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Richard W. Pollay and Banwari Mittal

# Here's the Beef: Factors, Determinants, and Segments in Consumer Criticism of Advertising

A comprehensive model of attitudes toward advertising includes three personal utility factors (product information, social image information, and hedonic amusement) and four socioeconomic factors (good for economy, fostering materialism, corrupting values, and falsity/no-sense). The proposed 7-factor model was tested on two independent samples: collegians (188) and householders (195) from Ohio and Mississippi Valley states, explaining 62% and 56% of the variance in their global attitudes, respectively. The model's dimensions were used to profile these publics and to identify attitudinal segments within them. Most respondents exhibited conflict between an appreciation of the personal uses and economic value of advertising and an apprehension of cultural degradation.

"Advertising is 85% confusion and 15% commission."—**Fred Allen**

"Let advertisers spend the same amount of money improving their product as they do advertising, and they wouldn't have to advertise it."—**Will Rogers**

**A**DVERTISING is an important social phenomenon. It both stimulates consumption and economic activity and models life-styles and a certain value orientation. Consumers are confronted with substantial daily doses of advertising in multiple media. Everyone seems to hold an opinion about various aspects of advertising, ranging from amusement and admiration to cynicism and condemnation. On one hand, advertising is appreciated enough to be the subject of

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TV talk shows and comedy skits, to have reels of award-winning commercials play in theaters, to have its art and slogans worn proudly on clothing, and to hear advertising phrases become the idiom of everyday speech, e.g. Wendy's briefly popular "Where's the Beef?" On the other hand, consumers fear covert manipulation and subliminal techniques and often complain about advertising clutter, banality, sexism, predation of children, and continuing proliferation into newer media and venues, e.g. Channel One in grade school classrooms or product placement in movies.

Consumer distrust of advertising is of great importance because it impedes advertising credibility and reduces marketplace efficiencies (Beales, Craswell, and Salop 1981; Calfee and Ringold 1987; Nelson 1974). Sceptical consumers develop naive models of advertisers' intentions and techniques, "schemer's schema" (Wright 1986), solidifying and codifying their distrust and structuring their counterarguments. High levels of distrust and cynicism put the professions of marketing and advertising in disrepute and ultimately require greater advertising spending and creativity to accomplish the same ends. A typical industry re-

sponse to this type of problem is advocacy advertising, asserting advertising's informativeness or centrality to a free market economy.

Adverse reactions to advertising are not confined to consumers. Intellectuals from diverse social sciences and humanities articulate their condemnation of advertising for its cultural impact (Pollay 1986a, 1986b). New social institutions have emerged, focusing their efforts against advertising and commercialization: magazines like *Media and Values* and *Adbusters* and organizations like the Cultural Environment Movement or the Center for the Study of Commercialism in Washington, D.C. (Pollay 1991). The extent to which the intellectual criticisms reflect more widely held consumer beliefs and attitudes is not well known, however.

Despite its importance, research to date has not fully explored the range of specific beliefs held by consumers and their relative importance in relation to global attitudes toward advertising and other consumer behaviors. The bulk of the research to date has centered on and relied upon a classical two-dimensional measure of perceived social and economic effects of advertising (Bauer and Greyser 1968).

The purposes of this research are to (1) explore the adequacy of the classical measure of advertising's perceived effects; (2) build and test a more comprehensive model of beliefs and attitudes toward advertising; (3) identify the latent factors in consumers' belief structures about advertising; and (4) estimate the relative importance of belief factors in relation to global attitudes.

In addition, the research may begin to (1) verify if the intellectual criticisms of advertising are shared by the general public and (2) illustrate the usefulness of a comprehensive model and measures in the identification of consumer segments with differing belief and attitude profiles.

## Background and Literature Review

### *The Classic Study and Followups*

Harvard's Bauer and Greyser (1968), working with the American Association of Advertising Agencies, conducted in-home personal interviews with a national probability sample ( $n = 1846$ ). They assessed (1) the salience of advertising issues relative to other aspects of American life; (2) thoughts and feelings about advertising in general, through open-ended responses; (3) scaled beliefs about the social and economic role or effects of advertising; and (4) reactions to specific print ads.

The scaled items of (3) were based upon a survey of published essays critical of advertising and the then-extant empirical studies, mostly done by media. The

seven resulting items were grouped into two clusters of "economic" and "social" effects, based solely on the apparent coherence of topics. "Economic" items were: "Advertising is essential," "Advertising helps raise our standard of living," "Advertising results in better products for the public," and "In general, advertising results in lowers prices." "Social" items were: "In general, advertising presents a true picture of the product advertised," "Most advertising insults the intelligence of the average consumer," and "Advertising persuades people to buy things they should not buy."

This study created the bench marks for subsequent studies and provided many with their primary measurement tool. Researchers employed this 7-item, 2-dimensional scale to measure different population groups, such as executives (Greyser and Reece 1971), subscribers to *Consumer Reports* (Anderson, Engledow, and Becker 1978), and students (e.g., Haller 1974). Zanot (1981) reviewed these and related studies, concluding that American consumers' attitudes about advertising had become more negative over the years. One notable consistency of these studies (and the authors' study) is the simultaneous appreciation of advertising's economic role and criticism of its social role. While these two dimensions do not comprehensively measure the underlying beliefs about advertising, they were central themes in the criticisms that Bauer and Greyser (B/G) and the AAAA sought to (in)validate. Although their open-ended responses provided many "information" and "entertainment" reasons for liking advertising, their 7-item measure has often been adopted as if it were sufficient.

The use of the B/G measures, with some supplementation, continued into the 1980s, although the typical study was still descriptive (e.g., Larkin 1977; Schutz and Casey 1981; Triff, Benningfield, and Murphy 1987). Though the supplementations did not produce a comprehensive list of underlying beliefs about advertising in any single source, collectively they suggested several facets of consumer beliefs about advertising: advertising as an information source (Barksdale and Darden 1972; Haller 1974; Durand and Lambert 1985; Muehling 1987; and Russell and Lane 1987; Soley and Reid 1983), materialism (Larkin 1977), falsehood and deception (Muehling 1987; Ford, Smith and Swasy 1990), ethics in advertising (Triff, Benningfield, and Murphy 1987), enjoyment of advertising (Russell and Lane 1989), and issues of poor taste and sexuality in advertising (Larkin 1977). Our proposed model incorporates these additional belief categories.

More analytic approaches have been undertaken by some authors. For example, Durand and Lambert (1980, 1985) used consumer alienation to explain variance in the support for regulation, and Muehling

(1987) regressed overall attitudes on some assessed beliefs. An important distinction was introduced by Reid and Soley (1982), who assessed the B/G items twice, phrasing them in both personalized and generalized ways, asking respondents about both themselves and others. Respondents thought, for example, that “lowers prices” or “better products” were benefits of advertising accruing to others more than themselves. They were also negative about advertising’s social effects but judged others to be more susceptible than themselves.

### **The Factor Structure of Beliefs**

The seven B/G items have been factor analyzed in two studies: Anderson, Engledow, and Becker (1978) studied *Consumer Report* subscribers, and Andrews (1989) surveyed 1562 students from six different schools. Despite the differences in dates and samples, both found very similar results. Two factors emerged, one “economic” and one “social,” with “presents a true picture” loading nearly equally on these. Both also found that “raises standard of living” and “better products” had higher loadings than did “essential” and “lowers prices,” with similar numerical results. This is consistent with Bauer and Greyser (p. 96), who considered “essential” to be “an overall appraisal of advertising” rather than a specific belief. They also did “not regard these (lowers prices) data as bearing on advertising’s role in the overall economy” (p. 103). These results informed our treatment of “essential,” “lowers prices,” and the other B/G items in the model and measures that follow.

