

“THE APPLICATION OF CLASSICAL CONDITIONING THEORY IN ADVERTISEMENTS”

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Abstract

In today's competitive and dynamic marketing world, where companies are striving hard to attract maximum number of consumers, it has become very hard to survive for smaller companies, even huge ones, without innovation and new developments. Commercial advertisements typically contain both product specific information and background features such as pleasant music, attractive jingles, actors- actresses, and humor. Do these features increase peoples' attention to product information in a message, or can they directly influence peoples' attitudes? Under such circumstances, classical conditioning has now become a major focus of marketing by large number of companies and brands for generating positive response for their products. In this report we try to understand these features used through classical conditioning theory in various Indian commercial advertisement that become positively affects the human minds. This study shows that impressions of the brand could be manipulated by means of specific features like music, jingles, and animation, animals and actors. Depending on the features used, the brand imparted either softness and silence or strength and arousal.

Key words:-

Classical conditioning theory

Commercial advertisement

Advertisement features

Stimulus

Responses

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Introduction

In recent times it is very necessary to make advertisement which can generate positive response for the products. There are various features of advertisement that can use effectively to make the advertisement memorable. Advertisement and features help in brand recall and recognition. Classical conditioning theory is all about stimulus that generates conditional response towards something. Consumer can associate some conditional response after watching the commercial advertisement. Marketer can use these features as unconditional stimulus and after repetitive telecasting it can generate conditional response towards the product or brand.

Advertising that evokes positive feelings can influence brand evaluation. The source of these feelings, however, may be critical to their persuasiveness. At one extreme, positive feelings may be generated by the deliberate consideration of brand related information that persuades consumers that the advertised brand outperforms other brands on one or more benefits. For example, advertising for DETTOL soap may convince people that DETTOL soap works faster on your skin than other soap. At the other extreme, an advertisement's visual or audio content that is void of performance related content may also generate positive feelings. In the case of a DETTOL soap advertisement, a punch line/ dialogue (tera sabun slow he kya?) may create these feelings.

Theoretical framework

Classical conditioning has become much more complex since the turn of the century when Ivan Pavlov conducted his conditioning experiment. Pavlov began his work studying the behaviour of dog. He noticed that the dogs salivated before the food was brought into the room. Pavlov thought to experiment and add the conditional stimuli bell. Pavlov rang a bell (conditioned stimulus, or CS) before the food (unconditioned stimulus, or US) was brought in. At first the dogs only salivated (unconditioned response, or UR) when the food was brought in. After several times repeating the same process, eventually the dogs began to salivate (now the conditioned response or CR) as soon as the bell was rung. Here we try to study the impact of classical conditioning theory on human minds in everyday life, as well as in some marketing aspects.

Classical conditioning is a four-step learning procedure involving reflexes:

1. Unconditioned Stimulus (US) - stimulus that evoke an unconditioned response without any prior conditioning (no learning needed for the response to occur).
2. Unconditioned Response (UR) - an unlearned reaction/response to an unconditioned stimulus that occurs without prior conditioning.
3. Conditioned Stimulus (CS) - a previously neutral stimulus that has, through conditioning, acquired the capacity to evoke a conditioned response.
4. Conditioned Response (CR) - a learned reaction to a conditioned stimulus that occurs because of prior conditioning

Literature review

This study will rely on the information gathered mainly from secondary sources about basic information of classical conditioning theory and its use in various researches. Here some of the literature is taken for doing effective research in particular topic.

