Is the 'Hierarchy of Effects' View of Advertising Evident Amongst Perth Advertising Agencies?

Carolyn Boulden

Edith Cowan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons

Part of the Public Relations and Advertising Commons

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is posted at Research Online.
https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/976
Edith Cowan University

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study.

The University does not authorize you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following:

- Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.

- A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. Where the reproduction of such material is done without attribution of authorship, with false attribution of authorship or the authorship is treated in a derogatory manner, this may be a breach of the author’s moral rights contained in Part IX of the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth).

- Courts have the power to impose a wide range of civil and criminal sanctions for infringement of copyright, infringement of moral rights and other offences under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth). Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
Is the ‘Hierarchy of Effects’ view of advertising evident amongst Perth advertising agencies?

Carolyn Boulden

Bachelor of Communications with Honours
Faculty of Communications and Creative Industries

Submitted: 17 November 2003
Copyright and Access Declaration

This copy is the property of Edith Cowan University. However the literary rights of the author must also be respected. If any passage from this thesis is quoted or closely paraphrased in a paper or written work prepared by the user, the source of the passage must be acknowledged in the work. If the user desires to publish a paper or written work containing passages copied or closely paraphrased from this thesis, which passages would in total constitute an infringing copy for the purpose of the Copyright Act, he or she must first obtain the written permission of the author to do so.
ABSTRACT

Hierarchy of effects models have underpinned the advertising industry for over 100 years. These models are based on an underlying pattern of cognition => affect => behaviour, in other words: think => feel => do, and suggest that consumers process advertising in a linear fashion, in stages. Recently, however, hierarchy of effects models have begun to be questioned by some authors who claim that there is no actual evidence that advertising is processed by consumers according to a hierarchy of effects. If this is the case, the advertising industry will need to seriously rethink the basis upon which many, if not all, campaigns are constructed.

The purpose of this project is to examine to what degree do Perth advertising professionals believe and use hierarchy of effects models and how prepared they are to consider an alternative view of how advertising works. E-mail surveys were sent to approximately five advertising professionals from the top five Perth advertising agencies, 24 people in total, to gain raw data concerning issues surrounding hierarchy of effects models. The research project will add significantly to the debate surrounding the validity hierarchy of effects models as the views of advertising professionals relating to this issue have not been considered and studied in depth.
Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

(ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

(iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signed: ____________________________ 31/01/05

Carolyn Boulden
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank everyone who helped throughout the development of this thesis, especially my wonderful supervisor Martin Trevaskis, and Lelia Green. I could not have completed Honours without your help and advice.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my ever-patient friends and family for all the support you have provided me over this past year, and all those people in the advertising industry that participated in this study.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One................................................................................................................ 7  
Introduction.............................................................................................................. 7  

Chapter Two ............................................................................................................. 12  
Review of the Literature......................................................................................... 12  
Advertising’s Role in the Marketplace.................................................................... 13  
Persuasive Hierarchy Models................................................................................... 14  
Critique of the Hierarchy of Effects......................................................................... 17  
Defence of the Hierarchy of Effects................................................................. 20  
Starcom............................................................................................................... 22  
Strong and Weak theories................................................................................... 22  

Chapter Three........................................................................................................... 25  
Methodology .......................................................................................................... 25  

Chapter Four ............................................................................................................. 30  
Discussion of the Results....................................................................................... 30  
Demographic Profile.............................................................................................. 30  
Awareness of Hierarchy of Effects Models......................................................... 31  
Agreement with Weibacher................................................................................. 32  
Open-ended Questions........................................................................................... 35  
Do you consciously use any other ‘model/s’?...................................................... 36  
Do you think there is such a thing as a universal model of advertising or advertising’s effects? Why/why not?................................................................. 37  
How do you think advertising’s effect should be measured?.................................. 39  
How do you think/believe advertising will change in the future, say over the next 10 years?................................................................. 41  

Chapter Five ............................................................................................................. 43  
Conclusions........................................................................................................... 43  
Utilitarian Approach.............................................................................................. 43  
Contradictions....................................................................................................... 44  

Chapter Six ............................................................................................................... 47  
Limitations and Future Research........................................................................... 47  
Limitations........................................................................................................... 47  
Future Research.................................................................................................. 47  

References ................................................................................................................ 50  
Appendix 1 - Statement of disclosure and informed consent............................ 52  
Appendix 2 - Questionnaire.................................................................................. 53
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Hierarchy of effects models, such as attention-interest-desire-action, have existed in the advertising arena for decades. Schultz characterises the pivotal position of hierarchy of advertising effects theory thus: "whilst many practitioners don't seem to realize it, there is no more sacred cow in the advertising or marketing communication business than the hierarchy of effects model" (Schultz, 2002, p. 6).

Weilbacher says that this may partly be due to the fact that "hierarchy-of-advertising-effects models have been around in the literature of marketing, in one form or another, for more than 100 years" (Weilbacher, 2001, p. 20). The theory and the models based on it have survived in the advertising arena because they are seen to be logical, they offer a simple set of stages to explain advertising's effect on consumers, they are intuitive, the stages provided by the models appear to be commonsensical, and they can provide a means to measure the consumers' experience when exposed to an advertisement.

Vakratsas and Ambler (1999) suggest that the common thread between hierarchy-of-advertising-effects models is that they usually involve an underlying pattern of cognition => affect => behaviour, in other words: think => feel => do. Hierarchy of effects models assume that consumers process advertising in a linear fashion; the consumer first becomes aware of the advertisement, then evaluates how it makes or could make them feel, and this leads the consumer to acts on the information, from purchasing the brand to a change in perception. These models provided advertisers with the means to identify and categorise consumers based upon which level they appear to have reached in the hierarchy.

AIDA (Attention-Interest-Desire-Action), the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), and DAGMAR (defining advertising goals for measurable advertising...
results) are the three recognised persuasion models amongst advertising professionals and agencies.

White (1999) traces AIDA back to 1898 and suggests that it was the first model to suggest that advertising works through a hierarchy of effects, proposing that consumers move through stages, ultimately ending in a purchase action. AIDA has been the basis for many, if not all, persuasion models to date. Weibacher (2001) employs the AIDA model as a basis to explain the hierarchy of effects theory, but he adds one more step to introduce the idea that advertising must convince the consumer about the brands superiority in the marketplace over competing brands before the final stage, action, is achieved.

Schiffman et al. summarise the Elaboration Likelihood Model as proposing that “consumer attitudes are changed by two distinctly different ‘routes to persuasion’: a central route and a peripheral route” (Schiffman et al., 2001, p. 240). They suggest that the central route occurs when the consumer actively seeks out relevant information relating to a brand, which then results in attitude change. The consumer processes this information cognitively. Alternatively, the peripheral route is activated through stimuli emotionally when the consumer’s motivation for product information is low. For example celebrity endorsements. The consumer does not process this information cognitively but subliminally. Vakratsas and Ambler (1999) indicate that, although the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) offers two routes of persuasion, it essentially contains a hierarchy of effects because the end result is that the consumer is more likely to consider or purchase a certain brand. These two routes may not instantaneously lead to purchase action but instead lead to a change in attitude or perception towards the advertised brand.

In 1961, Cowley released Defining advertising goals for measurable advertising results (DAGMAR). This model proposed that advertising affects consumers in such a way that they may be persuaded to act, ultimately purchasing the advertised brand or resulting in a change in perception or behaviour. Cowley (1961) suggested that to successfully measure the results of advertising in the
marketplace, the goals of the advertising must first be determined. The goal of the
advertising may be anything from changing perceptions about the brand to changing
behaviour, i.e. purchase action. An advertising campaign's success was measured
based upon whether these predetermined goals were achieved. Furthermore,
DAGMAR was one of the first models to recognise that there are extrinsic factors
beyond the product intrinsic factors that affect a brand's sales, which are completely
uncontrollable. These include such things as competitive activity, and the economic
environment. However, this model still maintains that advertising's effects are linear
and measurable.