### **Recap**

From this literature review, the authors’ primary conclusion is that a 2-factor model is not comprehensive and may well be improved upon with additional items that capture additional belief factors likely to be determinants of attitudes. It seems advisable to incorporate both information- and entertainment-related reasons and to distinguish between the utilitarian value of advertising to the individual and the perceived social and economic effects of advertising as an institution and in the aggregate.

It also seems that students might constitute a reasonable sample, at least for measurement development and modeling purposes, with respect to advertising attitudes. Few studies report significant age, demographic, or geographic variation (except between executives and the general public), and several explicitly report no such effect. Even where meaningful differences might well be presumed, they are not apparent in the underlying factor structures, as vividly seen in comparing Anderson, Engledow, and Becker (1978) and Andrews (1989). Nonetheless, the authors chose nonbusiness students for one sample and

used a second sample drawn from a consumer panel of heads of households.

## **Toward a More Comprehensive Model and Measures**

The authors’ model builds upon the fundamental distinction between attitudes and beliefs (Wilkie 1986, p. 450). Beliefs are descriptive statements about object attributes (e.g., advertising is truthful) or consequences (e.g., advertising lowers prices), whereas attitudes are summary evaluations of objects (e.g., advertising is a good/bad thing). Like Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), the authors consider attitudes to emanate from beliefs, being the aggregation of weighted evaluations of perceived attributes and consequences. Their model is also congruent with a functional view of attitudes (Lutz 1978).

The authors developed their thinking about advertising-specific factors and their inventory of items from existing studies and the critical literature. They posited several antecedents (i.e., concepts that precede, influence, explain, and/or predict other concepts) to advertising attitudes, formulated measures for them, and hypothesized interrelationships among them, aided throughout by the results of earlier studies, their own exploratory studies, the critical literature, and theoretical reflections. Nonetheless, in the absence of both a strong theory and much previous empirical work of this scope, many of their a priori expectations are posited as tentative expectations.

Following Reid and Soley (1982) and Sandage and Leckenby (1980), the authors make a fundamental distinction between those factors that explicate the personal uses and utilities of advertising from those that reflect consumers’ perceptions of advertising’s social and cultural effects. This tends to separate those items that are specific, personal, and self-reflective from those that are more abstract, generalized, and projective to others. They posit three personal uses and four societal effects that might be seen to stem from advertising, which might therefore determine peoples’ global attitudes, and which might also reveal important differences among people in their beliefs and attitudes toward advertising.

### **Personal Uses**

*1. Product information.* Much of the discussion by economists and the advocacy justification of advertising rest on its role as a provider of information (Norris 1984). This information, it is argued, permits greater marketplace efficiencies (i.e., more exact matching between consumers’ needs and wants and producers’ offerings). Information-related reasons were the ones most often given to B/G in open-ended responses, and seemed to them to be strongly related to overall

attitude. "Product information" is measured with: "Advertising is a valuable source of information about local sales;" "Advertising tells me which brands have the features I am looking for;" and "Advertising helps me keep up to date about products/services available in the marketplace."

2. *Social role and image.* Much advertising, especially at a national level, provides life style imagery, and its communication goals often specify a brand image or personality, the portrayal of typical or idealized users, associated status or prestige, or social reactions to purchase, ownership, and use. Many consumers pay premium prices for conspicuously branded items and wear clothing featuring logos, slogans, and other corporate designs. Recent research addresses the role that advertising plays in creating product "meaning" (Friedmann and Zimmer 1988; Tharp and Scott 1990) and self-image (Richins 1991). "Social role and image" are measured with: "From advertising I learn about fashions and about what to buy to impress others;" "Advertisements tell me what people with life styles similar to mine are buying and using;" and "Advertising helps me know which products will or will not reflect the sort of person I am."

3. *Hedonic/pleasure.* The experience of advertising can be a pleasure upon exposure or in recollection. Ads can be beautiful to look at, touching in their sentiment, funny in their portrayed events, or uplifting in their music, pace, and attitude. Entertainment-related reasons were often given by B/G's respondents in diary comments reacting to specific ads. "Hedonic/pleasure" is measured with: "Quite often, advertising is amusing and entertaining;" "Sometimes advertisements are even more enjoyable than other media contents;" and "Sometimes I take pleasure in thinking about what I saw or heard or read in advertisements."

### **Societal Effects**

1. *Good for the economy.* Advocates of advertising claim that it speeds acceptance of new goods and technologies, fosters full employment, lowers the average cost of production, promotes a healthy competition between producers to all consumers' benefit, and generally is a prudent use of national resources that raises the average standard of living (e.g., AAF 1992). At the least, advertising is likely to support the marginal propensity to consume (i.e., the proportions of marginal income that are spent, not saved and invested). As Galbraith (1967, p. 219) observed: "Advertising and its related arts thus help develop the kind of man (person) the goals of the industrial system require—one that reliably spends his income and works reliably because he is always in need of more." "Good for economy" is measured with: "In general, adver-

tising helps our nation's economy;" "Advertising is wasteful of our economic resources;" and "In general, advertising promotes competition which benefits the consumer." The B/G items, "raises standard of living," "better products," and "lowers cost of goods," are treated in the authors' causal model as distal antecedents (defined below).

2. *Materialism.* By parading an endless array of material goods in an enticing way, advertising is alleged to preoccupy consumers with commercial concerns, at the expense of social, political, philosophical, and cultural concerns. Consumers may or may not perceive this to be true and, if it is true, whether it is a good or a bad focus of attention. Materialism is a set of belief structures that sees consumption as the route to most, if not all, satisfactions. "Materialism" is measured with: "Advertising is making us a materialistic society—overly interested in buying and owning things;" "Advertising makes people buy unaffordable products just to show off;" "Advertising tends to make people live in a world of fantasy;" and "Because of advertising, people buy a lot of things that they do not really need." This last item supplants the more moralistic B/G item, "persuades . . . *should not buy* (emphasis added)."

3. *Value corruption.* Advertising appeals are based on value premises. These values, it is alleged, do more to reinforce the seven deadly sins (greed, lust, gluttony, envy, sloth, pride, and anger) than they do to the seven cardinal and theological virtues (prudence, temperance, justice, fortitude, faith, hope, and charity). Ads can contradict the values parents hope to instill in their children. Mannes (1964, p. 32) lamented: "I don't think the advertisers have any real idea of their power not only to reflect but to mold society . . . And if you reflect us incorrectly, as I believe you are doing, you are raising a generation of children with cockeyed values." President Bush's budget director, Richard Darman, charged advertising with making the nation "blithely self-indulgent," with a short-term focus that risked the nation's historic place and mission. He illustrated his points with slogans like "Take the Money and Run" and "You Can Have It All" (Kilborn 1989). "Value corruption" is measured with: "Advertising promotes undesirable values in our society;" and "Most advertising distorts the values of our youth." The authors also measured "There is too much sex in advertising today," and "Some products/services promoted in advertising are bad for our society," treating these in their causal model as distal antecedents to this factor.

4. *Falsity/no sense.* Advertising can be seen as purposefully misleading, or more benignly, as not fully informative, trivial, silly, confusing, etc. Some of this characteristic impacts on the personal usefulness of

advertising as an information source, but it also has potential societal consequences by making commonplace the telling of half-truths and other self-serving deceptiveness, justifying cynicism. "Falsity/no sense" is measured with: "In general, advertising is misleading," and two B/G items, "insults intelligence" and "presents a true picture (reverse-scored)."

