

Advertising to 'active' viewers

Consumer attitudes in the US and South Korea

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Effects of mere exposure have been widely investigated in the area of advertising, consumer behaviour and social psychology. However, mere exposure theory presents an inherently passive audience perspective ('What does advertising do to consumers?'). Using a cross-national sample from the US ($n = 280$) and South Korea ($n = 958$), this study proposes and tests an 'active' exposure concept ('What do consumers do with advertising?'), as derived from uses and gratifications theory. This is important because consumers have changed in the way that they watch television and television advertising, with 'active' audiences exerting more control over what, how and when they watch. The results of this study suggest that when consumers experience passive exposure to TV, their prior attitudes do not change in both countries. However, the findings suggest that consumers' active exposure to TV (in both countries) and to TV ads (only in South Korea) boosts the relationship between Aad and Aproduct in a positive direction. Theoretical and managerial implications are discussed.

Introduction

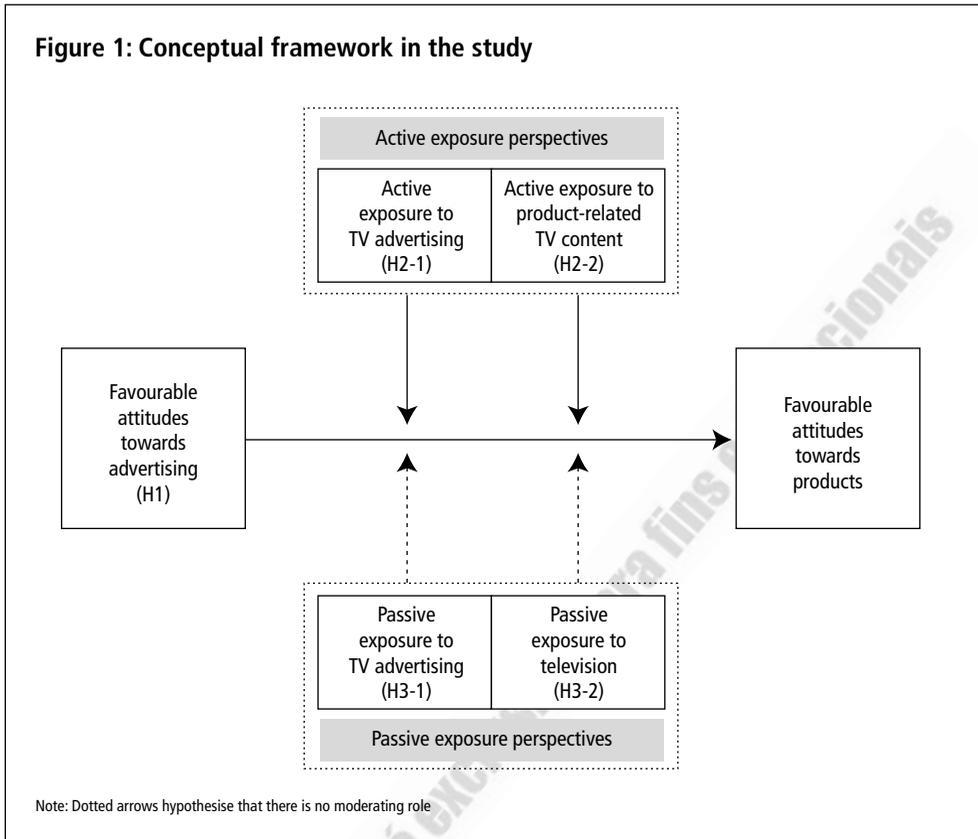
Television ownership and viewing is still on the rise globally and it remains an important medium. For example, world retail sales volume of televisions and projectors increased from just over 146 million units in 2001 to approximately 247.5 million units in 2006 (Euromonitor International 2007). Countries that previously had only governmentally sponsored television channels now allow commercially supported television channels, and there is greater availability of both satellite television and global channels such as CNN, MTV and ESPN. Additionally, television advertising remains an important component of overall media strategy. While it is

expected that television's share of overall advertising spending may have peaked in 2006, its percentage of total spending is expected to remain high (close to 38%) even as advertisers invest in alternative media such as the internet and mobile marketing (Tsao & Sibley 2004; Crawford 2007; Ives 2007). Thus, television advertising continues to be an important tool for communicating with consumers.

Of course, marketers communicating with consumers via television advertising is not new. However, the way that consumers watch television and television advertising has changed. Consumers have more options for controlling their exposure to advertising messages. While they may turn the television on and passively watch whatever programming and advertising comes across the airwaves, many consumers actively control their viewership via technologies such as TiVo. To date, we don't know much about how 'active' consumers differ from 'passive' consumers in terms of their general attitudes towards ads and products.

Further, are there differences in these relationships across different countries? This is an important question for both scholars and managers. Many theories used to understand advertising and marketing communications originated in the United States and other Western nations. In the 21st century, much of the growth in advertising is occurring outside these areas. For example, ad spending in many of the developing markets has been growing at a pace three to four times that of the predicted global advertising increase of 5% (King 2007). Therefore, it is reasonable to ask if these theories are culturally bound.

The main purpose of this study is to examine: (1) the relationship between consumers' general attitudes towards advertising (Aad) and general attitudes towards firms' product (Aproduct); and (2) the moderating role of consumers' 'active' and 'passive' television viewing patterns between their Aad and Aproduct. In doing so, this study proposes and tests an 'active' exposure concept ('What do *consumers do* with advertising?') from uses and gratifications theory (Katz & Foulkes 1963). Then, the study presents a competing model to the 'active' exposure model using mere exposure theory (Zajonc 1968) to examine the 'passive' approach to advertising effects on consumers ('What does *advertising do* with consumers?'). The research questions are investigated using a cross-national sample from the US and South Korea. The overall conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.



