



The Effects of Message Type and Product Involvement on Attitudes toward In-feed Advertising on Social Media

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Consumers' avoidance of traditional forms of advertising has driven the popularity of native advertising on social media. While the advantage of in-feed advertising is that ads appear to blend with editorial content, this study focuses on how different types of in-feed advertising messages influence the activation of persuasion knowledge and ensuing attitudes toward ads. In particular, we examine the moderating role of product involvement. We conducted a 2 (message type: informational versus entertaining) x 2 (product involvement: low versus high) between-subjects experiment, which demonstrated that informational in-feed ads are less likely to activate persuasion knowledge and result in more favorable ad attitudes, especially when product involvement is high. Consumers with low product involvement did not respond differently to the two types of content. These findings highlight the value of examining the type of messages and demonstrate that high product involvement enhances the effects of in-feed ads. They also point to persuasion knowledge as the underlying mechanism that explains the interaction effect.

KEY WORDS

Native advertising • In-feed advertising • Message type • Product involvement • Persuasion knowledge

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1. INTRODUCTION

Native advertising, “any paid advertising where the ad matches the form, feel, function, and quality of the content of the media on which it appears” (Laursen & Stone, 2016, p. 5), is an increasingly common form of online advertising. One recent report revealed that U.S. advertisers spent \$44 billion on native advertising in 2019, and among the various formats, most spending on native ads went to social media in general and Facebook in particular (eMarketer, 2019). On Facebook, native ads (hereafter in-feed ads) are embedded in consumers’ feeds along with other regular social media posts. The nondisruptive nature of in-feed ads can produce positive outcomes such as high exposure (Matteo & Dal Zotto, 2015), favorable attitudes and purchase intentions (Jung & Heo, 2019; Kim, Youn, & Yoon, 2019; Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014), and user interactions (e.g., “like” and “share”) (Boerman, Willemsen, & Van Der Aa, 2017; Kim, Song, & Jang, 2021; Lee, Kim, & Ham, 2016; Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2019).

The early work on native advertising focused on examining the role of sponsorship disclosure (Amazeen & Wojdyski, 2019; Boerman et al., 2017; Hwang & Jeong, 2016; Jung & Heo, 2019; Lu et al., 2014; Wojdyski & Evans, 2016). Specifically, adopting Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM; Friestad & Wright, 1994) as the theoretical framework, many studies have demonstrated that the presence of sponsorship disclosure lowered the effectiveness of native ads by activating persuasion knowledge. Then the research stream shifted its focus to how to mitigate the negative effect of sponsored messages. Scholars have thus far examined the content type (Kim, Lee, & Lee, 2019), the quality of ad content (Hwang & Jeong, 2019), and the message source (Kim et al., 2021) on consumer responses. Following this stream of research, the current study aims to examine the conditions under which the persuasion knowledge is reduced and the effectiveness of native ads is enhanced.

One such factor is message type. Prior research has shown that the nature of an ad’s message influences consumer responses to native advertising on social

media (Gavilanes, Flatten, & Brettel, 2018; Kim et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2021; Saenger & Song, 2019). For example, Kim et al. (2019) found that informational in-feed ads produced more favorable consumer responses (brand attitudes and click intentions) than entertaining type of in-feed ads on Facebook. While such message characteristics can play important roles in enhancing the effectiveness of in-feed ads on social media, researchers have only recently begun examining message-related factors. Thus, this study explores whether and how different type of message influences consumer responses toward native ads. Given the fact that consumers are more likely to be influenced by such information for utilitarian products than for hedonic products (Kim et al., 2019; Lu et al., 2014), this study focused on investigating how consumers respond to ad message type differently for utilitarian products.

Further, to expand scholarly understanding of the effects of message type on native ad effectiveness, this study investigates the moderating role of product involvement. Product involvement has been examined to a great extent as a key variable in advertising research, which influences the processing of messages by dictating the attention individuals give to specific products as well as the perceived importance of related information (Nelson, 1970; Zaichowsky, 1985). For consumers to recognize the persuasive appeal of native advertising, their persuasion knowledge needs to be activated. Activation of persuasion knowledge tends to be determined by individuals' motivation levels and abilities to process messages. When consumers review ads, their product involvement often dictates their motivation levels and message processing abilities. Individuals with high product involvement are more motivated to process given information and the quality and the nature of ad content is likely to be important to them. In contrast, individuals with low product involvement often lack the motivation to process ads and are less concerned about the quality of the messages. For example, Cho (2003) showed that while individuals with high product involvement are more likely than those with low involvement to click on banner ads to seek further information, the positive effects of attention-grabbing devices such as large-sized banners and the

use of animation are more effective among those with low product involvement than those with high involvement. Despite its importance in ad message evaluations, however, the moderating role of product involvement in the context of native ads has not been tested yet. To fill the gap, this study explores how message type interacts with consumer product involvement and influence consumer responses to in-feed ads.