### **Global Attitude**

All of the specific beliefs listed above are posited to be related to more generalized attitudes which exist at a different level of cognitive abstraction. These global attitudinal judgments are measured with: "Overall, I consider advertising a good (bad) thing;" "Overall, I like (dislike) advertising;" "My general opinion about advertising is (un)favorable." The authors also measured but did not here employ the B/G item "essential."<sup>1</sup>

### **Other Considerations**

*Distal antecedents.* Concepts whose influence is indirect, that is, through other intermediary concepts, are termed "distal antecedents." Figure 1 displays the four distal antecedents in the authors' model whose effects on global attitudes toward advertising, if any, are hypothesized to be mediated by the more general belief factors. Whether this holds true and/or in addition there is a direct impact on global attitudes will be determined empirically. "Sex in ads" and "promotes undesirables" are both posited as antecedent to "corrupts values." "Lowers cost of goods" is posited as related to but distinct from, "good for the economy." The factor analyses of the B/G items also suggested that "better living," the experience of an upgraded standard of living, was a separable antecedent to the judgment about the macro effect of being "good for the economy." "Better living" was measured by the B/G items "better products" and "raises standard of living" and was maintained as a separate concept in the model and analysis.

*Interrelationships.* The primary relationships hypothesized between the seven major and four distal antecedents and global attitudes are shown in Figure 1, whose insert shows the posited interrelationships among the primary determinants. Although of only secondary interest at this stage, a number of such interrelationships are expected and allowed. Given the limited previous research of this nature, the authors'

<sup>1</sup>In pretests, the item "essential" proved to be subsumed in the preferred measures of attitude. In a factor analysis (not shown) of the seven Bauer-Greyser items and the authors' three attitude items, three factors emerged with their items, and the item "essential" formed a single factor different from the other two. The "essential" item is atypical as a measure of attitude, in the authors' view, because it raises an issue of instrumentality toward ambiguous ends, i.e., "essential to what or whom?"

stance with respect to the importance of many of these is exploratory, although they do have directional expectations.

The authors model the causal flow to be from the specific, concrete, and personal to the general and abstract. Therefore, it is proposed that judgments about product information (as well as lowers cost of goods and better living) lead to correlated judgments about ads being good for the economy. In economic theory, and perhaps in fact, the personal (micro) benefits may be seen to flow from the societal (macro) phenomena of progress and productivity, not the other way around. But the authors argue that for the common citizen, being "good for the economy" is an abstract judgment that requires an intellectualization and is likely to be less accessible than reflections about more tangible specifics, such as product prices or advertising information. The latter, then, are more likely to cause the global judgment than the other way around. In modeling attitude formation the authors base their expectations on psychological processes not economic ones.

*Comprehensiveness.* The authors reviewed B/G's responses to open-ended questions about why people liked and disliked advertising in general or why they approved or disapproved of specific ads. This, and reflections on the many previous descriptive studies, the intellectual criticisms summarized by Pollay (1986a, 1986b), and the authors' own exploratory studies with adult consumers, lead them to believe that the causal model summarized in Figure 1 is reasonably inclusive of all plausible proximate antecedents (causes) to attitudes toward advertising.<sup>2</sup>

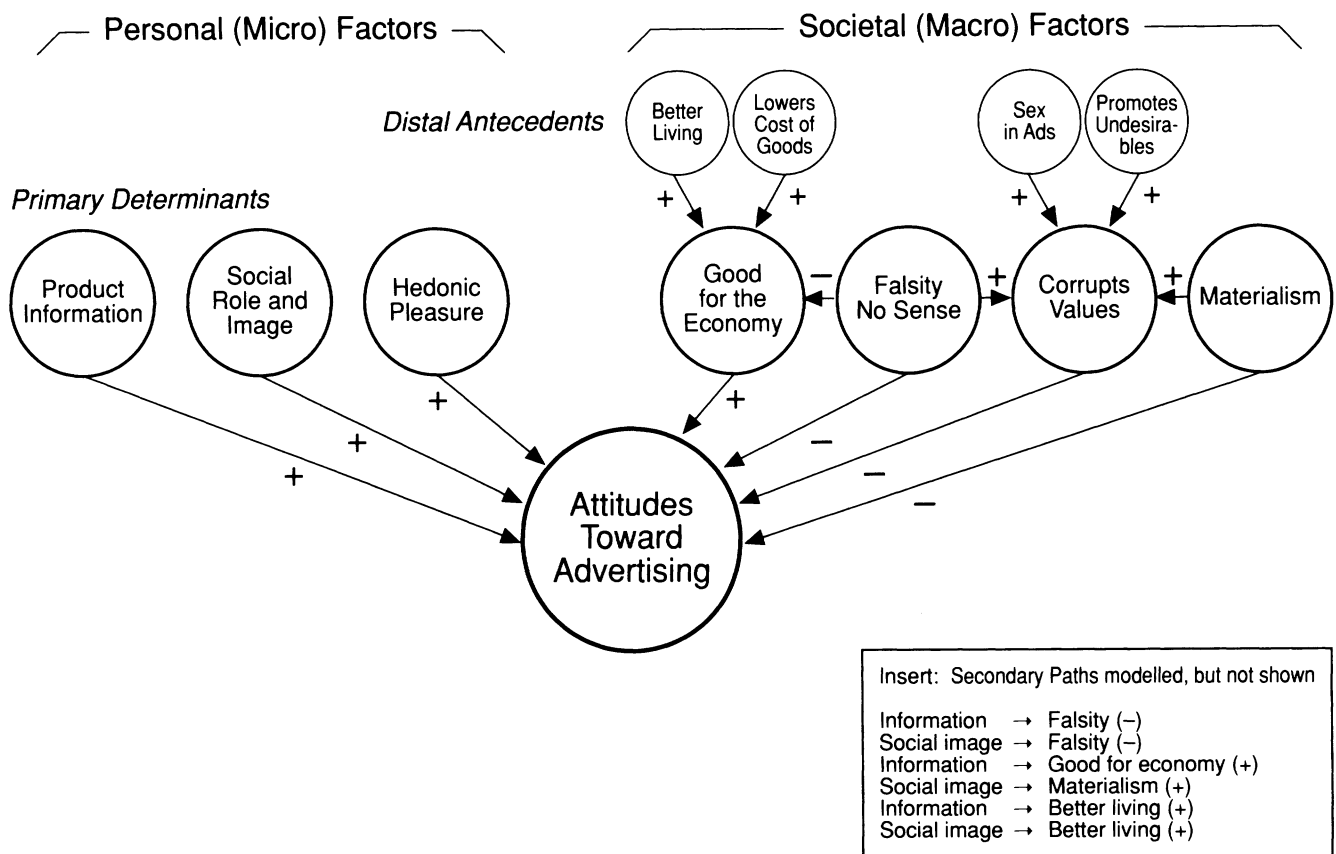
## **Method**

*Exploratory studies.* A convenience sample of students ( $n = 18$ ) was asked open-ended questions about how advertising helped them and what undesirable aspects of it affected them personally. Likewise, the students were asked about advertising's good or bad effects on society. From another convenience sample of adults ( $n = 30$ ), open-ended responses describing five good and five bad things about TV advertising was obtained. The responses aided in the model formulation and the drafting of measurement items administered to two independent samples totaling 383 respondents.

