

# Advertising Strategies to Increase Usage Frequency

Interest has been shifting from how consumers choose brands to how they use brands. The authors focus on how advertising can best encourage consumers to use a mature brand in a new situation. They develop a schema congruity framework that integrates comparison advertising with substitution-in-use research. The framework suggests that situation comparison ads favorably affect usage attitudes, but have no advantage over product comparison ads in enhancing a person's ability to recall the target brand in the target situation. The authors' empirical study shows increases in brand usage. The authors conclude with implications for brand managers and researchers.

**M**uch research on mature consumer packaged goods examines outcome variables such as preference and choice. However, for mature brands that dominate a specific niche—such as Arm & Hammer baking soda, Vaseline petroleum jelly, or Campbell's soup—managerial and theoretical interest has shifted from how consumers *choose* brands to how they *use* them (Wansink 1994). To increase the sales of brands with high awareness and high penetration, it is necessary to increase usage by current consumers (Wilke 1995). The question then becomes how to encourage the use of these brands in a new context or a secondary usage situation.

To this end, numerous brand management teams have either proposed, copy-tested, or launched usage-oriented advertising campaigns with the intent of expanding the use of the product (see Table 1). Although there have been both successes, and failures, no conclusive findings, generalizations, or studies have been offered to guide further efforts. We propose and contrast three advertising strategies to achieve this objective.

Substitution-in-use research indicates that most products can be used in a wide variety of situations (Ratneshwar and Shocker 1991; Srivastava, Leone, and Shocker 1981). However, consumers quickly become "functionally fixated" and tend to use many products in familiar or routine ways (Warlop and Ratneshwar 1993). It is understandable that consumers generally do not attempt to associate particular prod-

ucts with nonroutine usage situations unless such an association is presented to them. Although substitution-in-use research underscores the importance of these associations, it does not suggest how advertising can most effectively create them. Nevertheless, such associations are critical. Ultimately they determine a consumer's usage of the brand by influencing a person's usage-related attitudes and ability to evoke the brand when in this usage situation.

**TABLE 1**  
**Expansion Advertising Opportunities for Selected Products and Services**

Product or Service	Proposed, Pretested, or Launched Expansion Advertising Campaign
A-1 Steak Sauce	• Use when grilling hamburgers or to flavor rice
Alpha-Bits Cereal	• Spell you name on pudding, cookies, or jelly sandwiches
AT&T	• Use calls to "relive" good memories
American Express	• Use for small purchases
Burger King Whoppers	• Eat as carry-out food at picnics or home
Campbell's Soup	• Eat with formal family dinners or for breakfast
Clorox Bleach	• Clean counters and sinks
Gatorade	• Use to replenish liquids during flu attacks
Kodak Film	• Take everyday photos of family, pets, or guests
Milk (American Dairy Council)	• Drink after exercising
Palmolive Dishwashing Liquid	• Wash blouses and delicate fabrics
Pepsi-Cola	• Drink for morning breaks
Special K Cereal	• Eat as afternoon snack or midnight snack

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We develop a schema-based framework that shows how the different comparison strategies found in usage-related advertisements determine whether the new use is accepted and whether it will be remembered. Our general goals are to develop and test the implications of this framework for how different types of new use advertising affect recall, attitude, and use. Our results and discussion provide better direction for researchers who work with schema congruity and for managers who work with packaged goods.

## Usage Expansion Advertising

Usage attitudes toward products are situation-specific (Belk 1975; Lutz and Kakkar 1975). In other words, though a person might generally be favorable toward drinking a particular soft drink with lunch, he or she may be less favorable toward drinking it with breakfast (van Raaij and Verhallen 1994). An overall attitude toward a brand has been conventionally denoted as  $A_{\text{brand}}$ . We designate a person's attitude toward using a specific brand in a specific situation in which the brand is not currently used as  $A_{\text{new-use}}$ .

Advertising that encourages this new or different use of a brand is referred to as *usage expansion advertising* (Wansink 1995). The most typical forms of usage expansion advertising are *noncomparison*, *product comparison*, and *situation comparison ads*. A noncomparison ad simply states that the target brand is a reasonable choice for the target situation (e.g., "Eat Campbell's soup for breakfast because it is hot and nutritious"). A product comparison ad associates the target brand with the target situation by comparing the target brand with another product already favorably associated with that situation (e.g., "Eat Campbell's soup for breakfast because it is hot and nutritious like hot cereal"). A situation comparison ad associates the use of the target brand in the target situation with its use in another situation that is already favorably associated with the brand (e.g., "Eat Campbell's soup for breakfast because it is as hot and nutritious as it is with lunch"). (See also Appendix.)

