Creative Marketing in Asia Pacific:
Issues and Challenges

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Organized by
Faculty of Economics and Business
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)
Sarawak, Malaysia
Creative Marketing in Asia Pacific

Issues and Challenges
# Creative Marketing in Asia Pacific: Issues and Challenges

*Holiday Inn Resort Danai Beach Kuching, November 23, 2007*

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that all APMC 2007 participants will find this conference beneficial and improve on existing policies and research efforts in the area of marketing. I trust and express my appreciation. I hope all the participants will seize this opportunity to meet and discuss many current issues related to business and marketing. The aim is to help to create a governmental officers, business leaders, as well as academics are

and enrich their knowledge on the dynamics of marketing business environment and academic-practitioner discussions and networking participants can further enhance and contribute to the Asian Pacific region. Through symposiums of cross-disciplined and cross community to discuss and share knowledge on current issues facing in the marketing academia to share their insights on the development and challenges in all areas and business of University Malaysia Sarawak.

and Business of University Malaysia Sarawak. The conference theme is "Creative Marketing in Asia Pacific: Issues and Challenges" is organized by Faculty of Economics and Business of University Malaysia Sarawak.

A very warm welcome to all the distinguished presenters and delegates of the 2nd Asia University Malaysia Sarawak.

Vice Chancellor

The Vice Chancellor of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Assalamualaikum Walaikum, Selamat sejahtera

Wassalam

MESSAGE FROM

APMC

DR Abdua Kasih Abuddin

Professor Datuk Dr Abdua Kasih Abuddin

Vice Chancellor

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
The economy of this country. The need for collaboration and ultimately expanding further research and contributing growth in the business world and the way of conducting business. Product homogeneity in the different cultures has forced firms to be more creative in their marketing strategies. The importance of the Globalization has led to rapid transformation of challenges. The theme of this conference is "Creative Marketing in Asia Pacific Issues and Challenges." Therefore, this must create their own strategic innovations in marketing in order to stay ahead of competitors.

APMC is a biannual conference initiated with the aim of attracting academic scholars, government officers and practitioners to hold discussion on contemporaneous issues and developments in the area of marketing. It is also a platform for higher learning institutions and business schools.

I hope that this conference will pave more avenues for local and international industries.

On behalf of the organizing committee, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to all distinguished speakers and delegates to our 2nd Asia Pacific Marketing Conference 2007 (APMC 2007) in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia.
University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur
Faculty of Economics and Business
Conference Organizing Chair (APMC 2007)

Salam Pertama

I would like to extend my thanks to all the distinguished speakers and delegates for their valuable contributions. Besides, I would also like to express my thanks to all the distinguished speakers and delegates for their continuous support for this conference.

Firstly, on behalf of the organizers of the APMC 2007, I would like to extend my

This theme will hold the key towards sustainable competitiveness of the firms. Therefore, creative marketings strategies are viewed to be crucial in sustaining the firm's survival in a competitive market. Customers are becoming more and more demanding in products and services that are functional, efficient and effective. Hence, a firm's ability to outsmart its competitors is about the creative marketing strategies and the implementation of the creative marketing strategies. This is especially the case when the firm is in a challenging environment. The dynamic business environment nowadays leaves little room for

The theme of this conference is "Creative Marketing in Asia Pacific Issues and Challenges". A very warm welcome to all the distinguished speakers and delegates of the 2nd Asia

ASSalamualaikum w.b.t and Salam Seperti
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The Search for a Home: Thoughts on Involvement and Emotion

Catheryn Khoo, Phil Harris, Maree Thyne
Department of Marketing, School of Business, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand
Email: ckhoo@business.otago.ac.nz

Summary: The role of personal involvement as a key determinant of consumer home choice is investigated in this paper. Although the high level of involvement in a home purchase is well known, this paper argues that as a result of emotion, consumers may not necessarily engage in lengthy and detailed information searches and decision-making. We trace theoretical antecedents of involvement and discuss their relevance to consumer home choice. Research propositions are then made, supported by studies in areas other than involvement. We argue that it is too simplistic to suggest that home purchasers are always cognitive problem solvers with utilitarian motives.

Introduction

Consumer researchers have used the concept of involvement to understand how and why consumers develop particular affiliations with products. An appreciation of how involved a consumer is to a product is valuable to researchers and advantageous to practitioners in understanding purchase decisions.

