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# COMPARISON OF THE PATHS FROM CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT TYPES TO AD RESPONSES BETWEEN CORPORATE ADVERTISING AND PRODUCT ADVERTISING

Sora Kim, Eric Haley, and Gi-Yong Koo

**ABSTRACT:** The study reported here examines knowledge derived from past work on involvement in product advertising and explores whether consumer involvement works the same way when consumers respond to corporate ads. The use of corporate advertising in the United States has increased, but only limited research has been done to explore the nature of it. The study found key differences between product and corporate ads in terms of ad involvement effects on consumers' attitude/behavioral intentions. In corporate advertising, predispositional involvement influences consumers' ad attitudes and behavioral intentions only when mediated by ad involvement, whereas predispositional involvement has both a direct and an indirect influence on attitude and intentions in product ads. A key implication of this is that creating advertising involvement is even more critical in the corporate advertising setting as compared to product advertising. In explaining the results, the authors posit reasons such differences exist. Also, the results contribute to the debate on potential outcomes of corporate advertising by showing that corporate advertising can lead to increased product purchase intentions for a corporations' products even though the corporate ads are not product-focused.

Advertising involvement is a current "hot topic" in the advertising profession. What scholars have for years referred to as "involvement," today's practitioners speak of as "engagement." In an ever-increasingly cluttered and competitive message environment, advertisers are seeking ways to get their messages known and remembered. Thus, they seek to create advertising that engages the consumer, asking the consumer to stop, spend time, and become involved with the marketing message.

Involvement/engagement is not a particularly new idea. Scholars have studied the role of involvement in product advertising since the 1960s (e.g., Krugman 1966). However, in light of the advent of new media channels, increasing message clutter, and increasingly skeptical consumers, getting consumers involved with the marketing message has taken on new significance (Ives 2007; McIlroy 2007). Thus, advertising researchers should be reexamining what is currently known about involvement in contexts beyond traditional product advertising.

This study looks at the role of involvement/engagement in the context of corporate advertising. While much work

has been done identifying involvement hierarchies within product advertising contexts (that is, understanding the role of involvement in product ads), little to no work has been done in understanding the role of involvement in corporate, non-product-specific advertising, despite the increasing use of corporate, non-product-specific advertising.

Expenditures for corporate advertising that communicates about a company and about issues of concern to the company continue to grow each year in the United States (Pashupati, Arpan, and Nikolaev 2002; Patti and McDonald 1985; Sheinin and Biehal 1999). An ANA (Association of National Advertisers) survey conducted in 1998 also suggests that corporate advertising budgets continue to rise annually, with an 18% increase between 1997 and 1998, and an increase of 37% from 1992 (Blankenhorn 1998; Cardona 1998; Pachupati, Arpan, and Nikolaev 2002). Evidence that companies have put more emphasis on their corporate advertising in recent years is also prevalent. For instance, General Motors Corp. alone spent \$100 million dollars on corporate advertising in 2002, nearly 10 times more than it spent in 2000 (Halliday 2002a). In the same year, Shell Oil spent \$30 million on corporate advertising emphasizing its environmental efforts (Halliday 2002b). To enhance company credentials, BP has also doubled its spending on corporate advertising to \$150 million in 2006 (Andrews 2006). In addition, according to a CEO survey conducted by *PRWeek*, 57% of the CEOs mentioned their appreciation for corporate communications had risen from the previous year (Hood 2005).

One reason for this increase in expenditures on corporate advertising may be the potential cost-effectiveness of corporate advertising. Especially when a company has a series of

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products, corporate advertising could be more effective because the influences of corporate advertising are transferred to all of its products (Biehal and Sheinin 2007), whereas product advertising is only effective for the exact product. In fact, one report documented that over 80% of all corporate advertising expenditures focus on providing unified marketing support directly for the company's products (Raju and Dhar 1999). Some research has also shown that corporate advertising can have a positive impact on consumers' evaluations of a company's individual products and brands, thus leading to increased purchase consideration (Biehal and Sheinin 1998; 2007; Brown and Dacin 1997; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001).

On the surface, there are differences between corporate and product advertising. Corporate ads focus on the image of an entire corporation, while product ads are specific to one of a company's products or services. Corporate ads rarely make a purchase appeal, but product ads often include a purchase call to action. However, corporate and product ads can share common goals such as impacting a company's product sales and its bottom line. The two contexts seem "similar but different." Thus, the role of engagement/involvement should be explored within the two contexts to see if involvement works the same way to influence key advertising outcomes such as product purchase intention. If the role of involvement is the same in both contexts, then we can plan our corporate advertising strategy in much the same way as we plan our product advertising with regard to creating involvement/engagement. If the role is different, however, then we will need to understand how they are different and consider how to create involvement/engagement with corporate advertising to affect bottom-line advertising outcomes such as purchase intention.

Specifically, this study examines the effects of different involvement types previously known to be important in product advertising in the context of corporate advertising. To explore the role of involvement types, the study compares consumer responses (purchase intention, likelihood to recommend the product to a friend, and likelihood of remembering the brand name) to computer product ads and the respective manufacturer's corporate advertising. The purpose of this study is threefold. The first is to examine the relationships among the three involvement types previously identified as important in the product advertising literature (e.g., Celsi and Olson 1988; Laczniak, Kempf, and Muehling 1999): general involvement (i.e., technology involvement, or "TI" in this study), product category involvement (i.e., computer product involvement, or "CPI" in this study), and advertisement involvement (or "AI" in this study). The second purpose is to explore the role of AI in relation to other involvement types in affecting consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions. Finally, this study examines whether differences between product ads and corporate ads exist in the relationships among

involvement types in influencing consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions.