*Sample 1.* Collegians were surveyed at an Ohio

<sup>2</sup>The authors measured, but did not ultimately employ, "intrusiveness," judging it to be tautologically linked to global attitudes and an alternative measure of these. Respondents who are negative in attitude tend to report ads as intrusive, and those who are positive do not ( $r = .59$ ). Because ads are inherently intrusive of media content, especially in broadcast media, explaining attitudes with "intrusiveness" offers little analytic insight. The authors also measured the salience of advertising by an involvement item but see it as a potential mediator or qualifier of their model rather than an element in it.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Hypothesized Primary Structure of Beliefs and Attitudes About Advertising**



Valley state university, using a self-administered instrument given to mixed undergraduates while they attended several general studies classes (e.g., psychology, chemistry, geography). All belief and attitude statements were measured using 5-point Likert scales. Instructions reinforced that “there are no right or wrong answers; only your personal opinions matter.” The instrument (see Appendix) was randomly distributed between two versions with reversed wordings for the directional global attitudinal measures: good–bad; favorable–unfavorable. The survey was completed individually by 188 respondents during class time. These students were from a wider age range (17–50) than might be expected. While 37% were under 21 years of age, 40% were in their twenties, 15% in their thirties, and 9% in their forties (totals 101% because of rounding). Females (58%) and whites (98%) were in the majority.

*Sample 2.* The authors also examined the responses of a more mature sample of heads of households. Members of a consumer panel from a Missis-

sippi Valley state had been surveyed in an earlier study of their TV-related behaviors (e.g., zipping and zapping, fast-forwarding tapes and changing channels by remote control). This survey contained a large battery of advertising belief and attitude items that included virtually all the same categories of judgment but with some different measurement items in part.<sup>3</sup> The survey was mailed to 300 households—a randomly selected sample from the panel—with 203 responding, of which 195 (65%) had complete responses on the items utilized. These were predominately female (69%) and white (95%). They were, as desired, older than

<sup>3</sup>To measure “falsity/no sense,” respondents estimated, among seven response categories, the percentage of TV ads that were “honest and believable,” “deceptive and misleading,” and “insults (to) intelligence.” All other items were measured, as in Sample 1, on a 5-point scale. “Value corruption” was measured by “A lot of commercials are based on ideas and values which are opposite to my own values.” “good for the economy” was measured by “If TV advertising were eliminated, consumers would be better off.” No measures exist in this sample for “promotes bad things.” All measures for the major factors of “product information,” “social role and image,” “materialism,” and “sex in advertising” were identical with those for Sample 1.

the student sample, with a fairly uniform distribution across mature adult years; those in their twenties and thirties (21%), forties (20%), fifties (20%), sixties (25%), and seventy-plus (14%).

## Results

### *Are Multiple Dimensions Evident?*

*Factor structure (Sample 1).* To see if the multiple factors posited were being coherently measured and how the B/G items and their two factors mapped onto the factor structure hypothesized, the authors submitted the battery of 28 items from Sample 1 to a principal components procedure with a varimax rotation. This analysis yielded six orthogonal factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, explaining 55% of the variance within these data. These results are shown in Table 1, where for expositional purposes, the B/G items are isolated in the lower part of the table. Table 1 was first read for general results, deferring discussion of the B/G items.

Each of the three personal consequence belief categories yielded its own factor: product information (III), social role and image (II) and hedonic/pleasure (V). Among the societal level belief factors, good for the economy (IV) is a distinct factor. Materialism, value corruption and falsity/no sense do not separate but rather conglomerate into a single factor (I), which also includes one of our distal antecedent items, sex in ads. The last factor (VI) was the single item, promotes bad things, which reflects our distal antecedent, promotes undesirables.

As in any factor analysis, several cross-loadings can be seen where items show minor loading on factors other than where they principally load. These, for at least the authors' data, reflect interpretable and theoretically supportable interrelationships among conceptually distinct variables. For example, the last item in hedonic/pleasure, about taking pleasure in recalling ads, has a relatively low loading on hedonic/pleasure and also cross-loads onto factors III, product information, and II, social role and image. This suggests that "taking pleasure in thinking about advertising" stems not only from its amusement value but from its informative value as well. For another example, "promotes bad things" cross-loads onto the materialism/value corruption factor, which is congruent with the hypothesized structural relationship of this item with corrupts values (see Figure 1).

The B/G items, below the line, did not add to the number of factors but rather were absorbed in the aforementioned six factors. Another factor analysis, not shown, that excluded the B/G items yielded vir-

tually the same six-factor solution.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the B/G inventory of seven items was subsumed in the personal and societal belief categories the authors propose. They load onto the factors in interesting ways. Advertising is seen as essential in conjunction with its value for providing personal product information (Factor III) not for its economic role. Better living (the label for better products and a higher standard of living conjoined) loads onto Factor II with social role and image, suggesting that the latent concept might be up-to-dateness, as in "keeping up with the Joneses." Lowers the cost of goods, as expected, loads onto the good for the economy factor (IV).

Of the three B/G social items, "insults intelligence" and "true picture of goods" were presumed and labeled by the authors as falsity/no sense items, and "should not buy" as a materialism item. Although all three items do load together considerably on the materialism/corruption/falsity factor (I), the "true picture of goods" item has an even higher loading on Factor II, the social role and image factor. While this may make some sense post-hoc, it is an aberration in the otherwise clean and interpretable factor-loading pattern and a deviation from the authors' expectations. So, too, is the conglomeration of materialism, value corruption and falsity/no sense into a single factor, a result that will be dealt with after examining the factor structure in the householder data.

*Factor structure (Sample 2).* While the B/G items were unavailable in the householder sample, items tapping all seven belief categories were submitted to a principal components factor analysis procedure with varimax rotation. Five factors emerged with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, explaining 60.4% of the variance in the data. As Table 2 shows, the three personal belief categories each yielded their own factor: information (IV), social role and image (I), and hedonic/pleasure (V). Falsity/no sense also yielded its own factor (III). Materialism and value corruption coalesced into a single factor (II), and good for the economy overlapped primarily with information but to some extent with falsity/no sense factors as well.

Although some items are different between the two samples, these results are common: (1) the three personal consequence belief categories are distinguished from one another and as a group from the societal consequence belief categories, (2) the societal consequence of good for the economy is distinguished from the other three societal consequences, and (3) multiple items purported to measure a belief category cohered with high within-factor loadings. Two noteworthy de-

<sup>4</sup>Technical details for this and other results, such as secondary interrelationships, are available from the second author, because the authors focused this report on the primary paths of Figure 1.