Although literature on involvement is well developed and covers many product categories ranging from beer, household appliances, tennis racket and automobiles (Beatty & Smith, 1987; Celsi & Olson, 1988; Moorthy, Ratchford, & Talukdar, 1997; Punj & Staelin, 1983; Richins & Bloch, 1986; Tyebjee, 1979), it has not covered home purchases. There is a clear rationale for why we are interested in basing our research on home purchases, particularly in New Zealand. With a total market value of between NZ$450 and NZ$500 billion, New Zealand’s residential real estate market is the largest investment asset class in the country (DTZ, 2004). To a large extent, past research has shown that complex buying behaviour occurs when consumers are highly involved with the purchase, and products such as residential homes are therefore amongst the most highly-involved purchase decisions an individual will ever make (Baryla, Zumpano, & Elder, 2000; Findsen, 2005) as they tend to involve decisions that are expensive, bought infrequently, risky, or highly expressive (Asch & Wolfe, 2001). As such, consumer studies in real estate have taken on the assumption that homes are high involvement products and that housing choices are always preceded by lengthy rational decision making and intense cognitive pre-purchase search (Adair, Berry, & McGreal, 1998; Baryla, Zumpano, & Elder, 2000; Bates & Kane, 2003; Black & Diaz, 1996; Crews & Dyhrberg, 2004; Dennis, 2006; DTZ, 2005; Jameson, 2004; Levy & Lee, 2000).

While the academic home choice literature emphasizes rational decision making and cognitive pre-purchase search, mainstream practitioner literature offers very contrasting insights by suggesting that consumers may experience emotional, instantaneous and intuitive home-buying situations (De Roos & Somers, 2000; Fahy, 2006; Newland, 2002). It would thus be of interest to explore how the dimensionality of involvement can explain the influences of emotion on external pre-purchase search effort of purchases that require a high level of consumer involvement.

While considerable research has been devoted to establishing a causal relationship between high involvement and extensive pre-purchase information search, rather less attention has been paid to the negative correlation between the two variables. A few studies have concluded that consumers exhibit limited pre-purchase information search, even for very expensive products (Moorthy, Ratchford, & Talukdar, 1997; Urbany, Dickson, & Wilkie, 1989) but reasons for this relationship remain unclear. Further investigations are needed in order to explore this and to explicate the role of involvement in the decision-making process of consumer home choice. Answers to why high involvement may result in low pre-purchase search are important because it could give evidence to the fact that it is possible for housing choices to be made without lengthy decision-making and intense information searches — that the idea of on-the-spot decision-making on home choices is not a ridiculous one after all. An emergence of new theories
involvement and search will imply that much of the research done on housing consumers’ decision making processes would now be less applicable than has been assumed.

This paper begins by reviewing existing literature on the involvement concept and linking the dimensions of involvement to applications in consumer home choice. A model of involvement in home choice is then proposed and its implications, discussed. Based on the assumption that property investors are not as influenced by emotional factors as are home purchasers, their choices and purchases are precluded from the discussion in this paper.

**The Birth of the Involvement Concept**

The concept of involvement grew from a stream of research called hemispheral lateralization or split brain theory (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1991). The basic assumptions that underpin split brain theory is that the right and left hemispheres of the brain specialise in the kinds of information they process: right for nonverbal, emotional, impulsive, intuitive, timeless, pictorial and holistic information and the left for cognitive activities like reading, speaking, information processing, rational and realistic thinking. Following this, Krugman (1965) theorized that individuals passively process and store right-brain information, that is without active involvement – this gave birth to high and low involvement advertising media. Developing from the research on the conceptualisation of high and low involvement media, research on involvement began to focus on consumer involvement with products and purchases. Consequently, studies on involvement expanded to include conceptualising involvement (Barki & Hartwick, 1989; Houston & Rothschild, 1978; C. W. Park & Mittal, 1985; Zaichkowsky, 1985) and measurements of involvement constructs (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Mittal, 1989a, , 1995; Zaichkowsky, 1986).

**Definitions of Product Involvement**

Definitions of involvement probably evolved from the early days of Sherif & Cantril (1947) when they developed the concept of ego involvement and established that involvement exists when any social object in related by the individual to the domain of the ego. Since then, there have been many definitions of product involvement - these definitions are summarised in the Table 1. Adopting the definitions in Table 1, a consumer’s level of involvement with the product depends on the degree of personal relevance that the item holds for that consumer. Unfortunately, researchers in housing choice have adopted this definition of involvement without taking into account the content and relational properties of involvement. And under this approach a home purchase has been inadequately classified as high involvement.