The US and South Korean environments

In general, the purpose of this study is to examine the effects of active media exposure in the US and South Korea. The US and South Korea were chosen because consumers from these two countries are culturally distinct. For example, in Hall's (Hall 1976, 1984; Hall & Hall 1987, 1990) approach to culture, the US is described as low-context while South Korea is considered high-context. In low-context cultures, relatively more of a message is explicitly stated in the words of a message. Examples of low-context cultures are the US, Germany and Switzerland. On the other hand, in high-context cultures, relatively more of the information of a message is in the surrounding context, while less of the meaning of the message is coded explicitly in the message. Examples of high-context culture nations are South Korea, Japan and Saudi Arabia.

Hofstede (2001) developed another popular framework of culture. Hofstede's research identified five underlying value dimensions:

1. individualism vs collectivism
2. large versus small power distance
3. strong versus weak uncertainty avoidance
4. masculinity versus femininity
5. long- vs short-term orientation.

Individualism vs collectivism delineates cultures in which ties between individuals are loose (individualistic) against societies wherein people are integrated into strong cohesive groups (collectivist). Power distance indicates the degree to which it is accepted that power is distributed unequally in society. In large power distance cultures, more dependence is expected; in small power distance cultures inequality is minimised. Uncertainty avoidance indicates the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertain situations. Low uncertainty avoidance cultures are comfortable with ambiguous situations and unfamiliar risks, while high uncertainty cultures are sceptical of the 'unknown'. Masculine societies are associated with an increased emphasis on materialism, while feminine societies emphasise quality of life. The fifth dimension, long- vs short-term orientation, was added later (Hofstede & Bond 1988), and refers to the sense of immediacy in a culture versus delayed gratification. Asian cultures tend to score high on this dimension while Western cultures tend to score low. The US is a small power distance, individualistic, weak uncertainty avoidance, moderately masculine and short-term orientated society, while South Korea exhibits moderate power distance and is a very collectivist, strong uncertainty avoidance, more feminine society and long-term orientated society (Hofstede 2001).

Another reason for selecting the US and South Korea for comparison is that, while the cultures of the two nations are different, the advertising and media environments are similar. Korea's television environment has evolved into one roughly similar to that of the US. Like that of many countries, Korean TV has undergone major changes in the past two decades. In 2000, it had two national public networks (one supported by commercials and one commercial-free) and two privately owned, commercially supported networks. Today, there are 52 terrestrial broadcasting stations

in Korea, there is 100% television and radio penetration, and 89% cable television penetration (Kobacom 2006).

General attitude towards advertising and its impact

One of the central paradigms in the advertising literature is the impact of attitude towards an ad on the attitude towards the product, intentions and behaviour of consumers (Krugman 1965; McKenzie *et al.* 1986; Brown & Stayman 1992; Aaker 1996). In general, attitudes towards advertising have received a tremendous amount of research attention over the years (O'Donohoe 1995). In a broad sense, attitudinal advertising research can be divided into two categories. One category studies consumer attitudes towards specific advertisements (e.g. product or brand-specific ads). A number of studies have found that attitudes towards individual advertisements may affect consumers' information processing and, hence, attitudes towards advertised products. For example, Gelb *et al.* (1985) argue that advertising motivates consumers to change their attitude towards advertised products.

In a second stream of research, a variety of antecedents and consequences of 'general' attitudes towards advertising have been investigated. That is, consumers' attitudes towards product- or brand-specific advertisements are influenced by their general attitudes towards advertising (Bauer & Greyser 1968; Lutz 1985; James & Kover 1992). In particular, James and Kover (1992) argue that general positive attitudes towards advertising increase consumers' involvement with specific advertisements. More recently, Kwak *et al.* (2002) found that consumers' general attitudes towards advertising are strongly related to increased product purchases. This study contributes to the literature by examining cross-cultural differences in attitudes towards advertising. It has been suggested that an assessment of 'the cross-national applicability of a model of attitude toward advertising in general is a necessary first step in assessing the cultural boundaries of advertising constructs' (Durvasula *et al.* 1993 p. 627). If the models that have been developed and tested, primarily in the US, are culturally bound, the standardisation of advertising may not be a viable option for marketers, regardless of other factors that may influence the standardisation/adaptation decision. Thus, this study provides a cross-cultural assessment of an attitudinal model of advertising in two distinct cultural environments: the

US and South Korea. The study hypothesises that consumers' favourable attitudes towards advertising in general will be positively related to their general attitudes towards firms' products, regardless of cultural context.

H1: Those who have favourable attitudes towards advertising, in general, will possess more favourable attitudes towards products, in general, in the two countries.

Active exposure and its effects (Aad and Aproduct)

Having hypothesised a positive relationship between general attitudes towards advertising and general attitudes towards products, the study investigates some potential intervening variables that may moderate the relationship between attitude towards the ad (Aad) and attitude towards the product (Aproduct). Advertising researchers have identified a number of factors that may change the way Aad influences some other constructs (Ajzen & Fishbein 1973, 1977, 1980). For example, Taylor *et al.* (1997) find that Aad is influenced by different levels of information used in ads in the US and Korea. Additionally, mass communications researchers have long debated a central issue – whether audiences are active or passive (Katz 1959; Katz & Foulkes 1964; Gerbner 1973; Gerbner & Gross 1976; Blumler 1979; Rubin 1984; Morgan & Shanahan 1996). Researchers taking the latter position view audiences as 'passive'. For example, Gerbner's (1973) cultivation theory posited that the more people are exposed to mass media, the more they tend to believe that the real world reflects mass media content (Morgan & Shanahan 1996). In an extreme case of passive audience perspective, McLuhan (1964) states that 'the medium is the message'. However, research regarding the impact of media on audiences' perception of the real world has shifted away from the passive perspective. Academic researchers began to view audiences as 'active'. For instance, uses and gratifications theory (Katz *et al.* 1974a,b) asserts that media users have basic human needs that are influenced by society and through individual characteristics. If these needs are recognised as problems, then the individual takes action through media use (or other behaviour) to rectify the problem. As a result, the individual achieves gratification (Katz *et al.* 1974a,b). It assumes that individuals have preferences for media use and that they base their media usage on these preferences. However, there

have been very few applications of the theory to the study of the effects of advertising exposure. Thus, 'active' exposure to mass media in uses and gratifications theory is central to the present study. This study explores and applies uses and gratifications theory (Katz & Foulkes 1964; Katz *et al.* 1974a,b) to explain the effects of 'active' advertising exposure for attitude formation. It is proposed that a fundamental tenet of 'active' exposure is the degree to which the audience has control. In this regard, we operationalise the concept of 'active' exposure as the functioning of what *consumers do with advertising* as opposed to more passive exposure based on what *advertising does with consumers*. That is, consumers' 'active' exposure is defined as consumer-driven exposure based on goal-directed intentions to achieve specific informational gratifications from commercial messages (e.g. advertisements, product-related television content).