- a. Classical conditioning is generally used with low-involvement products (Hawkins 1998.) This is because classical conditioning is most effective when emotion is involved (Classical Conditioning). Advertising for low-involvement products usually attacks to the consumer minds through affective means because nobody wants to think more about purchasing low-involvement products. Advertising and sales promotion event are the most common forms of classical conditioning in marketing field.
- b. Several authors have recently dismissed the Implications of classical conditioning for consumer behavior (e.g., McSweeney and Blerley 1984; Nord and Peter 1980). However, little empirical evidence actually shows that classical conditioning can alter behaviors that are of interest to consumer behaviour. The present experiment provides some initial evidence that it can. In this experiment preference ratings or stimuli that predicted pleasant music were significantly greater than preference ratings for stimuli that predicted the absence of music. These preferences also generalized to other stimuli that resembled the ones actually used.
- c. John Watson subsequently went on to become a very successful and significant figure in the American advertising world where he used his knowledge of classical conditioning to change consumer attitudes and purchasing behaviors through stimulus contingencies that appear in

various forms of advertising. Thus advertising where instead of fears, highly positive feelings toward a product or brand are conditioned has become one of the most pervasive classical conditioning applications in modern societies around the world (Watson, 1936).

- d. Two processes through which affect can be effortlessly transferred from an advertisement to a brand are classical conditioning and mere exposure. In the case of classical conditioning, repeated pairings of an unconditioned stimulus (e.g., a beautiful sunset) with a conditioned stimulus (e.g., Tylenol) can cause the conditioned stimulus (Tylenol) to automatically evoke a conditioned response (i.e., the same good feeling that the beautiful sunset evokes) (Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991). The potential for using classical conditioning in advertising is well-documented (Gorn 1982; Shimp 1981; Stuart, Shimp and Engle 1987).
- e. According to Hergenhahn and Olson (2009), “The ingredients necessary to bring about Pavlovian or classical conditioning include (1) an unconditioned stimulus (US), which elicits a natural and automatic response from the organism; (2) an unconditioned response (UR), which is a natural and automatic response elicited by the US; and (3) a conditioned stimulus (CS), which is a neutral stimulus in that it does not elicit a natural and automatic response from the organism. When these ingredients are mixed in a certain way, a conditioned response (CR) occurs.” In order for a CR to be produced, you must pair the CS and the US numerous times. The order in which they are presented is very important as well. At some point, the CS can be presented by itself and a response similar to the UR will be produced.
- f. Nord and Peter (1980) argued that classical conditioning might alter consumer preferences in television advertising. Classical conditioning occurs when an arbitrary stimulus (the conditioned stimulus or CS) predicts some other stimulus (the unconditioned stimulus, or US). After several trials, a response (the conditioned response or CR) to the CS develops. Nord and Peter reasoned that advertisers could use the product as the CS and a pleasant stimulus as the US. If classical conditioning occurred, then an increase in consumer preference for the product (the CR) should be observed after the product is paired with the pleasant stimulus.

- g. Nord and Peter's argument is plausible; classical conditioning does occur when people serve as subjects (e.g., Hilgard 1931). However, responses of interest to consumer research have rarely been studied. Gorn (1982) provides a rare exception to this rule. He showed students slides of either beige or blue pens (the CSs) while they listened to either liked or disliked music (the USs). Subjects were then asked to take a pen. More students chose the color of pen which had been associated with the liked music rather than with the disliked music, potentially demonstrating that classical conditioning can change preferences.
- h. Studies by Bierley et al. (1985) and Tom (1995) supported Gorn's results but other examinations (Pitt and Abratt, 1988; Allen and Madden, 1985) did not arrive at his findings. It was not possible to create such conditioned responses for products of higher personal relevance like condoms. Middlestadt et al. (1994) doubted that studies using the classical conditioning paradigm could measure affective reactions to music. They found that music was able to spotlight different features of products, to influence the recipients' feelings, and as well to influence their beliefs. Scherer and Zentner (2001) defined the affective changes that music is supposed to produce in the listener and identified the determinants of the listening situation including the musical structure of the piece, relevant listener state and trait characteristics, and respective context.
- i. Affective conditioning is now seen as a special case of learning (Allen and Janiszewski 1989; Holyoak, Koh and Nisbett 1989; Janiszewski and Warlop 1993; Rescorla 1988; Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991). Successful conditioning requires sufficient attention to facilitate associational learning, but it does not require that subjects be aware of that learning or its persuasive effect (Allen and Janiszewski 1989; Baeyens, Eelen and Van den Bergh 1990; Shimp, Stuart and Engle 1991). In other words, consumers may be aware that an advertisement is very funny or has beautiful visuals or contagious music, but they may be unaware that these affect-producing elements of the execution are influencing their perceptions of and behavior towards the brand.
- j. Measures of the effectiveness of commercials typically stress recall of the basic selling points of the commercial. The impact of music and other back-ground a feature is usually neglected