In sum, the purpose of this study is to investigate the conditions under which the negative effect of native ads may be mitigated. Toward that end, this study examines (1) whether and how in-feed ad message types (informational vs. entertaining) influence the activation of persuasion knowledge and consumer responses to ads, (2) the moderating role of product involvement, and (3) the mediating role of persuasion knowledge in the context of native social media post. Employing the PKM as a theoretical framework, this study expands the literature on native advertising, and its findings provide marketers practical guidance for designing native social posts on social media.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

1) Persuasion knowledge model (PKM)

The PKM (Friestad & Wright, 1994) provides a useful framework for understanding how consumers recognize, evaluate, respond to, and cope with persuasive attempts. It posits that individuals' persuasion knowledge (i.e., a personal knowledge and beliefs about advertisers' motives or tactics) develops via exposure to persuasion attempts throughout their lifetimes (Friestad & Wright, 1994). In general, while consumers' persuasion knowledge is activated when they are exposed to established persuasion tactics because they have already developed coping skills, they are unable to detect new tactics like native advertisings. Since the line between organic and paid content is blurry to untrained eyes, consumers may not recognize the

commercial features of native advertising. Indeed, only 20% of participants identified the commercial motives of sponsored Twitter posts (Boerman & Kruikemeier, 2016).

Consumers' persuasion knowledge can represent chronic or stated traits. As a consumer trait, persuasion knowledge helps them recognize and respond to native advertising. People with high persuasion knowledge are more likely to detect persuasive intent and respond negatively (Jung & Heo, 2019; Lee et al., 2016; Youn & Shin, 2020). For example, Lee et al. (2016) demonstrated that consumers' persuasion knowledge negatively influences their attitudes and sharing intentions regarding native advertising on social media. Similarly, Jung and Heo (2019) found that chronic persuasion knowledge increases recognition of native advertising's selling intent. Thus, the effectiveness of native advertising seems to depend on consumer detection of commercial intent.

Although consumers' chronic persuasion knowledge plays an important role, understanding their stated or activated persuasion knowledge is more critical for marketers because they cannot control consumers' chronic persuasion knowledge. Previous studies have revealed that certain conditions activate persuasion knowledge, and this persuasion knowledge reduces the effects of native advertising (Boerman & Kruikemeier, 2016; Boerman et al., 2017; De Veirman & Hudders, 2020; Kim et al., 2019; Kim & Song, 2018; Wen et al., 2020; Wojdyski & Evans, 2016). For example, Boerman et al. (2017) found that sponsorship disclosures in native ads activate consumers' persuasion knowledge, which, in turn, lowers their intentions to share the ads on Facebook. Similarly, Wen et al. (2020) found that native news articles with explicit disclosure language activate persuasion knowledge.

Drawing on the PKM, this study focuses on the conditions that alleviate the negative effect of consumer persuasion knowledge activation in the context of in-feed advertising. One factor that influences these conditions is advertising message type (Kim et al., 2019).

2) In-feed ad message types

Message features are important factors of interest in persuasion. In the native advertising context, research has recently begun to examine the characteristics of ad messages, including message sidedness (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020; Hwang & Jeong, 2016) and message type (Kim et al., 2019; Kim & Song, 2018; Kim et al., 2021; Saenger & Song, 2019). Regarding message factors in the domain of native advertising, previous studies have primarily investigated the main effects of message type (Kim et al., 2019; Kim & Song, 2018; Kim et al., 2021; Saenger & Song, 2019) and the moderating role of message sidedness (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020; Hwang & Jeong, 2016). To explore the main effects of message features on the activation of persuasion knowledge, this study focuses on message type rather than message sidedness.