There has always been a desire to evaluate and measure just how advertising
works, to maximise return on investment. Hierarchy of effects models have provided
an accepted theoretical underpinning and framework for such investigations.
Advertising professionals see the need to measure advertising effectiveness to gain
repeat business. Measuring advertising effectiveness is one way advertisers possess
to indicate to the client the pre-campaign planning and post-campaign impact of their
advertising in the marketplace. White indicates the purpose of measuring advertising
campaigns in very simple terms: "if you manage a substantial brand, and the agency
is developing a new campaign, you want to be reassured, before spending perhaps
several million pounds behind the ads, that what you are doing will work" (White,
2000, p. 110).

Recently, the hierarchy-of-advertising-effects theory has been questioned by
Weilbacher. He claims that while the theory is intuitive, logical and commonsensical
there is no evidence to support the view that consumers' process advertising in stages
according to a hierarchy of effects. His main argument against the hierarchy of
effects theory is that advertising's effects alone are impossible to measure separately
from the product intrinsic factors, such as personal selling, promotion, and publicity,
and the extrinsic factors, such as the economic environment. He contends that
hierarchy of effects models are invalid for four main reasons:
1. they assume that all advertising has the same sequence of effects on each consumer,

2. they are based upon a model of human thought processes that has been discredited,

3. they only take advertising into account,

4. they assume that advertising effects are measurable and, therefore, valid.

Ambler (1998) and Ehrenberg (1999) have also provided recent critiques of 'popular beliefs' within the advertising arena. However, it is the first time the most popular beliefs and the most widely embraced theory of the way advertising works has been challenged in such a critical manner. Not surprisingly, Weilbacher's (2001) view has not gone unchallenged and was the subject of a spirited rebuttal by Barry (2002).

The significance of Weilbacher's (2001) challenge is that, if this new scepticism is justified, the advertising industry will need to seriously rethink the basis upon which many, if not all, campaigns are validated. The popular beliefs in the advertising industry concerning the theory of hierarchy of effects will need to be evaluated to find out whether the traditional views of how advertising works and its role in the marketplace are valid and justified. Therefore, if advertising effectiveness measures are not as effective as first thought, or advertising does not have the preconceived cumulative effect on consumers in the marketplace as once thought, what do we tell the client? How do we construct the role of advertising in the marketplace?

The purpose of this study is to determine to what extent practitioners in Perth advertising agencies base their own practice on hierarchy of effects theory. This research attempts to determine whether Perth advertisers know and think of their advertising in terms of a hierarchy of effects or whether they do not theorise in this way and instead follow an intuitive understanding of 'what works' in their advertising campaigns. The study also investigates the current critiques of the
hierarchy of effects theory and models and explores whether alternative models or theories are currently being considered and used by Perth advertising practitioners and agencies.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Hierarchy of effects models have provided academics, advertising and marketing professionals with a logical means of predicting and measuring how advertising works in the marketplace. These models were deemed important because “the question of how advertising works has exercised marketing thinkers for over 100 years: AIDA (Attention-Interest-Desire-Action), the first of the so-called hierarchy-of-effects models, dates back to 1898” (White, 1999, p. 6). Hierarchy of effects models have become so widely used in the advertising arena because they are seen as providing a logical and commonsensical method for measuring the effects of advertising on consumers in the marketplace. Measurements such as brand awareness, brand feature awareness, brand preference, and intention-to-buy specific brands evolved from the application of hierarchy of effects models and gave advertising practitioners a perceived concrete measure of how their advertising campaigns work.

Recently, however, hierarchy of effects models have begun to be questioned. Some authors have argued that persuasive hierarchy models have no evidence to support them and are ‘fatally flawed’ (cf. Ambler, 2000; Ehrenberg, Barnard, Kennedy, & Bloom, 2002; Ehrenberg, Barnard, & Scriven, 1997; Ewing & Jones, 2000; Miller & Berry, 1998; White, 1999).
Advertising’s Role in the Marketplace

Various persuasion models offer different views on advertising’s effect, and its key role, in the marketplace. As mentioned earlier, the hierarchy of effects theory has lead to numerous measurements to identifying successful advertising. Meyers-Levy and Malaviya suggest that “most [advertising] messages share a common final goal: persuading target consumers to adopt a particular product, service or idea” (Meyers-Levy & Malaviya cited in Ambler, 2000, p. 299). Aaker and Biel describe advertising as “the primary mechanism for creating psychological differentiation among brands and for enhancing brand equity” (Aaker & Biel cited in Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, & Donthu, 1995, p. 25).

Alternatively, advertising’s success, according to Weilbacher (2001), is based on how well the advertisement communicates its desired message to the target audience.

Advertising’s role, therefore, is to make consumers, whatever their current state of attitudes toward, information about, or images of a brand, more informed about the brand and more generally favorable to it. Advertising must, that is, produce some sort of mental change in the consumer: he or she must think differently about the brand after being exposed to successful advertising. The exact nature of this communications process has consistently been described in the marketing literature as a ‘hierarchy of advertising effects’.

(Weilbacher, 2001, p. 19)

The theory behind hierarchy of effects models is that advertising must stimulate some kind of action in the consumer by communicating information and a frame-of-mind towards a certain brand. The role of hierarchy of effects models was, and still is, to provide a measuring framework. These models have been perceived as an effective means of structuring measurement of the effect of advertising on
consumers and sales, and providing a step-by-step view of how advertising practitioners believe advertising works because of the simple and intuitive nature of the models.

**Persuasive Hierarchy Models**

Academics and practitioners have constructed frameworks and measured the effects of advertising on consumers through examining various persuasion models. Persuasive hierarchy models consist of an underlying pattern of “cognition => affect => behaviour” (Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999, p. 32) in other words think => feel => do. Hierarchy of effects models assume that consumers process advertising in a linear fashion (refer to AIDCA model below); the consumer first becomes aware of the advertisement, then evaluates how it makes or could make them feel, and then acts on this information, ultimately purchasing the brand or preparing mentally to do so.

The idea that, if advertising is to promote sales, it must inform and then persuade has intuitive appeal. Persuasive models introduced the concept of a hierarchy of effects, that is, an order in which things happen, with the implication that the earlier effects, being necessary preconditions, are more important. The hierarchy concept has played a large part in the development of advertising research.

(Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999, p. 32)

The most recognised persuasive hierarchy models circulating in the advertising industry are AIDA (Attention-Interest-Desire-Action), the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), and DAGMAR (defining advertising goals for measurable advertising results). All of these models emphasise that consumers must be moved through a series of steps or phases before behavioural change can occur, i.e. purchase action.
The AIDA model was the first to suggest that advertising works through a hierarchy of effects, proposing that consumers move through stages, which ultimately ends in a purchase action. AIDA has been the basis for many, if not all, persuasion models to date. Weilbacher's (2001) model (AIDCA featured below) employs the AIDA model as a basis but adds one more step to introduce the idea that advertising must convince the consumer about the brand's superiority over competing brands in the marketplace before the final stage, action, is achieved.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) proposes that "consumer attitudes are changed by two distinctly different 'routes to persuasion': a central route and a peripheral route" (Schiffman et al., 2001, p. 240). The central route occurs when the consumer seeks out relevant information relating to a brand, which then results in attitude change. Alternatively, the peripheral route is activated through non-elaborate and associative stimuli when the consumer's motivation for product information is low. For example: celebrity endorsements. However, although the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) offers two routes of persuasion, Vakratsas and Ambler (1999) argue, it essentially contains a hierarchy of effects for "the two alternative paths ... follow the same CA [cognition -> affect] sequence" (Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999, p. 32). These two routes may not instantaneously lead to purchase action but instead lead to a change in attitude or perception towards the advertised brand.

