The Use of Fear Appeals in Social Marketing: Analysing the Influence of Racial Characteristics on Attitude Formation in HIV/AIDS Communication

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Aids pandemic in South Africa is a major concern

50% of HIV infections in SA transmitted before age 20; more than 5 million HIV positive people

Fear appeal approach has not been used in SA for HIV/AIDS prevention communication

LoveLife SA a multi-million Dollar (US$12) HIV/AIDS prevention campaign targeted at SA youth

- Current loveLife HIV/AIDS campaign not producing expected results
- Informational appeal - focus on positive sexuality
- LoveLife world's first organisation to have its funding discontinued by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB & Malaria
- Reflects concern about effectiveness - failed to achieve original target, reducing number of HIV infected youths to half
Fear appeals = designed to create anxiety & tension = motivates action

Increase in various social problems & behaviours, forcing practitioners to reconsider the use of fear appeals in social advertising

Take into account cultural & economic fabric of society, with different types of people from different races

Research on race groups:
- Differ in responses to communication, advertising effectiveness and attitudes towards messages
Aim of study was to measure the influence of fear-based advertising appeals (HIV/AIDS category) in terms of impact on behaviour.

Research challenge was to:

► Assess potential impact of low, moderate & high fear appeal advertising on fear, attitude, threat & efficacy levels
► Determine influence of racial group on the persuasive power of fear appeal advertising
► To determine the above through use of selected number of print & television commercials
► Use Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM) in the SA context to test interventions and evaluate outcomes
**Phase I:** Comprehensive literature review on the use and effect of fear appeals advertising

**Phase II:** Exploratory study (qualitative research/focus groups), in-depth responses and insight into attitudes, beliefs & behaviour of target segment in terms of fear appeal advertising

**Phase III:** Quantitative phase - measure the behavioural effect of fear appeal advertising amongst the selected target group. A pre-test post-test, 3X2 between subjects, experimental design was used to collect data from 360 respondents
Phase III (continued): Presentation of various fear appeal advertisements (not been seen by respondents previously, except 2 S.A. loveLife ads; to prevent halo effects) was experimental intervention while the likelihood of changing behaviour based on fear and efficacy (as a result of the different levels of fear) was the dependent variable.

**Experimental Design**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low Fear</th>
<th>Medium Fear</th>
<th>High Fear</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Print</strong></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Television</strong></td>
<td>60</td>
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</tbody>
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Respondents per cell: White male, White female, Black male, Black female, Coloured male & Coloured female
METHODOLOGY

Universe

- HIV/AIDS racial prevalence in SA: Black (18.4%); Coloured (6.6%); White (6.2%) & Indian (1.8%)
- Target group, 18-24 years old; HIV prevalence amongst males are 9.2% and amongst females 33.3 %
- This study used the racial group classification system used by the SA national government
  - Ethnicity and race seen as related concepts - ethnicity embedded in the idea of social groups
  - SA’s population racial groups: Black African, White, Coloured & Indian/Asian
Convenience sample

- Sample size: 360
- 50:50 male vs female
- 60 per cell x 6 experimental groups
- White, Black & Coloured (main racial groups) males and females (20 each per cell)
- Aged 18 - 24 years
  - Based on target audience similarity to SA’s major HIV/AIDS advertising campaign loveLife
  - Sexually active
- Western Cape (main urban area in SA)
- Working & students
- Educated (high school), middle to upper income
EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS

- Respondents were given self-completion questionnaire
- Questions based on risk behaviour diagnosis (Likert scale)
- Completed prior to any intervention
- Same behaviour scale post-intervention
- 3 experimental groups print ad used as intervention
  - each cell one type of appeal - low, medium or high
- 3 experimental groups television ad used as intervention
  - each cell one type of appeal - low, medium or high
Print & Television
LEVEL OF FEAR PRINT & TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS

