Impacts of Personal Involvement Levels and Advertising Appeals on eSports Event Advertisement: Focusing on the MZ Generation

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20-minute oral presentation (including questions)
Session: Live Q&A for Marketing 1 (Asynchronous)

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, eSports has been spotlighted by media because the format of eSports competition does not require physical contacts between players. Consequently, many organizations and advertisers have dived into the industry to create potential business opportunities (Elasri, 2020). Therefore, the present research investigates how personal involvement levels (consumer-specific) with eSports and different advertising appeals (context-specific) can affect eSports consumers’ responses toward an eSports event advertisement such as flow, advertisement attitude, and watching intent. We especially focus on the younger generation such as MZ generation, who has emerged as major consumers in the global eSports industry (Lee et al., 2020).

As a theoretical foundation, this research considers the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981) which can predict two different information processing routes (central - relying on focal aspects; peripheral - relying on peripheral cues) depending on personal involvement level with an issue. Researchers found that individuals with high involvement showed better advertising attitude, interest, and behavior than those with low involvement (Bowen & Chaffee, 1974). We also posit that different advertising appeals (rational vs. emotional; Belch & Belch, 1990) can interact with the involvement levels. Holmes and Crocker (1987) found that rational appeal is more effective when personal involvement is high while emotional appeal better works when personal involvement is low. Moreover, scholars have found positive impacts of flow on consumer attitude and future intent toward advertising (Batra & Ray, 1986; Wang, 2006). Therefore, we propose as below:

H1. The participants with a higher involvement with eSports will show higher levels of flow, advertising attitude, and watching intent than those with low involvement.

H2. The participants under the high involvement-rational appeal condition will report higher levels of flow, advertising attitude, and watching intent than those under the low involvement-emotional appeal.

H3. The flow will be positively associated with the attitude toward the ad.

H4. The attitude toward the ad will have a positive impact on watching intent.

However, due to a lack of theoretical foundation to predict the differential impacts of advertising appeals, we do not include any predictions regarding the main impacts of the appeal type.

For a 2x2 between-subjects experimental design, a total of 200 research participants (MZ generation with their own Facebook accounts) will be randomly assigned to two different conditions (Ad appeal: rational vs emotional). Since the involvement level with eSports cannot be temporarily manipulated, the participants will be divided into two different groups (high vs. low) by using a median-split method. The participants will then be exposed to the stimuli highlighting either rational or emotional message type. A black-and-white version of advertisements promoting an eSports event will be generated and utilized. Participants will answer a survey asking involvement (Zaichkowsky, 1985), flow (Green & Brock, 2000), attitude toward Ad (Stafford et al., 1996), watching intent (Kim, 2009). To test hypotheses, two-way ANOVA and simple path analysis will be conducted. The findings will provide theory-based understandings of MZ generation's reactions toward eSports event advertising. More detailed implications will be discussed during the presentation.