2009

Television Shopping: The Effect of Persuasive Strategies on Parasocial Interaction, Subjective Well-Being, and Impulse Buying Tendency among Older Women

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Abstract
The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of persuasive strategies on middle-aging and older consumers' perceived parasocial interactions and consequent effects on perceived social involvement, perceived loneliness, mood, perceived risk, and impulse buying tendency in the television home shopping environment.

Keywords
television home shopping, parasocial interaction, subjective well-being, older consumer

Disciplines
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Comments
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Background & Purpose
Television shopping has reached a mature stage in terms of market size and sales volume (Fritchie & Johnson, 2003). During television shopping programs, hosts commonly lead a one-hour program; the main role of the hosts is to promote a product, which includes communication between hosts and the home viewers (Stephens, Hill, & Bergman, 1996). Television shopping hosts frequently use persuasive strategies for selling, which may foster a sense of connection between the host and consumers. This social connection may be important to middle-aged and older consumers, who experience more loneliness than other age groups. Although the number of shopping studies about middle-aged and older consumers has increased, we found scant scholarly literature addressing this issue. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of persuasive strategies on middle-aged and older consumers’ perceived parasocial interactions (i.e., a viewer’s perceived relationship with a media personality), and consequent effects on perceived social involvement (i.e., the extent to which an individual has a relationship with other people within a society), perceived loneliness, mood, perceived risk, and impulse buying tendency in the television home shopping environment. Thus, this study will explain the processes between the host’s strategies and their effects on consumer’s purchase tendencies.

Method
Using a mail survey, data were collected from consumers who aged 55 to 80, and who had at least minimal experience with television home shopping programs. Respondents came from senior centers and senior agencies in Midwestern communities, as well a university’s alumni now living in the Northeast. A total of 317 questionnaires were distributed and 109 usable responses were retained, providing a 34 percent response rate. The survey, consisting of seven parts, contained Likert-type scales to measure the levels of persuasive strategies, parasocial interaction, social involvement, loneliness, mood, risk, and impulse buying. Demographic information was also collected. The existing scales were adapted to measure all variables, except persuasive strategies. Because no existing scale was found, a fourteen-item scale was developed for measuring persuasive strategies. SPSS 15.0 was used for calculating descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, reliabilities, and factor analysis. Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) version 7.0 was used to derive the maximum-likelihood estimation for analysis of the model.

Results & Discussion
One factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1 was extracted for perceived parasocial interaction, while two factors were extracted for persuasive strategies, social involvement, loneliness, mood, and impulse buying using a principal axis factoring method with varimax rotation. Three factors were extracted for perceived risk, but only one factor, which explained the most variance, was used for further analysis. The theoretical model was first tested and the results indicated that overall fit indices were marginal with a $\chi^2$ of 35.82 and 11 degrees-of-freedom ($p < .01$). The GFI was .92; AGFI was .80; CFI was .89; and RMSEA was .15. Therefore, a fully recursive model was examined and two statistically significant paths, not included in the theoretical model, were identified. These two paths were added to the theoretical model to create an
empirical model. The results of this model revealed a good fit with a \( R^2 \) of 4.48 and 9 degrees-of-freedom \((p = .88)\). The GFI was .99; AGFI was .96; CFI was 1.00; and RMSEA was .00. Statistical indices (e.g., CFI > .95) were used to accommodate the sample size (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The effect of persuasive strategies on perceived parasocial interaction was not significant \((\beta = .15, C.R. = 1.52, p = .21)\). Yet, perceived parasocial interaction between hosts and viewers significantly influenced older consumers’ subjective well-being. Older consumers with higher levels of perceived parasocial interaction reported higher levels of social involvement \((\beta = .44, C.R. = 5.10, p < .01)\). Perceived parasocial interaction was associated with a positive mood state \((\beta = .28, C.R. = 3.35, p < .01)\).

Inconsistent with earlier findings (Levy, 1979), a significant negative association between perceived parasocial interaction and loneliness was not found \((\beta = -.09, C.R. = -.130, p = .22)\). However, social involvement had a significant negative effect on loneliness \((\beta = -.74, C.R. = -11.18, p < .01)\), which may have created a mediating effect of social involvement between perceived parasocial interaction and loneliness. Social involvement did not enhance mood among older women \((\beta = -.17, C.R. = 1.39, p = .29)\), but loneliness had a significant negative effect on positive mood \((\beta = -.29, C.R. = -2.37, p < .05)\). The hypothesized negative relationship between positive mood and perceived social risk was not supported \((\beta = -.02, C.R. = -.22, p = .84)\). Perceived social risk had a significant negative effect on impulse buying \((\beta = -.24, C.R. = -2.73, p < .01)\), while positive mood did not influence impulse buying \((\beta = .06, C.R. = .62, p = .53)\). This may be due to older consumers’ tendency to be more goal-oriented utilitarian shoppers; whereas, younger consumers may be more likely to make decisions based on their mood states (DeNora & Belcher, 2000). There was a significant negative effect of parasocial interaction on social risk \((\beta = -.40, C.R. = -4.05, p < .01)\). If the respondent had a favorable opinion of the television home shopping host, the perceived social risk decreased. A significant positive effect of parasocial interaction on impulse buying was found \((\beta = .40, C.R. = 4.16, p < .01)\). Stephens et al.’s (1996) found that television home shopping hosts tried to create parasocial interactions with viewers, while selling products, and viewers indicated their increased impulse buying experiences when the hosts encouraged them to buy a product.

**Limitations**

The results of this study should be reviewed in the context of several limitations. First, data were collected from not only those who frequently watched television shopping programs, but also those who watched such programs only once. Those who have more experience with television shopping may experience higher levels of parasocial interaction than those who watched a television shopping program only once. Second, respondents were asked to think of the situation when they watched television shopping programs. Thus, the respondents had to depend on memory to answer the questions. Third, because no scale existed, a scale was developed for persuasive strategies. The scale had an internal consistency (Cronbach’s \( \alpha \)=.88), but tests of convergent and discriminant validity were not performed.

**References**


The final empirical model showing the effects of persuasive strategies on parasocial interactions, social involvement, loneliness, positive mood, social risk, and impulse buying.

\[ \chi^2 = 4.48; df = 9; p = .88 \\
GFI = .99 \\
AGFI = .96 \\
CFI = 1.00 \\
RMSEA = .000 \]

Notes: Standardized path estimates are reported with critical ratio (C.R.) in parentheses.
* \( p < .05 \). ** \( p < .01 \).