**TABLE 1**  
**Factor Analysis of Beliefs about Advertising**

Beliefs About Advertising	Mean*	S.D.	Factor Loadings					
			I	II	III	IV	V	VI
<b>Product Information</b>								
valuable (for) local sales	3.83	1.05	—	—	<b>.796</b>	—	—	—
find brands with features	3.65	0.87	—	.379	<b>.561</b>	.297	—	—
up to date . . . what's available	3.65	0.96	—	.301	<b>.545</b>	.391	.299	—
<b>Social Role and Image</b>								
fashions . . . impress others	2.74	1.23	.227	<b>.586</b>	—	—	—	-.312
what similar others buying	2.91	0.96	—	<b>.556</b>	.385	—	—	—
what reflects me	2.39	1.03	—	<b>.631</b>	—	—	—	—
<b>Hedonic/Pleasure</b>								
amused/entertained	3.80	0.94	—	—	.227	—	<b>.678</b>	—
sometimes better than show	3.29	1.17	—	—	—	—	<b>.814</b>	—
pleasure in recalling	3.24	1.05	—	.402	.314	—	<b>.422</b>	—
<b>Good for the Economy</b>								
help's nation's economy	3.36	0.98	—	.345	—	<b>.663</b>	—	—
(not) wasteful of resources	3.23	1.02	-.322	—	.250	<b>.577</b>	.257	-.273
beneficial competition	3.54	1.00	-.260	—	.216	<b>.620</b>	—	—
<b>Materialism</b>								
materialistic society	3.69	1.12	<b>.675</b>	—	—	—	—	—
overspend . . . to show off	3.25	1.19	<b>.701</b>	—	—	—	—	—
induces living . . . (in) fantasy	3.15	1.12	<b>.691</b>	—	—	-.233	—	—
buy things not needed	3.57	1.06	<b>.762</b>	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Value Corruption</b>								
promotes undesirable values	3.07	1.03	<b>.631</b>	—	—	-.219	-.220	.244
distorts values of youth	3.40	1.05	<b>.596</b>	—	—	—	—	.260
<b>Falsity/No Sense</b>								
misleading	2.66	0.92	<b>.538</b>	-.265	—	—	—	.316
<b>Promotes Bad Things</b>								
	3.72	0.99	.287	—	—	—	—	<b>.726</b>
<b>Too Much Sex</b>								
	3.22	1.28	<b>.372</b>	—	—	-.224	—	.341
<b>Bauer-Greyser Items</b>								
<b>Economic</b>								
Overall: essential	3.89	1.04	-.255	—	<b>.658</b>	—	.224	—
Better Living:								
raises standard of living	2.62	1.13	—	<b>.629</b>	.268	—	—	—
better products	2.71	1.02	—	<b>.596</b>	—	—	—	.389
Costs: lowers cost of goods	3.70	1.04	-.223	—	—	<b>.659</b>	.244	—
<b>Social</b>								
Falsity/No Sense								
true picture of goods	2.32	0.91	.325	-.615	—	-.241	—	—
insults intelligence	2.81	1.06	<b>.481</b>	—	-.236	—	—	.351
Materialism: should not buy	3.42	1.07	<b>.764</b>	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Eigenvalues</b>			6.66	3.46	1.56	1.35	1.27	1.19
<b>% Variance—Factor</b>			23.8	12.4	5.6	4.8	4.5	4.2
<b>% Variance—Cumulative</b>			23.8	36.2	41.8	46.6	51.1	55.4

\*All item means display pro-dimension agreement. Higher mean scores indicate greater agreement with item, but note that this is not necessarily a pro-advertising attitude. Factor loadings of less than .200 have been omitted, and those judged to constitute a factor—the dominant loadings—are in boldface.

partures from the hypothesized seven-factor structure occurred, however. First, good for the economy was a distinct factor only in Sample 1, not in Sample 2. Because single-item measure is inherently less reliable than a three-item measure, the result for Sample 1 perhaps has greater credence. The second discrepancy concerns the desirable separation of falsity/no sense from Materialism/value corruption in Sample 2, but not in Sample 1.

*On the merging of three societal factors.* Because the three factors of materialism, value corruption, and falsity merged together in the collegian sample, the authors tested for discrimination among them using LISREL-estimated confirmatory factor analyses. A three-factor model was compared with separate sets of two-factor models—the latter obtained by merging all possible combinations of two factors at a time. A chi-square difference test (Bagozzi and Phillips 1982)

**TABLE 2**  
**Factor Analysis of Beliefs about Advertising (Householder Sample)**

Beliefs About Advertising	Mean*	S.D.	Factor Loadings				
			I	II	III	IV	V
<b>Product Information</b>							
valuable (for) local sales	2.80	1.13	.394	—	—	<b>.604</b>	—
find brands with features	3.10	0.94	—	—	—	<b>.688</b>	—
up to date . . . what's available	3.27	0.95	—	—	—	<b>.656</b>	.464
<b>Social Role and Image</b>							
fashions . . . impress others	2.27	1.05	<b>.637</b>	—	—	—	—
what similar others buying	2.69	1.00	<b>.828</b>	—	—	—	—
what reflects me	2.09	0.95	<b>.761</b>	—	—	—	—
<b>Hedonic/Pleasure</b>							
sometimes better than show	3.18	1.27	—	—	—	—	<b>.797</b>
entertaining and enjoyable (F)	2.22	0.88	.289	—	-.306	—	<b>.601</b>
<b>Good for the Economy</b>							
consumers would be better off	2.98	1.05	—	-.231	-.390	<b>.562</b>	—
<b>Materialism</b>							
materialistic society	3.89	.94	-.217	<b>.752</b>	—	—	—
overspend . . . to show off	3.58	1.02	—	<b>.667</b>	—	-.205	.232
induces living . . . (in) fantasy	3.96	0.94	—	<b>.630</b>	.263	-.311	—
<b>Value Corruption</b>							
opposite to my values (W)	3.62	1.01	—	<b>.705</b>	—	—	-.378
<b>Falsity/No Sense</b>							
deceptive and misleading (F)	2.65	0.92	—	—	<b>.808</b>	—	—
insults intelligence (F)	2.88	1.22	—	—	<b>.749</b>	—	—
honest and believable** (F,W)	3.48	0.88	-.305	—	<b>.634</b>	—	—
Eigenvalues			4.34	1.77	1.35	1.19	1.00
% Variance—Factor			27.1	11.1	8.5	7.4	6.3
% Variance—Cumulative			27.1	38.2	46.7	54.1	60.4

\*All item means display pro-dimension agreement, each on a scale of 1–5. Higher mean scores indicate greater agreement with item, but note that this is not necessarily a pro-advertising attitude. Factor loading of less than .200 have been omitted, and those judged to constitute a factor—the dominant loadings—are in boldface.

\*\*Reverse-scored

Notes: F: Item is same as for collegian sample, but response format differs. See text footnote 3.

W: Item wording different from Sample 1. See text footnote 3.

of deterioration in model-data fit compared results for two factors merged versus being kept separate. This showed that falsity/no sense was valuable as a factor separate from the other two, whereas the other two were *not* discriminated. Similar tests on the householder sample showed that the falsity/no sense factor was clearly distinct from the other two. Additionally, in this sample, these other two factors, were better kept distinct, because merging them produced marginal deterioration in the model-data fit. Accordingly, the authors concluded that falsity/no sense was best maintained as a separate factor, distinct from materialism and value corruption.

Because materialism and value corruption resisted statistical discrimination in Sample 1, in the subsequent dependence analyses four options were tried, employing (1) materialism only, (2) value corruption only, (3) a composite of the two factors and (4) both as separate factors. The results for the last option are reported, because they seemed informative and had the advantages of congruence with the structural model of Figure 1, facilitating replications, and simplifying post-hoc interpretations (for precedent, see Folkman and Lazarus 1985).

### **What Explains Attitudes Toward Advertising?**

The causal model of Figure 1 was estimated by a maximum likelihood LISREL procedure (Joreskog and Sorbom 1984), which works much like the conventional regression analysis but has the advantage of estimating several multiple regression equations simultaneously. Despite its widespread application in “causal” modeling, all it actually estimates is the “association” between one variable and another, controlling for the effects of other co-predictors. The authors’ data are correlational, and LISREL does not establish causality. Attitude is deemed to be a “dependent” variable a priori, independent of the decision to use LISREL.

Because the factor analysis verified that the items intended to measure the constructs cohered well, a composite measure for each construct was computed by averaging its constituent items.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Alternative approaches were considered and rejected. The authors could have used, for example, factor scores, but these capture variance from diverse sources, because of cross-loadings, impeding conceptual clarity. The approach adopted facilitates replication and industry applications.

