

Investigating Effects of Personality Characteristics on Responses toward Sexual Appeals in Advertising and Brand by Using the BFF Model

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article was to indicate personality roles in reaction to sex appeals in advertising and brand. Previous studies have tested the effects of traits such as extroversion, affection stability, and openness. Australia, and this research tested these effects in Iran by adding two variables (i.e., romanticism and fear) to the BFF model. The research used an experimental plan by compounding the two additional factors. Sex, level of sex appeal (at two levels) and participants with these characteristics served as were mediating factors. Product relation to appeals served as an internal factor under investigation. The researchers selected samples from among 384 undergraduate students randomly selected for average and intense appeals. The results demonstrated that extroversion, openness, romanticism and fear directly affected reactions to advertisement according to the tendency of the advertisement. The findings suggested that strong sex appeals should not be used for introverts, or shy and quiet persons. This research examined the effects of individual differences in reactions to advertisements, making it the first and most comprehensive research to indicate effects of personal characteristics on sex appeal.

KEY WORDS: Advertisements, Personality, Arousal, Experimental Plan, Individual Behavior, Romanticism.

1.INTRODUCTION

As long as advertisement exists, some form selling using sexual advertisements has been used [1]. Some researchers claim that using sexual appeals has been common in advertisements for approximately four decades, and such appeals are used in all advertisements [2], [3], [4] and [5]. Such preferences have resulted in greater research to define the effect of these appeals and perception of effective elements in reaction to them.

This research is generally focused on responses, stimuli, products and considerable differences have been observed in the effectiveness of these appeals. For example, men generally react more to sexual appeals than woman, although it depends on the model's gender and level of nudity [6], [7], [8] and [9]. The advertised product also plays a role that can be observed in many activities: when using these appeals, products should be observed without any predetermined sexual perceptions. Even in limited situations, responses can be positive [10]. Generally, one of the main focuses of research in previous studies is the many questions related to consumers' responses to sexual appeals. This research has identified the importance of factors and individual differences. Thus, the purpose of the current study is to investigate the effectiveness of main determinants of individual differences in response to sexual appeals in advertisements.

Personal characteristics are not focused on in marketing. Therefore, marketing relations specially the management of communication with customers, state that there should be personal approaches for everyone. Thus, marketing efforts are focused on customers' desires and who they are. The problem created from this perception is that economic motivation, philosophy of stability, and greater concentration contain all of today's creativeness in managing relationships with customers which leads to artificial characteristics, greater printing and a lack of mutual actions.

In addition to these experimental documents, personality affects responses to sexual appeals in advertising in various ways. Thus, to study the effectiveness of these trends, this research focuses on two purposes:

- Help create a comprehensive picture from previous studies about responses of people to sexual appeals
- Present suggestions about the way to use these pictures

This article includes the study of personality characteristics and qualities of perception models by using studies related to the effectiveness of sexual appeals and personality characteristics in response. Research hypotheses and special characteristics are also presented to review personal characteristics and sexual appeals as well as methods and trends.

Research on effectiveness of sexual appeals in advertising focusing on gender and people's responses is very limited: research about personality is also not considerable. Personality defines the dynamic organization and physiological systems that present individuals' behavioral patterns and feelings. These findings indicate stability and constancy of personality during specific time periods [11]. In the accepted hypothesis of personality, trait hypothesis is based on personality approaches called characteristics. Evidences indicates that

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inheritance, culture, and environmental factors have unidirectional affects: thus, characteristics conform to many approaches in psychology approaches.

Generally speaking, five characteristics form the most comprehensive and briefest structural model, although no consensus exists about the name of these characteristics, which consist of:

- Extroversion
- Neuroticism
- Openness
- Agreeableness
- Conscientiousness

Extroversion describes the amount and intensity of interaction among people who need stimulus and pleasure. Meanwhile, in neuroticism, individual differences indicate the tendency to experience anxiety disappointment, and guilty. Openness refers to the active considering and gratitude for experiences based on freedom of feelings, new ideas, flexibility in thought and preparation for extravagance in imagination and illusions. Agreeableness highlights the importance of having sympathy for and cooperating with others. Finally, conscientiousness amounts to organization, stability, and motivation of individuals in performing behaviors based on specific goals.