Cowley (1961) developed and popularised the concept of DAGMAR - defining advertising goals for measurable advertising results. He suggested that to successfully measure the results of advertising in the marketplace, the goals of the advertising must first be determined. Measuring the success of the advertising campaign is based upon whether these predetermined goals are achieved. This model suggests that advertising effects the consumer in such a way that they will eventually be persuaded to act, ultimately purchasing the advertised brand. Furthermore, DAGMAR was one of the first models to recognise that there are extrinsic factors beyond the product intrinsic factors that affect a brand's sales, which are completely uncontrollable. These include such things as competitive activity, and the economic environment. However, this model still maintains that advertising's effects are measurable.
The common link amongst all hierarchy of effects models is that they assume that all consumers move through stages mentally (cognitively) in a linear fashion and that it is advertising that motivates them to move through these mental stages. These models suggest that in the beginning the consumer is in a state of unawareness about the brand and as they are exposed to advertising the consumer moves through stages, such as awareness, interest and desire. The last stage, the ultimate result, of all hierarchy of effects models is behavioural change or purchase action.

In hierarchy of effects models the consumer must be involved at some level in order for it to be possible to continue on through the stages of the hierarchy. Weilbacher is the main protagonist in the hierarchy of effects argument and suggests that advertising is postulated to have many tasks in the hierarchy-of-advertising effects models. As Weilbacher sees it, these are:

1. **Attention**: A consumer new to the brand must be made aware of the brand's existence in the marketplace.

2. **Interest**: Once brand awareness has been created, interest must be aroused so the consumer can learn more about the brand.

3. **Desire**: Both the physical and emotional characteristics must be described when interest is being aroused so consumers develop an appreciation of these characteristics.

4. **Conviction**: The advertising must convince the consumer of the brand's superiority in the marketplace once they are aware of the brand and its characteristics.

5. **Action**: Once the advertising has fulfilled the first four steps in the hierarchy of effects the consumer will be mentally prepared to buy the brand.

Adapted from Weilbacher, 2001, p. 19-20
However, Weilbacher also argues that the hierarchy of effects models are flawed for there is no substantial evidence to support these persuasion models, or any other, as being an effective and accurate tool in measuring how advertising works. He suggests that "the most that can be said about the hierarchy-of-advertising-effects model of how advertising works is that it has been in the marketing/advertising atmosphere for over 100 years, expressed in one context or another, as an intuitive, non-validated explanation of how advertising works" (Weilbacher, 2001, p. 20).

Critique of the Hierarchy of Effects

The hierarchy of effects model has come under criticism due to the questioning of advertising’s persuasive power. This has been formulated as the ‘weak theory of advertising’ and suggests that advertising does not have the power to persuade consumers to adopt or purchase a particular brand. Instead advertising can only support the consumer’s repertoire of brands to which they are loyal. Schultz (2002) supports Weilbacher’s theory that hierarchy of effects models are outmoded. This current debate is vitally important for advertising and marketing practitioners to consider and “while many practitioners don’t seem to realise it, there is no more sacred cow in the advertising or marketing communication business than the hierarchy of effects model” (Schultz, 2002, p. 6).

Weilbacher acknowledges that the marketing community has enthusiastically embraced the hierarchy-of-advertising-effects theory and models and that “no comprehensive alternative model of how advertising works has ever gained general acceptance in the marketing community” (Weilbacher, 2001, p. 21). However, his main argument against the hierarchy of effects is that advertising’s effects alone are impossible to measure separately from the product intrinsic factors, such as personal selling, promotion, and publicity, and the extrinsic factors.

Weilbacher (2001) proposes hierarchy-of-advertising-effects models contain three main inconsistencies. First, the models imply that consumers go through stages
when exposed to a single advertisement and that once they are engaged in one of the stages in the models, consumers necessarily move through the stages in a linear fashion. However, Weilbacher (2001) argues that the hierarchy of advertising effects models do not take into account the effect of the advertising for various competing brands on the consumer prior to the final action stage. Second, the hierarchy of effects models suggest an unbreakable connection between the consumer and the brand; not taking into consideration that other brands in the marketplace are simultaneously attempting to attract the consumer. Third, “no evidence was presented in either of the DAGMAR (defining advertising goals for measured advertising results) editions ... or, for that matter, in any of the earlier publications, that demonstrated, unequivocally, that the hierarchy-of-advertising-effects model was a valid description of how advertising works” (Weilbacher, 2001, p. 20).

Fueling the debate concerning the validity of these models are the suggested “crucial conceptual weaknesses of hierarchy models of advertising effects” (Weilbacher, 2001, p. 21). Weilbacher offers four reasons why hierarchy of advertising effects models have not been, and cannot be, validated by academics and practitioners:

The model only takes advertising into account. Weilbacher (2001) argues that the effectiveness of advertising alone cannot be measured separately from numerous factors that may be in effect in the marketplace. Furthermore, advertising is not a single entity and its effects cannot be measured outside of and independently from the marketing mix in which it is contained.

The hierarchy of effects is based upon a behaviourist psychology model of human thought processes, “which has now largely been discredited in the contemporary literature of cognitive psychology” (Weilbacher, 2001, p. 23). The main difference between these two schools of thought is that behaviourist psychology studies the response properties of behaviour whereas cognitive psychology studies the information processing in the brain. Hierarchy of effects models suggests that the consumer’s purchases are based upon successful advertising
taking the consumer through the stages in the models. In the marketplace, however, the consumer is exposed to a wide range of information and experiences that affect their purchase behaviour and, according to Weilbacher (2001), it is impossible for advertising practitioners to even begin to understand exactly how product information is processed and stored in the consumer's brain leading up to purchase action. The behaviourist and cognitive schools of psychological thought are beyond the scope of this thesis but do warrant further investigation in future research.

The models assumes that all advertising has the same five stages of effects on a consumer. Advertising is thought to produce the same effect in the consumer no matter how highly differentiated the advertising is in the marketplace. However, the goals of all advertising campaigns differ and advertising agencies aims to create unique selling ideas to distinguish a brand from its competitors. Therefore, advertising must be different in order to have some, if any, effect on influencing consumer behaviour.

The hierarchy of effects model assumes that advertising effects are measurable and, therefore, valid. It is difficult, argues Weilbacher (2001), to measure and interpret the ambiguous information obtained in relation to the effectiveness of advertising when using persuasive hierarchy models. He suggests that "a continuing problem in the fields of advertising and marketing research is the fallacy that if a measurement can be made of a construct, then the fact of the measurement proves the construct to be true". However, if the model is indeed wrong then the measurements must therefore be irrelevant.

Adapted from Weilbacher, 2001, p. 21-24

Weilbacher (2001) suggests that we may never be able to truly measure the effects of advertising or, for that matter, marketing communications on consumers in the marketplace due to the complicated nature of the human brain. He believes it is time to move away from hierarchies of advertising and marketing effects and move towards a synthesis of marketing communications, integrated marketing communications.
Schultz (2002) supports Weilbacher’s view and believes that hierarchy of effects models are flawed because consumers are exposed to a magnitude of information in the marketplace, therefore devaluing the validity of a linear approach to the measurement of advertising’s effects on consumers. This raises some important questions concerning the future use of hierarchy of effects models as measurement tools. “If the basis of an advertising hierarchy is fallacious, or at least questionable, then what is the rationale for any or all of the advertising measurement tools in which we place so much faith and confidence?” (Schultz, 2002, p. 6).

Defence of the Hierarchy of Effects

Weilbacher’s current arguments against the hierarchy of effects view of advertising have met with some very spirited rebuttals, particularly from Barry (2002). However, Barry (2002) does suggest that Weilbacher’s views are useful and should be studied and discussed further because the theory of hierarchy of effects continues to be “a major guideline for advertising practice and research, [and] we are justified to continually question its value to our marketing communication endeavors” (Barry, 2002, p. 44).

