

# Do brand users really pay more attention to advertising?

*Extending the Empirical Generalisation: The influence of previous brand usage on two advertising effectiveness measures, advertising awareness and advertising likeability.*

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## Abstract

Advertising is a means by which brands can communicate with consumers and is broadcast through many different forms of media. Advertising effectiveness measures provide a tool for marketers and researchers to measure and evaluate their brand's advertising. Researchers have found when using these measures that brand users are more likely to respond to questions about their brand's advertising, than non-users (Harrison 2013; Rice & Bennett 1998; Romaniuk & Wight 2009). This is commonly referred to as "usage bias" and is considered an empirical generalisation, as the pattern has been observed in multiple studies (Hammer & Riebe 2006; Harrison 2013; Romaniuk & Wight 2009; Sharp, Beal & Romaniuk 2001, 2002).

This thesis is concerned with this usage bias effect and extending the empirical generalisation to new contexts of different advertising awareness measures and advertising likeability. Advertising awareness uses memory retrieval methods to identify the awareness of a commercial in a respondent's memory. Depending on the retrieval method used, particular cueing material and questions are used to trigger the respondents memory (du Plessis 1994b; McDonald 2000). Previous studies of usage bias effects on advertising awareness have predominately focussed on retrieval methods that use category or brand as the cueing material (Hammer & Riebe 2006; Harrison 2013; Romaniuk & Wight 2009; Sharp, Beal & Romaniuk 2001, 2002). This study replicated these previous studies and tested the boundary conditions of the empirical generalisation to different cueing material of execution and media.

Advertising likeability is a measure used to understand how consumers' felt about an advertisement (Haley & Baldinger 1991). This study also tested the boundary conditions of the empirical generalisation to the measure of advertising likeability, which previously had not been tested for usage bias effects.

The conditions of extension for advertising awareness were 242 brand level observations across six different retrieval methods, 14 categories, 74 brands, 10 countries (Australia, China, India, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey and UK) and 5 media formats. The findings show the empirical generalisation holds under these conditions. Brand users were on average 63% more likely to remember advertising for their brand than non-users. The results across each different retrieval method reflected the same pattern in favour of brand users. However the size of the usage bias varied for each method. The usage bias was strongest for top-of-mind and unprompted retrieval methods, which use only category as the cue. The usage bias was weakest for execution and media + execution prompted retrieval methods. The use of execution cueing materials allowed more non-users to remember seeing the advertising, which in turn reduced the size of the usage bias effect.

A similar bias was also found for advertising likeability. Brand users were on average 6% more inclined to like advertising for their brand, than non-users. This pattern was consistent across 58 brand level observations, eight categories, 25 brands, six countries (Australia, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Taiwan and UK) and three different media. While the effect is small, it is important that marketers are aware of the finding when analysing data from advertising likeability studies.

This study has contributed to existing marketing knowledge by demonstrating the influence of previous brand usage extends to different contexts. The findings have verified that usage bias effects should be expected when using different measures to assess the impact of advertising. As responses are influenced by the measure used and previous brand usage, marketers should ensure data is split and analysed by users and non-users. This will ensure advertising is not interpreted as being less or more effective than it actually is.