*Student sample.* First, a “saturated” model, in which all plausible paths were allowed to be “free,” was estimated. This produced a good overall fit ( $\chi^2 = 10.65$ , d.f. = 9,  $p = .30$ ; adjusted goodness of fit index [AGFI] = .920; and root mean square residual [RMSR] = .015) and identified a number of paths that were nonsignificant at  $p < .05$ . Of these nonsignificant paths, those which were not a priori hypothesized in Figure 1 were dropped, equivalent to being set equal to zero, and a “trimmed” model was estimated. This also had a good fit ( $\chi^2 = 36.35$ , d.f. = 30,  $p = .197$ ; AGFI = .921; RMSR = .042). Note that the trimmed model retained all the paths shown in Figure 1 and its insert, as well as five more which proved significant (see below). The parameter estimates of the trimmed model were not materially different from those of the saturated model. These LISREL estimates of causal path parameters, presented in Table 3, have meaning like the predictor coefficients in conventional regression analyses indicating relative importance.

Of the seven hypothesized primary antecedents, five were significant, explaining 62.4% of the variance in global attitudes. Of the personal factors, product information and hedonic/pleasure belief factors proved important, but social role and image did not. Of the societal factors, good for the economy, materialism, and falsity/no sense were significant, but value corruption was not. All coefficients had theo-

retically appropriate signs: negative for materialism and falsity/no sense and positive for the others. Good for the economy emerged as by far the strongest predictor, with a coefficient about three times that of the other four coefficients.

Table 3 does not display all of the secondary path coefficients associated with the interrelationships between variables, but these coefficients displayed no obvious anomalies. All paths specified in the insert in Figure 1 were significant. For example, the interrelationships indicated that being good for economy was in turn influenced by the lower cost of products (+.288), product information (+.276), falsity/no sense (-.224), and better living (+.155), with all remaining factors insignificant. Corrupts values was influenced by materialism (+.507), undesirable products/services (+.138), falsity/no sense (+.135) and sex in ads (+.110), but no other variables.

The five paths found significant, but not a priori, hypotheses were these: falsity-to-materialism (.414), lowers costs-to-materialism (.137), sex in ads-to-falsity (.201) and sex in ads-to-materialism (.210), and promotes undesirables-to-falsity/no sense (.264). These additional paths are all post hoc sensible.

*Householders sample.* Also in Table 3 are the results from a similar analysis for the householders in Sample 2. As before, first a full model, with all plausible paths was estimated, then paths that were found to be nonsignificant, unless hypothesized a priori, were dropped to estimate a trimmed model. The trimmed model produced a good overall fit ( $\chi^2 = 28.13$ , d.f. = 25,  $p = .302$ ; AGFI = .932; RMSR = .042), explaining 55.9% of the variance in overall attitudes.

As was true for the collegians, three of the four societal factors were significant, with the exception for both groups being corrupts values.<sup>6</sup> However, for householders, all three personal factors proved significant, including social role and image, which was not significant in the student data. Additionally, judgments about sex in ads had a significant, but modest coefficient for householders’ attitudes toward advertising. The main difference between the results was that the most important predictor of global attitudes for students was good for the economy, while for the older householders it was falsity and no sense.<sup>7</sup>

*Different roles of materialism and value corruption.* Because materialism and value corruption have resisted discrimination in factor analytical procedures,

**TABLE 3**  
Predictors of Global Attitudes Toward Advertising

Factors Predicting Global Attitudes (.83/.79) <sup>a</sup>	Sample 1	Sample 2
<b>Personal Factors</b>		
Product Information (.68/.59)	+ .149 <sup>b</sup>	+ .121
Social Role and Image (.47/.71)	[.048]	+ .180
Hedonic/Pleasure (.57/.54)	+ .143	+ .124
<b>Societal Factors</b>		
Good for the Economy (.65/-)	<b>+ .465</b>	+ .166
Materialism (.78/.64)	- .135	- .129
Corrupts Values (-/-)	[-.050]	[-.022]
Falsity/No Sense (.60/.69)	- .148	<b>- .355</b>
<b>Distal Antecedents</b>		
Lowers Costs of Goods	—	—
Better Living	—	—
Sex in Ads	—	- .091
Promote undesirables	—	—
<b>Variance Explained</b>	<b>62.4%</b>	<b>55.9%</b>

<sup>a</sup>Parenthetical entries are coefficient alpha reliabilities for factors with three or more indicators (Sample 1/Sample 2).

<sup>b</sup>Entries are standardized path coefficients, significant at  $p < .05$  (except those bracketed, which are nonsignificant) and interpretable as relative importance weights. The belief factor with the strongest influence is in boldface. Blank cells are “distal” paths found to be nonsignificant, congruent with the authors’ hypotheses.

<sup>6</sup>Zero order correlation of “corrupts values” with global attitudes is substantial among collegians ( $r = -.43$ ) and significant but modest among householders ( $r = -.15$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Thus, value corruption was associated with attitudes, even though its contribution was duplicative of that of other factors.

<sup>7</sup>All of the secondary paths in Figure 1’s insert were also significant for householders except for two, social role and image did not link to materialism, and falsity did not link to value corruption.

their predictive significance was tested in the absence of each other. In the collegian sample, fixing value corruption to zero raised the materialism coefficient marginally (from  $-.135$  to  $-.162$ ), and alternatively fixing materialism to zero yielded a significant coefficient for value corruption ( $-.120$ ,  $p < .05$ ). As yet another option, using a materialism/value corruption composite (i.e., averaging the two belief category scores) yielded a coefficient of  $-.155$ . The results were different for the householders' sample, where fixing materialism to zero failed to bring value corruption to significance. Thus, in the collegian sample, it seems that value corruption was nonsignificant because its co-variance with attitude (which was significant) was totally absorbed in the materialism-attitude covariance, while for householders, it was nonsignificant because of its initial low co-variance with attitudes.

### **An Application to Identify Attitudinal Segments**

This model aids in mapping public attitudes about advertising in more telling details, so that studies can learn not only whether some audience favors advertising or not, but also what beliefs about advertising's consequences are associated with that audience's overall attitude. Even more importantly, since the seven belief categories employed in the model are generally independent, they can be used to identify, within a given population group, segments with distinguishing belief and attitude profiles. This application is illustrated on each of the two samples below.

*Segments among collegians.* Using the seven antecedent standardized scores as input, a cluster analysis was run to group respondents into relatively homogeneous segments based on their belief profiles.<sup>8</sup> The cluster analysis algorithm suggested that at least four segments existed in the sample. These are profiled in Table 4, along the seven personal and societal belief dimensions which identified them and their global attitudes scores.

**1.1. Contented consumers (28%).** Supportive of advertising with few reservations, this segment judges advertising to be relatively informative and good for the economy. It is the only segment to disagree that

advertising misleads, corrupts values, and fosters materialism.

**1.2 Compromised concerned (45%).** As favorable in global attitude and as perceptive of personal uses and economic benefits as the contented consumers, this segment, unlike the contented, sees negative cultural effects of materialism, value corruption, and falsity.

**1.3 Conflicted Calvinists (8%).** Unfavorable in overall attitude, this segment most values the informational role of advertising and finds it pretty amusing and entertaining as well. All the societal effects, however, are judged harshly. It dismisses any economic good from advertising and is the most critical of the perceived cultural sins of advertising—fostering materialism, corrupting values, and promoting falsity and no sense.