Although Barry (2002) agrees that Weilbacher’s point of view is helpful, he disagrees with Weilbacher’s main arguments concerning hierarchy of effects models, approaching this debate from a marketing point of view. According to Barry (2002), advertising has never claimed to stimulate a hierarchy of effects; instead it is more likely that advertising assists in influencing consumer behaviour and providing information for problem resolution. “The goal of all marketing communications [information] is persuasion... in most cases, people have to process (carefully or not) that information, value (positively or negatively) that information, and then behave (or not) in some fashion” (Barry, 2002, p. 45). Barry (2002) argues that these hierarchy of effects models should not be dismissed on the basis that they are, supposedly, focused towards advertising rather than marketing. Hierarchy of effects models are relevant to advertising and marketing practitioners alike. However, Barry
claims that Weilbacher's arguments concerning the validity of hierarchy-of-advertising-effects models are based around advertising theory, and not developed in relation to marketing in broader terms.

The lack of evidence supporting hierarchy-of-advertising-effects models, Barry proposes, is not necessarily the problem; it is more in practitioners and scholars unwillingness to refine the persuasion models to provide better methods for measuring advertising effects. He believes that employing logic in the formation of effective persuasion models provides the advertising world with a good start towards understanding how advertising works. Weilbacher, however, argues that "if a widely accepted theory has not been proven over the course of 100 years, isn’t it time to say so?" (Weilbacher, 2002, p. 48).

Barry (2002) suggests that hierarchy of effects models are still important to practitioners and academics, proposing that the models continue to be valid in the marketplace because of their intuitive and logical framework. Barry & Howard (cited in Barry, 2002) outline three main functions of the hierarchy of effects:

1. Aids in predicting behaviour
2. Provides information relating to the focus of advertising strategies
3. Provides a good planning, training and conceptual tool.

Practitioners and academics, Barry proposes, need to work together to obtain a better understanding of the role advertising plays in the overall marketing and persuasion mix. Advertising professionals should continually work to refine the hierarchy of effects and other persuasion models in order to better address the issue of how advertising works. As for now, Barry argues, “viewing the hierarchy of effects simply as a heuristic model, which may have utility of general planning and guidance purposes, may be the most appropriate” (Barry, 2002, p. 47).
The hierarchy of advertising effects theory has not been the only long­
standing belief in the advertising industry and, for that fact, the marketing industry
to be currently questioned. Starcom, an international media planning and buying
company, has recently introduced a new term in the media-buying dictionary: “brand
experience points” (Shoebridge, 2003, p. 51). Brand experience points measure the
effectiveness of different marketing tools, such as direct mail and product sampling,
giving leave to the traditional and widely used mediums of television, radio and
press. Kate Lynch, senior vice-president and global research director of Starcom,
believes that cost per thousand (CPT) and target audience rating points (TARPs), two
of the traditional measures of ascertaining the effectiveness of media advertising, are
meaningless. She states that “my goal is to get rid of the term TARPs … it doesn’t
mean anything” (Shoebridge, 2003, p. 51).

Strong and Weak theories

The hierarchy of advertising’s effects theory is broadly linked to a separate
debate occurring between academics concerning advertising as a strong or weak
force in influencing consumer’s “brand choice” (Ehrenberg, Barnard, Kennedy &

Hierarchy of advertising effects models support the theory that advertising is
a strong force (strong theory). The strong theory suggests that advertising is
powerfully persuasive; with advertising having the power to persuade consumers to
adopt a brand, stimulate action and create psychological brand differentiation. The
alternative concepts of the strong and weak theories have been differentiated as
“whether it switches motivation on (strong theory) or stops it from switching off

Ehrenberg, the founding thinker of the weak theory, believes that the role of
advertising is not to persuade (as the strong theory suggests) but to publicise, for
advertising alone does not have the power to move consumers from one brand to another. The weak theory suggests that consumers have a repertoire of brands to which they are loyal. This is referred to as ‘brand salience’, “the order in which brands come to mind” (Miller & Berry, 1998, p. 78). The amount of salience a brand possesses is dependent upon the level of brand recall it has in a relevant situation in the marketplace. This “is not an attitudinal concept, being about a relevant brand’s ‘share of mind’. But it is much more than mere awareness of the brand in its product category (however measured)” (Ehrenberg et al., 2002, p. 8).

Given that the weak theory’s view that advertising lacks persuasive power, adoption of this perspective requires that the traditional view of advertising’s role in the marketplace would have to be altered. “Advertising’s role would be to reinforce consumers to continue buying your brand and, at times, to nudge them but with brand maintenance even then remaining the main task” (Barnard & Ehrenberg, 1997, p. 21). In considering advertising as a weak force, Ehrenberg et al. (2002) suggest that advertising dollars would be wasted on trying to persuade the consumer to buy, or switch to, a certain brand; instead the role of advertising in the marketplace would change from persuading consumers to maintaining the brand’s salience. “Instead of trying to persuade experienced consumers that every advertised brand is better or best, we should accept that advertising mostly needs to refresh, and may occasionally enhance, acceptance of the brand as one to buy and/or consider” (Ehrenberg et al., 2002, p. 16).

The debate concerning the strong and weak theories is beyond the scope of this research project. However, it is another example of how long-held beliefs about the role of advertising and how it works, both in the advertising industry and in academia, are being questioned.

In summary then, hierarchy of effects models, it has been suggested, are flawed because they are intuitive and logical rather than supported by validated evidence. According to the weak theory, these models may not be as effective or logical as first thought. “The general consensus of business opinion has been that
advertising has been a strong force, despite a good deal of debate during recent
decades, not to speak of an increasing body of evidence that advertising is not as
strong as many people think it is” (Ewing & Jones, 2000, p. 338). This then raises
some important questions; if the hierarchy of effects is flawed then upon what do we
base our advertising effectiveness measuring tools upon? What basis do we have for
theorising how advertising works?

The validity of the hierarchy of effects continues to be argued and, according
to Ambler, “no advertising theory can always be right, not least because innovation
requires the ‘rules’ to be changed from time to time... the strong theory
underestimates the significance of experience (memory) whereas the weak theory
underestimates the importance of feelings (affect)” (Ambler, 2000, p. 300).

Hierarchy of effects models need to be reviewed by advertising practitioners
and academics so alternative validated measurement tools can be created and
implemented in the advertising and marketing arenas. Until then, hierarchy of effects
models will continue to be used as the basis for measuring the effectiveness of
advertisements and explaining how advertising works.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The Managing Director or the Client Services Director from each of the five top advertising agency in Perth by billings were approached to recommend approximately five appropriate employees to take part in the research. People wielding senior account service positions were asked to participate in the study via e-mail. Participants with an account service background were chosen because “the primary contact between the agency and the client is the account manager (account director, account executive or whatever). This manager is responsible for the smooth running of the account and the effective use of the agency’s resources on the client’s behalf” (White, 2000, p. 32). Together with the client, account service professionals decide the objectives of the advertising, write the creative brief, and determine the advertising strategy. In total, twenty-four people, consisting of account directors, senior account managers and client service directors, were asked to participate in the study via an e-mail survey.