## INVOLVEMENT TYPOLOGY

### Classification of Involvement

Research has suggested many types of involvement to explain consumers' attitude and behavior intentions toward advertisements and the brands advertised. For example, Houston and Rothschild (1978) make a distinction between enduring and situational involvement. This distinction has been widely accepted in the literature (e.g., Andrews, Durvasula, and Akhter 1990; Day, Royne Stafford, and Camacho 1995). Situational involvement is related to a specific situation such as a purchase occasion, whereas enduring involvement is related to a general and permanent concern that affects the levels of involvement toward an object. Some researchers have indicated three types of involvement, such as involvement with the product, advertisements, and purchase situations (Zaichkowsky 1985, 1994), arguing that involvement with different objects could lead to different responses. Day, Stafford, and Camacho (1995) suggested five types of involvement based on involvement in objects: involvement in activity/interest/issue, product, service, advertisement, and purchase decision.

In addition, some researchers exhibit similarities in the way they dichotomize involvement: cognitive involvement and affective involvement (McGuire 1974; Park and Young 1986) or rational and emotional involvement (Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Vaughn 1980). Affective involvement or emotional involvement is related to the states of feelings or emotions caused by the interactions with a certain object, whereas cognitive involvement or rational involvement is related to the states of rationale used for informational processing during interaction with an object. Park and Young (1986) also asserted that those two types of involvement are especially important in the case of advertisement involvement. They suggested cognitive involvement is the level of personal relevance of message contents, whereas affective involvement is related to the level of personal relevance of the emotional or aesthetic appeals used in the advertisement.

In advertising research, researchers have focused on advertising message involvement to explain consumers' responses toward advertisements and their behavioral intentions (Greenwald and Clark 1984; Lee 2000; MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch 1986). Researchers have agreed that there is a distinct difference between product category involvement and advertising message involvement. For instance, Batra and Ray (1985) mentioned that message involvement is different from other types of involvement, suggesting product category involvement is relatively enduring, whereas advertising message involvement is relatively situational.

### Relationship Among Different Involvement Types

Since involvement itself has many antecedents and consequences and can vary depending on different situations, the scope of the literature has been voluminous and varied. As a summary, Day, Stafford, and Camacho (1995) classified the involvement literature in a parsimonious way. They suggested that involvement toward general issues or activities leads to more specific involvement, arguing for the existence of an involvement hierarchy. For example, a more general involvement in technology could lead to more specific computer product category involvement. In turn, computer product involvement can lead to involvement with ads, which is more specific than product category involvement. Using the enduring and situational dichotomy of involvement classification, Day, Stafford, and Camacho (1995) also indicated that general involvement and product category involvement belong to enduring involvement, whereas advertisement involvement and purchase decision involvement fall under situational involvement.

In light of the commonly accepted notion that general involvement may lead to more specific involvement, however, the relationship among different involvement types could be more dynamic than a single hierarchy. Regarding the relationships between advertisement involvement (AI) and other involvement types, research has suggested that AI is likely to be influenced by more enduring involvement such as product category involvement, product knowledge, and general interests (Andrews, Durvasula, and Akhter 1990; Celsi and Olson 1988; Lacznia, Kempf, and Muehling 1999). For instance, Lacznia, Kempf, and Muehling (1999) examined the influence of preexisting and enduring traits on AI, suggesting that both product class involvement and product class knowledge influence advertising involvement. Celsi and Olson (1988) have also suggested that product category involvement and situational manipulations have an influence on AI, proffering a direct linkage between consumers' product relevance and advertising involvement. Andrews, Durvasula, and Akhter (1990) suggested an interaction between enduring involvement and situational involvement. Other research has explored the role of product knowledge or consumers' abilities to perform product-related information processing, suggesting that individual ability has an impact on the individual level of advertising involvement (Lacznia, Kempf, and Muehling 1999; MacInnis and Jaworski 1989). Individual ability or interest to perform product-related information processing is certainly related to more general involvement when adapting Day, Stafford, and Camacho's (1995) classification.

Based on these previous studies, it is reasonable to expect that both product category involvement (in this study, computer category involvement) and more general involvement such as individuals' interests toward an object (in this study, technology involvement) could have a direct influence on

advertisement involvement. Thus, the relationships among three involvement types could be more dynamic than a single hierarchy in which general involvement leads to product category involvement; in turn, product category involvement is expected to lead to advertisement involvement. These ideas are posited in the following two hypotheses:

*H1: Technology involvement (TI) will have a direct influence on ad involvement (AI) in the case of product ads (TI → AI).*

*H2: Computer product involvement (CPI) will mediate the relationship between TI and AI, indicating indirect influences of TI on AI and direct influences of CPI on AI (TI → CPI → AI) in the case of product ads.*

### Effects of Different Involvement Types on Consumers' Responses

Previous research regarding the effects of preexisting and enduring involvement on attitudes toward advertisements has suggested that consumers' predispositional involvement factors could have both direct and indirect influences on attitude toward advertisements. For example, Gill, Grossbart, and Lacznia (1988) have suggested that product class involvement and knowledge have a direct influence on ad message acceptance. Celsi and Olson (1988) have also indicated that product knowledge has a direct effect on ad responses, independent from the effects of AI. However, Lacznia, Kempf, and Muehling (1999) concluded that preexisting involvements such as product class involvement and product class knowledge generally do not have a direct influence on ad response after controlling for the effect of AI, suggesting an indirect influence on attitudes toward ads. Despite their conclusion, they still found some direct influences between predispositional factors and some ad responses such as total number of brand-related thoughts and receivers' levels of postexposure belief confidence. Based on the previous research, it seems reasonable to expect that preexisting factors such as technology involvement and computer product category involvement may have both a direct and an indirect influence on attitudes/behavioral intentions in the case of product ads.

With respect to the effect of AI on consumers' responses, researchers have agreed that advertisement involvement has a direct influence on individuals' general ad responses (Batra and Ray 1985; Celsi and Olson 1988; Lacznia, Kempf, and Muehling 1999). For example, research has suggested that individuals with high advertisement involvement have higher confidence in brands advertised, as well as better recall and retrieval of advertised information (Celsi and Olson 1988; Lacznia, Kempf, and Muehling 1999; MacInnis and Jaworski 1989).