Due to advances in technology, consumers can actively opt in or out of exposure to television content and ads. They may choose to spend time on alternative media such as the internet, watch hand-held DVDs and/or interact with their iPod or iPhone rather than watch television. If consumers choose to watch television, technologies such as TiVo allow them to control what programme is watched and when to opt out of exposure to television advertising. As a result, consumers who go out of their way to seek out television and television ads may be more positively disposed to be influenced by exposure to the medium.

Given consumers' ability to choose what to watch (and not watch), it may be that these consumers actively seek out television programming and product information, which then may have an impact on their attitudes. For example, Pavelchak *et al.* (1988) found that consumers who are actively engaged in the Super Bowl game tend to evoke more arousal and pleasure, which, in turn, increases the ability to recall the Super Bowl commercials. Also, consumers' active participation with commercials strengthens the relationship between liking and memory (Zhao 2001). Thus, it is expected that active seeking of product information on television programmes influences consumers to be more favourably exposed to TV ads for products they see, and then have a more positive impact on attitude towards the products. Thus, it is hypothesised that when consumers are actively exposed to TV advertising and television, the relationship between A_{ad} and A_{product} will be increased in both countries.

- H2-1:** Active exposure to TV advertising will moderate the relationship between favourable attitudes towards advertising and favourable attitudes towards products in the two countries. That is, more goal-directed exposure to TV advertising (i.e. those who are motivated to watch product advertising through TV commercials) will increase the positive relationship between favourable attitudes towards advertising and favourable attitudes towards products in the two countries.
- H2-2:** Active exposure to TV for product/service information will moderate the relationship between favourable attitudes towards advertising and favourable attitudes towards products in the two countries. That is, more goal-directed exposures to TV (i.e. seeking products and services via watching TV) will increase the positive relationship between favourable attitudes towards advertising and favourable attitudes towards products in the two countries.

Passive exposure and its effects (Aad and Aproduct)

Historically, television audiences have been considered passive observers rather than active participants. While 21st-century technologies may provide viewers with more control, once viewers are watching is the passive approach for understanding viewer responses still appropriate? That is, once watching, is the viewer merely exposed to visuals and audios that wash over the screen? To address this possibility, the study also explores a competing approach to considering the impact of television advertising on consumers: the theory of mere exposure (Zajonc 1968, 1980, 2001; Zajonc *et al.* 1973). In general, mere exposure theory suggests that attitudes can change without cognition (Zajonc 1968). Zajonc states that ‘mere repeated exposure of the individual to a stimulus is a sufficient condition for the enhancement of his attitude toward it. By ‘mere exposure’ is meant a condition which just makes the given stimulus accessible to the individual’s perceptions’ (1968, p. 1). Thus, mere passive exposure makes attitudes more favourable.

Although applications of mere, or passive, exposure are not relatively well grounded in the advertising literature (Baker 1999), a considerable

number of consumer behaviour-related articles have investigated passive exposure. These include research regarding a wide range of topics, including advertising effects (Sawyer 1973; Mitchell & Olson 1981; Baker 1999), hemispheric process (Anand *et al.* 1988; Janiszewski 1993), information processing style (Obermiller 1985), and sales promotion (Huff & Alden 1998). However, most affect-response studies are undertaken via the assumption that the stimulus is new (e.g. new advertisements), often by controlling the number of repetitions with subjects. In other words, most passive exposure researchers have investigated how consumers react to new inputs in shaping their attitudes. However, in reality, many consumers can recall prior experience or knowledge of advertisements. When consumers recall advertisements the passive exposure effect may be relatively small compared to the retrieved attitude effect. Thus, any contribution of passive exposure to attitude formation would be minor when attitude retrieval is possible (Vanhuele 1994). When consumers already have recall of an advertisement, and have developed some degree of attitude, passive exposure to television ads may not be expected to 'change' consumers' pre-established attitudes.

In addition, exposure to television programming increasingly may have the capacity to affect consumers' attitudes. That is, product placement is increasingly common as a promotional strategy (d'Astous & Seguin 1999; Law & Braun 2000), and there is anecdotal evidence to indicate that it may be effective. For example, sales of Reese's Pieces increased 70% after appearing in the movie *ET* (*Advertising Age* 1982), and sales of Oakley sunglasses rose 80% after Tom Cruise wore them in *Mission Impossible II* (Reed 1998). However, while product placement is increasingly common, little is known beyond the anecdotal about its effectiveness (Law & Braun 2000). For example, while sales of Reese's Pieces and Oakley sunglasses skyrocketed after their prominent product placement, Kenny Rogers Roasters filed for bankruptcy following its prominent placement on hit US television show *Seinfeld*. Following the argument above, when consumers have previous experience with a product or service, have established attitudes with regard to them, and have recall, it may not be expected that passive exposure to television that contains product placements changes the way consumers' pre-established Aad interacts with Aproduct.

H3-1: Passive exposure to TV advertising will not moderate the relationship between favourable attitudes towards advertising and favourable attitudes towards products in the two countries.

H3-2: Passive exposure to TV will not moderate the relationship between favourable attitudes towards advertising and favourable attitudes towards products in the two countries.

Method

The hypothesised models are tested using structural equation modelling with cross-national data from the US and Korea. The overall conceptual framework of this study is shown in Figure 1.