Campaign Brief is Perth’s principal advertising magazine and the agencies were chosen according on their position within the 2002/2003 Campaign Brief Directory’s “Perth’s Top Ad Agencies by Estimated Billings” table (refer to Table 1). The top five agencies from the table were chosen to participate in the study. The combined billings of these agencies total approximately 301.5 million dollars, representing 76.25 per cent of all Perth agencies listed in the Campaign Brief table. Martin Trevaskis, editor of Campaign Brief, stated that “the top five agencies in the list are the principle campaign agencies for Perth. The majority of TMP Worldwide’s billings [number six in the table] is mainly from classified advertising, not campaigns” (Martin Trevaskis, personal communication, April 10, 2003).
E-mail was chosen as the most appropriate survey tool for the purpose of this study since it appeared that the advantages of employing e-mail surveys far outweighed the disadvantages. Several studies have been executed concerning the relative advantages and disadvantages of e-mail as a survey tool (cf. Bachmann, Elfrink, & Vazzana, 1996, 1999; Kiesler & Sproull, 1986; Kittleson, 1995; Meinert, Festervand, & Lumpkin, 1992; Opperman, 1995; Schuldt & Totten, 1994; Sheehan & McMillan, 1999). The advantages include:

- Low cost
- Fast response rate
- Time saving
- Higher degree of willingness to respond to open-ended questions
- Participants more likely to expand on questions

Figure 1: 2002/2003 Campaign Brief Directory’s “Perth Top Ad Agencies by Estimated Billings”
Instantaneous feedback on problem e-mail addresses

Improved communications: e-mail provides a fast means for participants to ask questions about the questionnaire by using the reply function

Ease of recontacting participants

One of the principle shortcomings of using e-mail as a survey tool however, has been identified as the issue of non-response. At the completion of the research period, only twelve people had completed and returned their questionnaires, representing a response rate of 50 per cent. Out of those who did not complete the questionnaire, four respondents stated that they did not have the time to participate. One other respondent felt that she did not have the right qualifications to participate. Nonetheless, Erdos suggests that in terms of mail out surveys “one can be satisfied to have a fifty per cent return rate” (Erdos cited in Kittleson, 1995, p. 27).

Another disadvantage associated with e-mail, which may have affected the return rate for this study is the lack of anonymity and the possibility of confidentiality issues raised by e-mail surveys. In an e-mail survey the questionnaires are sent to the participant’s personal e-mail address, lowering the participant’s sense of anonymity. This may have been a factor relating to the number of unreturned questionnaires. Nonetheless, the participants were advised that confidentiality and anonymity was assured throughout the research process (refer to Appendix 1). The questionnaires were returned to a private e-mail address and, when received, were given a number and saved to disk, which was password protected. The original e-mail was deleted immediately so the questionnaire could not be connected to the participant.

The most important advantage of e-mail research in respect to this study was the possibility of a fast response rate and quick turn-around. Due to the busy schedule of the participants, e-mail was chosen because of its immediate and instantaneous nature. Participants were asked to download the questionnaire directly
on to their computer's hard drive and informed that he/she could complete the questionnaire using Microsoft Word in approximately 20 minutes.

Specific instructions concerning the downloading of the original questionnaire and returning the completed questionnaire via e-mail as an attachment were given to the participants. They were asked to complete and return the questionnaire within one week, due to the immediacy associated with e-mail. After one week, those who had not responded were sent the questionnaire again and reminded of the time frame and purpose of the study, and were asked to respond within the next week.

A test group, containing four of the twenty-four participants, was sent the questionnaire before research commenced to test the research methodology and the participant's understanding of the instructions concerning the downloading the questionnaire. All four questionnaires were appropriately completed and included in the data pool.

The questionnaire was designed using a combination of open-ended questions and Likert scaling, closed questions, and was designed based on integrating the main arguments raised by Weilbacher (2001) in his article. These were:

- Hierarchy of effects models assume that advertising has the same stages of effects for each consumer
- The hierarchy of effects is based upon a model of human thought processes that has been discredited
- A single exposure to one advertisement will start to move a consumer through the hierarchy
- The models only take advertising into account, where consumers are exposed to a range of stimuli
Hierarchy of effects models assume that advertising effects are measurable and, therefore, valid.

The models are little more than rationally and intuitively sensible rather than proven to be effective.

Marketing activities, not just advertising, are responsible for sales.

Likert scaling was integrated into the questionnaire to uncover the intensity of agreement or disagreement with Weilbacher's main statements. Open-ended questions were also employed since these "can be used to gather information on topics not adaptable to multiple-choice format, and they often provide insights not anticipated by marketing researchers" (Bachmann et al., 1999, p. 14) and thus gave participants the opportunity to express their views, and offer insights, on some of the main issues raised. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix 2.
CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Given the small number of participants in this study, the results may not be an accurate account of the beliefs of all advertising professionals in Perth. However, the results do provide a number of useful insights into the participating practitioners' degree of belief in and use of hierarchy of effects models. These beliefs are now discussed.

Demographic Profile

As table 1.1 shows, the respondents group covered a broad range of age, experience and education levels.

Five of the eight respondents who had completed a tertiary level of education or higher had studied a degree in Business, suggesting that participants have studied marketing in a broader sense rather than advertising specifically. This could lead to the participants' responses being more skewed towards the need for quantitative measurement due to the fact that business units tend to promote quantitative approaches to validation of outcomes, measuring various factors in the marketplace.
Table 1.1: Demographic Profile of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Profile</th>
<th>Number (#)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-39</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-54</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55+</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of years in the Advertising Industry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduate</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note: one participant had completed two degrees.

Awareness of Hierarchy of Effects Models

The 'Hierarchy of Effects' theory of advertising was presented to the participants along with three of the most widely known hierarchy of effects models in the literature; AIDA, ELM and DAGMAR. Respondents were asked to indicate awareness of each of the models offered.

As table 1.2 shows, out of the four models, DAGMAR was the most recognised, with nine out of the twelve respondents indicating that they had heard of this model. Fewer participants (7) had heard of the hierarchy of effects theory in
general. This result suggests that at least two of the respondents don’t necessarily identify the theory behind applied hierarchy of effects models.

Table 1.2: Hierarchy of advertising effects models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy of Advertising Effects</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration Likelihood (ELM)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAGMAR</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A slightly surprising result was that fewer respondents (7) recognised the AIDA model than recognised the DAGMAR model. White (1999) suggested that AIDA was the first model that professed to explain how advertising works based on a hierarchy of effects, and which has since become a widely used model in advertising texts. On that basis, it might have been expected that this would be the more widely recognised model. The Elaboration Likelihood Model was the least model recognised by advertising practitioners, perhaps because ELM is a more complex cognitive model that doesn’t necessarily provide an ‘easy’ framework for advertising measurement.

Agreement with Weibacher

The participants were asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with a number of Weibacher’s (2001) statements. These statements represented the basis of his critique of the hierarchy of advertising effects theory.
Table 1.3: Degree of agreement and disagreement with Weilbacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Advertising must move individual consumers through a series of phases or steps before product or service purchase actually occurs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Consumers move through stages mentally (or cognitively) with successive exposures to advertising.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Exposure to advertising must end in behavioural change.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Advertisements for a brand must be strikingly different from advertisements for competitive brands if they are to have any chance of successfully influencing consumers.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Advertising's effect can be measured.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Advertising's effect should be measured.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Exposing a consumer to a particular advertisement only once will have an effect on the consumer.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>An advertisement needs to be seen at least three times to have an effect on the consumer.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>An advertisement needs to be seen more than three times to have an effect on the consumer.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Advertising's results are unpredictable and random.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Advertising does not persuade consumers to adopt a product or a particular point of view.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Advertising is not solely responsible among marketing activities for causing sales.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses to these statements, and open-ended questions, produced four main areas of interest:

1. a spread of opinions concerning how advertising works (refer to statements one to four).
2. unanimous responses concerning advertising's measurability and its role in the marketplace (statements five and six).
3. the respondents were unclear concerning how many times an advertisement
needs to be seen to have an effect on the consumer (statements seven to nine).

4. some contradictory responses.

Eleven out of twelve respondents agreed (9) or strongly agreed (2) that
advertising must move individual consumers through a series of steps or phases
before product or service purchase actually occurs. Ten out of twelve agreed (9) or
strongly agreed (1) that consumers move through stages mentally with successive
exposures to advertising. This indicates a very high level of agreement with the basic
concept that underpins hierarchy of advertising effects theory.