(Honomichl 1981). A recent study by the Foote, Cone, and Belding ad agency found, however, that recall of good “feeling” commercials, created through the skillful use of music and visuals, was equal to that obtained with good “thinking” commercials, created through the rational presentation of product attributes (Honomichl 1981).

- k. Preferences for new stimuli that resembled the ones used in the experiment were also assessed. Generalization of the conditioned response to other similar stimuli is typically found in classical conditioning experiments (e.g., Pavlov 1927). Therefore, it should also be found in the present experiment if classical conditioning does occur. Finally, the results were analyzed separately for subjects who were rated as aware or unaware of the purpose of the experiment. Several authors have argued that cognitive factors explain classical conditioning when human subjects are used (e.g., Brewer 1974). Other authors have argued that conditioning can occur in humans without awareness (e.g., Kennedy 1970, 1971), or that a cognitive theory does not provide a better explanation of the data than behavioral theories (e.g., Dulany 1974). The present experiment will assess the degree to which awareness of the CS-US contingency played a role in this conditioning.

Objective of the study

How strongly can different feature that is fitting and message-congruent influence a commercial advertisement? Can different product- and message-corresponding features affect recipients' perceptions in different ways?

The main purpose of the study is to know the impact of classical conditioning theory on consumer minds while used in making advertisement. Here we also study other advertisement elements which act as unconditional stimulus like sex appealing gestures, dialogues or punches, animation, animals, actors-actresses, risk and professional.

Analysis and findings

The theory of classical conditioning is used in a making of advertisements. The idea behind it is a simple one. Make a simple and effective advertisement of the products (unconditional stimulus) that reinforced a positive response (unconditional response) in the person. Unconditional stimulus

becomes the conditional stimulus after repeating within the advertisement of the product or brand with use of advertisement elements like music; jingles, animated character etc. And finally after repeating for several times conditional stimulus generates conditional responses in favor or against of particular product or brand.

The goal of advertisers is to get the exposed person for the products, to associate the positive feeling after watching the repetitive advertisement. This makes the conditional response. With event sponsorship the sponsor wants the person viewing the event (unconditional stimulus) to project the positive feelings (unconditional response) they get from the event with their offering/product. Therefore, the positive emotional feeling toward the event can be increase and gives conditional responses. This recognition by the masses has not only built a strong customer interface, but has also motivated the customer for subsequent purchases, through persuasive marketing. Also the existing customers have developed a strong brand loyalty and attach certain values to the brand. This is a very positive effect of the classical conditioning, giving the brand a competitive edge. It can also generate extremely negative emotions. When marketer try to associate the products with the extremely unbelievable stimuli then the product fails to get positive favor.

Music

Background music can affects on consumer minds which can act as an unconditional stimulus. Gerald Gorn can be considered the leader in this research due to his 1982 experiment (discussed in literature review) involving background music and the color of pen chosen as a gift (Kellaris 1989.) Nowadays you can see many advertisement telecast with attractive background music and jingles. Marketer used music as an unconditional stimulus but after repetitive telecast of interesting background music it act as a conditional stimulus. In present scenario there are many company gives advertisement with jingles; music etc. and their products get high responses.

Choosing the telecommunication companies, in general, there is a prevalent appliance of classical conditioning. Classical conditioning is being applied by companies through the association of particularly catchy jingles and appearance of picky models with their particular services. Through extensive promotion of these jingles, companies attempt to develop an involuntary recognition of

their products within the target market. Taking IDEA as an example, it has developed an unintentional relevance of these jingles (You my pumpkin pumpkin hello honey banny) with their brand, in the target market. So now even by hearing the promo sound of their respective jingle, the first thing come to customer's mind is IDEA.