Native ad message can be classified into two types on social media: informational and entertaining. *Informational advertising* offers consumers helpful information (Ducoffe, 1996); it consists of objective facts, appeals to consumer rationality, and satisfies consumers' utilitarian needs (Ducoffe, 1996). By contrast, *entertaining advertising* provides enjoyment or pleasure and fulfills consumers' hedonic needs (Ducoffe, 1996). Entertaining message often consists of subjective factors, drama, and narratives to arouse pleasant emotions (Dehghani et al., 2016).

Between informational and entertaining ads, prior research has revealed that informational ad is generally more persuasive than entertaining ad (Kim et al., 2019; Kim & Song, 2018; Saenger & Song, 2019). For example, Kim et al. (2019) found that, on Facebook, informational ad is less likely to activate persuasion knowledge and more likely to yield favorable brand attitudes and click intentions than entertaining ad. Further, they found this positive effect of informational ad on consumer responses is more pronounced for utilitarian products. The superiority of informational content derives from the verifiability of informational messages. In the context of broadcast and radio media, research has shown that messages that claim objectivity are considered more verifiable than subjective messages,

making them more effective (Darley & Smith, 1993). Since objective messages consist of facts, consumers do not need to search for additional information to judge the veracity of such ad claims. In contrast, subjective messages often involve personal and erroneous interpretations (Gardial & Biehal, 1991), and the resulting high levels of ambiguity tend to prompt consumers to search for additional information to evaluate such advertising claims (Kim & Lee, 2015).

Based on the findings of previous studies, we expect that consumer persuasion knowledge will be activated to a less extent when consumers view informational in-feed ads than when they view entertaining native ads on Facebook especially for utilitarian products. Since user-generated posts tend to include entertaining elements abound with emotions and stories, entertaining ads are more likely to blend with the organic content on social media (Grigsby & Mellema, 2020). Given the PKM perspective, this well fitted and ambiguous nature of entertaining ads taps into the notion of sponsorship transparency—the clarity with which the paid nature of ads is communicated to consumers (Grigsby & Mellema, 2020; Kim et al., 2019; Wojdyski, Evans, & Hoy, 2018). Ads that are perceived as more upfront about being ads tend to be perceived more favorably (Campbell & Evans, 2018; Harms, Bijmolt, & Hoekstra, 2017). In terms of sponsorship transparency, an entertaining ad may increase the perceived deceptiveness and result in unfavorable attitudes toward the ad. By contrast, since an informational ad is easier to distinguish in terms of the content and format from other organic user-generated content, it helps consumers detect the commercial nature of native ads. Consistent with this reasoning, Grigsby and Mellema (2020) found that consumers are more likely to recognize the advertising nature of a native ad for informational ad than for narrative ad. Additionally, consumers may regard an informational ad as unbiased information because it includes objective and easily verifiable facts. Based on the above discussion, we propose the following hypotheses.

H1a. Entertaining in-feed ads are more likely to activate persuasion knowledge than informational in-feed ads.

H1b. Entertaining in-feed ads are perceived less favorably than informational in-feed ads.

3) Moderating role of product involvement

Product involvement refers to the relevance of a product category to an individual's needs, values, and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Research has shown that product involvement serves as a key moderator of ad effectiveness (e.g., Belanche, Flavián, & Pérez-Rueda, 2017; Cho, 2003; Chung & Zhao, 2003; Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983; Van den Broeck, Poels, & Walrave, 2018). In their seminal study, Petty et al. (1983) demonstrated that strong argument quality in advertising is more effective in high product involvement situations than low product involvement situations whereas using famous endorsers has a greater impact in low involvement situations than high involvement situations. Subsequent researchers have examined the moderating role of product involvement on ad effectiveness in various contexts including humor ads (Chung & Zhao, 2003), banner ads (Cho, 2003), keyword search ads (Yoo, 2012), online video ads (Belanche et al., 2017), ad avoidance (Van den Broeck et al., 2018), and so forth.

The dual-processing model is often used as an overarching framework to explain how individuals process persuasive messages and especially why product involvement is an important moderator in examining how advertising affects consumers. Among the most prominent dual-process theories, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (hereafter ELM, Petty & Cacioppo, 1981) posits that individuals' information processing strategies are situation-specific. When people are involved with a certain product category, their preexisting cognitive structures guide their interpretations of the new information they receive (Zaichkowsky, 1994). According to the ELM, persuasive messages can be processed via the central route or the peripheral route. When message relevance is high, individuals engage in high levels of elaboration and the processing takes the central route, resulting in effortful message processing. On the other hand, low levels of elaboration lead to peripheral processing, which relies on cues such as source trustworthiness and information formats rather than central messages (Petty, Brinol, & Priester, 2007) and may even cause individuals to disregard the information (Laczniak, Kempf, & Muehling, 1993).

