

# The Effectiveness of Sex Appeal Advertising vs. Cause-related Advertising

David Michael M. Ledesma<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

*The purpose of this paper is to compare and measure the effectiveness of two common advertising strategies, cause-related advertising and the use of sex appeal, with respect to upper-middle and upper-class university students in Bangkok, Thailand. Convenience sampling was used. Questionnaires were given to students at a prestigious private university which exposed photographic advertising representing the two different types of advertising, after which the students were asked questions to measure their consumer response to the advertising. Amid the hype surrounding the use of sex on advertising, the findings of this study indicate that there is no significant difference between sex appeal advertising and cause-related advertising in the students' intent to visit, purchase from, and/or tell friends about an apparel retailer.*

**Key words:** Advertising, sex, cause-related, marketing, corporate social responsibility.

## Background

Turn on your television or stroll around almost any big city around the world, the likes of Paris, New York or Bangkok: references to sex and/or the exposition of sexually appealing and/or arousing images, videos, and/or other similar messages will invariably pop in on your TV screen or capture your attention on strategically-located bill boards (Clow & Baack 2007). This is referred to as *sex appeal advertising* and it is becoming very common in today's advertising (Hyllegard, Ogle, & Yan 2009).

Sex appeal advertising invokes any message, which, whether as brand information in advertising contexts or as persuasive appeals in marketing contexts, is associated with sexual information (Reichert *et. al.* 2001; as cited in Liu, Li, & Cheng 2006).

It has long been an accepted belief that this form of advertising is very effective at attention-grabbing, considered by some commentators as a powerful step in reaching one's target market, especially in the current clutter of 21<sup>st</sup> century marketing and communications (Levit, n.d.; Reichert & Lambiase, 2003; as cited in Dahl, Sengupta, & Vohs 2009). Believed to grab one's attention

easily, it is therefore assumed to be more effective at generating sales; one of the main objectives of commercial marketing activities, including advertising (Harrel 2002).

Another common and increasing trend in today's commercial advertising efforts is *cause-related advertising* (Reese, 2010). This advertising strategy is premised on the belief that by preaching a morally beautiful message embraced by society in general, a good "aura" will befall on the brand and/or product involved in the message, thereby eventually increasing consumer response in the form of higher sales for that brand and/or product (Hou, Du & Li 2008).

Cause-related advertising can be defined as a program in which a firm ties an advertising campaign in with some type of charity or other good cause in order to generate goodwill (adapted from Clow & Baack 2007). One cogent example of this form of advertising is Wal-Mart's recent advertising campaign which showcased how the company helps raise money for the Children's Miracle Network. One of the ads features a healthy toddler who once was a three-and-a-half-month prematurely-born baby who has since been helped by this network (Clow & Baack 2010).

## Theoretical Perspective and Review of Literature

Typically, sexual appeal in advertising is used for its "shock value." It is a strategy meant to break through the "clutter" of a

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1. David Michael M. Ledesma graduated from Assumption University, Graduate School of Business and is a recipient of the Rector's Award for Academic Excellence. He has been working in the advertising industry in both the Philippines and Thailand.

multitude of marketing communication campaigns in the modern world.

The so-called shock value of this strategy, however, has been dulled by the ever-growing permissiveness of contemporary societies. Today's teens are growing up in "societies immersed in sex" (Clow & Baack 2007). As a result of fast-changing mores, the sex-appeal strategy may no longer have the ability to sell the way it used to primarily because its shock value has sharply diminished (Clow & Baack 2010).

This societal openness has also blurred the gender line. In a gender-preference related study conducted in Asia by Liu, Li, & Cheng (2006), it was found that there was no significant difference between the 157 male and female respondents (73 males and 84 females) in their responses to advertising featuring either male or female models with a high degree of sex appeal.

Liu, Li and Cheng's study only compares the responses between the two genders and does not focus on the effectiveness of sex appeal advertising in general. Still, its findings are particularly relevant to this research as they involve Asian consumers, presumed to have socio-cultural backgrounds closer to those of the respondents surveyed by this researcher than those of the respondents typically found in most other related studies - conducted predominantly in western cultures.

