

## HOW ADVERTISING SEDUCES YOUR BRAIN

Does advertising sway you? Of course, it does! After all, it's one thing to go out and buy a new washing machine after the old one flooded your basement, but it's quite another to buy on impulse that 46-inch flat screen TV that just maybe, in hindsight, you didn't really need. Television ads have a very peculiar effect on men. If your husband is reluctant to fold the laundry or wash the dishes, you may want to hide the remote.

### ADVERTISERS COME AT YOU IN TWO WAYS:

#### 1. Logical persuasion (or LP)

This is a just-the-facts type of ad although the logic doesn't necessarily have to be true.

EXAMPLE: A serious, straightforward male voice intones, "This car gets 42 miles to the gallon."

#### 2. Non-Rational Influence (NI)

This ad circumvents conscious awareness.

EXAMPLE: A pretty woman, draped over a car with her cleavage exposed, coos, "This car gets 42 miles to the gallon."

Despite research surrounding the notion of neuromarketing, which studies consumers' cognitive responses to marketing stimuli, the impact on brain function of these types of real-world advertisements was unknown until now.

Researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles and George Washington University in Washington, D.C. have shown that different types of advertisements evoke different levels of brain activity, depending on whether they use elements of logical persuasion or non-rational influence.

The team, led by Dr. Ian Cook, a professor of psychiatry at the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior at UCLA, found that brain regions involved in decision-making and emotional processing were more active when individuals viewed ads that used logical persuasion than when they viewed ads that used non-rational influence. These brain regions help us inhibit our responses to certain stimuli.

In other words, "Watch your brain and watch your wallet," Cook said. "These results suggest that the lower levels of brain activity from ads employing NI images could lead to less behavioral inhibition, which could translate to less restraint when it comes to buying products depicted in the NI advertisements."

THE STUDY: Twenty-four healthy adults, 11 women and 13 men, viewed advertising images while electrical activity in their brains was recorded using electroencephalography (EEG). Each participant was shown 24 ads that had appeared in magazines and newspapers.

Ads using LP images included a table of facts and figures about cigarette products,

details about how to build a better toothbrush and suggestions about selecting food for dogs on the basis of their activity level.

In contrast, sample NI-type advertisements included beading water (liquor ad), an image of an attractive woman standing with legs apart (jeans ad) and a woman leapfrogging over a fire hydrant erupting with a water spray as a man enthusiastically grins behind her (cigarette ad).

THE RESULTS: The researchers found that viewing LP images was consistently linked with significantly higher activity levels in the orbitofrontal and anterior cingulate regions, the amygdala and the hippocampus, all areas of the brain involved in decision making and/or emotional processing.

TRANSLATION: You can be influenced by both types of advertising, but beware of the ads that are trying to seduce you because your brain won't function logically when a sexy woman is cooing at you!