**1.4 Critical cynics (20%).** The most negative and consistently critical, this segment is the least likely to find advertising informative about products and social image and the only group not to be amused by ads. Highly concerned with the value consequences of advertising and its tendency to mislead, this segment has no compensating perceptions of economic or personal benefits.

*Segments among householders.* A similar cluster analysis of older householders (Sample 2) also indicated that four clusters were appropriate to describe the subsets within the population. The data for these four segments are profiled in Table 5.

**2.1 Contented consumers (38%).** The only segment positive in global attitudes, it also is the only group to strongly support advertising's informational and economic roles, to support it (albeit mildly) as entertainment, and to disagree that ads exhibit falsity.

**2.2 Deceptiveness wary (7%).** Somewhat critical in overall attitudes, this group seems to see ads in a personal utilitarian context. About average in its judgment of advertising's informational and entertainment value, it categorically dismisses it as a source of social role and image information and as a bestower of any economic good for the society. It is the least critical of advertising's materialistic effect and constitutes the only group to exonerate advertising of the value corruption charge. Falsity and no sense concern this group most.

**2.3 Degeneracy wary (16%).** While displaying global attitudes similar to the deceptiveness wary, this segment is much more concerned about materialism and sees advertising as corrupting values. It shows about average appreciation of all three personal uses of advertising, including social role and image information. At the societal level, it tends to disregard any economic benefit and perceive advertising as culturally compromising on all fronts: materialism, value corruption, and falsity/no sense.

**2.4 Critical cynics (39%).** The most critical segment, it faults advertising on each and every dimension. It is the only group to deny all three personal uses of advertising, even as information. Tending to dismiss economic benefits, it sees advertising as promoting materialism and falsity and is vehement in charging that advertising corrupts values.

<sup>8</sup>The authors employed a procedure that is available in the SPSS-X application program, with squared euclidean distance as the measure of between-respondent similarity and the "complete linkage" method as the clustering algorithm which combines clusters, based upon the maximum distance between members of the two clusters (Hair, Anderson, and Tatham 1987; Punj and Stewart 1983). This distance is printed as a coefficient for each iterative step, and an examination of the schedule for this coefficient shows when the successive clusters are being combined into a larger group at a disproportionately large distance. For this data, a large jump in the scree plot of this coefficient occurred at four clusters, implying that to go from a 4-cluster to a 3-cluster solution would entail the merging of two substantially dissimilar clusters.

**TABLE 4**  
**Segments of Collegians Differing by Attitudes Toward Advertising**

SEGMENTS	% of Cases	Global Attitudes Advertising	Personal Value Experienced			Perceived Societal Effects			
			Information	Social Role	Hedonic	Economic	Materialism*	Corrupts Values*	Falsity/No Sense*
1. Content	28	<b>3.70</b>	<b>3.88</b>	2.69	3.23	<b>3.67</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>2.54</b>	<b>2.83</b>
2. Concerned	45	<b>3.66</b>	<b>3.93</b>	<b>2.95</b>	<b>3.84</b>	<b>3.65</b>	3.58	3.23	3.28
3. Conflicted	8	2.69	<b>4.22</b>	2.71	3.42	2.62	4.26	4.43	4.18
4. Critical	20	2.44	2.75	2.03	2.85	2.63	3.95	3.70	4.19
TOTAL	100	3.35	3.70	2.67	3.44	3.37	3.40	3.23	3.41

\*High scores for all cells indicate mean pro-factor agreement, therefore, for these factors *unfavorable* attitudes toward advertising. Boldfaced cells indicate those with the most favorable attitudes. Total adds to 101% because of rounding.

**TABLE 5**  
**Segments of Householders Differing by Attitudes Toward Advertising**

SEGMENTS	% of Cases	Global Attitudes Advertising	Personal Value Experienced			Perceived Societal Effects			
			Information	Social Role	Hedonic	Economic	Materialism*	Corrupts Values*	Falsity/No Sense*
1. Content	38	<b>3.51</b>	<b>3.57</b>	2.82	<b>3.17</b>	<b>3.65</b>	3.24	3.23	<b>2.33</b>
2. Deceptiveness Wary	7	2.75	3.02	1.76	2.99	2.50	3.11	<b>2.07</b>	3.77
3. Degeneracy Wary	16	2.73	2.94	2.73	2.94	2.53	4.02	3.97	3.46
4. Critical	39	2.50	2.62	1.86	2.12	2.61	3.85	4.12	3.33
TOTAL	100	2.94	3.06	2.35	2.71	2.99	3.59	3.62	3.00

\*High scores for all cells indicate mean pro-factor agreement, therefore, for these factors *unfavorable* attitudes toward advertising. Boldfaced cells indicate those with the most favorable attitudes.

*Caveat.* These segmentation results are, of course, preliminary, given the modest sample sizes and the experience of others which show that apparent segment structures can depend on the clustering algorithm and decision rules employed. Nonetheless, these results provide an indication regarding the considerable fraction of consumers that displays ambivalence and/or hostility toward advertising and rough estimates of the proportions of the population that manifest differing patterns of beliefs. An advantage of maintaining separate identity for the three social belief categories is seen in both segmentation tables. For example, collegiate segments 3 and 4 score alike on falsity, but they differ on materialism and value corruption.

## Summary and Discussion

This research sought to advance the modeling and measurement of attitudes toward advertising and specifically (1) to examine the adequacy of the Bauer-Greyser 2-factor model of advertising's perceived effects, (2) to propose a more comprehensive model of public beliefs about advertising, (3) to identify the factor structure underlying these beliefs, and (4) to estimate the relationship between belief factors and global attitudes. Secondly, the authors offered preliminary results (1) to illustrate the descriptive usefulness of

their 7-factor model, (2) to generate data relevant to the intellectual criticisms of advertising, and (3) to suggest consumer segments with distinct belief and attitude profiles. Brief comments about each follow.

*Adequacy of the Bauer-Greyser (B/G) model.* The authors argued that the B/G classical 2-factor measures were inadequate, in part because they excluded personal outcomes, such as product information and amusement. Moreover, the social dimension was re-specified to more sharply delineate three distinct kinds of cultural effects: materialism, value corruption, and falsity/no sense. Bauer-Greyser's economic dimension was adopted but not their measures of it. The authors' factor analyses found that all seven items of the B/G classical measure were absorbed in the six factors that were extracted and remained essentially unchanged, whether or not their seven items were included.

Among the collegians, two personal uses/values contributed independently to global attitudes and, among householders, all three did. Any model of beliefs which excludes these, such as the classical B/G model, would therefore be incomplete, as would a model without societal and cultural effects, since these also contributed to global attitudes independently of the personal factors.

*Factor structure of advertising beliefs.* As hy-

pothesized, the three personal uses emerged as three separate factors in both samples. The economic macro factor also emerged as a separate factor in Sample 1, and its absorption in other factors in Sample 2 data can perhaps be attributed to an inferior single-item measure. The three social factors (materialism, falsity, and value corruption) separated themselves as a group from the personal and macro economic factors. However, they failed to be consistently discriminated among themselves. This can be attributed to (1) extremely high covariation among the three societal dimensions, at least for these samples; (2) less than satisfactory measures for one or more of these constructs; or (3) the three constructs being subcomponents of an overarching belief category. All three possibilities should be addressed in future research: the first by a much more representative population sampling, the second by augmenting the authors' measures with other items, and the third by harnessing the more abstruse "second-order factor modeling" technique (e.g. Hunter and Gerbing 1982).