As to *cause-related advertising*, no specific definition of the term could be found. Consequently, the researcher relied on the slightly broader concept of *cause-related marketing* as defined by Clow & Baack (2007). Since cause-related advertising is a sub-group of that broader concept, the researcher thus reviewed literature related to cause-related marketing.

Cause-related marketing assumes that because of the goodwill brought upon the brand and/or products associated with the "good cause," there will be an increase in sales as a result of consumers patronizing the said product or brand as part of their support to the same cause (*Ibid*).

In a 2005 survey entitled "Consumers Back Companies on CSR," published in *Business &*

*the Environment with ISO 14000 Updates*, it was revealed that "nearly half of all consumers have switched brands, increased their usage, tried, or inquired about new products that were connected to companies supporting specific causes". It was also found that "in the same survey, 46 percent said they felt better about using the product, service, or company that supported a particular cause" (as cited in Clow & Baack 2007).

Barone, Miyazaki, & Taylor (2000) showed that the influence of cause-related marketing on consumer response depends on the perceived underlying motivation for which a company supports a specific cause, and on whether the consumers themselves will have to give up value due to the supported cause, either in the form of lower performance or higher prices.

What their study, entitled "The Influence of Cause-Related Marketing on Consumer Choice: Does One Good Turn Deserve Another?", infers is that, since cause-related advertising is psychologically linked to credibility, the company involved must also be perceived to be credible in its support of a certain cause in order for the said strategy to be effective.

Another study of cause-related marketing by Hou, Du, & Li (2008) found that among Chinese consumers, this type of marketing will influence purchasing intentions more if there happens to be a "fit between the brand and the cause, cause importance, [and] congruence between the firm's product...". This finding provides an insight into the complexities of cause-related marketing; especially in developing markets such as China, in which consumers may fail to see a clear link between a cause and a product or a brand, thereby reducing the effectiveness of this type of marketing. With Thailand also considered a developing market as opposed to the so-called "developed" markets in the West, this is a finding particularly relevant to this study.

This China-based study is consistent with an earlier study conducted in Pennsylvania, USA, by Gupta & Pirsch (2006). They found that "company-cause fit improves attitude toward company-cause alliance and increases purchase intent." Even though this study

involves respondents located far away and with socio-cultural backgrounds quite different from their Chinese counterparts in Hou, Du, & Li's (2008) study, the fit between the brand and the cause remains nonetheless a key factor in the successful implementation of cause-related marketing.

Of most relevance to this research, given that it concerns itself with Thailand, is Chattananon, Lawley, Supparerkchaisakul, & Leelayouthayothin's (2008) study. Entitled "Impacts of a Thai cause-related marketing program on corporate image," it focuses, as its title indicates, on some Thai companies (1,071 respondents surveyed in total). It reveals that in Thailand, "*cause-related marketing can create positive attitudes toward corporate image.*"

This study, however, only concentrates on the respondents' attitudes, and does not specifically address the issue of whether such attitudes translate into increased purchases of products linked to the corporate imagery and/or into an intention to buy.

All these studies on cause-related marketing corroborate each other in suggesting that the way this type of marketing influences buying intention is universal. Provided there is some degree of congruence between the company, the product, or the brand on the one hand and the cause espoused on the other, it will have an effect on buyers' intentions. This is true in both developing and developed countries and in both Asia and the West

In essence, both sex appeal advertising and cause-related marketing have their own merits. They have been found to be effective one way or another. Yet, even though these two strategies invite comparisons as to which one is more effective, the literature has been silent on this issue save for one research paper by Hyllegard, Ogle, and Yan (2009).

Based on Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action, it is quite detailed and surveyed a total of 425 respondents, who were divided into subgroups; each sub-group being exposed to different ads. The data was analyzed using both statistical t-tests and one-way analysis of variance.

