

Food commercial as the effective tool of marketing communication for persuading consumers to buy selected food products

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Abstract

Nowadays, it is very demanding to reach the attention of consumer. There are many new marketing methods, techniques and tools that can persuade consumers to buy food products of different categories. Television and internet advertisements are still very popular even though some authors believe that they gradually lose their power. We believe that in the current digital age, internet commercials have a great potential because they can reach the large number of potential customers. In our study, we firstly used projective test of unfinished sentences to evaluate seven selected food commercials. It was found out that even though consumers claimed that they do not like TV commercials they are willing to watch them until the end and buy promoted products. We focused on 180 young consumers (20-30 years old) who belong to the generation Y and we studied the persuading power of food advertisements with different topics. We were focused on food categories that are elastic, i.e. they are sensitive to the price changes on the market, mostly sweets and beverages. We call them “food we can live without”. This category of food is very important not only for agriculture, but for the whole economy, because current consumers are very specific and it is very difficult to satisfy them. Even though 130 respondents (72%) claimed that they sense mostly negative emotions during watching audio-visual commercials, 63% of them have personal experience with buying products that they saw in the TV or internet commercial. Another interesting finding is that most popular food commercials contain live or animated animals. We can assume that TV and internet commercials are still very effective if they can be associated easily with promoted product.

Keywords: food commercial; consumer behavior; food products; agricultural products; marketing communication; advertisement.

1. Introduction

The main task of marketing communication has never changed. It has always been one of persuasion – present our products in as attractive light as possible and persuade consumers to buy them. Nowadays, it is very challenging to reach the attention of consumers, that is why many ingenious methods and techniques have been evolved every year. But if we want to attract consumers we do not always have to use costly modern methods. Television advertisements are still very popular even though some authors believe that they gradually lose their power. The main reason for scepticism is that people face enormous number of commercials every day. But according to Lindstrom (2008) even if consumers are not giving the commercial a hundred percent attention, that does not mean the ad's message does not get through. It is because commercials influence two systems: the consciousness, using information consumers can read and understand and the subconsciousness, using information and techniques that consumers are not clearly aware of [6]. Another reason for scepticism could be the decrease in number of people watching television caused by the rocket growth of using the Internet. We

already know, that the world of digital media is changing at a phenomenal pace. Its constantly evolving technologies, and the way people are using them, is transforming not just how customers access information, but how they interact and communicate with marketers and with others on a global scale. It has also changed the way they choose and buy products [17]. The research conducted in USA by Liebowitz and Zenter (2012), however, showed that the Internet's effect on television watching varies by age group, reducing it by a moderate amount for the youngest but having no impact on the viewing of the oldest.

Thomas (2016) claims that only about a half of the ads actually work, that is, have any positive effects on the consumer buying behaviour. The valuation of commercial effectiveness is the specific issue for checking the cost effectiveness of the company. According to Nagyová et al. (2014), goals of commercials are mainly those of communication, so they cannot be expressed as direct economic goals. The valuation of commercial effectiveness should be therefore orientated mainly to non-economic effectiveness. The creativity and uniqueness of commercials are one of the most important factors of success of these marketing messages. Classic market surveys and questionnaire research, however, often fail and do not provide sufficient information to estimate the effect of commercials. As Lindstrom claims (2008, 2011), currently, the most important aim for advertisers is to engage consumers emotionally. If we can reach the consumer emotionally, the campaign will most likely be successful.

There is a huge discrepancy between what consumers say about commercials and what they actually feel or perceive. Lindstrom (2008, 2011), Heath (2009), Beriain (2013), and others consider neuromarketing methods as an effective tool for evaluating the effectiveness and consumer perception of commercials. We believe that also psychological methods can be very useful. In our study, we use projective test of unfinished sentences to evaluate hidden incentives and motives of human behaviour connected with TV and Internet commercials. What people say without the second thought can lead us to understanding the subconscious processes. We are focused on food categories that are elastic, i.e. they are sensitive to the price changes on the market, mostly sweets, snacks and beverages. We call them “food we can live without”. This category of food needs quite strong marketing communication to become visible on the market and is very important not only for agriculture, but for the whole economy, because current consumers always seek something new, unknown and different. Their lifestyle is connected with fashionable products as well as with fashionable food products.

2. Material and Methods

The sample of this study comprises 180 young adults (86 men and 94 women), aged 19 - 40. All respondents, according to their age structure, belong to the segment of “Generation Y” or “Millenials”. According to Polakevičová (2015), Generation Y involves consumers born between 1977 and 1998. All participants were chosen intentionally because presented commercials are targeted primarily on young adults. All respondents have completed a minimum of secondary education and they live in Slovak Republic. Further characteristics of participants are stated in following table (Table 1).