In the context of native advertising, consumers need to first detect and separate paid ads from non-paid content. This requires cognitive resources and the consumers to scrutinize the content of a message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981; Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990). Consumers are constantly bombarded with various content including advertising messages, and the general interest level about a product is likely to dictate consumers' intention to search for and process information (Celsi & Olson, 1988; Yoo, Kim, & Stout, 2004). When consumers are highly involved with a product, they are likely to pay more attention to related information (Laczniak et al., 1993), including the advertising presented to them while surfing the Internet. As such, we expect consumers with high product involvement to scrutinize messages more than those with low product involvement. This means that the positive effects of informational native ads will be heightened for those with high involvement, which will, in turn, heighten their persuasion knowledge. On the other hand, those with low product involvement, who are less likely to pay attention to ad messages than those with high involvement, may not find the ambiguous nature of entertaining native ads disturbing. Therefore, we expect that product involvement will moderate the main effect of message type, and propose the following hypotheses.

- H2a. The proposed effects of message type on the activation of persuasion knowledge are more pronounced for individuals with high product involvement than for those with low involvement.
- H2b. The proposed effects of message type on attitudes toward ads are more pronounced for individuals with high product involvement than for those with low involvement.

Previous studies have found that persuasion knowledge plays a mediating role in the context of native advertising (Boerman & Kruikemeier, 2016; Boerman et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2019; Kim & Song, 2018; Wojdyski & Evans, 2016). For instance, Boerman et al. (2017) found that persuasion knowledge plays a mediating role in the context of native social posts on Facebook. In their study, sponsorship

disclosure activated consumers' persuasion knowledge, and this activated persuasion knowledge, in turn, lowered their word-of-mouth intentions on Facebook. Similarly, Kim et al. (2019) demonstrated that persuasion knowledge mediates the interaction effects of native ad message type (informational versus entertaining) and product type (utilitarian versus hedonic) on brand attitudes and intentions to click "like" on Facebook. Consistent with previous studies, we expect that persuasion knowledge will play a mediating role in explaining the relationship between message type and product involvement on ad attitude. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis.

H3. Activated persuasion knowledge mediates the interaction effect between message type and product involvement on attitudes toward ads.

3. METHOD

1) Stimuli

We created two Facebook pages, one that displayed informational message and the other that displayed entertainment message. The layouts of the Facebook pages were kept identical across the conditions including the brand logo, a short introduction message, a URL link to the brand page, video-centric content, and the label "sponsored."

(1) Product category selection

A pretest with 23 undergraduate students was conducted to select an appropriate product category. Based on a week-long review of sponsored news feeds on undergraduate students' Facebook pages, we developed a list of eight product categories that we gave participants: acne treatments, perfume, sunscreen, sunglasses, face cleanser, smartphone accessories, smartphone battery, and headphones. We

asked participants to indicate the degree to which each they were interested in each product (1 = not at all interested, 7 = very much interested). Among the eight product categories, participants gave sunscreen the highest product interest score ($M = 5.43$, $SD = 1.19$). Therefore, we chose sunscreen as the product category for the main experiment. To control prior attitudes toward the brand, we used a fictitious brand name (Till & Busler, 2000).

(2) Message type

We manipulated messages to make them either informational or entertaining. The informational message for sunscreen included information regarding how to protect skin during the winter. By contrast, the entertaining message for sunscreen described a situation where a man was fooling around with his friend with sunscreen. The results of pretest with 20 undergraduate students (different from the main experiment) showed that the participants were exposed to the entertaining message perceived their video clips as more entertaining ($M = 6.20$, $SD = 1.23$) than those exposed to the informational message ($M = 1.3$, $SD = .48$), $t(18) = 11.73$, $p < .001$ (1 = informational, 7 = entertaining).

2) Design, participants, and procedure

A 2 (content type: informational versus entertaining) \times 2 (product involvement: high versus low) between-subjects experimental design was employed. A total of 101 college students (59.2% females; $M_{age} = 21.43$ years, $SD = 1.80$) participated in return for research credit. We deemed college students an appropriate sample for this study because social media-related statistics show that although social media usage is growing among all demographics, 18-to-29-year-olds are the most active demographic segment—88% of 18-to-29-year-olds indicate that they use a social media platform (Smith & Anders, 2018). About 95 percent of participants in the current study had Facebook accounts and reported spending more than thirty minutes a day on Facebook on average.