The findings show that the respondents' attitude toward the brand was significantly

more positive when they were exposed to cause-related advertising (in the form of a fair labor message) as compared to sex appeal.

Herein lies the rub, though; this is true only in cases where the respondents were shown a sample of cause-related advertising *together with* another advertising sample using the sex appeal message strategy. In cases where respondents viewed the two different types of advertising separately, the research did not indicate any significant difference in the respondents' attitudes toward the brand. In other words, to be valid, the respondent's reaction to the two forms of advertising must be sought in the same survey interaction (Hyllegard, Ogle & Yan 2009).

This researcher surmised that, when putting both types of advertising on the same survey form as was the case in Hyllegard, Ogle, and Yan's study, there is a risk it will trigger a "moral conscience" reaction among the respondents, thereby biasing them into "doing the right thing" by favorably rating the more "morally expected" or "appropriate" option; in this case, the cause-related advertising (Hanson, 2006).

Therefore, for this very reason and in an effort to be consistent with a controlled survey environment, this researcher opted to survey the respondents in two separate groups; each group being exposed to only one of the two types of advertising strategies; either cause-related or sex appeal advertising.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

The researcher initially intended the theoretical framework of this study to be based on Ajzen & Fishbein's (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action, which first came out in 1975, was revised in 1980, and later extended by Hyllegard, Ogle, & Yan (2009) to apply to their strikingly similar research study.

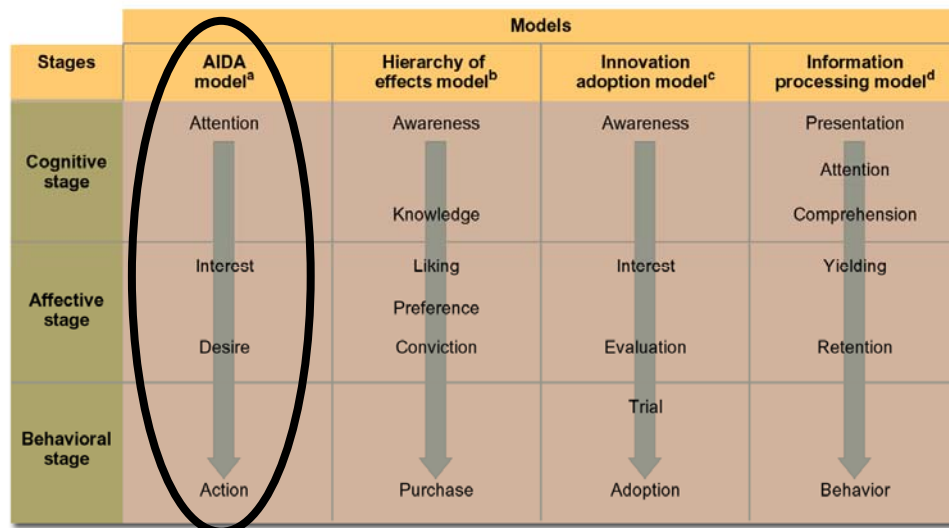
However, collecting data in a format compatible with Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action, would require a comprehensive and lengthy questionnaire and numerous variables; two requirements incompatible with this study, intended to be conducted on a simpler scale.

Besides, whereas, under Fishbein and

Ajzen's theory, the respondent go through some "lengthy reasoning" before making a decision with respect to purchasing, visiting, and/or telling friends about a particular product and/or store, this research is essentially based on the immediate emotional response and/or arousal that a respondent feels upon seeing the two different types of advertising.

The researcher thus concluded that consumer behavior models would be a better alternative. Four models were initially considered. As shown in Figure 1, they are: the AIDA Model: the Hierarchy of Effects Model: the Innovation Adaption Model: and the Information Processing Model (Clow & Baack 2007).