One of the important hypotheses of personality in the BFF model focuses on psychological research that is experimentally supported. The validity and completeness of these five elements are distinguished through expanded resources, cultures, and participants. These traits have considerable effects on behaviors and tendencies of individuals, and many writers believe that personality has a direct effect on tendencies and indirect effects on behaviors. In marketing, personality is primarily considered in light of customers' behaviors, and the relation of these behaviors has been studied based on marketing and advertising measures. For example, research has shown their effect on customers during purchasing and information processing as well as regarding what they purchase and the type of consumers, indicating the relationship of personality and customer satisfaction. These behaviors are based on mediators and affect the repetition of purchase, suggestion and complaint behaviors.

Limited studies have considered the effects of personality traits in mass relationships and advertising. Although the results of the effectiveness of personality traits on responses and preferences have been considered, the study of the potential of personality traits and theory of relations and applications has been presented as possible perceptions to separate customers [12]. For example, Bruno used a model of 16 personality traits and found that extroverted people respond more to mass relations than introverted people. The extroversion element was studied by other researchers as well, who found that extroversion is related to positive feelings while neuroticism is related to negative feelings. Finally, considering different types of appeals indicated that neuroticism has a positive relation to fear while extroversion has a negative relation to fear [13]. Studies indicate that personality affects behavior and tendencies of individuals in advertising and marketing. The current research uses the perception model to explain how personality affects responses toward sexual appeals in advertising.

1-1 Advertising and personality traits

Advertising is a way to have relationship and companies use it to expose customers to products and brands. This matter needs an expanded amount of budget of marketing in companies which should be allocated in the best way. Managers are responsible for allocating budget of marketing and better allocation of resources. Advertising consist of marketing which include assets of market which are vital for company performance. These touchable assets change to cash flow and increases with lack of stress.

There is a new trend in marketing researches which deals with optimum marketing and allocation of resources. It said that an optimum marketing compound cause the best results. This matter increases request to increase the advertisings. It means that this matter is important for companies to using advertising resources effectively and presents the best image. To concept personality traits of customers help organization in better decision making about the types of advertising and markets and proper classification of advertising.

The effect of personality traits has considerable conceptions. First, there are many choices in personal advertising. Personal approaches can be improved, if advertisements are according to individual preferences. If, this is not true that personality traits are better anticipators in compare to demography traits, a new way is created to optimize resources and classify customers. Second, it is specified that different classifications of product may be attractive for different individuals.

1-2 Conceptual framework

Generally, evidences indicates that sexual appeals are effective in encouraging audiences to use a product, and it seems that the effective origins of arousal related to sexual appeals energize and attract attention. Belch et al found that nudity and temptation in advertisement have considerable effects on arousal in both genders [14]. Yet are these arousals beneficial? Some researchers have found that, for women and those groups who more often

deal with sexual appeal these effects can cause stress and fatigue, which has a negative effect in advertisements [7], [15]. Separate from responses, these works support the effectiveness of sexual appeals through arousal. Arousal affects responses to advertisements through excitement from feelings. This discussion is supported by works analyzing stimulus feelings and responses to advertisements [12].