The experiment was conducted in a computer lab. The participants were asked to come at their assigned times. Upon arrival, we guided them to sit in front of the assigned computer and to read the instructions on the screen. Once participants had completed reading the instruction, their levels of product involvement were measured. After assessing their involvement, we gave them the definition and characteristics of native advertising to help them recognize the given in-feed ad in the experiment page as a type of advertising.

Then, the participants were randomly exposed to one of the two content types ($n_{\text{informational}} = 50$ vs. $n_{\text{entertaining}} = 51$). Immediately after watching the assigned video clip, the participants were asked to complete the questionnaire, which included the dependent measures, manipulation checks, and demographic information. The procedure took about 30 minutes to complete.

3) Measures

Consumers' product involvement was measured using ten 7-point semantic differential items (e.g., unimportant/important; Zaichkowsky, 1994; $\alpha = .96$). We averaged the scores for the ten items to obtain a product involvement index score (mean = 4.69, median = 4.8).

Persuasion knowledge was measured using Campbell's (1995) scale. Specifically, we used the following four seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) items: "The way this advertising tries to persuade people seems acceptable to me" (reverse coded), "The advertiser tries to persuade people in ways that I like" (reverse coded), "I do not mind this advertising; the advertiser tried to be persuasive without being excessively manipulative" (reverse coded), "This advertising was fair in what was said and shown" (reverse coded), and "I was annoyed by this advertising because the advertiser seemed to be trying to inappropriately manage or control people" ($\alpha = .88$).

We measured attitudes toward the ads using four 7-point semantic differential scales anchored by "dislike/like," "negative/positive," "unfavorable/favorable," and "bad/good" (Holbrook & Batra, 1987; $\alpha = .98$).

4. RESULTS

1) Manipulation check

For the message type manipulation check, we asked participants to rate the informational or entertainment value of the content (1 = informational, 7 = entertaining). An independent *t*-test showed that participants exposed to entertaining message perceived the message as more entertaining ($M = 5.82$, $SD = 1.34$) than did those exposed to informative message ($M = 1.45$, $SD = .71$), $t(99) = 22.61$, $p < .001$. These results show that our manipulations of the message type were successful.

2) Hypotheses testing

This study predicted the main effects of message type on the activation of persuasion knowledge (H1a) and attitude toward the advertising (H1b). To test H1a-b, independent sample *t*-tests were performed. As predicted in H1a, the result showed that the entertaining message was more likely to activate persuasion knowledge than the informational message ($M_{\text{entertaining}} = 4.76$; $M_{\text{informational}} = 3.80$, $p < .001$), $t(99) = -3.77$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, as posited in H1b, the informational message ($M = 4.41$) induced more favorable attitudes toward the ads than the entertaining message ($M = 3.58$, $p < .01$), $t(99) = -3.07$, $p < .01$. Therefore, H1a and H1b were supported.

H2a-b focused on how product involvement moderates the effect of content type on persuasion knowledge (H2a) and attitudes toward ads (H2b). To test these interaction hypotheses, the SPSS PROCESS Macro with Model 1 (Hayes, 2018) was performed. Since the base of PROCESS is regression, message type (0 = entertaining, 1 = informational) was dummy coded. The results revealed a significant two-way interaction effect on the activation of persuasion knowledge ($B(SE) = .46 (.16)$, $t = 2.82$, $p < .01$). Consistent with H2a, the significantly positive conditional effect of the message type was found only for those with high

involvement (1.59, LLCI = .91, ULCI = 2.26). In contrast, there was no significant conditional effect of message type on the activation of persuasion knowledge for individuals with low involvement (.04, LLCI = -.76, ULCI = .83) (see Figure 1). Thus, H2a was supported.