**Figure 1** - "Ad Models of the Response Process"



Source: course notes of Prof. M. Jarumaneroj, 2009. Retrieved from E-learning @ AU Website  
[http://www.grad.au.edu/curr/index.php?option=com\\_myprofile](http://www.grad.au.edu/curr/index.php?option=com_myprofile)

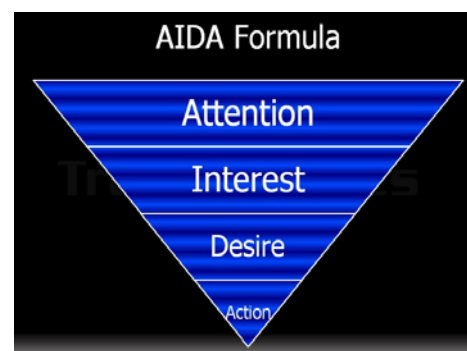
As Figure 1 also indicates, some of these models, however, deal with extensive aspects of consumer behavior such as awareness, knowledge, preference, liking, conviction, evaluation, trial, comprehension, and attention; all considerations outside the ambit of this study.

Since this research focuses on the ability of both advertising strategies to grab a respondent's attention and generate interest and desire in the product and on the potential action he/she may take after he/she has been exposed to either one of the two different types of advertising, the AIDA Model was thus deemed to be the most appropriate one.

AIDA stands for *Attention-Interest-Desire-Action*. The AIDA model is applied to determine the kind of reaction, emotions, and desires in the product these two strategies elicit and the kind of action which the respondent would take; either hypothetically visiting a Bangkok-based American Apparel store, purchasing a product from the store, and/or

telling friends about the brand (Mandossian, 2009). Figure 1.2 below will make this point clear.

**Figure 2.** – The AIDA Formula Diagram.



Source: From "Rediscover the 100-year old AIDA Formula," by A. Mandossian, 2009. Retrieved June 20, 2009, from AlexMandossian.Com Web site:  
<http://www.alexmandossian.com/2009/02/17/773>

The largest item in the diagram (i.e. the one that weights the most) is "attention". It is followed by "interest," still a very substantial subset but one smaller than "attention", and by "desire," medium-sized and more important than "action," the smallest of all four subsets-

concepts.

The reason for this hierarchy is that for any type of advertising, it is assumed that the easiest part is to merely grab a person's attention. Once a person's attention has been grabbed, it is then still easy - yet slightly more difficult (hence the "smaller" subset in the diagram) - to generate interest in the consumer's mind. In other words, not everyone whose attention is grabbed by advertising will eventually become interested as well. And obviously, consumers who may actually *desire* the product in question will be found among the interested parties. Yet, not all of them, will desire it, making the *desire* subset smaller in the triangle. Finally, as expected, from among the consumers who yearn for the product, an even smaller number will eventually take action in purchasing the product; which accounts for *action* as the smallest subset (*Ibid*).

### ***Statement of the Problem***

To the best of this researcher's knowledge, there has been no study focusing on the effectiveness of *sex appeal advertising* among Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students as consumers. Similarly, this researcher also believes there has been no study measuring the effectiveness of *cause-related advertising* as an advertising strategy with regard to that same group of Bangkok-based university students. In addition, there has been no study actually comparing the effectiveness, if any, of these two strategies with respect to these students as potential consumers.

### ***Objective and Scope of the Study***

This study therefore aims to measure and compare the effectiveness of two advertising strategies (*sex appeal* and *cause-related advertising*) in the marketing of fashion apparel by analyzing the response of Bangkok upper-middle and/or upper-class university students to them.

While the objective of this study is to gauge the effectiveness of these two advertising strategies, it only measures one strategy's effectiveness against the other and does not compare them with effectiveness in general or

with any other type of advertising strategies.

Moreover, although this researcher endeavors to get a sense of the effectiveness of these advertising strategies with regard to Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students, the study is limited to students from one institution of higher learning - Assumption University of Thailand. The demographics of that particular population sample may be dissimilar to the demographic statistics of upper-middle and upper-class students enrolled in other Bangkok-based universities, for example, in terms of family background or ethnicity.

Due to the small sample size of this research, no distinction shall be made between upper-middle and upper-class students or between male and female respondents; although it should be noted that the study of Hyllegard, Ogle, & Yan (2009), upon which this researcher's study is largely based, made the gender distinction when analyzing research findings.