Although the reference points differ across the three advertisements, all three explicitly convey identical information about the attributes of the target brand (i.e., "it is hot and nutritious"), though they use different association strategies (Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1991; Wilkie and Farris 1975). These association strategies force comparisons with an existing use. Thus, a schema congruity framework may be beneficial in predicting when one type of advertisement is more effective than another. Before developing this predictive framework, we first describe the notion of usage schema and suggest that consumers use a schema-based method for evaluating new uses for a product.

## Conceptual Development

Schemas have commonly been defined as organized patterns of expectations, beliefs, prototypes, and affect (Folkes and Kiesler 1991) that guide perception, thought, and action (Mandler 1982). Consumer research has recognized that there are schemas for product categories (Sujan 1985), brands (Boush and Loken 1991), and advertisements (Goodstein 1993). We propose that there are also schemas for the

situations in which products are used, much like there are scripts. Just as insights have been gained by determining how product category schemas are used by consumers when evaluating new products, important insights can be gained by determining how consumers use usage schemas when evaluating an advertised new use of a brand.

We define a *usage schema* to include the expectations, beliefs, prototypes, and affect that consumers associate with using a specific product in a specific situation. Consumers may have numerous usage schemas for any usage situation. One example of the construct we investigate is eating. When considering a Saturday breakfast, for instance, separate usage schemas could exist for eating hot cereal, pancakes, presweetened cereal, or omelets. In this manner, a usage schema can be seen as an ad hoc category that is associated with a specific usage situation (cf. Barsalou 1983).

## How Usage Schemas Are Processed

Any new or unfamiliar use for a brand, is—by virtue of being "new"—incongruent (or discrepant) with existing usage schemas. Incongruity, however, is based on consumer perceptions and measured in degrees (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989). As such, the perception of incongruity between a new use and an existing usage schema can range from being mild to extreme, depending on their salient differences (Kahneman and Miller 1986) and the important characteristics they share (Keller 1993). Although all new uses are at least mildly incongruent with existing usage schemas, some are perceived by consumers as relatively more congruent and others as relatively less congruent. The more congruent schemas are often assimilated (Mandler 1982, p. 22) or *matched* (Sujan 1985) with existing ones. Less congruent schemas can be rejected or subtyped in a way that maintains the integrity of existing schemas (Sujan and Bettman 1989). For the purpose of exposition, we refer to new uses as being relatively *congruent* or as being *incongruent* or *less congruent* with a salient usage schema.

A key consideration in how consumers respond to new uses is the degree to which the consumer perceives the proposed new use as congruent with a salient usage schema. If the consumer perceives it as congruent, affect is transferred from the existing schema to the new use (Fiske and Pavelchak 1986). Suppose a consumer is evaluating whether to eat soup for breakfast. If the consumer perceives this action as congruent with an existing usage schema, such as eating hot cereal for breakfast, his or her attitude toward eating hot cereal for breakfast provides a *halo* that favorably affects his or her attitude toward eating soup for breakfast (Pavelchak 1989). We refer to this process as *schema-based evaluation* or *processing* (Sujan 1985). Although schema-based evaluations commonly occur when there is perfect congruity, they also occur when mild incongruity exists (Fiske and Taylor 1991; Wyer and Gordon 1982).

Alternatively, if a consumer perceives a new use as incongruent with an existing usage schema, he or she will more deliberately determine whether the attributes of the target brand satisfy his or her needs in that usage situation. An evaluation is then made by weighing and combining these attributes. In evaluating whether to eat soup for break-

fast, for example, a consumer might consider its convenience, taste, and potential to complement other breakfast foods he or she might eat with it. We refer to this deliberate, attribute-based evaluation as a *piecemeal-based* evaluation (Sujan 1985). (See Figure 1 for an illustration of this process.)

By expanding the concept of schema to include usage schemas, we examine how usage schemas can be used to predict what types of expansion ads are most effective. In general, we believe that when an advertised new use is perceived as congruent with an existing usage schema, it is processed less deeply, but evaluated more favorably, than an advertised new use that is perceived as incongruent. Stated differently, the effectiveness of expansion ads is influenced by whether they encourage schema- or piecemeal-based processing.

Sujan (1985) indicates that the types of thoughts a consumer generates when processing an advertisement provide evidence of whether the consumer has processed the message using schema- or piecemeal-based evaluation. Her work indicates that schema-based processing is evidenced by a generation of relatively fewer attribute-oriented thoughts and a greater number of simple, evaluative thoughts. Sujan suggests that the specificity of these thoughts provide evidence of schema-based processing, whereas Mandler (1982) suggests that the valence of these thoughts also provides such evidence. Although relatively congruent uses may not be deeply processed, the thoughts that are generated are likely to be favorable (i.e., support arguments). In contrast, when piecemeal-based processing focuses on specific incongruities, the difficulty in resolving them increases a consumer's frustration and results in unfavorable thoughts (i.e., counterarguments).