On the issue of measurement, there was unanimous agreement that the effect
of advertising on consumers can and should be measured (statements five and six). In
light of the result that only four of the respondents agree that exposure to advertising
must end in behavioural change, these responses indicate that these advertising
practitioners believe advertising’s effect on consumers is something other than
behavioural, presumably cognitive. Furthermore, that this effect may constitute an
appropriate objective for an advertisement and that it can be measured. In addition,
the unanimous disagreement with the statement that advertising’s results are
unpredictable and random indicates that respondents believe there are pointers as to
how it will affect consumers and therefore, by extension, its success in the
marketplace.

The respondents unanimously agreed with statement eleven that advertising is
influential and can persuade consumers to adopt a particular product or viewpoint.
This is not entirely surprising; it is their profession after all so it is logical that they
would see it in the most positive light.

The responses given by the participating advertising practitioners to
Weibelacher’s statements, and open-ended questions, are somewhat contradictory in
nature, for example they believe that advertising is measurable but that numerous
factors affect the effect of advertising in the marketplace. According to Weilbacher, however, they can’t have it both ways. The hierarchy of advertising effects theory suggests advertising is measurable, predictable and persuasive. Weilbacher argues that the reality of marketing communications, where consumers assemble information about a product or service from a wide variety of sources – for example word-of-mouth, direct mail, et cetera – ‘proves’ that advertising is none of these.

The respondents disagreed (8/12) with Weilbacher’s (2001) argument that the hierarchy of effects theory suggests that a single exposure of a single advertisement may push the consumer through the stages of the model, ending in a sale. There was the same level of disagreement with the statement that advertising needs to be seen at least three times (8/12) and an even greater level of disagreement (9/12) with the statement that an advertisement need to be seen more than three times to have an effect. This issue falls into the contentious area of ‘effective frequency’, which is beyond the scope of this thesis, but the results do prompt this researcher to wonder how many times advertising practitioners do believe a consumer needs to be exposed to a particular advertisement for an effect to occur.

The unanimous agreement to statement twelve – that advertising is not solely responsible among marketing activities for causing sales – plus the answers to some open-ended questions (to be discussed subsequently), suggest that the respondents believe that advertising alone is not responsible for causing sales. This is the key component of Weilbacher’s critique of the hierarchy of advertising effects theory, that is that behavioural change (purchase action) is the result of a wide variety of factors and it is impossible to isolate and measure the part that advertising plays in causing that action.

Open-ended Questions

Four open-ended questions were asked to gauge the respondents’ level of understanding of hierarchy of effects theory without prescriptive statements that may
have offered 'clues', and to gain broader information on how the respondents viewed the role of advertising now and in the future.

**Do you consciously use any other ‘models’?**

This question was asked to discover whether the participants know of, or use any, other hierarchy of effects models within their agency; and to gauge the level of understanding of the hierarchy of effects theory.

I have used a number of *measuring models* [emphasis added]. They are all labelled differently but the objectives and methodologies are essentially the same. Fundamentally recall, message take out, cut through and brand linkage measures are the most important (Verbatim response to Question 5, Section B).

Not consciously, however, many of the models principles get adopted into everyday practice. They just don't get used as a specific model (Verbatim response to Question 5, Section B).

We have our own business models that we utilise which are directly *correlated to individual business results* [emphasis added]. This is not theory but reality. It has been the basis of our business success for many years (Verbatim response to Question 5, Section B).

Cross Modal Communication where Advertising, PR & New Media closely interact with each other and by doing that they influence customer’s behavior (Verbatim response to Question 5, Section B).

While the opinions of these respondents varied, the common thread in all the respondents’ answers was reference to business models and measurement models. Measurement is seen as a key element in the management of a campaign and there is strong belief that the effect of advertising can be measured. Whilst the respondents may not consciously know of or explicitly use the hierarchy-of-effects-theory, they use what they see as the most important or useful elements in the running of their campaigns. At least one respondent believes that the effective use of business models to drive advertising correlates to business results and builds agency success. This
does not, however, mask the fact that models are still being used to inform the application of measuring tools in the advertising arena, with different agencies adopting different models in different ways; depending upon the way their agency is run.

Do you think there is such a thing as a universal model of advertising or advertising's effects? Why/why not?

This question was asked to investigate how advertising practitioners and agencies approach developing and measuring their advertising campaigns. Almost none of the respondents believed that there was such a thing as a universal model of advertising.

No, every problem and approach is and should be different (Verbatim response to Question 6, Section B).

No, different cultures, different socio economic groups, changing lifestyles etc dictate that there needs to be different considerations in any approach. Though a model may form a basis on which build from (Verbatim response to Question 6, Section B).

No. There are a number of models adopted, some to suit the structure of their organisation. i.e. An integrated approach (Verbatim response to Question 6, Section B).

No - models vary depending on communications objectives (Verbatim response to Question 6, Section B).

Not really. Reason being is that all consumers are different and react differently. Furthermore each campaign has its own set of objectives. Therefore, pinning down advertising and its effects down to a universal model is potentially flawed. There are however, some key elements that are universal such as human nature, exposure etc. Their effects are varied (Verbatim response to Question 6, Section B).

There could be, but I think researchers all try to add value by including unique measures that set their methodology apart so it will be difficult to be totally universal. Also many products and services
have unique features that require different measures. Marketing
decision makers also have personal requirements from measures that
are often varied (Verbatim response to Question 6, Section B).

From the answers, it seems the respondents may not have made a distinction
between a model of advertising effects and a strategy. There are many, perhaps
infinite, approaches to executing an advertising campaign, but the hierarchy of
effects theory says that however a campaign is executed, its aim is to move
consumers through linear stages towards an outcome, usually behavioural.

But perhaps the most telling point from these answers was that the
respondents happily mixed measurement and effects concepts with no difficulty.
There was a strongly utilitarian approach to the concepts that suggests the
respondents maybe less concerned with the finer points of the theoretical discussion,
instead co-opting various ideas to build their own conceptual framework to suit the
purposes of their advertising campaigns.

Whilst most participants believed that there is no such thing as a universal
model of advertising, four of the twelve respondents believed that there are
guidelines, principles or structures that exist in the advertising arena.

There are guidelines, although each product, service, company etc has
different objectives, and are in different stages of a marketing cycle.
Therefore, they require a specific strategy for their individual
requirements (Verbatim response to Question 6, Section B).

There are fundamental principles to generating a cause and effect with
advertising. The key is understanding what business you are in and
what effect you need to create – then monitor and manage the results
[emphasis added] (Verbatim response to Question 6, Section B).

I believe that there are universal structures used in advertising and
universal models applied for many of the projects. However, most of
the projects require unique approach in order to influence the effects of
advertising [emphasis added] (Verbatim response to Question 6, Section B).
Such responses indicate that although a majority of respondents do not believe in a universal model of advertising (8/12), they use many of the principals of hierarchy-of-effects-models, especially DAGMAR or at least the essential elements of that model. This is indicated by the use of such terms as ‘objectives’, ‘integrated approach’, ‘consumers are different and react differently’, et cetera.

How do you think advertising’s effect should be measured?

The responses to this question significantly contribute to the main contradiction presented by the responses Likert scale questions and while the opinions were varied, there was a common agreement that advertising could and should be measured. The differences occurred in precisely what or how it should be measured.

Most significantly, there was a divided opinion on whether using sales figures was an adequate method of measuring advertising’s effects in the marketplace. Half of the respondents indicated that sales were an appropriate measure, and half disagreed with that view. The following two quotes were indicative of the opposing views.

Actual sales/quantifiable results as per behaviour change and agreed research attributes (Verbatim response to Question 7, Section B).

With effectiveness research to determine if the message takeout was clear i.e. based on meeting communication objectives. Using sales results as a means of measuring advertising is not appropriate as there are too many environmental factors that can get in the way of a sale being made ie weather, price, customer service etc. (Verbatim response to Question 7, Section B).
Again, Weilbacher’s argument is that advertising practitioners can’t argue that many factors affect sales but that despite these factors, the effect of advertising can be isolated and measured separately.