Table 1. Participants according to gender and place of living (residence).

Gender	Residence		Total
	Town	Village	
Male	47	39	86
Female	50	44	94
Total	97	83	180

The representativeness of the sample was verified by a Pearson’s Chi-square test. If the p-value is lower than the chosen significance level ($\alpha = 0,05$), we reject the null hypothesis, which means that the difference between the frequencies found in the sample set and the expected frequencies is statistically significant. If the p-value is equal to or higher than the chosen significance level, we accept the null hypothesis. In our case, the p-value is 0,49. This means that the sample of respondents is representative according to gender and residence.

The temperament of all participants was investigated by the NEO Five Factor Inventory. Representation of the extroversion, neuroticism and individual temperaments in the sample corresponds with the anticipated

representation of these characteristics and temperament structure in the worldwide population, which was found on the basis of longitudinal studies based predominantly on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator whose items are significantly correlated with the NEO FFI. These findings indicate that there are about 25-30% of introverts in the population. In our sample there are 25% of introverts, 72% of extroverts, and 3% of respondents with indefinite temperament that is caused by the borderline score on the scale of extroversion or neuroticism (Figure 1).

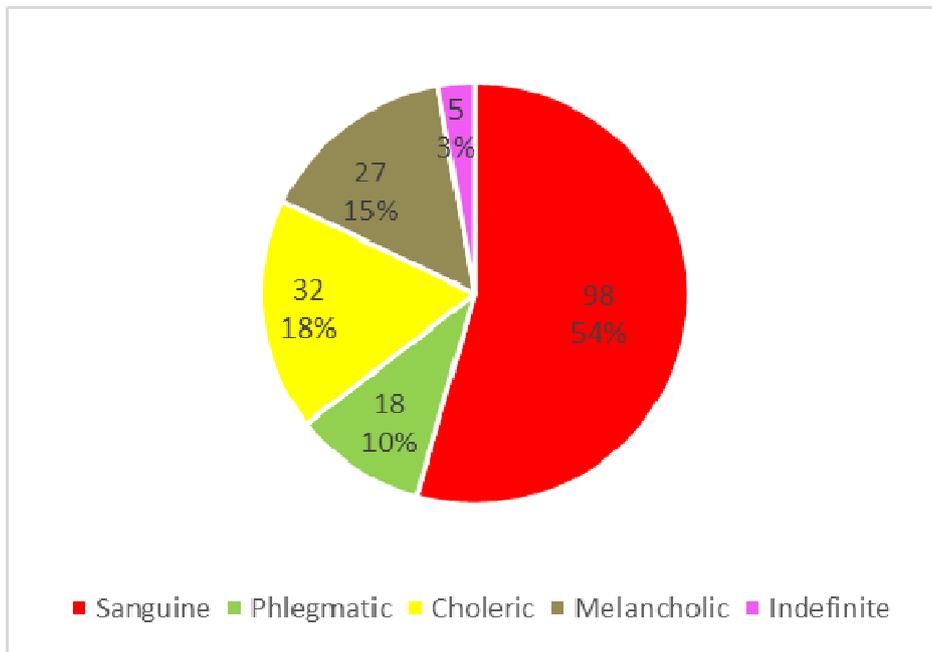


Figure 1. Temperament structure of the sample.

In our study we used projective test of unfinished sentences to evaluate seven selected food commercials. We chose two commercials (both animated) featuring non-alcoholic beverages, two commercials featuring cheese products, one commercial featuring fast-food products, one commercial featuring snack and one commercial featuring alcoholic drink. Six of seven commercials carry positive emotions, mainly love, friendship and humour, one commercial carry both positive and negative emotions, namely humour, anger and fear.

Projective tests of unfinished sentences are based on the assumption that these kind of tools are able to measure the emotional adaptation. They reveal the relationship between the participant and his environment. Using projective test of unfinished sentences we work on the assumption that respondent projects his personality, mood and emotions to his answers (answers of respondent reflect his personality traits and emotions). The author of the original test of unfinished sentences (1953) is J. Curtis. Used projective test of unfinished sentences is modified and focused on perception and evaluation of selected commercials. Four unfinished sentences were formulated for each commercial:

1. After watching the commercial I felt.....
2. I like this commercial / I do not like this commercial because.....
3. The commercial is
4. The promoted product, in my opinion, is

Filled statements were divided into three categories – positive statements, negative statements and neutral statements.