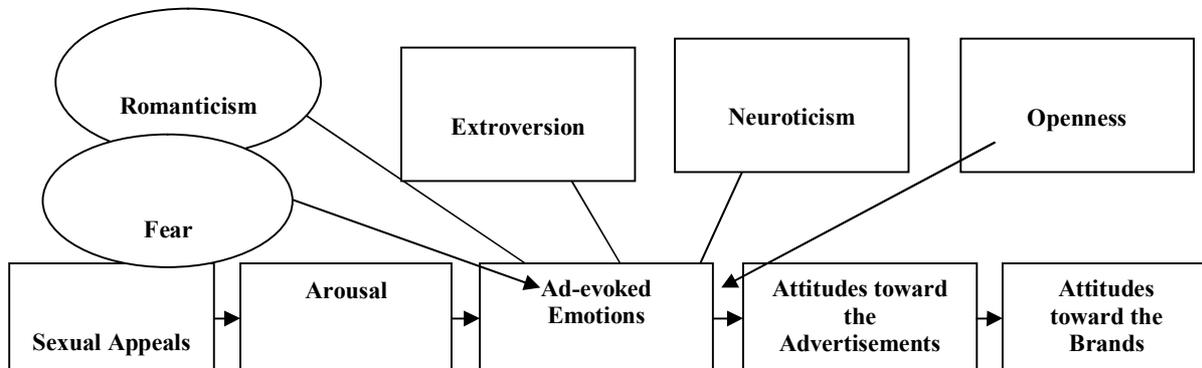


Figure1. Conceptual Framework (Conceptual Model)

Some researchers have indicated that responses affect attitude toward brand and purchase intention. The special role of pleasure, which has been accepted in advertising, indicates that arousal following pleasure affects subsequent attitudes to brand and advertisements [16]. Thus, the conceptual model discusses the effectiveness of sexual appeal in responses to advertisements. As the discussion suggests, aroused feelings in advertisements indicate effectiveness of personality in responses to sexual appeal.

Before presenting more detail in this area, it is important to understand how personality affects responses to sexual appeal. According to conceptual and social approaches, individual differences affect how an individual receives information from the environment. Thus, different personalities can affect individuals' perception of sexual appeal. In psychology, it is specified that personality traits affect feelings and extroversion in relation to positive effects and neuroticism in relation to negative effects. Several studies have stated that these effects exist [17]. Neuroticism and extroversion affect customer satisfaction by stimulating positive and negative feelings [18]. Researchers have studied the effects of extroversion and openness on attitudes toward brand. Both traits affect customer loyalty through affection responses [19], which causes those people with more freedom to experience intense positive and negative feelings. Ultimately, the range of research indicates that personality traits affect aroused feelings: this theory is presented in the final section on theoretical direction.

The BFF model, examined five personality traits in Australia, considering relations among neuroticism, openness, and extroversion [20]. Agreeableness is the strongest trait for conclusions, as it is an internal trait and the relationship between perception and sexual behaviors is specified. Measuring the consciousness of a person is considered in the area of organization, stability, and motivation: this approach does not conform to the intended purpose, making it an exception. The current research includes romanticism and fears with the three traits of neuroticism, openness, and extroversion to examine the effectiveness of these variables in sexual appeal in Iran. This comprehensive research focuses on the field of perceiving and affecting individual differences in sexual appeal in advertisements. Before compiling the hypotheses for personality traits, we will discuss gender, level of nudity, and relationships.

1-3 Theoretical framework

Gender and level of sexual appeal

Previous studies have demonstrated that in some cases, men respond to sexual appeal more than women. In three different studies, the men responded to nudity in advertisements and brand more than women [7], [14]. However some studies have criticized this theory and stated that in such advertisements only female nudity was used [5]. Although other researchers used couples in their tests men were still found to respond more than women indicating higher levels of sexual appeal [21], [22]. Some studies have also indicated that men respond more to advertisements of nude couples than women do [7], [14]. This leads to the first hypothesis of the current research:

H1: When advertising and brand appeals are at their highest levels, men tend are more often participants than women.

Factors related to product

Elementary text about sexual appeal reported that sexy pictures not related to a product prevent the audience from remembering the brand: when the pictures are related to the product presented remembering

occurs more frequently [23]. In addition, a female model for advertisements related to body oil is more appropriate than other products [24]. For this reason, product relation or nudity effect has been accepted in many studies about sexual appeal in advertisements. When information process capacity is limited, responses to sexual appeal not related to the product are unnecessary, and can be positive. If the capacity of processing is not limited, hypotheses based on effectiveness of product are tested [10].