Based on previous studies, hypotheses addressing the influences of different involvement types on consumer ad responses

in product ad contexts are proposed. It is important to note that most of these previous studies have been limited to the product ad context. Exploring the effects of consumers' product category involvement or knowledge on their attitudes toward corporate advertising has been missing in the advertising literature. Therefore, the hypotheses posited here are limited to the product advertising context. The following hypotheses are proposed regarding the effects of TI, CPI, and AI on consumer ad responses in the *product ad* context:

*H3: In the relationships among the involvement types and ad responses, there will be the paths of  $TI \rightarrow CPI \rightarrow AI \rightarrow$  attitude/behavioral intentions, indicating indirect influences of TI and CPI on attitudes/behavioral intentions in the case of product ads.*

*H4: TI and CPI will also have direct influences on attitude/behavioral intentions without mediation of AI in the case of product ads ( $TI \rightarrow$  attitude/behavioral intentions;  $CPI \rightarrow$  attitude/behavioral intentions).*

#### CORPORATE ADVERTISING AND CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT

Unlike the ample research on involvement types such as product category involvement, product knowledge, and ad involvement in the context of product ads, there has been little research examining the relationships between predispositional involvements (e.g., product category involvement, product class-related knowledge, or general interest) and corporate ad involvement and the role of corporate advertisement involvement in influencing ad responses. Considering a large portion of corporate advertising expenditures have directly targeted supporting the market share of the company's products (Raju and Dhar 1999), it is important to understand whether consumers' product-related involvement has direct influences on their corporate ad responses. Recently, researchers have started to pay more attention to the importance of corporate advertising (Biehal and Sheinin 2007; Pashupati, Arpan, and Nikolaev 2002). For instance, Biehal and Sheinin (2007) point out the importance of corporate advertising messages' transferring effects on product portfolio, suggesting corporate ad messages are more easily transferred to other products in the company's portfolio than a product ad message.

Corporate advertising is intended to build a favorable corporate reputation because advertisers believe corporate reputation has an influence on consumer product evaluations, eventually affecting the sales of the products. Since the primary objective of corporate advertising is to provide an overarching marketing support for the company's products by creating a favorable corporate image, the focus of corporate advertising is often broader than that of product advertising. It includes corporate image advertising, advocacy advertising, issue advertising, and

corporate social responsibility-related advertising to support a company's position regarding social, environmental, and political issues (Schumann, Hathcote, and West 1991). Thus, the relationships between different involvement types (technology involvement, computer product involvement, ad involvement) and ad responses might be different in the case of corporate ads even if consumers acknowledge the company's main products are computer related or technology related.

Previous studies regarding corporate advertising have focused on consumers' perceptions about a company's identity. Researchers have supported that consumers have higher identification toward a company when the company's core business matches a cause it supports (Hoeffler and Keller 2002; Varadarajan and Menon 1988). Because consumers perceive the company as an expert when the cause matches its core business, more positive feelings are transferred to the company. When evaluating advocacy advertising, Haley (1996) suggested that consumers' perceptions of the sponsoring organization's image are related to consumers' perceptions of themselves, and the relationship between the consumers and the organization is multidimensional. His findings indicated that consumers perceive an organization's image based on whether they trust the organization or whether the organization represents values congruent with their own. In the case of value incongruence between consumers and organizations, positive influences of corporate advertising are not likely to take place.

Previous research has also suggested that consumers are attracted to a company by motives such as self-definitional or self-identification needs (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003; Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994; Whetten and Godfrey 1998). For instance, Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) suggested that consumers tend to be more attracted to a company identity when it corresponds to their own self-definitional needs. In their framework, the attractiveness of a company's identity depends on the extent of similarity between the company's identity and the consumer's own identity, identity distinctiveness, and prestige. In other words, consumers' corporate identifications are related to their perceptions of the company's characteristics or perceived identity (Brown and Dacin 1997). A company's perceived identity could encompass nonproduct aspects of the company such as its values, demographics, and social responsibility efforts beyond the utilitarian attributes that consumers consider for its products.

Therefore, it is reasonable to state that consumers seem to use the degree of similarity between their own identity and a company's identity, values or causes, or its social responsibility efforts when they evaluate corporate advertising. In other words, people tend to interact with an ad based on specific information delivered by corporate ad messages as that information relates to the person's self-identity, suggesting a potentially strong degree of corporate ad involvement among consumers. Also, since consumers could view a company as

a member of society in terms of social obligations, departing from the traditional utilitarian view toward products, product-related involvements such as TI and CPI may not have the same direct influence on AI and consumer ad responses as in the context of product ads.

Based on the discussion regarding corporate advertising, the following hypotheses are proposed addressing the relationships among the three involvement types and their corresponding effects on consumer ad responses.

*H5: There will be no direct influences of TI and CPI on attitude/behavioral intentions in the context of corporate advertising, indicating strong AI mediation effects between TI, CPI, and attitude/behavioral intentions.*

## METHOD

### Research Design

Four hundred fifty college students at a major public university in the southeastern region of the United States were recruited for the study. Arts and sciences as well as business classes were used for recruiting. Most of the classes offered extra credit for participation. A between-group experimental design was used for the study. Each participant was exposed to only one treatment: either a product ad or a corporate ad. In addition, to prevent possible influences of a single execution/message strategy, two different message strategies (informational and transformational) were adopted for both product and corporate ads.

Of the final four hundred student respondents in this study, 225 (56.3%) were female and 175 (43.7%) were male. The majority of students (90.1%) were between the ages of 18 and 27 ( $M = 22.3$  years). Ninety-eight students (24.5%) saw the product ad with the informational message strategy and 107 (26.8%) students saw the product ad with the transformational message strategy. For the corporate advertisement, 98 students (24.5%) participated in the corporate informational advertisement group, and 103 students (25.1%) participated in the corporate transformational advertisement group.

Since we chose a computer product category for the ad stimuli, college students are appropriate subjects because they are likely to be computer/laptop consumers. College students represent a significant target market for computer products. According to the 2003 Simmons U.S. Populations Survey (Simmons 2003), 80% of people aged 18 to 24 years old with some college education have personal computers. In addition, our study tried to choose a product category that would not exhibit extreme ratings in any direction with regard to consumer attitudes. According to Noyes and Garland's (2004) study, college students can have various subjective computer experiences; they have a high level of accessibility to computers, and at the same time, they also have varied subjective attitudes toward computers.