Then respondents had to finish three more unfinished sentences about commercials in general:

1. In general, I like commercials, which
2. When I see interesting product in the commercial I
3. When I watch commercials, I mostly feel

Filled statements were divided again into three categories – positive statements, negative statements and neutral statements. After projective testing, respondents evaluated selected commercials in a complex questionnaire survey. They also answered several questions about commercials in general.

3. Results and Discussion

From the reactions of respondents we can conclude that consumers mostly do not like audiovisual commercials (TV nad Internet), they consider them annoying. However, if the commercial is interesting, the consumer is willing to watch it, he is even willing to buy the promoted product. From the reactions of respondents we can further assume that the more interesting the commercial is and the more emotional content it contains, the higher is the chance of reaching the consumer and provoking the buying behaviour. It was found out that even though consumers claimed that they do not like TV commercials they are willing to watch them until the end and buy promoted products.

The discrepancy between results of projective testing and questionnaire survey was discovered. In the projective test of unfinished sentences participants claimed that watched commercials are mostly annoying, long, not funny and stupid. In the questionnaire survey they evaluated them quite positively. More than 50% of participants claimed that they like each of seven selected commercials very much. Even the one featuring negative emotional content.

Even though 130 respondents (72%) claimed that they sensed mostly negative emotions during watching audiovisual commercials, 114 (63%) of them have personal experience with buying products that they only saw in the TV or Internet commercial. Another interesting finding is that the most popular food commercials among Millenials contain live or animated animals (Figure 2). We can assume that TV and Internet commercials can be still very effective if they can be associated with promoted product easily and if they fit into the frame of mind of the selected segment.

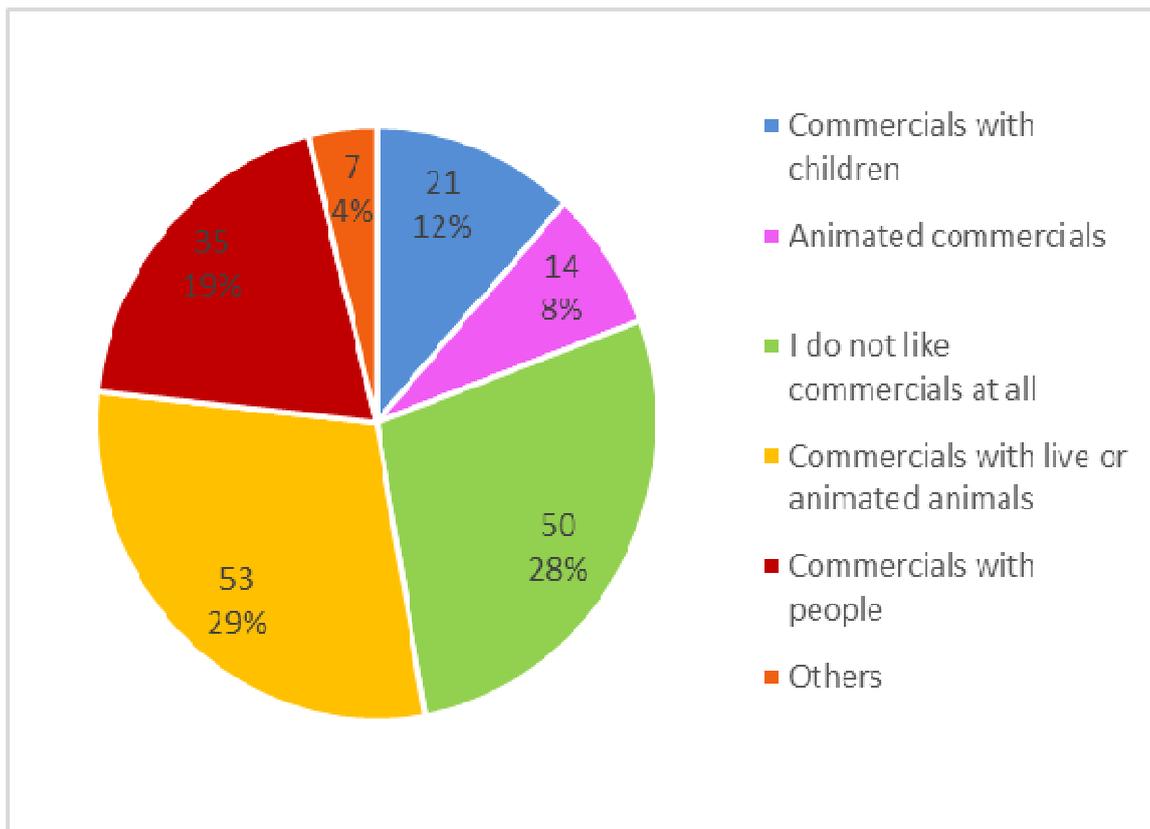


Figure 2. The most favourite commercials among Millenials.