H2: As long as the product is related to the advertisements separating the product from its appeals is more desirable.

Extroversion

Extroverts try to affect the thoughts and behaviors of others through an attitude related to negotiation. Moreover, they prefer a high level of arousal and always have a positive relation to dependency needs. Although extroverts are often a centered personality, some approaches relate to internal approaches. Introverted individuals are shy, self-contained and quiet whereas extroverts are active, follow excitement, and have positive feelings. Extroverts are freer in their sexual tendencies and do not agree with censorship of sexual pictures, unlike introverts. In addition, extroverts are less cautious compared to introverts [25]. Researchers have studied the relationship of this trait and sex experimentally [26]. These studies found that extroversion and neuroticism are traits that anticipate sexual attitudes intensely [27]. Meanwhile, a low level of introversion indicates fear and sexual anxiety [28]. Based on this evidences, the following hypothesis is stated:

H3: Regarding those advertisements that use sexual appeal, participants with a high score in extroversion will have more tendencies to accept sexual appeal.

Neuroticism

People with a low score in neuroticism are quiet, self-satisfied and self while those with a high score are not self-satisfied, are emotional, and upset easily. These people are very sensitive to sarcasm and are shy. Neurotic people move in the direction of negative emotions and show behaviors such as hostility and nervousness [29]. The reason for such behaviors is like a song in radio-namely, unimportant for them [30]. Since sexual appeals can change, those people with neurotic behavior are upset and anxious during the evaluation of such advertising. When facing sexual appeal and subjects related to sex, neurotic people become more upset and anxious. Indeed, individual with a high level of neuroticism have fewer tendencies toward sexual subjects while a low level of neuroticism decreases anxiety and sexual guilt [31].

H4: Participants with a low level of neuroticism enjoy sexual appeals in advertisements more than those with a high level of neuroticism.

Openness

Openness is defined as the active consideration of experiences for their own sake based on traits such as freedom in feelings, new ideas, attitudes toward traditional values, flexibility in thought, and readiness not to disagree. People with closed minds have traditional attitudes and are conservative in their opinions and their styles, whereas open-minded people are creative and curious and have attitudes towards new ideas and nontraditional values. Few studies have examined the relationship between openness and attitudes and behaviors; most focus on lack of awareness about the real meaning of this subject although openness has a vast effect on sexual subjects. Open-minded people have more information about sex and have more sexual experiences; they also have strong sexual attitudes and more freedom [32]. Research supports the theory that less openness occurs in relation to a low level of sexual stress and a high level of sexual imagination [33]. Finally, these characteristics relate to openness in limited sexual behaviors [33]. Thus we state the following hypothesis:

H5: When sexual appeal is used in advertisements, participants with high openness are more successful in advertising and creating brand compared to those with low openness.

Romanticism

Romanticism affects those people whose right hemisphere of the brain is more active and who have stronger feelings. These people have a strong ability to visualize and can present their thoughts and emotional ideas. Classicalism describes those people whose left hemisphere of the brain is more active and who are logical in their life. Researchers have studied romantic and classical approaches in advertisements. Results indicated that romantic stimuli in advertisement have considerable effects on personality [34]. Thus we state the following hypothesis:

H6: Romanticists respond more to sexual appeals in advertisements than classicalists.

Fear

Fear is one of the main traits in all people in the world, and it is revealed in different behaviors. Some studies have considered different traits related to fear in printing advertisements appeals. These results showed that, for those advertisements with aggressive stimuli, more and positive support is needed. However, the lack of personality stability causes negative anticipation [13]. Therefore:

H7: Individuals who encounter a fearful stimulus respond more to sexual appeal in compared to those who do not encounter a fearful stimulus.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research considers the effects of traits such as extroversion, neuroticism, and openness as well as adding two variables (romanticism and fear) to the BFF model. The stimulus consists of color and the way of writing advertisements for both genders. Both levels of sexual appeal were considered through nudity of models. In the normal situation the model wore a white T shirt and blue jeans. To intensify sexual appeal the model put on black underwear. In half of the advertisements, the product was related to sexual appeals; in the other half, this relationship did not exist.