Furthermore, due to time constraints and other factors such as limited resources and limited access to Assumption's university students in general, a precise and accurate random sampling was probably not fully achieved.

Another limiting factor is that the surveyed consumers' "intent to buy" is measured by their answers to the questionnaire. There is a risk that their answers may or may not be exactly the same as what they would have truly done in an actual purchasing situation. In other words, the study may provide an insight more on consumer perception and less on actual consumer behavior.

Moreover, the survey involves asking a respondent's reaction toward sex, which he/she may not be completely comfortable with and therefore may not be completely honest about when answering it (Presser, Rothgeb, & Couper 2004).

By the same token, the survey also involves answering questions about what is perceived to be a "good cause", thereby creating a risk of dissonance. Again, the respondent may not be completely honest in answering the survey, this time, however, for a different reason; wanting

to appear “good” or cause-oriented (Presser, Rothgeb, & Couper, 2004).

There is also a cultural component to this particular issue; the respondents’ Thai *kreng jai*, or “shame” factor (Maguire, 2002). As a result, the respondents, predominantly Thai nationals, may make their answers in the survey seem pleasing and/or not embarrassing and thus not be completely honest in answering the questionnaire.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The type of advertising assigned to each and every respondent (either sexually arousing or cause-related) are the *independent* variables in each of the separate sub-groups, and the degree of intent to visit, purchase from, or talk about the target retailer the *dependent* variables.

The research question can be formulated as follows: which advertising strategy, between sex appeal and cause-related advertising, is more effective with regard to a favorable consumer response among Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students, in their intent to patronize, visit, and/or speak about an apparel retailer?

Therefore, it can be expected that Bangkok upper middle and upper-class university students would be likely to patronize, visit, or speak about a garment retailer as a result of either one of this advertising strategies, which lead to the following hypotheses:

H<sub>0a</sub> *There is no significant difference in effectiveness between sex appeal and cause-related advertising with regard to Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students and their intent to visit an apparel retailer.*

H<sub>0b</sub> *There is no significant difference in effectiveness between sex appeal and cause-related advertising with regard to Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students and their intent to purchase from an apparel retailer.*

H<sub>0c</sub> *There is no significant difference in effectiveness between sex appeal and*

*cause-related advertising with regard to Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students and their intent to tell friends about an apparel retailer.*

H<sub>1a</sub> *Sex appeal advertising is significantly more effective than cause-related advertising in increasing the likelihood of Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students in their intent to visit an apparel retailer.*

H<sub>2a</sub> *Cause-related advertising is significantly more effective than sex appeal advertising in increasing the likelihood of Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students in their intent to visit an apparel retailer.*

H<sub>1b</sub> *Sex appeal advertising is significantly more effective than cause-related advertising in increasing the likelihood of Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students in their intent to purchase from an apparel retailer.*

H<sub>2b</sub> *Cause-related advertising is significantly more effective than sex appeal advertising in increasing the likelihood of Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students in their intent to purchase from an apparel retailer.*

H<sub>1c</sub> *Sex appeal advertising is significantly more effective than cause-related advertising in increasing the likelihood of Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students in their intent to tell friends about an apparel retailer.*

H<sub>2c</sub> *Cause-related advertising is significantly more effective than sex appeal advertising in increasing the likelihood of Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students in their intent to tell friends about an apparel retailer.*

## Concepts and Variables Operationalization

Table 1: Operationalization of Variables

Concept/variable	Operationalization	Data Source
Degree of liking toward sex appeal advertising and purchase intent	Scores on Likert scales regarding purchase intent after viewing sex appeal advertising	Questionnaire
Degree of liking toward cause-related advertising and purchase intent	Scores on Likert scales regarding purchase intent after viewing cause-related advertising	Questionnaire
Degree of liking toward sex appeal advertising and intent to visit store.	Scores on Likert scales regarding intent to visit store after viewing sex appeal advertising	Questionnaire
Degree of liking toward cause-related advertising and intent to visit store	Scores on Likert scales regarding intent to visit store after viewing cause-related advertising	Questionnaire
Degree of liking toward sex appeal advertising and intent to tell friends about brand	Scores on Likert scales regarding intent to tell friends about brand after viewing sex appeal advertising	Questionnaire
Degree of liking toward cause-related advertising and intent to tell friends about brand	Scores on Likert scales regarding intent to tell friends about brand after viewing cause-related advertising	Questionnaire