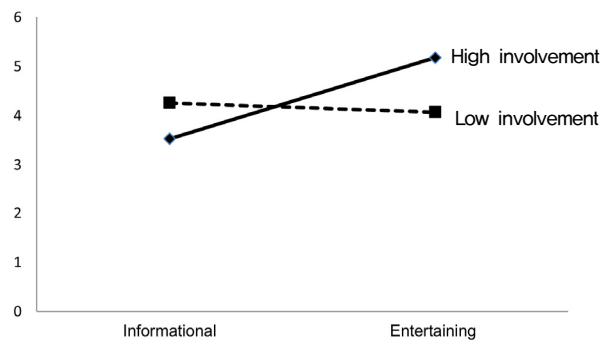


Figure 1. Interaction effect between message type and product involvement on persuasion knowledge

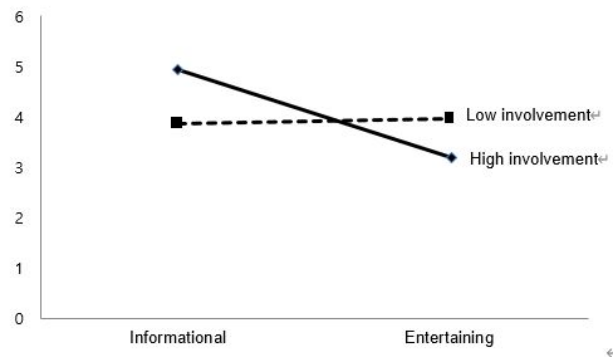
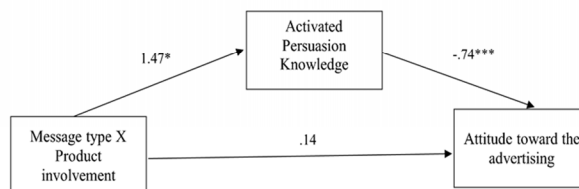


Figure 2. Interaction effect between message type and product involvement on attitudes toward the ads

As H2b predicted, we found a significant a two-way interaction effect between message and product involvement on attitudes toward the ads ($B(SE) = .60 (.17)$, $t = 3.45$, $p < .001$). The results indicated that positive conditional effect of product involvement was found only for those with high involvement (1.65, LLCI = .94, ULCI = 2.37). For those with low involvement, however, there was no significant

conditional effect of message type on attitudes toward the ads ($-.36$, LLCI = -1.19 , ULCI = $.49$) (see Figure 2). Thus, H2b was supported.

H3 predicted that persuasion knowledge would mediate the interactive effect of message type and product involvement on attitudes toward in-feed ads. We analyzed the data using Model 7 of PROCESS with 5,000 bootstrapping (Hayes, 2018). The conditional effects indicated that the informational message significantly influenced persuasion knowledge only for people with high product involvement ($B(SE) = 1.66 (.35)$, $t = 4.77$, $p < .001$, LLCI = $.97$, ULCI = 2.35). Consistent with our prediction, activated persuasion knowledge negatively influenced attitudes toward the ads ($B(SE) = -.74 (.08)$, $t = 9.29$, $p < .001$). The analysis revealed that the indirect effects of informational message (versus entertainment) on attitude toward the ad via persuasion knowledge were significant only for those with high product involvement ($B(SE) = 1.22 (.28)$, LLCI = $.69$, ULCI = 1.80), supporting H3. On the other hand, for those with low product involvement, the indirect effects were not significant ($B(SE) = .14 (.26)$, LLCI = $-.39$, ULCI = $.65$) (see Figure 3). Table 1 summarizes the results of the analysis.



* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 3. Conditional indirect effects

Table 1. Mediation model results

	M(persuasion knowledge)			Y(Attitude)		
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p
X (message type)	.19	.34	.58	.14	.21	.52
W (product involvement)	-.54	.34	.12			
X*W interaction	1.47	.49	.003			
M (persuasion knowledge)				-.74	.08	.000
	$R^2 = .20$			$R^2 = .51$		
	$F(3, 98) = 8.05$, $p < .001$			$F(2, 99) = 51.45$, $p < .001$		

Note: message type coding: 1 = informational

5. DISCUSSION

Consumers often believe that ads are untruthful—that advertising attempts to persuade them to purchase things by making exaggerated claims and/or creating nonessential needs. In addition, from a consumer's perspective, advertising often interferes with viewing media content. A long history of both generally unfavorable attitudes toward advertising and ad avoidance has led advertisers to identify less distracting ways to deliver their messages, and for this reason, many scholars have attempted to explicate the seemingly disguised nature of native advertising that allows it to be perceived as content.