**Cognitive-based Involvement and Home Purchases**

Fundamental theories in involvement posit that high consumer involvement in a product’s purchase will lead to extensive pre-choice information search (Asch & Wolfe, 2001; Balabanis & Vassileiou, 1999; Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984; Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990; Mano & Oliver, 1993; Moorthy, Ratchford, & Talukdar, 1997; Punj & Staelin, 1983; Tyebjee, 1979). For example, in an experiment on the effects of message framing on information processing by Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy (1990), highly involved consumers were found to search more information before they buy, to process relevant information in greater detail and to use more criteria in their buying decisions than other consumers. To quote another example, Greenwald and Leavitt (1984) in their conceptual paper theorise that when subjects find message information personally relevant & important, they are expected to devote considerably more attention to the message contents and to process that information at a deeper level.

Researchers in housing choice have adopted this assumption that high involvement leads to significant pre-purchase search (Baryla, Zumpano, & Elder, 2000; Coolen & van Montfort, 2001; Findsen, 2005; C. W Park, Hughes, Thukral, & Friedmann, 1981; C.W Park & Lutz, 1982; Witlox, 1995). Baryla, Zumpano & Elder (2000) for instance, concluded that search, whether self-search or broker-assisted, is influenced by variables like price and interest rates. For Park & Lutz (1982), consumers are rational problem solvers,
 incessantly comparing product attributes and conducting trade-off analysis. For many researchers in housing choice, consumers are seen as always trying to maximize their utility through tangible attributes such as price, location, size of property and number of bedrooms, just to name a few. Arguments instantaneously link home choices to extensive external pre-purchase information search and problem solving processes.

*Figure 1* sums up the view of the above studies and illustrates the causal relationship between involvement and search in the consumer decision-making process. In exploring the housing choice literature, we have been struck by the apparent lack of consideration of the fact that home choice may not necessarily implicate complex decision making processes. This despite the fact that mainstream literature and the business press have published extensive examples that suggest this phenomenon and point to the role of emotions as a significant influencing factor in consumer decision-making process (De Roos & Somers, 2000; Fahy, 2006; Hamilton, 2006; Newland, 2002). For instance, Dolf de Roos (2002), a reputable name in the New Zealand residential property investment field, recommends that sellers adopt numerous ways of improving the look of their properties by playing on their emotions, some of which includes putting up a new front fence, painting, putting in a new letter box, landscaping, putting up new curtains and even as far as exchanging the door knobs. Another prominent investor, Olly Newland (2002), advises home sellers to spend money on “new switches and taps” rather than “on wiring and plumbing” because “most buyers are only interested in the shiny paint and chrome finish (p172).” This highlights the potential role of emotion as a disruptive influence on the decision-making process and ultimately the consumer’s choice of home. While academic literature in housing choice conforms to the general relationship between involvement and the decision-making process, the dotted line in *Figure 1* posits that emotions can significantly change the course of the decision-making process, making home choice seemingly impulsive.

**Home Purchases: High Involvement, Limited Information Search**

This section aims to seek out the other part of the story that has ignored the emotional aspects of involvement. Support for this is found in contemporary choice and decision-making literature (Beatty & Smith, 1987; Hawkins & Hoch, 1992; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook & Batra, 1987; Holbrook & Gardner, 1993; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Holbrook & Huber, 1979; Mittal, 1989b; Moorthy, Ratchford, & Talukdar, 1997; Urban, Dickson, & Wilkie, 1989; Wilkie & Dickson, 1985; Zaichkowsky, 1987). On this side of the fence, researchers questioned the economic, utilitarian and cognitive models of choice models. Most of this view stems from Olshavsky & Granbois (1979) who challenged the conventional view of choice models and advocated that a significant amount of consumer choice does not involve decision-making, not even if it is a first purchase. Holbrook & Hirschman (1982) agree and emphasize the hedonic experiences of consumer choice. This suggests a new view for housing choice – that an individual could buy a house not for its location, price or size but for a sense of stability, achievement and satisfaction.

Although interesting and insightful, these studies have not established valid reasons for the negative correlation between high involvement and effortless pre-purchase search. It is established that a home purchase is high involvement but a gap remains in our knowledge regarding reasons why high involvement is not always preceded by extensive external information search and lengthy decision-making processes. This paper seeks to extend our understanding of the complex relationship between involvement, pre-purchase search and choice by drawing upon the antecedents of involvement.