## Methodology

Convenience sampling - not random sampling - was utilized via an intercept survey method. A questionnaire was distributed to 90 students divided into two advertising exposure groups. Group 1 evaluated an American Apparel ad with a sexually suggestive and sexually arousing visual layout, while Group 2 evaluated an American Apparel ad bearing a message clearly indicating that the company is involved in a socially responsible cause-oriented effort.

It should be noted that in this research study the brand in question, *American Apparel*, does not have a presence in Bangkok. This is something the researcher regards as an advantage since the respondents can therefore be assumed to be free from any preconceived biases about the brand to which they have probably never been exposed in the past.

In order to create a “respectable” number of cases for a more complete output when using the statistical software program SPSS, the number of respondents was artificially increased to 540 by multiplying and replicating the survey results by an arbitrary number (6 in this case).

After the survey results were tabulated and multiplied, the researcher then used *independent sample t-tests* to compare the means of the answers of all the students exposed to the sexually-appealing advertising to the means of the answers of all the students exposed to the cause-related advertising. The commonly commercially used 95% confidence interval was chosen as the basis for the analysis.

On the questionnaire, the respondents were tested on their response toward their assigned advertising on three fronts; on whether they would “visit” an American Apparel store in Bangkok in the future, whether they would “buy” from the store in Bangkok in the future, and whether they would “tell their friends” about the American Apparel brand if it were available in Bangkok in the future.

To answer these questions, the respondents were presented with a 5-point Likert-type scale in which they could check either: “yes, maybe yes, not sure, maybe no, and no”.

However, to simplify the data input in the SPSS program, only a width of 3 was used, with “yes and maybe yes” being grouped as a favorable response with a number of 1, “not sure” being counted as a neutral response with a number of 2, and “maybe no” and “no” being grouped as a negative response with a number of 3.

While the wording on the questionnaire may not have been exactly considered as having “good grammar” in a sense (i.e. it would be better stated as “probably yes” instead of “maybe yes”), the researcher chose this final wording because it is in simpler English and thus assumed to be easier to understand by the respondents who are believed to be predominantly of Thai nationality.

## Results and Analysis

The results of the survey are shown in Tables

3.1 and 3.2 below.

**Table 3.1** - Group Statistics from SPSS output.

Group Statistics					
Sex or Cause		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Visit	Sex Appeal	258	1.26	.575	.036
	Cause Related	282	1.34	.629	.037
Buy	Sex Appeal	258	1.49	.662	.041
	Cause Related	282	1.45	.613	.037
Tell	Sex Appeal	258	1.28	.585	.036
	Cause Related	282	1.32	.588	.035

Source: SPSS Output

The findings reveal that, regarding the issue of whether the respondents will visit an American Apparel store, there is a slightly lower mean with those exposed to the sexually appealing ad as compared to those who were exposed to the cause-related one. This suggests that the sexually appealing ad is more effective than the cause-related one in this regard.

Likewise, when studying the results regarding the intent to tell friends about the American Apparel brand, there is also a lower mean among respondents, thereby possibly indicating that sexually appealing advertising is more effective than cause-related advertising in stimulating respondents to tell their friends about the American Apparel brand.

On the other hand, however, an opposite result seems to have surfaced with regard to the actual purchase intent. As shown in Table 3.1, a higher mean was generated among the respondents exposed to the sexually appealing ad as compared to the cause-related one. Therefore, it can be surmised that cause-related advertising is more effective than sex appeal advertising in terms of its ability to stimulate the respondents into actually buying the target product.