Secondly, rather than sales some of the respondents suggested measurements such as brand awareness, market share, behaviour change, et cetera referenced by Weilbacher (2001) as being the factors advertising is traditionally supposed to influence according to the hierarchy of effects theory.

Depends on the criteria i.e. Brand awareness, sales driven, perception etc. Research the result (Verbatim response to Question 7, Section B).

In essence, advertising practitioners believe that advertising is measurable and they use traditional measuring methods and tools to record the progress of their advertising campaigns.

The third view widely expressed on the topic of measuring advertising campaigns concerned the use of advertising objectives. The main argument was that campaigns should be measured on whether certain communications objectives are achieved.

Simply, against clearly defined and agreed objectives. All too often advertising is measured without a clear understanding of its role in the marketing mix. It is but one of many ingredients but is often seen as performing roles it simply wasn’t designed for (Verbatim response to Question 7, Section B).

It depends wholly on what it is you are trying to achieve. One view is that sales should be the measure but for issue related marketing and advertising sales do not apply. I believe that effects should be measured against a predetermined set of criteria agreed by all parties prior to the commencement of the creative process (Verbatim response to Question 7, Section B).

The use of defined advertising goals, as opposed to broader marketing goals and objectives, is the key principle of DAGMAR.
How do you think/believe advertising will change in the future, say over the next 10 years?

This final question was asked to provide an indication of where the respondents saw the future of the industry, as Schultz argues that with the discrediting of “another iconic advertising monolith ... we need new concepts, approaches, new models and icons” (Schultz, 2002, p. 9).

A variety of possibilities arose concerning likely changes in advertising over, approximately, the next ten years. However, these were largely technical in nature with little or no consideration of conceptual foundations of how advertising works.

The most common thought was that advertising will become more interactive, technology-driven, less based on theoretical models and more sensitive to target marketing (the targeting will be narrowed to create more niche marketing), and more creative.

Businesses will always want to achieve demonstrable results at a cost effective level. As the industry changes with new opportunities and consumer habit evolving it will become increasingly difficult to sustain those results at the current budgeted levels. As such, we will be forced to become more innovative in our approach (Verbatim response to Question 8, Section B).

It [advertising] will become far less based on theoretical models and much more in tune with the consumers desires. People act as people and that is unpredictable. Models that aim to predict what people will say or do in relation to advertising limit the way we think [emphasis added]. Advertising in the future will become much more part of our entertainment culture just like the soap opera and radio have become everyday parts of our lives, advertising too will become part of pop culture. The proliferation of advertiser funded initiatives is where the future lies. That and creative that aims to entertain based around a unique product truth (Verbatim response to Question 8, Section B).
This response was noted for its acknowledgment that people are indeed unpredictable, and that models of advertising that aimed at prediction of their responses were limiting rather than desirable or necessary. This response also contradicts the previous unanimous disagreement to Weilbacher's statement that advertising is random and unpredictable.

It will be less like 'advertising'. It will be more targeted and more sensitive to the audience (Verbatim response to Question 8, Section B).

The third view raised was that an integrated approach was the way of the future. This answer indicates that advertising is not a single entity and is not solely responsible for creating results:

New media advertising will became one of the major channels of advertising. In my opinion there will be some revolutionary changes in the form of Direct Marketing communication. Advertising will also be more involved in more complex marketing model, where PR, DM, CRM (Customer Relation Management), New Media & advertising should be inseparable (Verbatim response to Question 8, Section B).

In summary, there is widespread acknowledgment that advertising is evolving and becoming part of a larger communications mix. This presents the central contradiction in response to the survey overall; the acknowledgment that advertising is only part of an increasingly complex marketing mix that affects consumer behaviour but a part which can nevertheless be isolated, measured and managed in its own right.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the extent to which the participating Perth advertising professionals and agencies base their own practice on hierarchy of advertising effects theory has been researched and discussed based on Weibacher’s (2001) direct questioning of the hierarchy of effects theory and therefore models based upon it. The results from this study suggest that the hierarchy of effects view of advertising is greatly evident amongst the respondents but that the usage is selective and at times contradictory.

Two main conclusions may be drawn from this study:

1. A utilitarian approach is taken in regards to the use of hierarchy of effects theory.
2. Some beliefs are contradictory.

Utilitarian Approach

The participating Perth advertising practitioners widely accept the hierarchy of effects view of advertising. It is suggested by this study that the theory and the models based upon it are used in the everyday running of advertising agencies. However, there appears to be a somewhat utilitarian approach adopted, that is the respondents pick and choose part of different models to suit the objectives of their campaign from which they can measure and justify their advertising in the marketplace to their clients. This is shown by the respondents’ use of different aspects of the theory – and its attendant models – that suit their particular view of how advertising works.
The utilitarian approach to the concepts presented in this study suggested that, overall, the basic concepts of hierarchy of effects theory were understood and used to implement various conceptual frameworks that suited the purposes of their advertising campaigns. However, it was apparent that the finer details of the theoretical discussion were less understood. The selection process, which parts of which models will be used in which advertising campaigns, indicates that this process is very intuitive. Weibacher’s (2001) claims that hierarchy of effects models are embraced because they are intuitively sensible. This utilitarian approach or use of the hierarchy of advertising effects theory gives rise to some contradictions.

Contradictions

There were two main beliefs that arose from this study that provided the greatest contradiction: a) that advertising can and should be measured and b) advertising alone does not cause sales.

The need to measure was the most prevalent point in this study. The belief that advertising is measurable and should be measured conforms to the view that hierarchy of effects models assume that advertising effects are measurable and, therefore, valid. Whether consciously or implicitly, this underpinning aspect of hierarchy of effects models provides that participating Perth advertising practitioners and agencies with an indication of how it will work in the marketplace. The hierarchy of advertising effects theory is used as a means of justification, progress or evaluation of the effectiveness of an advertising campaign on influencing the consumer, perhaps offering a framework to measure or ‘prove’ its effectiveness to the client.

However, it must be acknowledged that there is little alternative for the participating Perth advertising practitioners. Advertising agencies need to be able to justify their business and/or profession to the client and indicate if, how and when the advertising will work. These advertising practitioners can not simply tell the client that they don’t know what effect their advertising will have and when. Without a
framework to measure or 'prove' the effectiveness of their advertising campaign the client's expenditure on advertising would not be justifiable. What would or could they tell their clients?

The respondents assume that advertising specifically has a measurable effect on the consumer. They see hierarchy of effects models as a logical and commonsensical means of justifying their advertising expenditure to the client, creating demonstrable results at cost effective levels. Therefore, the theory behind these models is seen as a valid explanation of how advertising campaigns will work in the marketplace.

However, this study highlights the fact that the participating Perth advertising industry is growing towards an integrated marketing communications approach, where advertising is not a single entity, instead it is part of a total communications program.

The main argument from Weilbacher (2001) is that various factors effect the outcome of an advertising campaign and, therefore, advertising's effects cannot be measured independent from these factors. The theory behind hierarchy of effects models are referred to and modified by the participating Perth advertising practitioners to fit the criteria of each individual advertising campaign as a means of measurement and justification. The respondents agree that there are numerous factors that effect the success of an advertising campaign. However, they also believe that individual components of an advertising campaign can be measured.

Weilbacher suggests, however, they can't have it both ways. The hierarchy of advertising effects theory suggests advertising is measurable, predictable and persuasive. However, the reality of marketing communications, where consumers assemble information about a product or service from a wide variety of sources — for example word-of-mouth, direct mail, et cetera — 'proves' that advertising is none of these. This is the heart of Weilbacher's (2001) argument that marketing activities,
not just advertising, are responsible for causing sales and that as such, it is virtually impossible to separate the effects of advertising from those of other marketing activities.