To prevent prejudice, two advertisements were developed for each situation. A pretest was done with 30 students as the main sample. Advertisements were randomly presented through a computer and then a Likert scale was used for participants separately. The results showed that all variables were similar for both groups as planned allowing for their relationship to be investigated.

The test was done in two phases. In the first phase, participants were asked to complete 144 questions using a Likert scale related to extroversion, neuroticism, openness, romanticism, and fear. This test was done with 348 students, with 5% reliability and 20% errors. The second phase took place two weeks later; all students were asked to participate. Collecting information and presenting samples was done using Microsoft Excel so that we can present information on separate sheets. The sample consisted of 384 students who completed both sections of the study. Using students as samples decreases risk of error and causes exact anticipation. Since samples were students from an Islamic Azad university (IAU), cultural variables were considered.

2-1 Tools for collecting information

To collect information, a questionnaire was used based on the core research. The questionnaire consisted of 27 questions that focused on each of the dependant and independent variables.

Table1. Number of Variables in Questions

| Variables | Number | Questions |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Extroversion | 4 | 1-2-3-4 |
| Neuroticism | 4 | 5-6-7-8 |
| Openness | 4 | 9-10-11-12 |
| Romanticism | 4 | 13-14-15-16 |
| Fear | 4 | 17-18-19-20 |
| Related Factors to Product | 4 | 21-22-23-24 |
| Sexual Appeals in Advertisement | 3 | 25-26-27 |
| Total | 27 | |

Table2. Validity of Formal Questionnaire

| Variables | Questions | Factor Loading | T |
|---------------------------------|-----------|----------------|-------|
| Extroversion | 1 | .52 | 9.74 |
| | 2 | .45 | 8.39 |
| | 3 | .56 | 10.69 |
| | 4 | .54 | 10.30 |
| Neuroticism | 5 | .61 | 11.82 |
| | 6 | .69 | 13.89 |
| | 7 | .45 | 8.28 |
| | 8 | .68 | 13.56 |
| Openness | 9 | .56 | 9.80 |
| | 10 | .47 | 8.02 |
| | 11 | .68 | 11.99 |
| | 12 | .45 | 7.75 |
| Romanticism | 13 | .49 | 8.55 |
| | 14 | .43 | 8.25 |
| | 15 | .78 | 17.06 |
| | 16 | .87 | 19.65 |
| Fear | 17 | .53 | 10.48 |
| | 18 | .67 | 13.88 |
| | 19 | .42 | 8.05 |
| | 20 | .75 | 16.18 |
| Related Factors to Product | 21 | .81 | 18.28 |
| | 22 | .77 | 16.99 |
| | 23 | .76 | 16.67 |
| | 24 | .86 | 18.95 |
| Sexual Appeals in Advertisement | 25 | .86 | 19.00 |
| | 26 | .78 | 17.06 |
| | 27 | .87 | 19.65 |

Table3. Reliability of Questionnaire of Pre-Test and Formal Investigation

| Variables | Pre-Test Cronbach's alpha value | Formal Investigation Cronbach's alpha value |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Extroversion | .86 | .83 |
| Neuroticism | .79 | .70 |
| Openness | .80 | .81 |
| Romanticism | .95 | .85 |
| Fear | .82 | .87 |
| Related Factors to Product | .77 | .81 |
| Sexual Appeals in Advertisement | .71 | .78 |
| Total | .93 | .88 |

Questions were prepared by using the resources related to extroversion, openness, and neuroticism as well as factors related to the product [17], in addition to romanticism [28] and fear [27]. A Likert scale was used to measure the responses; questions were all closed types. To select the best way of asking questions, two experimental tests were used. The first test included 76 questions; the second test included 88 questions. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated at 91% for the 390 questionnaires distributed.