**The Answer: Emotion-based Involvement?**

We have established that researchers in housing choice have treated residential homes solely as utilitarian or functional products while the emotive and expressive aspects of a residential home have been overlooked. As pointed out earlier, this has happened because they adopted the definition of involvement without taking into account the content and relational properties of involvement. Later studies have categorised involvement into different types, mainly situational versus enduring (Bloch, Sherrell, & Ridgway, 1986; Houston & Rothschild, 1977; Laurens & Kapferer, 1985; Richins & Bloch, 1986); ego versus response (C. W. Park & Mittal, 1985; Sherif & Cantril, 1947) and product versus purchase-decision (Mittal, 1989a).
Enduring involvement derives from the feeling that the product is related to centrally held values (Arora, 1982 cited in Laurent & Kapferer, 1985), those reflecting singularity, identity and one’s ego (Ostrom and Brock, 1968 cited in Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). Enduring involvement is independent of purchase situations and is motivated by the degree to which the product relates to the self and/or the hedonic pleasure received from the product (Richins & Bloch, 1986). In this light, it is obvious that a consumer’s enduring involvement is likely to be high in the context of a home purchase but we would like to point out here that enduring involvement is expressed by words pointing to emotions. Situational involvement reflects product involvement that occurs only in specific situations, such as a purchase (Richins & Bloch, 1986) and this is referred to by Mittal (1989a) as purchase-decision involvement. A situational involvement occurs when the consumer “cares about what he or she buys and correspondingly the extent to which he or she is motivated to make the right choice” (Mittal, 1989a). This is not surprising considering that a home is a large financial undertaking, one that is bought perhaps only once in a lifetime and involves responsibility and commitment. However, caring about what one buys and being motivated stand out as affective words and as such, home purchase would qualify as having high emotion-based involvement. While studies have classified products into having either high situational or enduring involvement, this paper proposes a shift in current research on involvement – that consumers have one high emotion-based involvement with their choices. The implications of this are significant in our attempt to understand their decision-making process and external pre-purchase activities.

Another group of researchers draws the distinction between ego and response involvement. Put simply, ego involvement means a concern with a given issue because it is intrinsically involving and it is related to the individual’s needs and values (Sherif & Cantril, 1947). Intrinsic needs and values in purchasing a home are identified as security and family continuity (Dupuis & Thorns, 1996) and these values nonetheless appeal to the human emotions. In short, we are suggesting that ego involvement is an emotion-based involvement. In contrast to ego involvement is response involvement, which refers to an individual’s concern with the consequences of his/her response with the instrumental meaning of his/her opinion (C. W. Park & Mittal, 1985). There is no doubt that a home purchaser will be thinking about responses to his or her choice. Depending on the consequences of his or her choice, a home purchaser will be worried, relieved or glad. High levels of involvement in either ego or response involvement assume that consumers will be motivated to seek information prior to purchase. High levels of emotion-based involvement may mean otherwise. We suggest that a home purchase is an emotion-based involvement and its implications on consumers’ decision-making processes will be significant in helping us understand the relationship between involvement and search.

Mittal (1989a) distinguished purchase-decision involvement from product class involvement. He characterised product involvement as a “precursor, and not a necessary one at that, to the purchase-decision involvement” (Mittal, 1989a, p. 148). This is illustrated by the following example: “Ms. Consumer sends her convalescing friend some flowers, but while placing a phone order, she may be largely indifferent as to the type of flowers” (Mittal, 1989a, p.148). In this case, a product class (flowers) is important to the consumer but she is indifferent in the choice of a brand (type of flowers), packaging or colour, thus implying low purchase-decision involvement. Consumers have either high product involvement and low purchase-decision involvement or high purchase-decision involvement and low product involvement. However, in the case of a home, the home itself is as central as the purchase decision. The home as a product class is important due to its symbolic meaning to the purchasers (Despres, 1991; Dupuis & Thorns, 1996; Marcus, 1995). As people attach their own meanings to home, they naturally attach feelings and emotions to the home. In addition, the choice of the home as explained in response involvement is of equal importance. We thus, extend Mittal (1989a)’s typology by looking at home purchase as a combination of both purchase-decision and product class and classify this as emotion-based involvement.