### Ad Stimuli

The laptop computer product category was chosen for product advertisements, and a Korean company (TG) that produces computer technology-related products was adopted for company advertisements. Participants were not informed that the brand names advertised are Korean. The reason that a real Korean laptop brand (TG R400) and a Korean computer company brand (TG) were adopted for experimental stimuli were because (1) Americans are unlikely to be familiar with Korean domestic brands, which helps ensure to preclude possible previous exposures, and (2) using existing Korean brand logos can increase the realistic element of advertisements stimuli.

The ad executions included a limited visual element, the company logo, and a visual image at the top of the ad. The visual presentations were consistent across executions. To exclude possible influences of message strategies on consumer ad responses, our study includes both an informational message strategy and a transformational message strategy (see the Appendix). The message strategies were manipulated in the form of advertising copy and headlines. Message strategy literature, such as Puto and Wells (1984) and Taylor (1999), were used as the basis for operationalizing the message strategies.

To ensure that the informational and transformational message strategies operationalized in a proper way, all four advertisements were reviewed by advertising professors, one of them being the author of the message strategy literature that we used for operationalizing the message strategies. Based on the experts' recommendations, the executions of advertisements were revised several times. In addition, the executions of all four advertisements were pretested with college students and graduate students in terms of message clarity, believability, and likability.

### Instrument

Given the different ad stimuli, each participant in all four experimental groups was asked to answer an instrument for the measurement of the three involvement types (TI, CPI, and AI), along with attitude/behavioral intentions. For the cases of corporate advertisement stimuli, the participants were informed that the company advertised manufactured computer products.

All three involvement types included in the study were measured using multi-item scales. The scale for computer product involvement measurement was adopted from Zaichkowsky's (1985) 20-item scale. The three items for technology involvement measurement were developed for this study and presented as follows: (1) technology appeals to me; (2) I am very savvy in using technology; and (3) when a new technology product comes out, I tend to buy and try it earlier than others. All items

were measured by seven-point Likert type scales anchored by strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (7). For the measurement of advertisement involvement, Zaichkowsky's (1994) 10-item scale was revised to specifically measure involvement toward the advertisement. All 10 items were measured by seven semantic differential scales.

For measuring ad attitude, four items were adapted from Lee's 2000 study. Four items were also added to measure brand attitude of participants (Lee 2000). For the corporate ad, the word "product brand" was replaced with "company brand" (see Table 1). In addition, three items were developed to measure recognition and behavioral intentions, as follows: (1) I am more likely to remember the brand name after seeing the ad, (2) I would recommend the product to my friends who are interested in computer products (Note: For the corporate ad, the word "product" was replaced by "company"), and (3) I am more likely to purchase the product after seeing the ad (Note: for the corporate ad, the word "product" was replaced by "the company's product").

The survey instrument was pretested by college students and experts and revised afterward. The experts included three professors: two in the field of advertising and one in journalism. All students who pretested the survey instrument responded that they understood the questions clearly. Cronbach's  $\alpha$ s of each construct for the instrument were .77 for the technology involvement scale, .89 for the advertisement involvement scale (five cognitive items, .80, and five affective items, .86), and .97 for the computer product involvement scale. Scale reliabilities exceeding the .70 threshold are supported as having an acceptable level of reliability (Nunnally 1978).

## RESULTS

### Psychometric Evaluation of the Measures

The purpose of assessing construct validity was to determine whether the measures were indeed measures of the constructs they aimed to assess and whether the measures were isolated to the construct that they were said to gauge and not other constructs (Mentzer and Flint 1999). Items of all scaled constructs were put into a measurement model as indicators of exogenous latent variables. In this study, two measurement models for both product and corporate ads were addressed separately for assessing the construct validity of exogenous latent variables such as involvement types, attitude (ad attitude and brand attitude), and behavioral intentions. Each exogenous latent variable in the measurement model was evaluated by more than three indicators and the scale of each latent variable was fixed by assuming that the variance of each latent variable was equal to one.

Evidence of convergent validity was sought by examining each construct's average variance extracted (Hair et al. 2006)

and a construct was considered to exhibit convergent validity if the average variance extracted (AVE) was .50 or greater (Fornell and Larcker 1981). As shown in Table 1, the AVE estimates ranged from .58 to .88 for product ads and from .50 to .81 for corporate ads, excluding the measure of AI in both ad cases (see Table 1). These results suggested that the measures for both ad cases have convergent validity because the values of AVE exceeded a common target of .50 (Fornell and Larcker 1981).

Another indicator of the construct validity can be determined by comparing the AVE with the square of the correlation ( $\phi^2$ ) between the factor and each of the other constructs (Lichtenstein, Netemeyer, and Burton 1990). The AVE for each exogenous latent variable excluding the measure of AI was greater than the squared  $\phi$  correlations in the measurement model for the product ads (see Table 1). This supported that the measures for the product ads were considered to possess discriminant validity. In addition, for the corporate ads, the AVE for all latent variables was larger than its squared  $\phi$  correlations (see Table 1), suggesting that the measures for the corporate ads were also considered to possess discriminant validity.

The calculated fit indices for all scales were also applied to assess a reasonable model fit via a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The fit indices are as follows for both measurement models: (1) for product ads:  $\chi^2(764, n = 211) = 2045.56, p = .00$ ; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .08; normed fit index (NFI) = .94; non-normed fit index (NNFI) = .96; comparative fit index (CFI) = .96, and (2) for corporate ads:  $\chi^2(764, n = 199) = 2121.64, p = .00$ ; RMSEA = .09; NFI = .91; NNFI = .94; CFI = .94. The fit indices for all scales in both ad treatments met or exceeded the minimum threshold value of .90 suggested by Kelloway (1998). Therefore, based on the overall results of the CFA, the researchers deemed the measurement model to be acceptable in terms of overall fit and convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al. 2006). Consequently, all variables were subjected to further analysis.