Samples

The questionnaire was administered in the US and Korea simultaneously using college student samples. A student sample has often been used in marketing research and considered appropriate in attitudinal and behavioural research (Oakes 1972; Burnett & Dunne 1986). In addition, college students are important targets of television programmers and advertisers, and they are consumers of television and advertising. For instance, Nielsen has recently begun to realise the importance of college students by measuring their specific TV viewing patterns (Aspan 2006). Thus, we believe that students are a relevant sample for the present study. Also, the use of the student sample from the two countries provides a unique comparison in the cross-national study.

Respondents in both countries completed the same questionnaire but in their native languages. They were told the main purpose of the survey (i.e. patterns of TV viewing) before the survey was taken in the two nations. To ensure equivalency, the English version of the scales was initially translated into Korean. Then, two different South Korean bilingual scholars of marketing and psychology who are familiar with English-language surveys performed a back-translation to ensure the precision of the translation.

The questionnaire gathered audiences' general opinions about advertising and products/services, exposure to television ads and product-related television content. The sample resulted in a total of 1,238 responses,

collected from an American university in the south-eastern US ($n = 280$) and from a South Korean university in Seoul ($n = 958$). The age and gender breakdown was as follows:

- age (21.0 in the US/22.4 in South Korea)
- gender ($n_{\text{male}} = 100$ [35.7%], $n_{\text{female}} = 180$ [64.3%] in the US/ $n_{\text{male}} = 536$ [55.9%], $n_{\text{female}} = 422$ [44.1%] in South Korea).¹

Measures

Attitude towards advertising (Aad)

To assess consumers' general opinions about companies' advertising activities, Gaski and Etzel's (1986) Index of Consumer Sentiment Toward Marketing was adopted. One dimension of the scale measures consumers' attitude towards advertising and is represented by four Likert-type items, anchored by 'strongly disagree' and 'strongly agree' (5-point scale). The four items read:

X1: Most advertising is very annoying.

X2: Most advertising makes false claims.

X3: If most advertising were eliminated, consumers would be better off.

X4: Most advertising is intended to deceive rather than inform.

The scale's scores were reversed for an interpretation of consumers' favourable attitudes towards advertising. Reliability coefficients for the four items were satisfactory (0.75 in the US and 0.71 in South Korea). An exploratory factor analysis found that the items are loaded on a single dimension with large factor loadings in both countries (over 0.65). This single factor is well explained by the four items (57% in the US and 54% in Korea). A confirmatory factor analysis was also conducted to further investigate the psychometric properties of the scale. The results suggest

¹ We acknowledge some potential issues that may arise from our unbalanced sample size in the two nations. We understand that the best way to address the issue is to collect more data in the US. However, as an alternative way, we randomly divided the Korean data ($n = 958$) into two samples ($n = 479$ each). Then, a series of t tests showed any mean differences between these two groups. Finally, we ran all the same SEM models used in the main analysis with these two data sets. In the end, we found that the outcomes from these two random sample confirmed all the outcomes generated from the original single data. Thus, we believe that our unbalanced samples across the two countries make no significant variations in interpreting the final outcomes.

that the four-item-scale model is unidimensional and fits data well with large and significant lambdas ($p < 0.05$): the US ($\chi^2 (2) = 13.7, p < 0.05$, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = 0.98, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.96) and South Korea ($\chi^2 (2) = 30.7, p < 0.05$, GFI = 0.98, CFI = 0.97). Higher scores reflect more favourable attitudes towards firms' advertising.

Attitude towards products (Aproduct)

Another dimension of Gaski and Etzel's (1986) Index of Consumer Sentiment Toward Marketing was adopted to measure consumers' general attitudes towards firms' products. The three-item scale used Likert-type items, anchored by 'strongly disagree' and 'strongly agree' (5-point scale). The three items read:

Y1: Most products that I buy wear out too quickly.

Y2: Too many of the products that I buy are defective in some way.

Y3: The companies that make products I buy don't care enough about how well they perform.

The scale's scores were reversed to express consumers' favourable attitudes towards products. Acceptable reliability coefficients were found (0.76 in the US and 0.67 in South Korea). An exploratory factor analysis revealed that the items loaded on a single dimension, and show large factor loadings (over 0.70 in the two countries). These three items explain 68% of total variance in the US and 60% in South Korea. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to further investigate the psychometric properties of the scale. In addition, since there are only three indicators in the model, one error variance was randomly chosen and constrained to zero to fit the model. The results confirm the unidimensional structure of the scale, and the model fits data well with large and significant lambdas ($p < 0.05$): the US ($\chi^2 (1) = 1.6, p > 0.05$, GFI = 0.99, CFI = 0.99) and South Korea ($\chi^2 (2) = 48.5, p < 0.05$, GFI = 0.97, CFI = 0.90). Higher scores reflect more favourable attitudes towards firms' products.

Active exposure to TV advertising (AEA) and TV for product information (AET)

To evaluate the moderating impact of active exposure to television for advertising and product information, this study followed a general method

according to uses and gratifications theory (e.g. Windahl 1981; Rubin 1984; Rubin *et al.* 1985; Dobos & Dimmick 1988). A single item was used to measure consumers' active exposure to television to gain TV advertising information. Subjects were asked to respond on a 5-point Likert-type question item (strongly disagree/strongly agree) to the comment: 'I watch television for product advertising.' Higher scores on the scale represent higher active exposure to television advertising.

Finally, another single item was used to investigate consumers' tendencies to actively seek for product information via television. Participants were asked to respond on a 5-point Likert-type question item (strongly disagree/strongly agree) to the comment: 'I watch TV to get advice on products and services.' Higher scores on the scale represent higher active exposure to television for products/services information. As expected (e.g. O'Guinn & Shrum 1997; Sirgy *et al.* 1998), positive correlations between these two active exposure measures were found in both countries (0.53 ($p < 0.05$) in the US and 0.43 ($p < 0.05$) in South Korea).