Existing research in the housing literature holds that residential home purchases require a high level of involvement and this consequently will lead to extensive external pre-purchase information search. Most, if not all studies in housing choice see involvement as cognitive. This paper departs from traditional housing literature that views high involvement requiring extensive thinking and problem solving. Park and Mittal (1985) have already advocated two types of involvement – cognitive and affective. This is later supported by Zaichowsky (1987) who revised the Product Involvement Inventory to include the emotional aspects of
involvement. These studies although insightful, have categorised involvement types as one or the other – cognitive or emotional, thinking or feeling, irrational or rational. We propose yet another modification to existing literature – that a purchase is emotionally involving but that emotion-based involvement is not necessarily irrational. Emotion-based involvement is as instrumental as cognitive involvement to fully understand consumer choice and warrants further investigation.

**Research Propositions**

Given the common belief that emotions serve as primary motivators of behaviour (including search), the absence of emotion in housing choice research and the scarcity of it in involvement literature does raise concern. We attempt to address this issue by drawing several propositions from an emotionally-based approach to involvement.

**Proposition 1:** Involvement in home purchases for consummatory purposes is highly affective - consumers are highly involved but only affectively. Feelings toward a purchase should be perceived as more relevant when the purchase is evaluated for consummatory reasons than when it is evaluated for instrumental reasons (Pham, 1998). When the motive is consummatory, involvement is emotionally-based. When the motive is instrumental as in the case of investors, consumers will have low emotionally-based involvement.

**Proposition 2:** External pre-purchase search is limited in the context of consummatory home purchasing. This has not been empirically tested in housing choice yet but in research on the purchase of new automobiles by Bennet & Mandell (1969), it was found that a majority of consumers (60%) make their purchase decisions after only visiting one store. Indeed, this could be explained by pointing to the role of emotions (Moorthy, Ratchford, Talukdar, 1997). Mittal (1989b) also notes that “information search is only high when the product is functional or utilitarian; when the product serves psycho-social or expressive goals, the consumer would not seek much information, a high level of involvement notwithstanding” (p. 167).

In relation to the first proposition, high emotion-based involvement will lead to limited pre-purchase search while low emotion-based involvement will result in lengthy information search. Answers to these and other exploratory propositions, we aim to research and report back on in more depth in subsequent work.

**Conclusion**

We have demonstrated that involvement in home choice is best conceptualised as emotionally-involving and Figure 2 sums up this notion. While the causal influence of involvement on information search is indubitable, this paper extends the literature by proposing an explanation for the flexible relationship between three main constructs: involvement, search and choice (see Figure 1). Despite its preliminary character, the proposed model in Figure 1 opens doors to the possibility that consumer home choice may not always follow a flow of deliberate and calculative decision making stages.

Although the decision to purchase a house is embedded within a set of economic processes, we believe that cognitive involvement is not solely responsible for the view that consumers are highly involved with their purchase decisions, as presented in most studies in the housing choice literature. Extant academic literature in housing choice tends to focus on issues relating to house prices, locations and purchase affordability while discounting the role played by emotions. This has provided a biased picture. In this paper, we argue that the role emotions play in home choice and its decision-making process is much more significant than has previously been acknowledged.
References


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<td>Day (1970)</td>
<td>&quot;...the general level of interest in the object or the centrality of the object to the person’s ego structure (p. 45).&quot;</td>
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<td>Mitchell (1979)</td>
<td>&quot;...an internal state variable that indicates the amount of arousal interest or drive evoked by a particular stimulus or situation (p.194).&quot;</td>
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<td>Cohen (1983)</td>
<td>&quot;...as a person’s activation level at a particular moment of time (p. ).&quot;</td>
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<td>Rothschild (1984)</td>
<td>&quot;...an observable state of motivation, arousal or interest (p.127).&quot;</td>
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<td>Zaichkowsky (1985)</td>
<td>&quot;...a higher perceived relevance of an object based on inherent needs, values and interests (p.342).&quot;</td>
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<td>Barki &amp; Hartwick (1989)</td>
<td>&quot;...a subjective psychological state (p53).&quot;</td>
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<td>Mittal (1989a)</td>
<td>&quot;... the degree of interest of a person in an object (p.148) .&quot;</td>
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<td>Blackwell, Miniard, &amp; Engel (2001)</td>
<td>&quot;The degree to which an object or behaviour is personally relevant or of interest, evoked by a stimulus within a specific situation (p. 545).&quot;</td>
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**Figure 1: The relationship between involvement and search in consumer decision-making process**

Adapted from (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2001)
Figure 2: The Emotion-based Model of Involvement

Involvement in Consumer Home Choice

Ego Response
Product Purchase decision
Cognitive Affective
Enduring Situational