Native advertising is sometimes criticized as advertising in disguise, and a growing body of research on native advertising has predominantly focused on consumers' recognition of this ad format. Although firms are required to clearly separate ads from content by labeling "ads," the similarities in appearance between ads and content seem to lower consumers' attention to these labels. Indeed, studies have shown that, in general, consumers have difficulty recognizing native advertising on social media as ads. However, when consumers are instructed about native ads, research has revealed that they find the ads more informative, more amusing, and less irritating than banner ads (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012), primarily because advertising format recognition and ad skepticism are higher for banner ads than for native ads. When users do not receive such instruction, they tend to not recognize native ad as "advertising." While one stream of research has continued to explore ways to increase ad recognition, another has focused on how to increase the effectiveness of native ads. This study contributes to the latter stream of research. By tracing the boundary conditions of when native advertising works, the findings of this study advance our understanding of native advertising effectiveness.

1) Theoretical contributions

Our findings have the following theoretical implications. First, our analyses confirmed that, when exposed to information in the native advertising context, current consumers actively try to deduce the motives and persuasion intentions behind the messages and either accept or resist the messages. These findings support the notion that one of the key roles of advertising is to provide valuable information to consumers. Applying Ducoffe (1995)'s framework of perceived advertising value to native advertising, we demonstrated that consumers value the informative aspects of native advertising more than the entertainment value it provides. In addition, although we clearly told the participants that the content was paid-for and had a persuasive intent, the informative (versus entertaining) ad successfully reduced the activation of persuasion knowledge. These results suggest that savvy consumers recognize that entertaining native ads are designed exclusively to alter consumer preferences, whereas they have generally favorable attitudes toward informative ads. While many studies have suggested that native ads work because of their covert nature (Boerman & Kruikemeier, 2016; Wojdyski & Evans, 2016; Wojdyski & Evans, 2020), our findings demonstrate that even when consumers explicitly recognize such ads as ads, they still work.

Second, the results of this study confirmed the moderating role of product involvement and showed that informational ads benefit even more from the cognitive effort expended by those with high product involvement. This finding aligns with prior research suggesting that campaigns perform better when ads target consumers with high product involvement, and that high involvement reduces intrusiveness (Belanche et al., 2017). On the other hand, those with low product involvement did not respond differently to informational and entertaining ads, suggesting that product involvement plays a crucial differentiating role at the individual level in the activation of cognitive resources. According to the ELM, the peripheral route of persuasion tends to be activated for those with low product involvement (Petty et al., 1983); thus, the low involvement participants in our study

may have relied on the fact that the content was labeled “sponsored” instead of carefully processing it. This would have prevented the participants from reacting differently to the two message types.

Lastly, the results of our mediation analysis showed that activating persuasion knowledge negatively influences the effects of advertising. Previous research utilizing the PKM framework has demonstrated this relationship (Friestad & Wright, 1994). The current study adds to the literature by demonstrating that persuasion knowledge affects attitudes toward advertising in the native advertising context as well, but only when product involvement is high.

2) Managerial implications

The findings of this study have several managerial implications. First, advertisers should be more strategic about designing their messages. Current in-feed advertising may appear similar to the content and lead consumers to mistakenly perceive and consume it as content. Prior research has shown that those who recognize content as in-feed advertising generate more counterarguments against said content than those who do not, meaning recognition of ads produces unfavorable results for advertisers (Amazeen & Wojdyski, 2019). However, research has shown that familiarity with a given advertising domain allows consumers to accurately retrieve and apply relevant persuasion knowledge. Familiarity with the practices of in-feed advertising may lead to increased familiarity with the various disclosure labels and eventually teach consumers to separate ads from content; practitioners will therefore need to be cognizant of the strategies they use to enhance ad effectiveness. This highlights the importance of applying a content marketing approach to advertising by focusing on delivering valuable and relevant information to consumers (Hayes et al., 2020). Our findings reveal that not all in-feed ads activate persuasion knowledge to the degree that it negatively influences consumers’ attitudes toward the ads. Indeed, we found that even when an in-feed ad is clearly presented with the label “sponsored” and consumers are cognizant of the label, consumers are less

skeptical of informational ads than entertaining ads, and their ad attitudes are favorable. Therefore, marketers deciding what messages to include in ads should be aware that ads intended to inform consumers about products and their characteristics (e.g., price or non-price product features) are apparently the safer choice than trying to make the ads entertaining.

