by pursuing a marketing strategy aimed at maximizing this exclusive value premium“. Netemeyer et al. (2004) come to the result of a positive influence of the perceived quality to the willingness to pay a price premium. Because of the presumed high quality of premium printed advertisement we propose:

H₉: The use of premium printed advertisement will result in a higher willingness to pay a price premium, than the use of traditional printed advertisement.

Method and Results

Method

We operationalized premium print through a print advertisement and tested hypotheses in a between-subjects experiment with a 2x2 design. Regarding the purpose of experimental research Perdue and Summers (1986, p. 317) postulate: “the identification of cause and effect relationships is the raison d’être of experimentation.” Thus, test-persons (N = 186) were acquired “offline” out of total population; they participated without any incentives given to them and we did not mention the purpose of our study. Gender distribution is fairly equal (female = 49.6%, male = 50.4%). The average age of the subjects was 33.4 years. Regarding the education level 38.4 percent featured a university entrance diploma, 24.9 percent had a secondary school level, 8.1 percent of the test persons had a university degree, rest was not specified. Considering profession 33.6 percent were employees, 24.9 percent students, blue-collar worker represented 10.4 percent, the rest marked “other”. 23.8 percent of the test persons were in funds of a monthly net-income between 501 and 1250 Euro, below 500 Euro marked 22.1 percent; 1251 – 2000 Euro 18.5 percent; 2001 – 2750 Euro 14.3 percent; 2751 - 2500 Euro 6.2 percent; above 3500 Euro 5.9 percent; 9.2 percent made no declaration.

To test the effectiveness of premium printed ads an advertisement for a Rolex luxury (c.f. figure 1) watch (LW) was used. The premium printed ad for the LW was designed with haptic cues on the front, high paper quality and a high glossy print design (LWprem). In addition the ad was duplicated in a non-premium printed version (without the above mentioned characteristics) for the control group (LWcontrol). Test persons were randomly allocated to one of the two groups and exposed to the group-specific stimulus. After that participants were asked to fill in a paper and pencil questionnaire containing all items for measuring our study’s constructs. All constructs were measured on seven-point Likert scales. We used two pre-tests to ensure consistency of the measurement instruments. Cronbach’s alpha was computed to guarantee reliability. To secure construct validity we analyzed the explained variance and the factor loadings using exploratory factor analysis. The results shown in Table 1 indicate good operationalization of the used measurement items (Gerbing and Anderson, 1988). Moreover, it is also important to test for discriminant validity between the constructs, which was analyzed with the help of the test recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Our test reveals that discriminant validity is given.

Construct	Source	items	alpha	factor loading	expl. var.	factor reliability
Uniqueness of the ad	Dean (1999)	4	.90	.85 - .90	.77	.90
Prestige of the ad	Kirmani et al. (1999)	4	.91	.85 - .91	.78	.91
Prestige of the brand	Kirmani et al. (1999)	4	.91	.86 - .91	.79	.91
Perceived Wow	Own conception	4	.84	.79 - .85	.67	.84
Attitude toward the ad	Lee/Mason (1999)	4	.91	.86 - .92	.80	.91
Attitude toward the brand	Holbrook/Batra(1987)	4	.91	.86 - .91	.78	.91
Purchase Intention	Dodds et al. (1991)	4	.91	.88 - .90	.78	.91
Word of Mouth	Gremler et al. (2000)	4	.91	.87 - .91	.79	.91
Willingness to pay a price premium	Netemeyer et al. (2004)	4	.91	.87 - .91	.80	.91

Table 1: Final Construct Measurement

Results and Discussion

To test the hypothesized causal cause-and-effect relations we used analysis of variance. We first computed the Pearson and Kendall-Tau-b correlation matrixes. According to the recommendation of Hair et al. (2006) a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) should be used if relatively high correlations between the dependent variables are given as in our data. To further verify if the sample emanates from a basic population in which the dependent constructs are also highly correlated, we calculated the Bartlett's test of sphericity (Dzubian and Shirkey, 1974). According to that we can assume ($p < .01$) that there are also high correlations between the dependent variables. Hence we used MANOVA for calculation instead of a number of single ANOVAS.

A Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test and the calculation of skewness and kurtosis (Maxwell and Delaney, 2004) approved Gaussian distribution within our data. Box-M and Levene Tests guaranteed homogeneity of variances (Field, 2000). The multivariate tests of MANOVA procedure indicate high significant differences between the experimental and control groups. The test statistics highlights differences in variances for the 2 different ads (premium and non-premium) for luxury watches: Pillai-Spur ($F = 13.966$; $p < .01$) and Wilk's-Lambda ($F = 13.966$; $p < .01$). The detailed results are shown in table 2.

Advertisement for luxury watches

Hypothesis	Variable	Mean_PREM	Mean_CONTROL	F	p
H ₁	Uq _{AD}	4.69	3.33	79.370	< .01
H ₂	Pres _{AD}	4.74	3.23	83.925	< .01
H ₃	Pres _{BR}	5.36	4.61	18.516	< .01
H ₄	Wow	4.18	3.21	46.604	< .01
H ₅	Att _{AD}	4.77	3.51	52.009	< .01
H ₆	Att _{BR}	4.65	3.75	23.329	< .01
H ₇	Pi	4.70	3.90	19.703	< .01
H ₈	WoM	4.64	3.92	13.541	< .01
H ₉	WPP	4.35	3.61	15.146	< .01



Table 2: Results of MANOVA

Figure 1: Advertisement

MANOVA analysis reveals a significant difference for every investigated construct between the experimental (premium print) and control (conventional print) group. A comparison of the means of the groups highlights higher means for each construct due to the use of premium print in the experimental group as opposed to conventional print in the control group (cf. table 2). Therefore all hypotheses are supported as delineated below.

According to the results premium printed advertisement is perceived as more unique (H₁) and prestigious (H₂) in contrast to the traditional one. The more prestigious perception of the advertisement converges further to a more prestigious perception of the advertised brand (H₃). The researched affective constructs of advertising impact Perceived Wow (H₄), attitude toward the ad (H₅) and attitude toward the brand (H₆) are positively influenced by the use of premium printing. Hence, premium printed ads are applicable to branding campaigns as they secure communicative excess value. The premium printing cues serve further as eye-catchers (perceived Wow-effect). Firms can use them to differentiate in terms of communication from their competitors and to impart prestige and exclusivity.

Concerning our financial focused dependent variables purchase intention (H₇), word of mouth (H₈) and willingness to pay a price premium (H₉) are increased by using premium print technology for the advertising scope of design as opposed to traditional print advertising design. This finding is obviously very important to advertisers. As the more sophisticated premium printed ads demand higher developed and a more cost-intensive print procedure, the higher costs have to pay off. Because of the positive influence of those ads on higher financial outcomes, the effort which has to be put into the production of premium printed ads seems to be worth for this print technique.

Although we find support, that premium printed ads increase financial campaign outcome, more research has to be done to clarify the profitability of such campaigns using ad spending and revenue data. Further, efforts of research should be extended to the impact for the recall and recognition of brands in premium printed ads.

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