Here some of the examples of music and jingles are given in table given below.

1	Airtel	Jo tera he wo mere he jo mera ho tera, kyuki Har ek friend jaruri hota he.....
2	Idea	You my pumpkin pumpkin hello honey banny.....
3	Nirma	Dudh si safedi nirma se aayi rangeen kapda bhi khil khil jaye sabki pasand nirma.....
4	Zandu bam	Zandu bam zandu ban pidahari bam sardi, sardard, pida ko pal me dur kere.....
5	Kitkat	Kate nahi katate ye din ye rat kahani he tumse jo dil ki bat lo aaj me kehta hu.....
6	Dairy milk	Khane walo ko khane ka bahana chahiye

Like music there are some other advertisement elements which act as unconditional stimulus. This includes sex appealing gestures, dialogues or punches, animation, animals, actors-actresses, risk and professional. List is present in the table given below for each unconditional stimulus which further leads to conditional response.

Sex appealing gestures

Lady gives the sex appealing gestures to a man. Human mind repeatedly watch gestures (unconditional stimulus) in advertisement and generates conditional response towards these products.	Fogg body spray
	Axe body spray
	Condoms

Dialogues or punches

Dar kea age jit he	Dew
Aaj kuchha tufani karte he	Thumps up
Jeo ji bhar ke	Revital
Thanda matlab coca cola	Coca cola
Ye fan hamesha mere hi rahenge	Khetan fan
Sidhi bat no bakwas	Sprite
Jio befikar	Bajaj Allianz
No confusion great combination	Bingo
Teda he par mera he	Kurkure

Animation

Chipmunks	Kit-kat
Human- Chintamani	Bajaj Allianz
Doctors	Toothpaste
Laboratory technicians	Washing powder
Human- Gabbar, policeman	Amaron pro battery
Girl- Chulbuli	Clinic plus shampoo
Zoo- zoo	Vodafone

Animals

Dog	Vodafone
Cow	Amul milk
Tiger	Tiger balm
Elephants	Happident wava
Elephants	Pepsi

Actors-actresses

Saif ali khan	Pepsi
Salman khan	Sujuki hayate, Revital, Ray bon, thumps up
Sahrukh khan	Pepsi, Lux, Fair & handsom cream, Dish TV
Kaitrina kaif	Lux, Mazza
Amitab bachhan	Dairy milk

Risk

Accident- seat belt	Axion seat belt
Germs- kitanu	Dettol handwash
Skin problem	Johnson baby lotion
Fear	Max new York life insurance

Professional

Repetition

Low-involvement advertising needs extensive repetition in advertising (Hawkins 1998.) This is mostly because people are not actively involved in searching for information for buying low-involvement products. Thus advertisement may be key factor to generate positive responses towards the products. Many advertisement telecast during the serials on television like dairy milk, kit-kat, baby diaper, pads, coca cola, thumps up etc. Event sponsorship is also the effective to generate positive response. Like during one cricket match particular advertisement telecasts approximate 120 times.

Here some of the examples are given which repeatedly telecast during the one day series between INDIA- ENGLAND in January 2013.

Micromax mobile- MICROMAX CANVAS
AXE body spray
FOGG body spray

Conclusions

The major aim of the present study was to take a product advertisement features and a favorable or unfavorable context simply by associating it with liked or disliked features like music and jingles, dialogues, actors-actresses, animation and animals. The study supported the simple association between a product (conditioned stimulus) and another stimulus such as music (unconditioned stimulus) can affect product preferences as measured by product choice.

This paper further suggests that the advertisement features can influence product choice. It is argued that the positive emotions they generate become associated with the advertised product through classical conditioning. The situation in which many commercials are viewed may be characterized as non decision making. In watching TV we are only interested in programs, not in advertisements. This suggests to the advertiser that an audience may be largely comprised of uninvolved potential consumers rather than cognitively active problem solvers. Reaching them through emotionally arousing background features may make the difference between their choosing and not choosing a brand.

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