### Path Analyses of the Relationships Between Involvement Types and Attitude

The path analysis via structural equation modeling (SEM) is addressed to test the causal relations among technology involvement (TI), computer product involvement (CPI), and ad message involvement (AI) for two different types of ads: product and corporate. Results of the path analysis support the first two research hypotheses. The path diagram of the case of product ads indicates that the path coefficient of .23 for TI  $\rightarrow$  AI was significant at the .05 level ( $t = 2.82, p < .01$ ). Also, the effect of TI on AI mediated by CPI was significant at the .05 level ( $t = 2.17, p < .01$ ). These findings specify that TI

**TABLE I**  
**Convergent and Discriminant Validity for the Measures**

Factors/variables	Standardized loading (PA/CA)	AVE (PA/CA)	$\phi^2$ * (PA/CA)
<i>Technology involvement</i>		.58/.50	.04-.09/.00-.18
Technology appeals to me.	.76 / .79		
I am very savvy in computer technology.	.88 / .76		
When a new technology product comes out, I tend to buy it and try it earlier than others.	.60 / .52		
<i>Computer product involvement</i>		.73/.62	.05-.10/.02-.18
The computer is important to me.	.93 / .81		
The computer is of concern to me.	.82 / .62		
The computer is relevant to me.	.88 / .82		
The computer means a lot to me.	.91 / .90		
The computer is valuable to me.	.93 / .88		
The computer is beneficial to me.	.89 / .78		
The computer matters to me.	.92 / .88		
I am interested in the computer.	.86 / .79		
The computer is significant to me.	.91 / .86		
The computer is vital to me.	.89 / .79		
The computer is exciting to me.	.82 / .77		
The computer is appealing.	.81 / .81		
The computer is fascinating.	.80 / .74		
The computer is essential.	.86 / .76		
The computer is desirable.	.77 / .75		
I want the computer.	.79 / .65		
I need the computer.	.74 / .60		
<i>Advertisement involvement</i>		.50/.49	.06-.51/.00-.44
Important/unimportant	.69 / .74		
Boring/interesting	.63 / .60		
Relevant/irrelevant	.58 / .56		
Exciting/unexciting	.75 / .61		
Means nothing/means a lot to me	.72 / .70		
Appealing/unappealing	.82 / .70		
Fascinating/mundane	.76 / .72		
Worthless/valuable	.72 / .76		
Involving/uninvolving	.70 / .76		
Not needed/needed	.65 / .77		
<i>Ad attitudes</i>		.88/.81	.07-.56/.00-.59
I like the advertisement that I saw.	.91 / .87		
The advertisement that I saw is appealing to me.	.96 / .92		
The advertisement that I saw is attractive to me.	.95 / .91		
The advertisement that I saw is interesting to me.	.92 / .90		
<i>Recognition, behavior intentions</i>		.61/.68	.04-.56/.00-.59
I am more likely to remember the computer brand name after seeing the ad.	.60 / .81		
I would recommend the computer brand to my friends who are interested in it.	.91 / .83		
I am more likely to purchase the computer brand after seeing the ad.	.84 / .83		
<i>Brand attitudes</i>		.72/.73	.04-.60/.00-.53
I react favorably to the computer brand/company that appears on the ad.	.91 / .92		
I feel positively towards the computer brand/company that appears on the ad.	.95 / .91		
I like the computer brand/company that appears on the ad.	.89 / .87		
I am more interested in the computer brand/company as a result of seeing the message.	.67 / .73		

Notes: PA = product ad; CA = corporate ad; AVE = average variance extracted.

\* The squared  $\phi$  correlation.



**TABLE 2**  
**Standardized Causal Effects for Product and Corporate Ads**

Outcome	Determinant	Causal effects			R <sup>2</sup>
		Direct (PA/CA)	Indirect (PA/CA)	Total (PA/CA)	
CPI	TI	.31/.44		.31/.44	.10/.19
AI	CPI	.19/.25		.19/.25	.12/.05
	TI	.23/.0	.05/.11	.28/.11	
Ad attitude	AI	.69/.65		.69/.65	.56/.44
	CPI	.13/.0	.13/.16	.26/.16	
	TI		.28/.02	.28/.02	
Brand attitude	Ad attitude	.73/.68		.73/.68	.54/.46
	AI		.50/.44	.50/.44	
	CPI		.19/.15	.19/.15	
	TI		.20/.03	.20/.03	
Behavioral intentions	Ad attitude	.39/.52	.36/.26	.75/.78	.69/.69
	Brand attitude	.50/.38		.50/.38	
	AI		.52/.51	.52/.51	
	CPI		.20/.17	.20/.17	
	TI		.21/.03	.21/.03	

Notes: PA = product ad; CA = corporate ad; CPI = computer product involvement; AI = advertisement involvement; TI = technology involvement.

has a significant direct influence on AI as well as an indirect influence on AI mediated by CPI.

In relation to the second research hypothesis, the path coefficient of .19 for CPI → AI was significant at the .05 level (CPI → AI:  $t = 2.49, p < .01$ ). These results support that CPI has a direct influence on AI in the case of product ads. Approximately 12% of the variance of AI is explained by the causal relations with TI and CPI for the product ad (see Table 2).

The support for the third research hypothesis was indicated by the significant positive indirect influence of TI on attitudes/behavioral intentions mediated by CPI and AI, indicating TI's indirect influence, which is mediated by CPI → AI or mediated by AI on consumers' ad attitudes. TI's total causal effect is statistically significant ( $t = 3.95, p < .01$ ). The third research hypothesis regarding indirect influences of CPI on ad attitude was also supported (CPI → AI → ad attitude:  $t = 2.47, p < .01$ ). The results support the research hypothesis that both TI and CPI have significant positive indirect influences on consumers' ad attitudes.

Concerning the fourth research hypothesis regarding direct influences of both TI and CPI on ad attitude, partial support was found by the significant positive direct influence of CPI on attitudes/behavioral intentions (CPI → ad attitude:  $t = 2.44, p < .01$ ), while the results do not support a positive direct relationship between TI and ad attitude toward the product ads (TI → ad attitude:  $t = .60, p > .01$ ).