3. RESULTS

The following figure, depicts the factorial and analytical model (drawn using LISREL software), which was than measured. All structures measured correctly by related points. In other words, selected points are accurate enough to measure structures in equations under the name of latent variable. To measure sufficiency of samples according to assessed parameters, an analytical and factorial model was used, and a threshold of 0-1 for errors was considered. In this model, the RMSEA with degree of freedom was 222, and sample volume was 390, indicating that the model is congruent with the sample volume. Thus, the present model is interpretable based on the variables, and it is necessary the analyze the factorial model and measuring model.

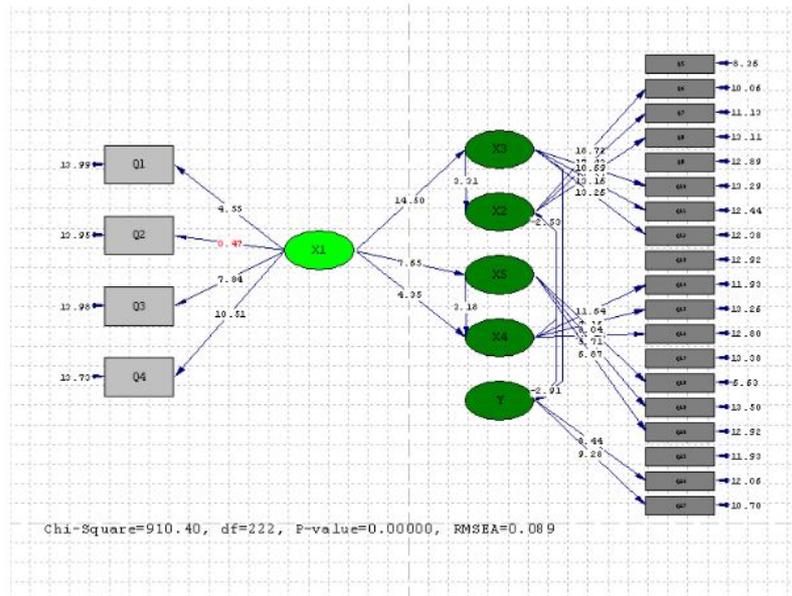


Figure2. CFA After Modify with LISREL

Table 4. Goodness of Fit Index

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Chi-Square(degrees of freedom) | 910.40 (222) |
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | 0.89 |
| Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) | 0.066 |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | 0.089 |
| Normed Fit Index (NFI) | 0.91 |
| Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) | 0.94 |

Table5. Construction Model in Comparison to Dependency Construction

| Construction | To Construction | Standard Parameter | T | Standard Error | Significant Level |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|------|----------------|-------------------|
| Gender | Advertising | 1/09 | 5/18 | 0/21 | 0/01 |
| Related Product | Advertising | 0/3 | 2/37 | 0/13 | 0/01 |
| Extroversion | Advertising | 0/17 | 1/37 | 0/12 | 0/01 |
| Neuroticism | Advertising | 0/08 | 0/67 | 0/12 | No Significant |
| Openness | Advertising | 0/87 | 0/09 | 9/22 | 0/01 |
| Romanticism | Advertising | 0/15 | 0/06 | 2/61 | 0/01 |
| Fear | Advertising | 0/16 | 0/13 | 1/21 | 0/01 |

Some tests were implemented between subjects for advertising and brands; the results indicated that they have considerable effects on gender. Studying the marks of the two groups shows that appeals of brand and advertising occur more in men than women. Thus, the first hypothesis is accepted. However, no considerable interaction occurred between gender and level of sexual appeal in advertisement and brands.

