6. Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications

This chapter is divided into five sections. Section 1 gives an overview of the complete study. Section 2 sums up the study findings based on the objectives. Section 3 looks at the theoretical and managerial implications of the study, which also include implications for strategic management perspective. After this, Section 4 mentions the limitations of the current study. Lastly, section 5 provides the conclusion as well as the recommendations for further research.

6.1. Overview of the Study

A lot of research on effectiveness of advertising has focused on the context in which the ad appears or the congruity of the ad with the context (Yi, 1990; Moorman et al., 2002; Yaveroglu & Donthu, 2008). However, past studies have given differing results regarding the effectiveness of ad-context congruity (Yi, 1990; Collins & Loftus, 1975; Gunter et al., 2002) and incongruity (Burke & Srull, 1988; Furnham & Price, 2006; Moore et al., 2005; Duff & Faber, 2011). This study has provided direction regarding the effect of congruity on persuasion while demonstrating the way in which takes place i.e. consumer’s felt involvement as well as the conditions under which it takes place which are the reader’s inherent motives and strength of arguments in the ad. This
The focus of our study is on e-magazines because it has been found that among all the different media, magazines are most effective in terms of attitude towards ads. A study by Association of Indian Magazines (AIM) [Belch et al., 2013] suggests that magazines offer quality readership, get the most undivided attention and are the preferred sources of information. Digital advertising has also been growing along with the proportional increase in digital media consumption through smartphones and tablets which make this a timely study.

6.2. Discussion of the Findings
As proposed in the research objectives, the psychological aspects of consumers reading an e-magazine that contained advertisements were studied. This study empirically established the role of ad-context congruity, motives and argument strength in persuasion while exploring this phenomenon through the process of felt involvement. Three empirical studies were conducted to test the hypotheses.

The first study was done to investigate the effects of congruity and motives on persuasion. The research design had four treatment conditions and the subjects were assigned to the four conditions randomly. The respondents were motivated to be either goal-oriented or experiential through scenarios and either the congruent or incongruent ad was shown to them. It was found that there was no interaction effect of congruity and motives on persuasion, however, congruity had a significant effect on persuasion. The reason for the findings could be that since the first study had a comparatively smaller sample size, we did not get the expected effects. Further, priming effects could have taken place (Yi 1990; Moorman et. al 2002) where in the study has built on previous studies by showing that the effect of congruity on persuasion would vary depending on the argument strength of the ad.
context i.e. the magazine articles could have primed the respondents to look at the ads in the congruent condition.

The second study was conducted to investigate the effects of congruity and motives on persuasion through felt involvement. It was found that felt involvement did mediate the relationship between congruity and persuasion but not for the interaction of congruity and motives. Further, as hypothesized, moderated mediation test showed the effect of congruity on persuasion through felt involvement for the goal oriented motive but not for experiential motive. This means that as expected goal-oriented users paid attention to the congruent ad leading to higher persuasion through felt involvement and the ad acted as an ISPR. For experiential users, we expected them to pay more attention to the incongruent ad compared to the congruent ad however the results were contrary to our expectations. The ad did not act as SSPR for the respondents hence the persuasion through felt involvement wasn’t there. This result can be explained by the studies which support the congruity hypothesis (Yi, 1990; Collins & Loftus, 1975; Gunter, Baluch, Duffy & Furnham, 2002).

The third study was conducted to investigate the effects of congruity, motives and argument strength on persuasion through felt involvement. While checking for mediation, it was found that felt involvement mediated the relationship between Congruity and Persuasion. Further moderated mediation tests showed that felt involvement mediated the interaction of congruity and motives on persuasion. For the other moderator i.e. argument strength, the moderated mediation test showed the effect of congruity on persuasion through felt involvement for weak argument strength condition showing mediation that is moderated.
Lastly, the moderated mediation test showed the effect of congruity on persuasion through felt involvement for goal oriented as well as experiential motives for weak argument strength showing that there was a moderated mediation just as we had hypothesized.

ELM and HSM explain how goal oriented consumers were more persuaded by the ad when they saw it congruent with the context. When the ads were congruent with the context, they had higher elaboration and effective persuasion. This in-turn took place through felt involvement, i.e. for a goal oriented user when the ad in the magazine was similar to the context, it fostered the reader’s ability and motivation to employ issue relevant thinking (here similar ad) as it acted as an intrinsic source of personal relevance (ISPR). Hence, elaboration with the similar ads was high. This increased elaboration driven by ISPR created greater felt involvement leading to higher persuasion (Karmarkar and Tormala, 2010). Lastly the role of argument strength was proved, i.e. once the experiential user was motivated for higher processing and higher elaboration, the level of persuasion was now conditional upon the strength of the arguments presented in the ad, as shown that in the condition of greater elaboration, weak argument worsened persuasion.

6.3. Research Implications

6.3.1. Theoretical Implications

The current understanding of the study extends and complements several theoretical frameworks and models that can be used to further enrich the e-magazine ad persuasion literature. First, the academic implications of ad-context congruity are given through proposing conditions under which and the process through which the congruity or incongruity of ads with the context
influences ad persuasion. Thus the study plays an important role in helping to resolve the dilemma of the effectiveness of congruity on persuasion.

Second, the study contributes to advertising literature by providing insights on advertising effectiveness through emphasizing the roles of the motives of the user. The overall effect of congruity on persuasion has differed for goal oriented and experiential users. Hence, building on these conditions, the current study demonstrates that ad context congruity is contingent upon the consumer motives.