In addition, the path coefficient of .69 for AI → attitude was significant at the .05 level ( $t = 8.91, p < .01$ ). The results

indicate that AI has a direct influence on attitudes/behavioral intentions toward the product ads. TI, CPI, and AI, which are the determinants of consumers' ad attitudes, reveal total effects of .20, .20, and .52, respectively; those relationships are due to the corresponding direct and indirect effect. Approximately 69% of the variance of consumers' ad attitudes is explained by TI, CPI, and AI (see Table 2).

Alternatively, in the case of the corporate ad, the relations among TI, CPI, and AI are not consistent with the findings in the case of the product ad. The path coefficients of TI → CPI and CPI → AI are significant (TI → CPI:  $t = 5.10, p < .01$ ; CPI → AI:  $t = 2.82, p < .01$ ), while that of TI → AI is not significant (TI → AI:  $t = -1.23, p > .05$ ). The results suggested that TI has a significant direct influence on CPI as well as an indirect influence on AI mediated by CPI (TI → CPI → AI:  $t = 2.39, p < .01$ ), which is the same as the case of the product ad. However, TI does not have a significant direct influence on AI in the case of corporate ads, which is different from the case of the product ads. TI has a significant influence on AI only when it is mediated by CPI in the case of corporate ads. Approximately 5% of the variance of AI is explained by the relations among those of the determinants (i.e., TI, CPI) in the case of corporate ads (see Table 2).

The fifth hypothesis regarding the causal relationships between ad involvement types and attitude/behavioral intentions in the case of the corporate ads was also supported. There were no significant direct influences of both TI and CPI on ad attitude toward the corporate ads. CPI only has a positive

indirect influence on consumers' ad attitude (CPI → AI → attitude:  $t = 2.74, p < .01$ ), as TI only has a positive indirect influence on consumers' ad attitude mediated by the path of CPI and AI (TI → CPI → AI → attitude:  $t = 2.36, p < .01$ ). In other words, TI and CPI can influence consumers' ad attitudes only through AI in the case of corporate ads. There was not a direct influence of CPI on attitudes, which differs from the case of product ads. The results indicate that the determinant of consumers' ad attitudes with the largest total causal effect (.633) is AI, with the entire total effect due to the direct effect. CPI, the second most important determinant of consumers' ad attitudes, reveals a total effect of .16 due to the indirect effect, whereas TI shows a total effect of .02, comprised completely of the indirect effect. For the corporate ad, approximately 44% of the variance of consumers' ad attitudes is explained by causal relations among TI, CPI, and AI (see Table 2).

Finally, regarding consumers' behavioral intentions, all involvement constructs have positive influences on behavioral intentions, but only when mediated by the attitude constructs (e.g., ad attitude and brand attitude). In particular, the relations among ad attitude, brand attitude, and behavioral intentions are consistent with the findings in both product and corporate ads. The results indicate that ad attitude has a significant direct influence on behavioral intentions (product:  $t = 4.76, p < .00$ ; corporate:  $t = 6.53, p < .01$ ), as well as an indirect influence on behavioral intentions mediated by brand attitude (product:  $t = 5.22, p < .00$ ; corporate:  $t = 4.57, p < .01$ ), while brand attitude has a significant direct influence on behavioral intentions for both cases (product:  $t = 5.39, p < .00$ ; corporate:  $t = 4.92, p < .01$ ). Estimated standardized effects among each construct for both product and corporate ads are presented in Figures 1 and 2.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of this paper, it was suggested that the product and corporate advertising contexts seem "similar but different." The results of this study support that contention, at least with respect to the role of involvement in impacting key advertising outcomes such as brand and company attitudes, product referral, and purchase intention. Both corporate and product advertising can influence such outcomes, but how they do it appears to be somewhat different.

With regard to product advertising, the findings of this study support and extend those of previous product advertising involvement studies. For instance, our results suggesting a direct influence of product category involvement are consistent with Celsi and Olson's (1988) study and, to some extent, with that of Gill, Grossbart, and Lacznia's (1988). At the same time, our results also indicate a significant indirect effect of product category involvement on ad attitudes that are mediated by ad involvement. This mediating effect of AI is

consistent with Lacznia, Kempf, and Muehling's 1999 findings. Our results extend previous studies by suggesting that product category involvement not only has a direct influence on ad responses (e.g., recommendation intention, purchase intention), but also an indirect influence mediated by advertising involvement (AI) in product ads.

On the other hand, our findings suggest different relationships among the types of involvement and their corresponding effects on ad responses in the case of corporate ads. All predispositional involvement factors, which in this study are technology involvement (general involvement) and computer product involvement (product category involvement), influence ad responses only when mediated by advertising involvement (AI). Without being mediated by advertising involvement, there are no influences of technology involvement and computer product category involvement in the case of the corporate ads. Even though our participants were informed that the company advertised is a manufacturer of computer products, the levels of technology involvement and computer product involvement did not reveal significant direct influences on ad outcomes. Therefore, in corporate ads, consumers' ad involvement plays a more important role in influencing ad outcomes than predispositional involvement.

So what does this mean for advertisers? Creating advertising involvement—or advertising engagement to use recent industry terminology—is important for both product and corporate ads. This study provides support for previous research that corporate messages can influence both general evaluations of a company and its products, including such traditional product advertising outcomes as purchase intention (Biehal and Sheinin 1998, 2007; Brown and Dacin 1997; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). In some respects, however, corporate ads have to "work harder" in that they carry the burden of the involvement effects when compared to product ads.

If marketers fail to create corporate ad involvement among consumers, there will be little benefit from consumers' previous product-related involvement effects. Even if a consumer is highly involved in technology and computer products or has a high level of computer product knowledge, a corporate advertising campaign cannot transfer effects of that consumer's product-related involvements into favorable ad attitudes and purchase intentions if marketers fail to create a high level of corporate ad involvement. Yet it seems that finding a highly involved consumer in the general area (technology) and/or in the product category (laptop computers) makes the job of a product ad easier.