Passive exposure to TV advertising (PEA) and TV content (PET)

Although there has been a debate regarding an appropriate measure of TV viewing, a total viewing measure has often been used in the mass communication literature (e.g. Gerbner *et al.* 1986) and it was adopted in the present study. Respondents were asked to answer two questions for the measure of passive exposure to TV advertising: 'Approximately, how many TV commercials do you think you watched yesterday?' and 'Approximately, how many TV commercials do you think you watch on a typical day?'. Mean scores for the first question are 32.8 in the US and 18.5 in South Korea. On average, US participants watch 41.5 TV commercials on a typical day, whereas South Korean subjects watch 24.3. Significant, positive correlations were found between these two items: $r = 0.91$ ($p < 0.05$) in the US and $r = 0.62$ ($p < 0.05$) in South Korea. The two items are summated and averaged for use in the main analysis. Higher scores indicate higher passive exposure to television advertising.

Second, the following two questions were used to measure consumers' passive exposure to TV content: 'Approximately, how many hours did you watch TV yesterday?' and 'Approximately, how many hours do you watch TV on a typical day?'. Mean scores for the first item are 2.7 in the US and 2.1 in South Korea. On average, US participants report spending

2.8 hours watching TV on a typical day, whereas South Korean subjects report spending 2.4 hours. Positive correlations are found between these two items: $r = 0.54$ ($p < 0.05$) in the US and $r = 0.43$ ($p < 0.05$) in South Korea. Again, the two items are summated and averaged for use in our main analysis. Higher scores indicate higher passive exposure to television content in the two countries. A summary of the construct correlations for the measures is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Correlation matrix for major constructs

		Favourable attitudes towards advertising (Aad)		Favourable attitudes towards products (Aproduct)		Passive exposure to TV advertising (PEA)		Passive exposure to TV (PET)		Active exposure to TV advertising (AEA)		Active exposure to TV (AET)	
		The US	Korea	The US	Korea	The US	Korea	The US	Korea	The US	Korea	The US	Korea
(Aad)	The US	1											
	Korea		1										
(Aproduct)	The US	0.38		1									
	Korea		0.30		1								
(PEA)	The US	-0.06		-0.01		1							
	Korea		-0.03		-0.07		1						
(PET)	The US	-0.09		-0.01		0.25		1					
	Korea		0.02		-0.04		0.40		1				
(AEA)	The US	0.32		0.05		0.12		0.10		1			
	Korea		0.14		-0.04		0.10		0.11		1		
(AET)	The US	0.21		0.00		0.09		0.15		0.53		1	
	Korea		0.12		-0.07		0.09		0.09		0.43		1

Notes: All correlations are significant at $p < 0.05$

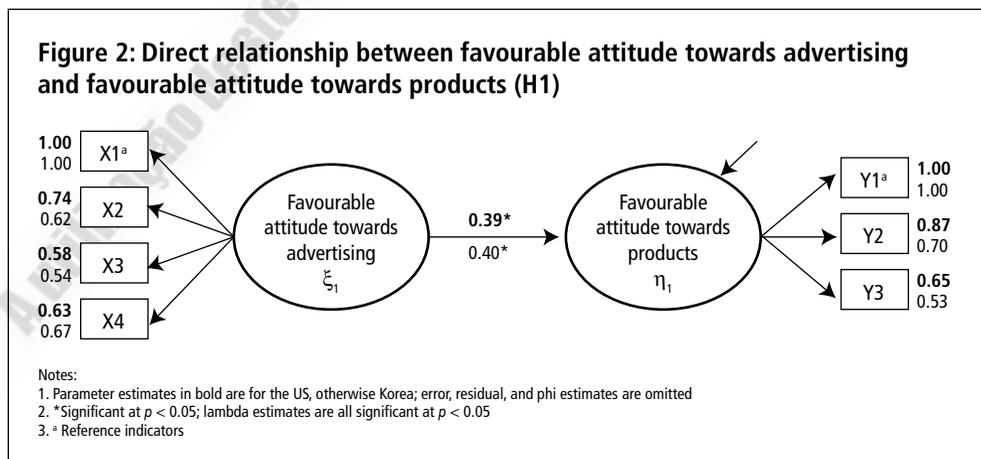
Analysis and results

Structural equation modelling (SEM) was employed to test the hypotheses via a maximum likelihood method. All SEM procedures were conducted using covariance matrices. In evaluating model fit, a model fits the data well when calculated chi-square value is insignificant based on a Type I error level of 0.05. However, SEM researchers argue that a significant chi-square value (i.e. $p > 0.05$) does not necessarily mean that a model

fit is not acceptable. For example, given the fact that the chi-square test statistic is very sensitive to multivariate normality and produces instable results with the violation of such a basic assumption, researchers have generally been advised to use other fit indices (Gerbing & Anderson 1993; Jaccard & Wan 1996). Thus, in addition to the statistical evaluation of fit using chi-square value, GFI or CFI over 0.90 is used to indicate a good fit when a significant chi-square value is detected (Bentler 1990; Joreskog & Sorbom 1996).

Direct relationship between Aad and Aproduct (H1)

In H1, it is hypothesised that consumers' favourable attitudes towards firms' advertising are positively related to favourable attitudes towards firms' products. Overall, the hypothesised model fits the data well for both countries: for the US, $\chi^2(13) = 33.0$, $p > 0.05$, GFI = 0.97, CFI = 0.97; for the South Korean data, $\chi^2(13) = 38.1$, $p < 0.05$, GFI = 0.99 CFI = 0.98. All lambdas are large and significant ($p < 0.05$). As anticipated, consumers' favourable attitudes towards advertising are positively related to favourable attitudes towards products in both the US ($\gamma_{Aad \rightarrow Aproduct} = 0.39$, $p < 0.05$) and South Korea ($\gamma_{Aad \rightarrow Aproduct} = 0.40$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, H1 is supported in the two nations. A graphical presentation of this relationship is given in Figure 2.