This begs the question of whether these differences in means are significant.

It is necessary to look at the “Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances” first.

**Table 3.2** - Independent Samples Test (simplified and summarized)

Independent Samples Test			
		Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means
		Sig	Sig. (2-tailed)
Visit	Equal variances <u>not</u> assumed	.006	.103
Buy	Equal variances assumed	.106	.449
Tell	Equal variances assumed	.278	.428

Source: SPSS output

Under the Levene’s test, if the values under “Sig.” are less than 0.05 (when using a 95% confidence interval) then the equal variances are *not* assumed. However, if under that same Levene’s test the values under “Sig.” are greater than 0.05, then the equal variances *are* assumed.

Next, the values under “Sig. (2-tailed)” were reviewed. If the values are less than 0.05, the null hypothesis  $H_0$  is rejected and one of the alternative hypotheses  $H_1$  or  $H_2$  adapted. However, if the value is greater than 0.05, the researcher is to *accept* the null hypothesis  $H_0$  (Veal, 2005).

As Table 3.2 above shows, with regard to the “visit” criterion, the “Sig.” value under Levene’s test is less than 0.05. Therefore, equal variances were *not* assumed and the appropriate figures related to this assumption included in Table 3.2. It is clear that under “Sig. (2-tailed)”, 0.103 is *greater* than 0.05 and therefore, the *null* hypothesis  $H_{0a}$  is *accepted*. There is no significant difference in effectiveness between sex appeal and cause-related advertising with regard to Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students and their intent to visit an apparel retailer.

With regard to the “buy” criterion on purchase intent, the result is different from under Levene’s test in that at 0.106, the value under “Sig.” the value is greater than 0.05, thereby indicating that equal variances *are*

assumed. Therefore the appropriate figures for this assumption were used in the t-test for Equality of Means, and included in the figures in Table 3.2. At 0.449, the value under “Sig. (2-tailed)” is much greater than 0.05; the *null* hypothesis is accepted, which means there is no significant difference in effectiveness between sex appeal and cause-related advertising with regard to Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students and their intent to purchase from an apparel retailer.

Lastly, with regard to the last criterion, “word of mouth”, operationalized in the form of “telling friends about the brand”, the Levene’s test has a result similar to that of the purchase intent criterion. The value under “Sig.” is 0.278, and therefore also larger than 0.05; prompting the researcher to use the appropriate figures providing that equal variances are assumed in the t-test for Equality of Means. At 0.428, the value under “Sig. 2-tailed” is also similar to that of the purchase intent results above. It is much larger than 0.05. Therefore, just like with the two earlier criteria, the *null* hypothesis, in this case  $H_{0c}$ , is once again and for the last time *accepted*. As is the case with the two other criteria, there is no significant difference in effectiveness between sex appeal and cause-related advertising with regard to Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students and their intent to tell friends about an apparel retailer.

### ***Conclusion and Implication***

Based on these results and on the inferential statistics, it can be concluded with a 95% degree of confidence that there is no significant difference between sex appeal and cause-related advertising with regard to this small-sized convenience sample of Bangkok upper-middle and upper-class university students and their intent to visit, purchase from, and/or tell friends about an apparel retailer.

The researcher himself was surprised the results came out the way they did. In his view, sex appeal advertising seemed a lot more attractive than cause-related advertising. These findings can be accounted for in various ways.

For one, the absence of significant differences in means may be attributed, as

mentioned by Clow & Baack (2007), to the fact that the shock value and strong appeal of sex appeal advertising may have distracted the respondents from the actual product. It could be that the respondents are already presumably exposed to plenty of sex in today’s media and over-immersed in sex. As a result, sex appeal advertising no longer has the pulling power it might have had in a situation where sexual cues in the mass media had not been as prevalent.

Another possible explanation, previously mentioned as a limiting factor in this study, is “Asian modesty.” It may have prompted the respondents into being biased when answering the survey; the bias being in favor of the more “appropriately” perceived choice; i.e., cause-related advertising. This is not to say, however, that such bias would ultimately skew the results with great magnitude, but only that a mere “bias” may have occurred.

