

Summary of the study: Braun et al (Memory 2) - Experiment 1

Aim

To see whether autobiographical-focused advertising could directly affect how consumers recall a childhood experience

Hypotheses

- If the advertisement becomes part of how the consumer's memory is reconstructed, then elements of the images of the advert will appear as part of the memory regardless of whether or not they actually occurred.
- If the advertisement causes the consumer to visualise their childhood memory, then the process of imagining the memory will lead consumers to believe they actually shook hands with Mickey (as shown in the advert)

Method

Laboratory experiment. Independent measures design

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected

IV: whether participants were shown a Disney advertisement OR a control advert

DV: Difference on the Life Event Inventory (LEI) target item: met and shook hands with favourite TV character between week one and week two

Sample: 107 undergraduates (64 F/ 43 M) USA university

Materials

- Life Events Inventory questionnaire (LEI questionnaire)
- Disney resort advert
- Questionnaire rating the advert (unfavourable – favourable)
- Questionnaire rating how involved Pps felt in the ad (using empathy measures)
- 2 distraction tasks
- Questionnaire about Pps personal memories of Disney

Procedure

Participants randomly assigned to experimental or control group

Week one: Participants given the LEI plus other experimental tasks

Week two: Participants either given the Disney or control ad and asked to visualise themselves in the ad. Then 5 mins to write down how the video made them feel and think

- Asked to rate the advert using attitude and empathy measures
- 5 minute distractor task
- Researcher returns 'panicked' saying results from previous week LEI 'lost'
- Participants completed LEI again
- Distractor task 15mins
- Different researcher gives participants questionnaire on memories of visiting Disney resort
- Participants asked what the aim of experiment was to test for demand characteristics

Results

- Significantly more participants in the **experimental group showed an increase in their score on the LEI in week two for the critical question (met and shook hands with a favourite TV character)**
- Participants in the experimental groups showed significantly **more positive change on the LEI (i.e. more convinced the event had happened to them)**
- Out of those who had reported visiting the park previously, participants in the **experimental groups reported more positive feelings about Disney and used significantly more of the words used in the advert i.e. magical and cool rides**

Conclusions

Autobiographical advertising **can influence how consumers recall their past**

Summary of the study: Braun et al. (Memory 2)- Experiment 2

Aim

To see whether false information in an advert could make participants believe the events had happened to them as a child

Method

Laboratory experiment. Independent measures design

Sample: 167 undergraduate psychology students USA (104 F / 63 M)

Materials

Same as experiment 1 with the following amendment

1. Advert 1: suggested they had shaken hands with Bugs Bunny
2. Advert 2: suggested they had shaken hands with Ariel
3. Advert 3: factual – given to the control group
4. LEI modified so that critical question was “shaking hands with a cartoon character in a theme park (10 pt scale- definitely did not/definitely did happen

Procedure

Participants given 2 types of **false information** –

- 1) they had shaken hands with Bug Bunny (not a Disney character so impossible)
- 2) they had shaken hands with Ariel (she IS a Disney character but a later additional so they could not have shaken hands with her when they were a child)

Both experimental and control groups given Disney ads but experimental included false information

Results

Ads rated as being ‘more involving. Means scores /8

Ariel: 4.8

Bugs Bunny 5.1

Factual (control): 3.8

Percentage increase in confidence they had shaken hands with the characters (on second LEI)

Ariel 76%

Bugs Bunny 78%

Factual (control) 62%

Conclusions

1. Autobiographical advertising **can make consumers more likely to believe an event happened to them even if it was impossible**
2. Autobiographical advertising **can create false memories**
3. Results support the theory of reconstructive memory

Criticisms/limitations for both Experiment 1 & Experiment 2

1. **Age bias:** used undergraduate students from the USA. May not represent how people of different ages respond to autobiographical advertising.
2. **Not ethical (manipulated people’s memory):** they reported they would be more likely to visit Disney so could spend a considerable amount of money/ could have affected how they recalled the past.
3. **Study lacked ecological validity:** conducted in laboratory conditions (given direct instruction to watch ads & imagine themselves in situations) – may not reflect how people think about ads in real life situations.