The moderating role of active exposure to TV advertising (H2-1) and TV for product information (H2-2)

Traditionally, interaction effects are tested using a series of multiple regression analyses. However, to maximise data information (e.g. use of multiple items and error estimates for a construct), structural equation modelling (SEM) is employed. In particular, a nested goodness-of-fit strategy of SEM is used to investigate the moderating role of active exposure to television advertising (H2-1) and television (H2-2) on the relationship between Aad and Aproduct. Specifically, three steps of a two-group solution are used. The first tests how well the model fits the data without constraints across two groups. The second step involves an investigation of the model fit with an across-group constraint given to gamma estimates. An interaction is indicated in the third step if the difference between chi-squares for step 2 minus step 1 is significant. An example of outcomes for the nested goodness-of-fit method is illustrated in Table 2.

H2-1 anticipates that the degree of active exposure to television advertising moderates the relationship between Aad and Aproduct. A median

Table 2: Testing the moderating role of active exposure to TV advertising (H2-1) and TV (H2-2)

Procedure ^a	Fit index	Active exposure to TV advertising (H2-1)		Active exposure to product-related TV content (H2-2)	
		The US	Korea	The US	Korea
Step 1	χ^2	42.44 (26)*	52.29 (26)*	42.28 (26)*	78.45 (26)*
	GFI	0.95	0.98	0.96	0.96
	CFI	0.97	0.98	0.97	0.97
Step 2	χ^2	42.66 (27)*	57.69 (27)*	50.39 (27)*	86.53 (27)*
	GFI	0.95	0.98	0.96	0.96
	CFI	0.97	0.98	0.97	0.96
Step 3	$\chi^2_{\text{step 2}} - \chi^2_{\text{step 1}}$	0.22 (1)	5.40 (1)*	8.11 (1)*	8.08 (1)*
Effect size ^b (%)		n.a.	9.40	16.10	9.30

Notes:

1. *Significant at $p < 0.05$

2. ^a Step 1: multiple-group test of model fit with no constraints between the two groups; Step 2: multiple-group test of model fit with constraints between the two groups; Step 3: comparing χ^2 for the constrained model (Step 2) with the unconstrained model (Step 1)

3. ^b Effect size = $[1 - (\chi^2_{\text{step 1}} / \chi^2_{\text{step 2}})] \cdot 100$

split on the AEA item was conducted to create a group with higher active exposure to TV advertising (HAEA) and a group with lower active exposure to TV advertising (LAEA) (see Figure 3). Mean differences are statistically significant in both countries: $M_{HAEA} (n = 124) = 2.3$, $M_{LAEA} (n = 156) = 1.0$, $t(278) = 24.4$, $p < 0.05$ in the US and $M_{HAEA} (n = 605) = 2.6$, $M_{LAEA} (n = 353) = 1.0$, $t(956) = 36.2$, $p < 0.05$ in South Korea. The hypothesised moderating role of active exposure to television advertising is not found in the US. The unconstrained model fits data well in the US ($\chi^2(26) = 42.4$, $p < 0.05$, GFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.97), but nested goodness of fit is not statistically significant ($\chi^2_{1st} - \chi^2_{2nd}(1) = 0.2$, $p > 0.05$). However, as anticipated, the hypothesised moderating role of active exposure to television advertising is supported in South Korea. That is, the fit of the unconstrained model is acceptable ($\chi^2(26) = 52.3$, $p < 0.05$, GFI = 0.98, CFI = 0.98), and significant differences are found in the nested goodness of fit ($\chi^2_{1st} - \chi^2_{2nd}(1) = 5.4$, $p < 0.05$) (see Table 2). Having verified an interaction effect of active exposure to TV advertising in South Korea, the effect size of the interaction (EFS) using the ratios of chi-squares was assessed since traditional evaluation of effect size using the incremental explained variance is not available in SEM. EFS is calculated by the following formula:

$$EFS = \left(1 - \frac{\chi^2_{Step1}}{\chi^2_{Step2}} \right) \times 100$$

where χ^2_{Step1} is the chi-square value derived from the unconstrained model (step 1) and χ^2_{Step2} is the chi-square value derived from the constrained model (step 2). As a result, the South Korean model is explained by more than 9% with AEA as an interaction variable. Therefore, H2-1 is supported in South Korea but not in the US. Findings for H2-1 are presented graphically in Figure 3. Overall results for the hypothesis are also shown in Table 2.

It is hypothesised in H2-2 that the degree of active exposure to television for product/service information moderates the relationship between Aad and Aproduct. Again, a median split on the AET item was used to create participants with higher active exposure to TV for product/service information (HAET) and subjects with lower active exposure to TV for product/service information (LAET) (see Figure 4). Significant mean differences are found in both countries: $M_{HAET} (n = 96) = 3.3$, $M_{LAET} (n = 184)$

Figure 3: Moderating role of active exposure to TV advertising in favourable Aad and favourable Aproducts (H2-1)