Why? It could be that a person who is highly involved with technology and/or laptops has a high level of knowledge about the product category and does not need to spend a great deal of time processing a laptop ad (product ad) because the person knows the key things to look for in that laptop ad. This would explain the direct effects of technology and

FIGURE 1  
Estimated Standardized Direct Effects for the Product Ads

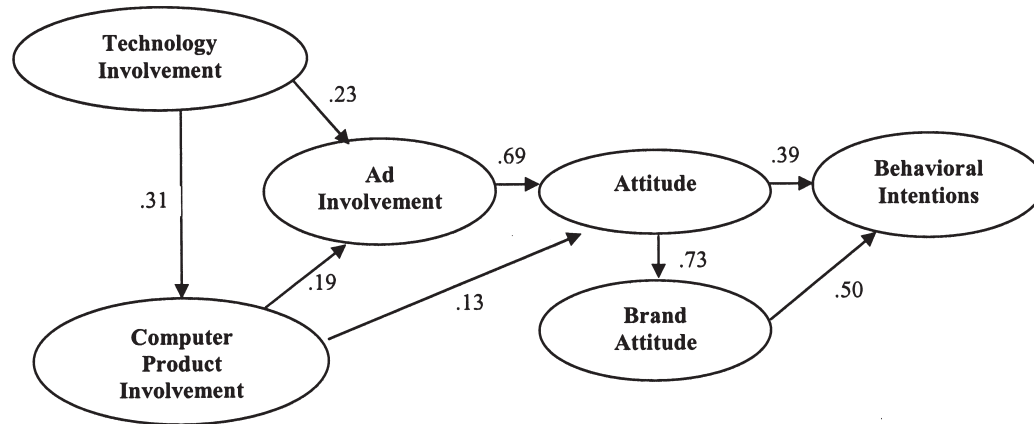
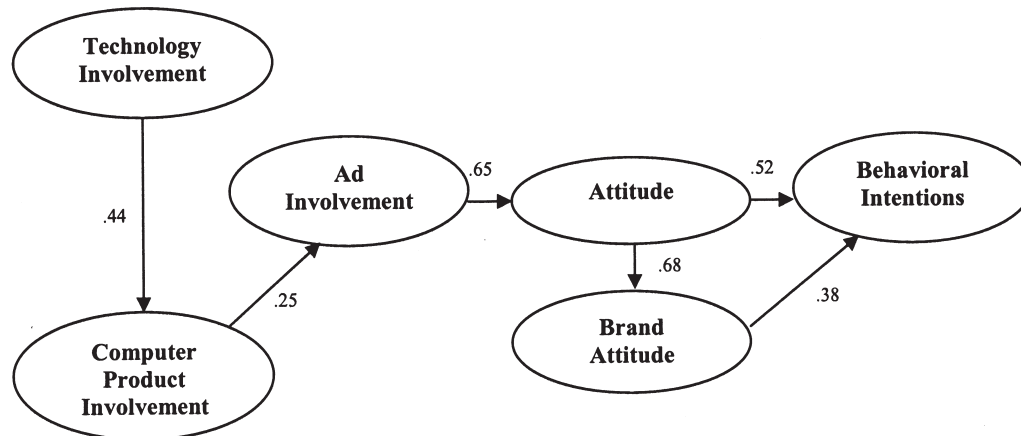


FIGURE 2  
Estimated Standardized Direct Effects for the Corporate Ads



product category involvement on the ad outcomes tested. The indirect effects of technology and product category involvement mediated via the product ad found in this study could describe a situation where a consumer who is highly involved in the technology and category may spend time with the ad because of interest in the topic. In the case of the ads tested, the fact that manufacturer and laptop model were foreign and likely unfamiliar to the viewers might account for the mediation role that ad involvement played in this study. That is, a person predisposed to have interest in the category might spend more time evaluating a novel/unfamiliar brand ad. If this is the case, then it could be that ads for familiar laptop models from familiar companies might show more direct effects of predispositional involvement. Future research could examine this contention, but would need to account for the role of brand loyalty and prior brand perceptions when using familiar companies and brands.

The fact that no direct effects were found for the predispositional involvement types in the corporate ads might suggest a model similar to the indirect effects rationale provided above. That is, the participants' lack of familiarity with the corporation and its values may explain why ad involvement was the key in leveraging predispositional involvement. In this situation, if the viewer was mentally engaged or involved with the corporate ad from the unfamiliar corporation, then the fact that he or she was predisposed to the company's product category would work with the ad involvement to positively influence his or her ad responses, such as product purchase consideration.

Conversely, the study's findings imply that corporate ads can be a tool to influence brand attitudes and purchase intentions for nonproduct category involved consumers (i.e., consumers other than those traditionally targeted by product advertising). Since the importance of ad involvement is greater in

corporate ads than in product ads, marketers and advertisers can influence nonproduct category-involved consumers to have favorable attitudes and behavioral intentions by increasing their ad involvement with the corporate ads. This finding can be supported by past literature showing that product purchase decisions of those who have lower involvement levels with the respective category might be made on nonproduct attribute-related dimensions such as brand or company image (Taylor 1999). Following this logic, a corporate ad that images the company in a way that is liked by the consumer who has low predispositional involvement in computers (for example), might be more effective in swaying a purchase decision than a product ad that might speak to the high product category involved consumer. Certainly, this is an avenue for future investigation.

Given that this study has shown a differential and important role for advertising involvement in corporate advertising, future work should focus on how to create advertising involvement in corporate advertising if the effects demonstrated in this study are to be leveraged. For example, the scope of corporate advertising includes corporate image advertising, advocacy advertising, issue advertising, and corporate social responsibility-related advertising. Research regarding the effects of a company's corporate social responsibility efforts on its bottom line has suggested somewhat mixed results: Some found no associations and some demonstrated a positive relationship (see Pava and Krausz 1996). Considering the corporate ad stimuli in the present study are more concerned with corporate social responsibility aspects of the company advertised, our findings certainly support the idea of a positive relationship between consumers' product preferences and their perceptions about how ethical the company is in the market (Creyer and Ross 1997).