Of course, as hoped, it is also possible that the results indeed reflect an accurate sentiment of how the respondents really feel about the topic, with very little or no biases whatsoever, no distraction from the shock value over the purchase intent, and no “over-saturation” of sexual communication in the respondents’ minds.

In the future, the questions in the survey could be answered on a larger scale and possibly as part of a more detailed study. Moreover, it may be more beneficial if a female researcher conducted the survey instead as it should be noted that the researcher is a male who was interacting with young Thai female respondents. Considering that the sex-related topic of this study is quite sensitive, the respondents might have answered differently had the researcher been a female.

Equally importantly and interestingly enough, the results of this study are consistent with another similar study by Hyllegard *et al* (2009) which did not report any significant difference between sex appeal and cause-related advertising except in cases where the respondents were shown a sample of cause-related advertising *together with* another advertising sample using the sex appeal message strategy.

Also worth noting is the fact that these findings were based on the assumption that the results were generated from 540 respondents whereas only 1/6<sup>th</sup> of that (or 90 respondents) were actually surveyed. As mentioned earlier, the 90 responses were simply replicated 6 times in order to come up with a total of 540 “cases” for the software program to analyze.

Taking the size of the sample into consideration, it can be said that the objectives of this study - to compare and measure the effectiveness of sex appeal and cause-related advertising - have been achieved in that this research gives academics and marketers a good idea of what the consumer responses among Bangkok upper-class and upper-middle class students *may* be with regard to the these two advertising strategies.

The results, analysis, and conclusion are informative and raise further pertinent issues which would be just as interesting to study in a future (possibly larger) study of a similar nature.

For example, it would be interesting to separate the respondents into various groups to analyze whether there would be different responses between males and females, undergraduate and graduate students, and/or Thai and non-Thai students – not to mention any other distinctions or groupings. What if, for example, a future study were to find that while there is no significant differences in means when analyzing responses as a whole, there were actually significant differences in means between males and females, Thais and non-Thais, and/or undergraduate and graduate respondents? These issues are just a few of the ways this study could be extended, enlarged, replicated, and/or modified. In other words, a more detailed future study may determine that while there are no significant differences in means in terms of global responses, there may actually be significant differences when analyzing subgroups.

The recommendation is therefore for a student, academic, or marketing researcher to embark on a similar more meticulous and possibly large-scale study in order to answer all these issues.

### *Importance of the Study Academic Contribution and Managerial Implication*

Companies and advertisers with limited financial means must prioritize different advertising strategies and choose some over the others with the objective of generating the highest amount of sales possible while working with a limited amount of funds. Therefore, it would greatly benefit such advertisers if they were to know - or at least have a sense of - which types of advertising strategies are more effective than others. The formats found to be more effective could be allocated a larger - if not the entire - portion of the advertising budget of a particular product and/or brand (Clow & Baack 2007).

As mentioned earlier, two of the most common advertising strategies today are those resorting to sex appeal and those relying on a message under the concept of cause-related advertising. Both advertising strategies may directly or indirectly compete with each other for part of or for the entire advertising budget of one brand or product. Therefore, it would be valuable for the advertisers of brands targeting Bangkok university students as their market to know which of the two strategies is more effective with respect to such market.

While, as mentioned, there is a whole range of additional useful and relevant information that could be garnered, this study is the first of its kind to be published in English in Bangkok. At the very least, this study is thus a starting point and an impetus for academics to build on it and replicate and/or modified it on a larger scale in order to generate a more thorough answer to this paper’s research questions in the future.

Furthermore, while the differences in the means of this study may not generally speaking be statistically significant, some managers and marketers may still find them *managerially* significant *for their own purposes*.

Finally, any marketing or advertising manager intending to target this Bangkok-based student population, could use this study as one of his/her references to determine which of a sex appeal and/or cause-related advertising campaign is most suitable.

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