Third, this study shows how these conditions of congruity, as well as the motives of the users, are mediated through felt involvement of the consumer. Depending on whether the consumers are goal oriented or experiential in their motives, the effects of congruity are through felt involvement. This means better processing of the ads and higher elaboration ultimately resulting in better ad persuasion.

Lastly, as per our knowledge, this study is the first in its stream of literature to show that argument strength plays an important role in persuasion after felt involvement has been achieved through the interaction of congruity and motives. It shows that the argument strength of the ad which is developed based on the claims of the product features does play a role in affecting persuasion.

6.3.2. Managerial Implications

The integrative ad-context congruity and persuasion model offers pertinent information to the advertising managers and presents a wide range of information to resolve their managerial uncertainty and planning in online advertising.
First, the advertisers need better planning for placement of ads in congruent or incongruent context depending on the motive of the user. The motives play a bigger role for target customer persuasion effect.

In particular, the goal oriented motive can be seen in specific interest magazines which mainly target focused audience or hobbyists like those automobile or technology and computer segments. The readers of such magazines normally read these magazines to gain knowledge in those fields and look for specific information. As a result, their attention to the advertisements, in general, will be less as they are more focused on the articles. However, advertising managers and marketers can address this issue by ensuring that the advertisement is relevant to the reader by higher ad-context congruity.

Second, the strength of the product/service argument in the ad needs to be taken care of by the managers. As mentioned earlier, online advertising is increasing but the attention to ads seen in terms of click-through rates is decreasing. E-magazines would increasingly emerge as an attractive medium for advertising given that consumers perceive magazine ads more positively compared to other mediums. Since consumers are looking for information even from ads, it is very important to create suitable ads accordingly. The strength of the arguments in the ads needs be taken care of through the kind of claims that are made about the product features.

The results also provide answers to advertisers regarding where to place the ad and what kind of magazines should be selected. Knowing the motives of the consumers based on the type of magazines and by adjusting the congruity, it might also help advertisers in positioning themselves and targeting the right customers. If the magazine contains general purpose information, then the advertiser can opt for those ads which will be incongruent with the context. Furthermore, the mediating role of felt involvement as proposed in the current study will give
directions for advertisers to the understanding of the role of consumers’ felt involvement to create effectiveness in online magazine ads.

6.4. Limitations and Scope

Even though the study findings have ample managerial implications, still this research has a few limitations also.

First, we used a student sample for our study and college students may not represent the general population. Thus the limitation could be regarding the generalizability of the results to a larger population of interest. Prior studies (e.g. Park and Lessig, 1977) indicated that students have partially solidified cognitive structures and generally are subjected to higher peer influence. Students seem to exhibit relatively lower levels of self-interest and susceptibility to group norms (Sears, 1986). Thus, student sample can sometimes make it harder to find effects (Druckman and Kam, 2009). In our case, however, students do represent the population for the kind of study we are doing. Further, students might give a biased response if course credits are offered. In our study, we did not offer course credits to take care of this issue. Lastly, students from one institute may not have a diverse background including their native place which may again affect the generalizability of the results, however, in the University because there are over 1000 students, the students are very diverse and do represent a mini-India.

This study has used technological products for the advertisements in the e-magazines and the kind of product selected for the advertisement in the study might also play a role in the way it affects persuasion of the users.
Further, in this study, variables like motives i.e. goal orientation or experiential motives were induced through scenarios and we expect them to remain the same over time but that might not be the case.

6.5. Recommendations for Further Study

While students do use online media quite a lot, further research could extend it to other populations. In our study, motives were manipulated and the respondents were assigned to the conditions in the experiment randomly. However, future research could include persons with different preexisting motives to confirm that the effects take place in a real-world context. For better understanding, the model would be tested with corporate executives, who read e-newspapers more frequently. Further, due to an increase in usage of smartphones, tablets and phablets, the study of e-magazines is opportune and important, but future research could be extended to other online areas like blogs and retail websites.

In our study we have stated that ad-context congruity influences persuasion but the levels of persuasion vary depending on reader’s inherent motives, and strength of arguments in the ad. However, future studies might consider other factors like involvement with the product and purchase occasions besides considering the effect of culture, gender and age of the consumers.

This study has used technological products in the advertisements for both the congruent and incongruent conditions in the e-magazines. Future studies could look at using other products to see whether the result holds.

We used an experimental design wherein we manipulated a few of the variables like congruity by inserting ads in different contexts, argument strength by using different claims and
motives through scenarios. Other studies could look to measure the variables instead of manipulating them to measure the respondents’ actual motives.

Lastly, the role of advertising clutter can also be considered in the study since that is one of the reasons why consumers avoid the ads. It is defined as the belief that the amount of advertising in a medium is excessive (Speck & Elliott, 1997). Advertising clutter assumes importance as the amount of advertising is increasing and as a result consumers find them to be intrusive and hence avoid advertisements. Besides this, technology like eye-tracking can be used (Garcia, Ponsoda & Estebaranz, 2000; Porta et al., 2013) to better capture where the respondents are looking at and paying attention to understand ad effectiveness.

6.6. Chapter Summary

The increase of online advertising is accompanied with a decreasing attention and click through rate which is posing a problem for the marketers. This raises the question of how marketers can ensure online ad effectiveness. Hence the aim of the study was to test an empirical model concerning the effect of ad-context congruity on persuasion to provide answers to the dilemma faced by the marketers. Three models were developed and tested in three different studies. The analysis was done using ANOVA and Macro Process for the studies. The study helped analyze the relationship between ad-context congruity and persuasion while looking at the roles of motive, felt involvement and argument strength. The findings of the studies provide various theoretical and managerial contributions.