In our study we found out that there are also differences in evaluating selected commercials between participants with different personality traits (different temperament structure). In the questionnaire survey participants evaluated seven commercials on the seven-point scale of 13 bipolar adjectives. For illustration, we show differences found in evaluating one of seven selected commercial (specifically commercial for the cheese product) in the Figure 3.

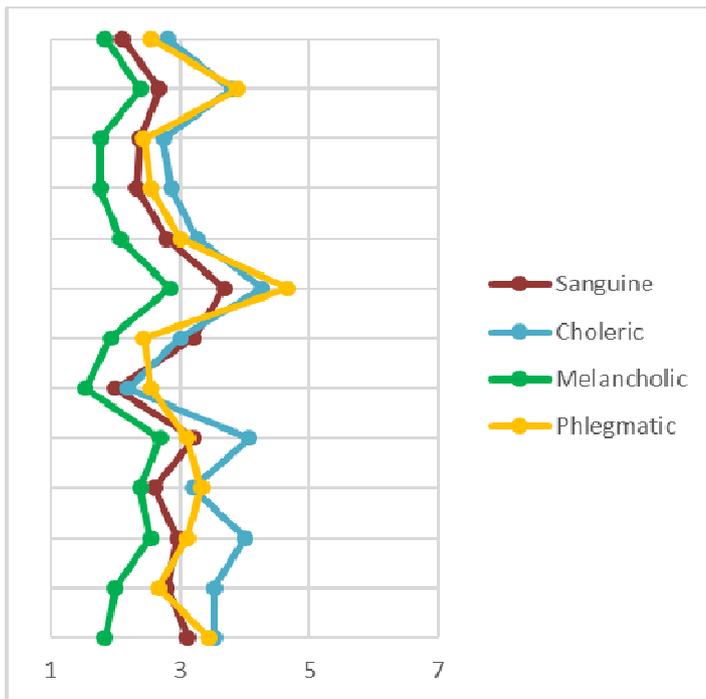


Figure 3. Differences in evaluating selected commercials between participants with different temperament structure.

Similar results were found in each of seven commercials. From these findings we can assume that inborn personality traits and emotional predispositions significantly influence the perception and evaluation of audiovisual commercials. Persons with melancholic temperament (and higher degree of neuroticism) are more sensitive to emotional stimuli in commercials. We can also assume that the better story a commercial provides, the higher is the overall effectiveness of the message. From the evaluation of seven commercials it can be concluded that the most effective stimuli are those that evoke positive emotions.

4. Conclusions

If we want to reach consumers through advertisements, they must promote a quality product, otherwise their positive effect is short-lived, or is even negative. Today's commercials are significantly different from those in the past, but so are consumers. They are demanding and often spoiled, they require not only high-quality products and services but also high-quality marketing communication. Generation Y or Millennials are the generation that grew up in front of television and in contact with the Internet, which means they know commercials and commercial tricks very well. If we want to reach them, we must emotionally engaged them. The Millennial is selectively attentive and if the message does not trigger the emotional response, it is mostly ineffective. We found the discrepancy between results in projective testing and questionnaire survey. We can agree with Berčík (2016), Whang (2016), Lindstrom (2008, 2011) and claim that there are differences between conscious and subconscious perception and evaluation of presented messages. We also confirmed findings of authors who examined the impact of the personality of consumer to the perception of selected tools of marketing communication and consumer behaviour, for example Verplanken and Herabadi (2001), Matzler, Bidmon and Grabner-Kräuter (2006), Barkhi and Wallace (2007) and others. Consumers with different personalities and temperament traits react differently to different commercials.

In our study, we showed that a commercial is still effective marketing communication tool, similarly to Gašpariková and Kádeková (2011), Olenski (2012), Kubeláková and Košičiarová (2016), Tafani, Roux and Greifeneder (2018) and others. Even though consumers claim that they do not like commercials, they are willing to buy products promoted in commercials. Emotional content in commercials can reach the subconscious mind of consumers and evoke buying behavior. We can conclude, that commercials are still very effective when they carry right information for the right consumer.

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