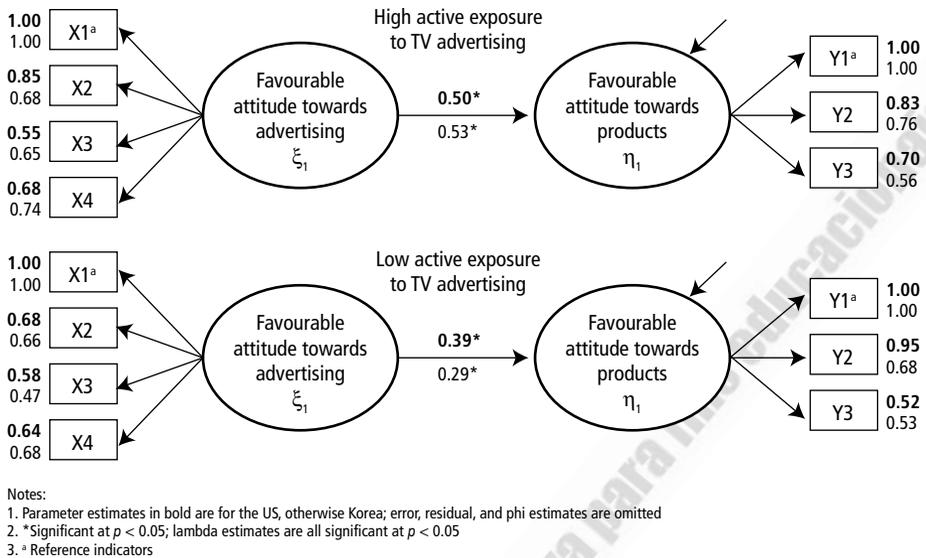
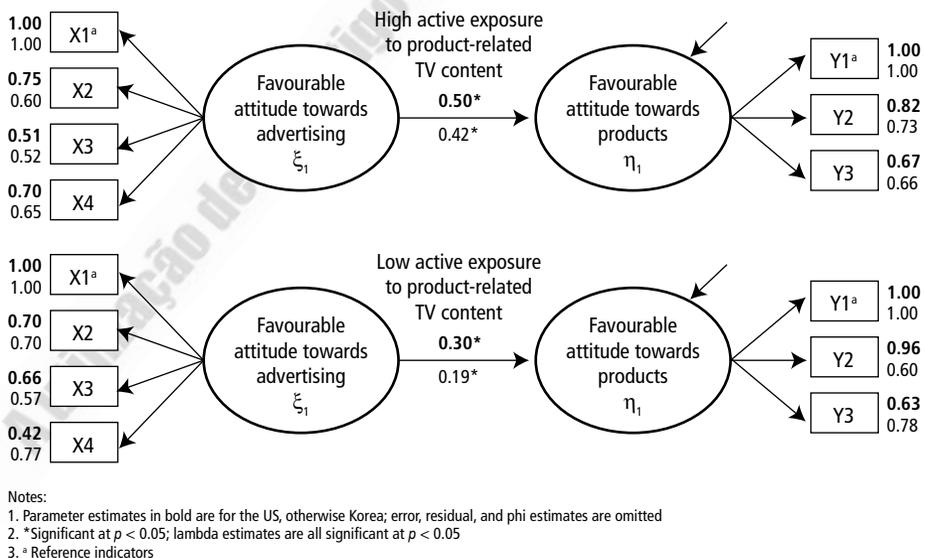


Figure 4: Moderating role of active exposure to product-related TV content in favourable Aad and favourable Aproducts (H2-2)



= 1.4, $t(278) = 27.9$, $p < 0.05$ in the US and $M_{\text{HAET}} (n = 528) = 3.5$, $M_{\text{LAET}} (n = 430) = 1.6$, $t(956) = 48.2$, $p < 0.05$ in South Korea. The moderating role of active exposure to television for product/service information is found in both countries. The unconstrained model fits data well: ($\chi^2_{\text{the US}} (26) = 42.3$, $p_{\text{the US}} < 0.05$, $\text{GFI}_{\text{the US}} = 0.96$, $\text{CFI}_{\text{the US}} = 0.97/\chi^2_{\text{Korea}} (26) = 78.5$, $p_{\text{Korea}} < 0.05$, $\text{GFI}_{\text{Korea}} = 0.96$, $\text{CFI}_{\text{Korea}} = 0.97$). Nested goodness of fit is significant ($\chi^2_{1\text{st}} - \chi^2_{2\text{nd}} (1) = 8.1$, $p > 0.05$ in the US and $\chi^2_{1\text{st}} - \chi^2_{2\text{nd}} (1) = 8.1$, $p > 0.05$ in South Korea). In other words, when there is higher active exposure to TV for product/service information, the positive relationship between Aad and Aproduct increases in the two nations. Observing EFS, it is interesting to note that the interaction effect size of AET in the model is larger by about 7% in the US (161.1%) than in Korea (9.3%). Thus, H2-2 is supported in both countries. A graphical presentation of H2-2 is shown in Figure 4.

The moderating role of passive exposure to TV advertising (H3-1) and TV (H3-2)

H3-1 posits that the degree of passive exposure to television advertising moderates the relationship between Aad and Aproduct. To test H3-1, subjects were divided into two groups in the two countries based on a median split in the PEA scale. Respondents in the HPEA group ($M_{\text{the US}} (n = 140) = 48.3/M_{\text{Korea}} (n = 530) = 30.5$) had higher exposure to TV advertising than did subjects in the LPEA group ($M_{\text{the US}} (n = 140) = 10.4$, $t(278) = 6.89$, $p < 0.05/M_{\text{Korea}} (n = 428) = 7.2$, $t(956) = 20.61$, $p < 0.05$). As expected, the moderating role of passive exposure to television advertising is not present in both countries. Although the fit of the unconstrained model is acceptable ($\chi^2_{\text{the US}} (26) = 39.9$, $p_{\text{the US}} < 0.05$, $\text{GFI}_{\text{the US}} = 0.98$, $\text{CFI}_{\text{the US}} = 0.98/\chi^2_{\text{Korea}} (26) = 53.1$, $p_{\text{Korea}} < 0.05$, $\text{GFI}_{\text{Korea}} = 0.99$, $\text{CFI}_{\text{Korea}} = 0.98$), nested goodness of fit is not significant ($\chi^2_{1\text{st}} - \chi^2_{2\text{nd}} (1) = 2.3$, $p > 0.05$ in the US and $\chi^2_{1\text{st}} - \chi^2_{2\text{nd}} (1) = 0.8$, $p > 0.05$ in South Korea). In other words, consumers' passive exposure to TV advertising is not found to affect the relationship between Aad and Aproduct in the two nations. Thus, H3-1 is supported in both countries.

It is hypothesised in H3-2 that the degree of passive exposure to television moderates the relationship between Aad and Aproduct. Using the same method illustrated above, subjects were formed into two groups.