In addition, the average scores indicate that both men and women prefer usual level to intense level. The main affects for advertisements and brand indicated that normal appeals are preferred to intense appeals. In advertisements, tests have shown the considerable affects of sexual appeal on products. The average scores of the two groups indicated that advertisement and brand reports for related product than unrelated products. Thus, hypotheses two is accepted

The data further indicate that appeals in advertisements have considerable affects on extroverts: thus hypothesis three is accepted. Especially regarding advertisements, those participants with low extroversion scores had less response toward sexual appeal. However, the data indicated no considerable affects for neuroticism in sexual appeals, thereby rejecting hypothesis four.

The data indicated a considerable effect for advertisement appeals related to openness, albeit in the opposite direction. Thus, participants with low scores in openness have more tendencies toward appeals in advertisements. Thus, hypothesis five is accepted. In addition, romanticism was shown to have considerable responses toward sexual appeal in advertisements. Thus, hypothesis six is accepted.

Finally, the scores indicated that fear has a considerable effect on sexual appeals in advertisements; individuals do respond more to sexual appeals in advertisements when they are afraid of something. Thus, hypothesis seven is accepted.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Although not all hypotheses about personality traits were accepted, they all support the conclusion that personality has a considerable effect on responses toward sexual appeals in advertisements. This claim has long been accepted about extroversion, but-as we will discuss-results from openness and neuroticisms were also supported. Thus, this research had considerable effect on sexual appeal conceptions by presenting individual and physiological differences for the first time. Such research is helpful in presenting a comprehensive picture of related factors to responses of customers to sexual appeal in advertisements. Moreover, it was supported that this theory had considerable effects on gender and relation of product. The most obvious results indicated a relationship between personality and extroversion, as those people with a high score in extroversion responded to appeals more than others. However, this information was not enough for brand. To affect brand more information (e.g.. experience with product) was needed.

As we discussed in previous sections, openness was one of the main traits examined; people with this trait have congruent and agreeable feelings. However, for those people who do not have this trait, exposure was not enough. Effects of openness were in the opposite direction and demonstrated no interactional effect. The way of presenting the model and nudity was an appropriate and secure factor that attracts people with openness. We studied vast levels by decreasing clothes and increasing levels of nudity, without being surprising according to today’s standards. Moreover, no sexual contact or imitation of sexual behaviors was shown as more arousal in the sample might decrease the responses.

The neuroticism hypothesis was rejected in this research because we did not have any considerable relation in this respect. The relationship between effects of neuroticism and sexual appeal was specified. A key factor in the hypothesis was that participants with a high score of neuroticism were expected to respond less to sexual appeal in commercial advertisements. This relationship and the negative effects were ha specified. However, it did not mean that they responded negatively toward the stimulus. As we previously mentioned one of the constant achievements in the field of sexual has been that individuals do not indicate a desirable response when appeals are not related to the product. In this research, the effects of romanticisms and fear were considered for the first time, and both demonstrated positive effects in response to sexual appeal. All hypotheses were tested using structural equations model.

4-1 Managerial Applications

The results demonstrated that, when managers use couples in advertisements with sexual appeal they should use normal sexual appeal levels. In these situations, only men respond while women's responses are neutral. The result also supported the conclusion that more sexual appeals should be used in relation to the product in and is harmonious way. If sexual appeals in advertisements are not related to the product, the response of those with a high level of neuroticism is negative. Interactional effects between extroversion and level of appeals indicated that if sexual appeals are overly used better results occur among extroverts; such appeals should be avoided if the target group is introverts. Regarding open-minded people, more nudity should be used; however, for close-minded people, proper and secure sexual appeals should be used. The target group needs especial measures based on their behaviors and attitudes. The classification of the target market is possible based on different traits in different ways. For example, extroverted individual are active and follow excitements; thus they have some special expectations of the market related to these characteristics. We can classify them in this way and achieve specific goals through the media.

4-2 Future Research

This research is a first step in considering the effectiveness of personality in response to sexual appeal in advertisements. More research is needed to ensure more results. We should use different approaches to prove the opposite results of openness and consider participants with traits such as introversion, neuroticism, and close-mindedness. Personality researches should be done in various areas and with a large number of participants.

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