Second, the results of the current study suggest that consumers appreciate the informative nature of ads even more when they are in a particular situation. While consumers are skeptical of advertising in general, they simultaneously see value in it as a means of learning because it gives them access to companies' official words about their products (Calfee & Ringold, 1994). Our findings suggest that when consumers perceive an ad message as informative, they appreciate the information even though they are aware that they are viewing an ad; this is especially true for consumers who are highly involved with the advertised product. Since such consumers are invested in the product, they naturally pay more attention to relevant information and appreciate the informational value. Thus, it is important for advertising practitioners to understand that when product involvement is high, ads should clearly play an informative role.

Third, the non-significant difference between informational and entertaining ads for those with low product involvement suggests that when product involvement is low and products are of low relevance to consumers, the content of the ad messages do not exert much influence on the consumers. They seem to be negatively affected by the fact that the content is an ad, regardless of how informative the ad is. Therefore, enhancing the visual similarity between the content and the ad may be a more effective approach when product involvement is low than when high.

3) Limitations and future research directions

This study had several limitations that future research should endeavor to address. First, we provided participants a detailed explanation of native advertising prior to

exposing them to the in-feed ads. Therefore, they were able to recognize such ads when they saw them. However, whether the participants indeed regarded the ads as ads is unclear. Future studies could replicate this study and confirm that the participants were aware that the native ads were ads by measuring ad recognition.

Second, the product used in the experiment was sunscreen, which is a naturally utilitarian rather than hedonic product. The nature of sunscreen may have prompted participants to rate the informational content higher than the entertaining content. Therefore, the results of the study may only be applicable for ads featuring utilitarian products. Using a hedonic product such as chocolate to examine the message type effects would better enrich the findings revealed in this study.

Third, the manipulation of the message type can be revisited. In the current study, the informational type provided information about the sunscreen itself while the entertaining type showed a humorous situation featuring the sunscreen. Although the overall perceptions of the video clips were appropriately evaluated as informational and entertaining, the informational type was more product-oriented than the entertaining type. Future research could use stimuli where the same product information is delivered in a straightforward manner or in a humorous way to manipulate the message type.

Lastly, we did not control for other consumer-related factors that can influence in-feed ad effectiveness. For example, a study examining individuals' regulatory focus showed that consumers with a promotion focus recognize and favor native ads that use implicit rather than explicit disclosure language, whereas prevention-focused individuals favor native ads that use explicit as opposed to implicit labels (Dodoo, Wen, & Wu, 2020). In another study, practitioners suggested that informational content may be more effective when consumers are near the purchasing stage of the consumer journey than when they are in the earlier brand awareness and preference forming stages (Harms et al., 2017). This proposition has not been empirically tested and future research could enhance the findings of this study by comparing the various contexts in which consumers encounter in-feed ads.

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광고 콘텐츠 유형과 제품 관여도가 소셜 미디어 인피드 광고에 대한 태도에 미치는 영향

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전통적인 형태의 광고가 소비자들로부터 외면을 받으면서 소셜 미디어 네이티브 광고의 인기가 높아지고 있다. 소셜 미디어 피드에 등장하는 인피드 광고의 장점은 광고가 플랫폼 콘텐츠와 유사한 형태를 하고 있다는 것이다. 본 연구는 인피드 광고의 콘텐츠 유형이 설득 지식의 활성화와 광고에 대한 태도에 미치는 영향을 살펴보고, 특히 제품 관여도의 조절 효과를 확인하고자 하였다. 가설 검증을 위해 2(광고 콘텐츠 유형: 정보 제공형, 오락형) × 2(제품 참여도: 고, 저) 피험자 간 실험을 수행하였다. 실험 결과, 오락형 광고에 비해 정보 제공형 인피드 광고가 설득 지식 활성화가 덜 되었고, 광고 태도가 더 호의적인 것으로 나타났다. 이는 특히 제품에 대한 관여도가 높을 때 더 두드러지게 나타났다. 반면, 제품에 대한 관여도가 낮은 소비자의 경우 광고 콘텐츠 유형에 따른 차이가 없는 것으로 나타났다. 본 연구를 통해 광고 메시지의 유형이 광고 효과에 영향을 미친다는 점과 제품 관여도가 높을수록 그 효과가 상승한다는 점이 밝혀졌다. 또한 설득 지식 활성화가 광고 콘텐츠 유형과 제품에 대한 관여도의 상호 작용 효과를 설명하는 기본 메커니즘으로 작용한다는 점을 확인할 수 있었다.

KEY WORDS

네이티브광고 • 인피드광고 • 페이스북광고 • 제품관여도 • 설득지식

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