Even if future research finds that the three consistently display high covariation and are non-orthogonal components to a more global factor, it may still be useful to explore the separate contributions of the three subfactors to specific criterion variables. For example, parental control might be driven more strongly by value corruption beliefs, whereas claim discounting and/or counterarguing might be more influenced by beliefs about falsity. Certainly, other research is needed to better understand the appropriateness of maintaining these distinctions and their informational value in relation to other behaviors of interest.

*Explaining attitudes by beliefs.* The 7-factor model explained considerable variance in global attitudes toward advertising: 62.4% for collegians and 55.9% for householders. Different factors played a dominant role in the two samples. For collegians, good for the economy beliefs best explained their global attitudes, while for the older householders it was beliefs about advertising's falsity/no sense. Identical roles of different beliefs in different population groups are not to be expected for at least two reasons. First, different populations have different experiences of advertising because of factors such as their age, family responsibilities, life styles, media availability, and habits. Second, beliefs interact with preferences and value systems to determine overall dispositions, and values may differ between populations.

The authors' data are correlational and therefore equivocal on the causal role of beliefs in the formation of global attitudes, their use of LISREL notwithstanding. In reality, both beliefs and attitudes can influence each other, and their data do not speak to the history of this influence. The model and analysis is used to

show how various beliefs that respondents hold "account for" the attitudes they simultaneously hold at the time of measurement.

*Descriptive belief and attitude profiles.* The 7-factor model can be used to profile any population of interest, and the seven belief dimensions can identify segments that are then describable by other data. The authors briefly illustrated this on both their samples, whose overall belief profiles differed as did their segment structures. Although discovered segments are not invariant across alternative clustering algorithms, the resulting segments represent an organized view of the heterogeneity in the surveyed publics, suggesting the proportions of people holding various patterns of beliefs and the large number of people who are conflicted or outright critical.

*Intellectual criticisms.* The intellectual criticisms of advertising's unintended consequences are apparently echoed in the public's perceptions. In both samples, the three cultural sins attributed to advertising each score above the midpoint of the scale, and this unflattering attribution is particularly exacerbated in the two most critical segments in each sample. Furthermore, while collegians exhibit macro beliefs similar to Bauer and Greyser's national sample of some 35 years ago, the householders exhibit, on an average, a less congenial view. The apparent worsening of public attitudes may be an artifact of differing methodologies, but Zano's (1981) review also found deteriorating attitudes over the long term. Continuing deterioration of public acceptance of advertising could be a result of advertising's proliferation over time and its increasing intrusiveness, without any apparent compensatory improvement in its value profile.

*Future research.* Further research is needed to test and perhaps augment the 7-factor model to verify its structure, particularly in respect of separate identities of the three sociocultural factors and to profile a more representative sample of the national population. Because the attitude object employed in this research—advertising in general—was necessarily broad, future research might contrast beliefs about advertising specified by media (e.g., TV versus newspapers), by geographic scope (national versus local), or by product type (convenience versus capital goods). Other dependent variables of interest may be studied in relation to these belief and attitude dimensions, such as characteristic shopping patterns; media consumption behavior; parental yielding to children's request for advertised products; or source credibility, cognitive counterarguing, and ad processing generally.

*What can the industry do?* The industry can profit

from taking the public pulse every so often, utilizing a comprehensive belief inventory. Advocacy campaign elements could be designed around each belief category, as results for larger national samples suggest. Knowledge of segments with differential beliefs would facilitate message development and media selection for improved targeting. At the same time, of course, the practice of advertising should be improved in fact as well as in managed public perception.

As ad man Howard Gossage (1986, p. 6) once lamented: "It seems probable that in the future . . . there will eventually be one last man—or probably a woman—alive, who still likes commercials, and Mr. Clean will be playing to him or her alone." This research suggests that there is still at least one last

segment who likes commercials for their positive outcomes and virtues, despite any concerns about their negative cultural effects. Whether or not these ranks dwindle may well depend on what the advertising industry does or does not do to soothe their reservations about the cultural consequences of advertising.

One of marketing's oldest maxims is that "the customer is always right." Changes in practice, not just efforts to change public perceptions, are called for, to the extent that the customers are right about advertising's role in fostering materialism, corrupting values, and promoting falsity. These aspects of the commercialization of culture are at the heart of their beef about advertising in America.

### Appendix: The Instrument A Survey of Public Opinion on Advertising

Given below are some statements about advertising. There are no right or wrong answers. Only your personal opinions matter. Please mark your answers by circling one number on each line, where the numbers have the following meaning.

Strongly Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Feel Neutral 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
Q1. Advertising is essential.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q2. Advertising is a valuable source of information about local sales.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q3. In general, advertising is misleading.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q4. Quite often advertising is amusing and entertaining.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q5. Advertising persuades people to buy things they should not buy.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q6. Most advertising insults the intelligence of the average consumer.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q7. From advertising I learn about fashions and about what to buy to impress others.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q8. Advertising helps raise our standard of living.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q9. Advertising results in better products for the public.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q10. Advertising tells me what people with life styles similar to mine are buying and using.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q11. Advertising is making us a materialistic society, overly interested in buying and owning things.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q12. Advertising tells me which brands have the features I am looking for.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q13. Advertising promotes undesirable values in our society.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q14. Sometimes I take pleasure in thinking about what I saw or heard or read in advertisements.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q15. Advertising makes people buy unaffordable products just to show off.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q16. In general, advertising results in lower prices.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q17. Advertising helps me know which products will or will not reflect the sort of person I am.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q18. In general, advertisements present a true picture of the product advertised.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q19. Sometimes advertisements are even more enjoyable than other media contents.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q20. In general, advertising helps our nation's economy.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q21. Most advertising distorts the values of our youth.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q22. Advertising helps me keep up to date about products/services available in the marketplace.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q23. Mostly, advertising is wasteful of our economic resources.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q24. Overall, I consider advertising a good thing.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q25. Advertising makes people live in a world of fantasy.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q26. There is too much sex in advertising today.	1	2	3	4	5	
Q27. Because of advertising, people buy a lot of things they do not really need.	1	2	3	4	5	

Q28. My general opinion of advertising is unfavorable.	1	2	3	4	5
Q29. In general, advertising promotes competition, which benefits the consumer.	1	2	3	4	5
Q30. Some products/services promoted in advertising are bad for our society.	1	2	3	4	5
Q31. I consider advertisements unwelcome interruptions.	1	2	3	4	5
Q32. Advertising is not an important issue for me, and I am not bothered about it.	1	2	3	4	5
Q33. Overall, do you like or dislike advertising? 1. Strongly dislike it 2. Somewhat dislike it 3. Feel neutral 4. Somewhat like it 5. Strongly like it					

*Respondent Information (for Statistical Purposes Only).*  
(Add appropriate demographics as needed.)







*Note:* The instrument measures these constructs (with items in parentheses), principal to the authors' model: Global attitudes (24, 28, 33), Information (2, 12, 22), Social Role and Image (7, 10, 17), Hedonic/Pleasure (4, 14, 19), Good for the Economy (20, 23, 29), Materialism (11, 15, 25, 27), Falsity/No Sense (3, 6, 18), and Value Corruption (13, 21). Bauer-Greyser items are 1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 16, 18, of which 6 and 18, are absorbed in the authors' principal constructs, while 1 and 5 are supplanted; 8, 9, and 16 measure "distal" antecedents, as do additional items 26 and 30. Two more constructs, extraneous to the model in Figure 1, are also measured: Intrusion (31) and Salience (32).

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