The advertising literature provides some guidance on how to create involvement in specific types of corporate advertising. One way for marketers to increase consumers' corporate ad involvement would be through facilitating congruency effects between consumers and issues discussed or advocated in the corporate ad (such as a company's involvement in particular philanthropic issues, or a company's environmental policy). Past research suggests that consumers tend to be more attracted to a company identity when it corresponds to the consumers' self-definitional needs (e.g., Bhattacharya and Sen 2003; Brown and Dacin 1997; Haley 1996). How to increase congruency effects between consumers and different types of corporate campaigns would be an interesting next step for research. In such studies, corporate advertising engagement/involvement might be related to a consumer predispositional involvement in a particular issue or cause advocated in the corporate ad. How to create corporate ad involvement will be dependent on the type of corporate ad studied, however. Corporate advertising has been classified into three types: sales-related corporate

advertisements, which focus on the benefits and advantages of a company's products or services; goodwill advertisements (e.g., issues or advocacy advertising); and umbrella advertisements, which combine both sales-related and goodwill messages (Drumwright 1996; Schumann, Hathcote, and West 1991). Each provides a unique context to explore.

Within each of these contexts, the role of more audience-specific variables in creating advertising involvement should be explored. Such variables would be message strategy and executional tactics. While this study found no differences between two different message strategies in the ads tested (transformation and informational), it is highly likely that different message strategies would produce different advertising involvement based on the type of corporation, the subject of the ad, and the target audience (Taylor 1999). In addition, there are a variety of tactical ways to deliver a message strategy, such as slice-of-life, testimonial, celebrity endorser, humor, and so forth, each of which might produce different levels of ad involvement depending on the corporate advertising goal, topic, message strategy, and target audience. Finally, much discussion in the trade press within the past year has been devoted to where channel or engagement with the medium or engagement with the message is more important when vying for consumers' attention. The supremacy of channel engagement is largely advanced by companies that specialize in interactive media, whereas copywriters and traditional advertising companies are advancing the supremacy of message. While a recent industry study concludes that it is the message that matters most (McIlory 2007), future study should look at the interaction between message and channel in creating involvement in both corporate and product advertising.

## LIMITATIONS

As with any study, the results of the present research should be taken in light of the following limitations. First, although our study used Zaichkowsky's (1994) 10-item measurement for AI, the convergent validity seems to be low in the measurement of AI for both product and corporate ads (AVE in the case of the corporate ad was .49, a little lower than the recommended benchmark of .50). This could be because the 10-item scale contained both cognitive and affective items. For future studies, closer examination of advertisement involvement by distinguishing between cognitive and affective involvement is needed.

Second, it would be inappropriate to generalize the results of the study to the total population because the study used a convenience sample of college students. Although college students could be appropriate for this study because our study employed the computer as the product category of the advertisements, there are still some limitations to generalizing the results to a larger population. Thus, future research may wish

to draw random samples of participants to deal more successfully with the issue of external validity.

The present study has shown that while product and corporate advertising can have a similar objective (that of impacting consumer's intention to buy a company's products), the way in which each type works to effect such consumer intentions is likely to be somewhat different. This study illustrated that knowledge from our understanding of product advertising can help us understand the way corporate advertising works. Future research should continue to explore how our product advertising knowledge can or cannot predict how corporate advertising works, thus helping us understand the unique context of corporate advertising.

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APPENDIX

Four Ad Stimuli: (1) Product Informational Ad, (2) Product Transformational Ad, (3) Corporate Informational Ad, and (4) Corporate Transformational Ad



### Quality. More for your money. That's TG R400

Lowest price. Lots of features:


- User friendly interface,
- Pentium Centrino 3.0 GHz, 60 GB Hard Drive,
- 512 MB RAM, 12.1-inch XGA, Starting at 2.3 Lbs,
- CD/DVD RW Combo Drive,
- .... And the list goes on.

TG R400 has an incredible user-friendly interface.  
TG R400 is a laptop anyone can use.  
TG R400 has the lowest price in the industry.

TG R400 is designed to ensure that everyone can afford  
a high-quality computer.

Quality. Functionality. Lowest price.  
Only from a TG Computer.

Computer Company **TG**



### At home, at work, or at play...

TG R400 Gives You the Tools You Need.

TG R400 is there to help learners learn, teachers teach, and businesses do business.


School is tough! But by letting TG R400 be their personal tutor, struggling students can move ahead in their studies and improve their standardized test scores. Thank you TG!

You love your music. So does TG R400.  
TG's lightning fast processor makes it easy to download, create, and organize your songs. Thank you TG!

Who knew starting a business was so easy?  
TG R400 offers software and online support to help small businesses save time and money turning dreams into reality. Thank you TG!

You're a firefighter not a computer geek! TG 400 offers the tools you need to learn to organize your bank statements or pay your taxes online. Thank you TG!

Computer Company **TG**



### To be a great company, you have to play by the rules.

Not only does TG abide by current labor laws, we exceed the standards to protect our workers.

The Department of Labor proposes to update and revise the regulations issued under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) by implementing the exemption from minimum wage and overtime pay for executive, administrative, professional, outside sales and computer employees.  
Federal wage standards are going down. But not ours.

We will continue to pay all of our employees fair wages. All of our sales, professional, and administrative staff will continue to be paid above the minimum wage and will get the overtime pay they earn. Any cut in wages would be applied to our executives first.

TG is committed to implementing high employment standards.

High standards. That's TG.

Computer Company **TG**



### Born in the USA! TG is born in the USA!

Okay, the Boss sings it best. But we are just as proud to be American here at TG.

TG is proud to bring democracy to the corporate world.

TG is proud to have a more diverse work force than any other company in the technology sector.

TG is proud to offer all of its employees the best possible wages, benefits, and at least six weeks of paid vacation every year.

At TG we believe in investing in American workers by giving them opportunities to pursue their dreams with a company that cares.

Here at TG we also value your perspectives and your dreams because we see the great potential in the American dream.

Pursue the dream and let TG help!

Computer Company **TG**