Print

Low/No fear

High Fear

Tshepo & Busi

Chain Reaction

Tsunami

Television
Summary of Main Findings
RELIABILITY

- Reliability of mood adjectives to measure fear & attitude confirmed; Cronbach alpha 0.8

- Reliability of Extended Parallel Process Model confirmed
  - Cronbach alpha tests used on individual questions measuring response efficacy and self efficacy for pre- and post-tests
    - Scores ranged between 0.6 and 0.7

- Efficacy measures conducted for both condom usage and safe sexual behaviour
FEAR

- ANOVA comparisons & univariate tests of significance (all groups) resulted in interaction for fear & advert type (p<0.01); fear & type of advert appeal (p<0.01); fear & race (p<0.01)
  - Fear & advert type: respondents experienced higher fear after viewing television adverts than printed adverts
  - Fear & type of advert appeal: respondents experienced lowest level of fear for HIV/AIDS from low fear appeal adverts & highest from high fear appeal adverts
Fear

Advert type
Advert appeal
Race

Figure 1, means plot for fear and race, denotes that all race groups experienced similar levels of fear when exposed to low fear appeals.

- **White respondents’** fear increased gradually from low to high fear appeals.
- **Coloured respondents’** fear increased substantially after exposure to high fear appeals.
- **Black respondents’** fear increased gradually to medium fear appeals and their fear level stayed similar after this.
Figure 1: Means Plot for Fear and Race

- Medium & high fear appeal - respondents more afraid of HIV/AIDS
ANOVA & univariate tests of significance resulted in interaction for fear appeal & advert type (p<0.01); fear appeal & race (p<0.01)

Respondents’ attitude toward adv was more positive after exposure to medium than low fear appeals, as well as for high than low fear appeals.

Upward trend for attitude from low to high fear appeals stronger after viewing television advertisements.

Positive trend for attitude towards the advertisement from low to high fear appeals for both coloured and white respondents.

Black respondents’ attitude positive trend from low to medium fear appeals, with a downward trend for attitude from medium to high fear appeals
Repeated measures analysis of variance all advertisements & time for severity indicated a non-significant interaction (not strictly 5%)

The same measures for susceptibility indicated a significant interaction (p<0.01)
  - All respondents experienced higher levels of susceptibility after exposure to television advertisements

ANOVA comparisons & Tukey HSD post hoc tests resulted in an interaction for time & race (p=0.08)
  - Coloured respondents experienced higher levels of susceptibility than black & white respondents in all groups
ANNOVA comparisons & Tukey post hoc tests; interaction for time & fear (p < 0.01)

- Figure 2, means plot for time and fear illustrates efficacy showed a downward movement after exposure to medium and high fear appeals
- Upward movement when exposed to low fear appeals
Figure 2: Means Plot for Time and Fear

Current effect: F(2, 342)=5.0327, p=.00701
Vertical bars denote 0.95 confidence intervals

- Medium & high fear appeal – efficacy down
ANCOVA comparisons & Tukey HSD post hoc tests; interaction for advertisement, fear and race (p<0.01)

- Coloured respondents in four of the six groups had lower efficacy levels
- Black and white respondents had similar efficacy levels in the same groups
- No significant time effect was noted - efficacy in terms of safe sexual behaviour didn’t change after exposure to various fear appeal advertisements
CONCLUSIONS

- Racial characteristics play major role in reaction to fear appeals.
- Low levels of fear for HIV/AIDS from low fear interventions, medium & high fear attitude change & likelihood of adopting safe sexual behaviour.
- Targeted advertising campaigns for racial groups:
  - Black and white respondents require higher fear appeal messages to increase perceived vulnerability to HIV/AIDS
  - Have high efficacy levels - combined this will direct positive behavioural changes
  - Coloured respondents higher levels of fear after exposure to high fear appeals - are motivated to act.
  - Have lower efficacy perceptions - don't think they can practice safe sexual behaviour - need messages that increase perceptions of efficacy
Thank you!