The resulting PET means were 3.7 ($n = 148$) in the US and 3.0 ($n = 554$) in South Korea for the HPET group and 1.3 ($n = 132$) in the US and 1.0 ($n = 404$) in South Korea for the LPET group. Those in the HPET group had higher passive exposure to television than did those in the LPET group ($t(278) = 20.1, p < 0.05$ in the US/ $t(956) = 31.1, p < 0.05$ in Korea). Again, the moderating role of passive exposure to television is not found in the US and South Korea. That is, the unconstrained model fits data well ($\chi^2_{\text{the US}}(26) = 44.8, p_{\text{the US}} < 0.05, \text{GFI}_{\text{the US}} = 0.97, \text{CFI}_{\text{the US}} = 0.97/\chi^2_{\text{Korea}}(26) = 50.3, p_{\text{Korea}} < 0.05, \text{GFI}_{\text{Korea}} = 0.99, \text{CFI}_{\text{Korea}} = 0.99$). However, nested goodness of fit is not significant ($\chi^2_{1\text{st}} - \chi^2_{2\text{nd}}(1) = 0.2, p > 0.05$ in the US and $\chi^2_{1\text{st}} - \chi^2_{2\text{nd}}(1) = 1.2, p > 0.05$ in South Korea). In summary, consumers' passive exposure to TV is not found to influence the relationship between Aad and Aproduct in the two nations. Thus, H3-2 is supported in both countries. The overall results are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary results

Hypotheses	Key relationships	The US	Korea
	<i>Direct relationship</i>		
H1	Favourable attitudes towards advertising → Favourable attitudes towards products	Supported	Supported
	<i>Moderating role of 'active' exposure to TV advertising in</i>		
H2-1	Favourable attitudes towards advertising → Favourable attitudes towards products	Not supported	Supported
	<i>Moderating role of 'active' exposure to product-related television contents in</i>		
H2-2	Favourable attitudes towards advertising → Favourable attitudes towards products	Supported	Supported
	<i>No moderating role of 'passive' exposure to advertising in</i>		
H3-1	Favourable attitudes towards advertising → Favourable attitudes towards products	Supported	Supported
	<i>No moderating role of 'passive' exposure to television in</i>		
H3-2	Favourable attitudes towards advertising → Favourable attitudes towards products	Supported	Supported

Note: All supported results are significant at $p < 0.05$

Discussion and conclusion

This study investigates 'active' (and 'passive') exposure to TV advertising and product-related content across two distinct cultures: the US and South Korea. We find that favourable attitudes towards advertising in general are positively related to general attitudes towards firms' products, across two distinct cultural environments. Thus, the results indicate that the model is not necessarily culturally bound.

Further, the uses and gratifications model was tested. In both cultural contexts, we find that more active exposure to TV content increases the positive relationship between favourable attitudes towards ads and products in the two countries. Thus, when consumers' attitudes are pre-shaped, by adopting an 'active' exposure perspective, those attitudes can be changed.

Additionally, the results suggest that active exposure to TV advertising moderated the relationship between favourable attitudes towards advertising and favourable attitudes towards products only in South Korea. That is, more goal-directed exposure to TV increases the positive relationship between favourable attitudes towards ads and favourable attitudes towards products in South Korea, but not in the US. This finding should be explored further in future research. This finding may be related to a particular cultural dimension that was not directly tested in this study or it may have to do with the length of consumers' exposure to advertising and the relative saturation level of consumers with regard to advertising. That is, US consumers have grown up with very high levels of ad exposure. As a result, they may have developed a level of cynicism to advertising that is not yet present in South Korean consumers.

Finally, the study examines mere exposure theory, which suggests that attitudes can change without cognition. The results suggest that, in both countries, under passive (mere) exposure, TV ads tend not to influence prior attitudes. This finding provides an important theoretical contribution to the advertising literature. In the past, mere exposure theory has primarily been used to investigate the role of exposure repetition in affect-response models when consumers face 'new' advertising stimuli with no prior knowledge of the stimuli. This study extends the applicability of the theory to a situation where consumers have prior experience with marketing stimuli (i.e. pre-established attitudes towards TV

advertising and product). Results suggest that the theory does not seem to play an important role when consumers have already developed a perception towards the messages. While advertising to consumers who engage in passive exposure to TV and TV ads may be effective in sustaining existing positive attitudes, such a strategy may not be effective in swaying consumers towards a more positive disposition. Thus, for these passive viewers, more behaviourally orientated promotional strategies (e.g. coupons, price reductions) may be more effective.

Overall, the results suggest that, by adopting an 'active' exposure perspective, consumers' pre-existing attitudes can be changed. Thus, future advertising effects research should investigate further, putting a greater emphasis on what consumers do with advertising as opposed to what advertising does with people. Additionally, while this study tested the notion of 'active' exposure in general advertising settings, future research may investigate how audience-driven exposure works with product-specific advertisements (e.g. low-involvement vs high-involvement product ads).

Additionally, there are some limitations in interpreting the outcomes of this study. Although the use of a student sample is common in advertising research, future research should address the research themes via a general sample. In addition, we used self-reported measures for our variables that may create some common method biases, affecting internal validity of the measures. We suggest that future research should address this issue. Also, single-item measures were used to understand consumers' active exposure to TV ads and product-related content. In fact, consumers' motivations to be exposed to commercial messages may be more complicated. Thus, future research may develop multiple-item measures. Also, future research may consider an alternative way to measure 'passive' audience. In the present study, the subjects were asked the number of commercials they *watched*. This may capture both 'active' and 'passive' audience properties. One way to purify this possible confounding effect may be to ask subjects the number of commercials to which they *were exposed*. Also, the number of commercials watched is different in the two countries. For example, the frequency/number of total TV commercials available in a specific time frame is different in the two nations. In the US, TV commercials are aired during TV programmes, whereas TV commercials are allowed only at the beginning and end of TV programmes in Korea. So, while US subjects

indicate that they watch less TV than Korean subjects, US subjects report that they watch more TV commercials. Thus, future research may investigate the impact of the number of TV commercials and the frequency of TV commercials on consumers' perception of products.

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