It is evident that the participating Perth advertising practitioners use the hierarchy of effect theory and models and, although they have begun to be questioned, no alternative models are being considered or used to the extent that hierarchy of effects models are currently. Therefore, the hierarchy of effects theory and models will continue to be used by the participating Perth advertising agencies and practitioners because it is seen as being a logical and commonsensical method of measuring the effectiveness of advertisements and explaining how advertising works.
CHAPTER SIX

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Limitations

The principal limitations of this study are the sample size and e-mail survey methodology. A larger sample size would have perhaps made the study more representative of the views held by Perth advertising agencies and practitioners. However, given the time available, the professional demands upon the participant's time and the fact that the survey was voluntary, obtaining a larger sample size was not possible.

A known limitation of e-mail is a lack of anonymity. This may have affected the return rate of the survey because the respondent's e-mail address was supplied automatically when the survey was returned via e-mail. This was overcome by allocating a number to the survey and deleting the original e-mail to which it was associated. Given the time constraints, the e-mail methodology was considered the 'best' approach and the questions asked were not especially sensitive in nature (refer to Appendix 2).

Future Research

There is ample opportunity for more empirical research into the validity of the hierarchy of effects theory. Results from a wider region need to be studied and collated to determine whether the findings of this study correlate to the opinions of advertising professional worldwide, for Perth is a unique market compared to the rest of Australia. There is a need for marketing and advertising professional to think
about the importance they place on hierarchy of effects models and how or if they are used or useful.

Furthermore, Weilbacher (2001) argues that hierarchy of effects models are based upon behaviourist psychology, a model of human thought processes that has been discredited. However, the responses to the survey indicate that there is a widespread and unquestioned acceptance of the hierarchy of effects theory and therefore, any criticism of the aspects of behaviourist psychology that underpin it is yet to be recognised and/or acknowledged. This issue warrants further investigation because the debate between behaviourist and cognitive psychology underlies the hierarchy of effects theory. According to Weilbacher (2001) the science behind these theories is complex and cognitive psychologists are yet to even touch the surface of the mental processing in the brain that consumers undertake when exposed to an advertisement. If this is the case, argues Weilbacher, how can advertising professionals even begin to predict how advertising works in the marketplace.

Another issue worth investigating and comparing is that of account service personnel and the client. Account service people have been the focus of this study due to the fact that they have an overall view of the advertising campaigns, they are in constant contact with the creative and media departments within the agency, and they are the first point of contact with the clients. It would be interesting to consider the clients' point of view concerning the hierarchy of advertising effects theory because they are the ones who contract the advertising agency to develop campaigns. The clients probably would not know of or think in terms of a hierarchy of effects. However, it would be interesting to explore what role they think advertising plays for their brand in the marketplace.

Additionally, a further investigation into effective frequency is warranted. No concrete answer to what advertising professionals believed was effective frequency was obtained in this study because the question was not asked. However, the responses to what was asked were interesting. The theory behind effective frequency is that consumers need to be exposed to a particular advertisement three
times for that advertisement to have any effect and this, along with once and more than three times, generated disagreement among the respondents. This raises the question of how many times advertising practitioners believe a consumer needs to be exposed to a particular advertisement for an effect to occur.
REFERENCES


Weilbacher, W. M. (2002). Weilbacher comments on "In defense of the hierarchy of effects". *Journal of Advertising Research, 42*(2), 48-49.


Statement of disclosure and informed consent

Dear Participant,

This letter is to inform you of the nature and purpose of the research being completed by me as part of my Honours degree at Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia.

The study is entitled: How ingrained is the 'Hierarchy of Effects' view of advertising amongst Perth advertising agencies? The purpose of the study is to investigate how widely and strongly the hierarchy of effects view is used and believed in by Perth advertising practitioners and if alternative models are currently being considered or used in the advertising industry. If you agree to participate in the study, the standard questionnaire issued will take approximately twenty minutes to complete.

Confidentiality is assured, and you will not be identifiable in any part of the research. If at any time you decide not to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw and all the data collected in regards to you will be destroyed.

If you have any concerns or queries about the project, you can direct them to me, Carolyn Boulden, either by e-mail at yamacoca@hotmail.com, or by telephone on 9228 4331 or mobile 0407 322 985. Alternatively you may contact my supervisor, Martin Trevaskis, via e-mail at m.trevaskis@ecu.edu.au, or by telephone 9370 6387.

As this is an e-mail survey, if you agree to take part in the research, your consent is based upon whether you return a completed questionnaire with the consent form below. If you do not consent to participating in the research you do not have to complete or return your questionnaire.

If you agree to take part in the research, please fill in the consent form below and return it with your completed questionnaire.

Carolyn Boulden

CONSENT FORM

I (Name of participant) have been informed about all aspects of the above research proposal and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, realising that I may withdraw at any time.

I understand that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided I am not identifiable.

Date
APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire: Hierarchy of Effects

SECTION A – DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Age? (please underline)
   18-25  26-35  36-50  above 51

2. Gender? (please underline)
   M  F

3. What is your current position title?

4. How many years have you worked in the advertising industry?

5. What is your highest level of completed education? (please underline)
   Secondary  Tertiary  Graduate  Postgraduate

6. If you undertook tertiary education, which degree did you receive? (please underline)
   Business  Communications  Arts  Other
   (Please specify)

53
Section B – Advertising Models

1. Have you heard of the ‘Hierarchy of Effects’ model of advertising? (please underline)
   YES     NO

2. Have you heard of the AIDA model of advertising? (please underline)
   YES     NO

3. Have you heard of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)? (please underline)
   YES     NO

4. Have you heard of DAGMAR (defining advertising goals for measurable advertising results)? (please underline)
   YES     NO

5. Do you consciously use any other ‘model/s’? (please specify)

6. Do you think there is such a thing as a universal model of advertising or advertising’s effects?
7. How do you think advertising's effects should be measured?

8. How do you think/believe advertising will change in the future, say over the next 10 years?

Section C - Advertising's Effects

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements (please underline)

1. Advertising must move individual consumers through a series of steps or phases before product or service purchase actually occurs.
   STRONGLY DISAGREE  DISAGREE  AGREE  STRONGLY AGREE

2. Consumers move through stages mentally (or cognitively) with successive exposures to advertising.
   STRONGLY DISAGREE  DISAGREE  AGREE  STRONGLY AGREE

3. Exposure to advertising must end in behavioural change.
   STRONGLY DISAGREE  DISAGREE  AGREE  STRONGLY AGREE

4. Advertisements for a brand must be strikingly different from advertisements for competitive brands if they are to have any chance of successfully influencing consumers
   STRONGLY DISAGREE  DISAGREE  AGREE  STRONGLY AGREE
5. Advertising’s effects can be measured.  
   STRONGLY DISAGREE  DISAGREE  AGREE  STRONGLY AGREE

6. Advertising’s effects should be measured.  
   STRONGLY DISAGREE  DISAGREE  AGREE  STRONGLY AGREE

7. Exposing a consumer to a particular advertisement only once will have an effect on the consumer.  
   STRONGLY DISAGREE  DISAGREE  AGREE  STRONGLY AGREE

8. An advertisement needs to be seen at least 3 times to have an effect on the consumer.  
   STRONGLY DISAGREE  DISAGREE  AGREE  STRONGLY AGREE

9. An advertisement needs to be seen more than 3 times to have an effect on the consumer.  
   STRONGLY DISAGREE  DISAGREE  AGREE  STRONGLY AGREE

10. Advertising’s results are unpredictable and random.  
    STRONGLY DISAGREE  DISAGREE  AGREE  STRONGLY AGREE

11. Advertising does not persuade consumers to adopt a product or a particular point of view.  
    STRONGLY DISAGREE  DISAGREE  AGREE  STRONGLY AGREE

12. Advertising is not solely responsible among marketing activities for causing sales.  
    STRONGLY DISAGREE  DISAGREE  AGREE  STRONGLY AGREE