These differences in processing lead to differences in attitude and recall. If a consumer is cognitively involved in processing an advertisement for an incongruent use of a brand, Stangor and McMillan (1992) suggest that a consumer should be more able to recall the brand (after a delay) than if the advertisement had suggested a more congruent use of the brand. In contrast, if a more congruent use for that brand is compared and matched with a favorable usage schema, we expect consumers to have more favorable attitudes toward the brand (i.e.,  $A_{\text{new-use}}$ ). Taken together, we expect:

H<sub>1</sub>: Relative to advertisements for an incongruent use of a brand, an advertisement for a more congruent use of that brand generates:

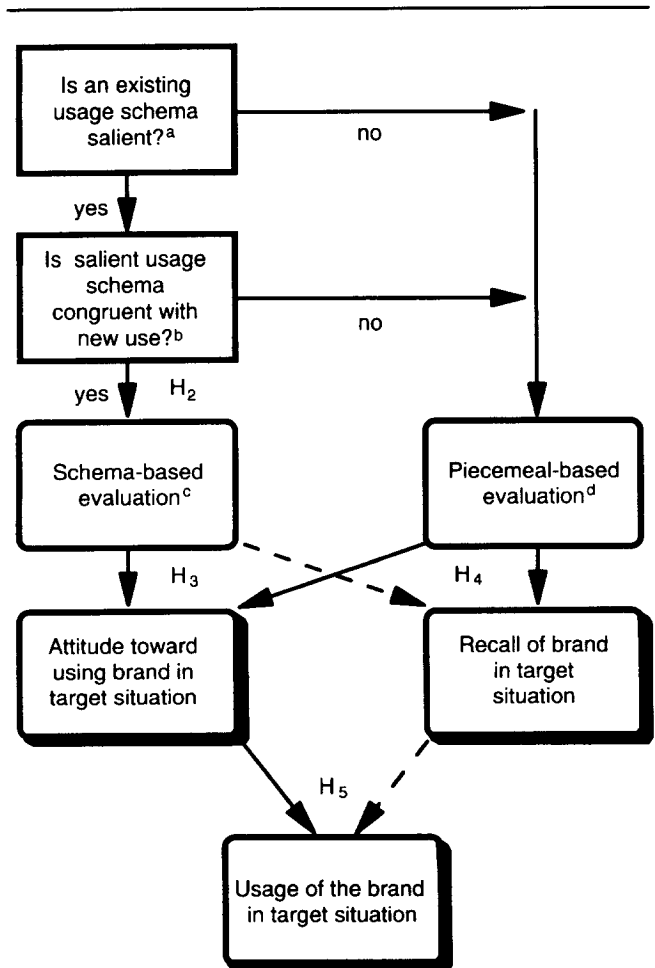
- (a) a greater number of simple evaluative thoughts,
- (b) a greater number of support arguments,
- (c) a smaller number of attribute-oriented thoughts,
- (d) a smaller number of counterarguments,
- (e) higher ratings of  $A_{\text{new-use}}$ , and
- (f) lower situation-cued recall.

## Predicting Expansion Advertising Effectiveness

Schema research has tended to examine schemas that are naturally evoked. In most consumer research, consumers have wide latitude in the types of schemas they evoke. Con-

sider an expansion ad that recommends a new use for a brand, but makes no comparison to any existing usage schema. On seeing this advertisement, consumers can evoke the usage schema of their choice and use it as a comparison point when evaluating this new use. They might, for example, evaluate the new use on the basis of comparison products that are usually used in that situation, or they might evaluate it on the basis of other situations in which the brand is typically used. Note, however, that the specific schema evoked affects the way this new use is processed and evaluated. The more latitude consumers have over the comparison

**FIGURE 1**  
How Consumers Evaluate New Uses for Brands



———— Strong effect

- - - Less strong effect

<sup>a</sup>Is a relevant point-of-comparison salient, such as one involving a similar situation or product?

<sup>b</sup>Do the salient usage schema and the new use have similar associations, and do they share important characteristics?

<sup>c</sup>Schema-based evaluations are ones in which attitudes toward the existing usage schema affect a person's evaluation of the target brand in the target situation.

<sup>d</sup>Piecemeal evaluations are ones in which attribute beliefs are weighted and combined in a person's evaluation of the target brand in the target situation.

schema they evoke, the less researchers can predict about their processing and their subsequent behavior.

One way advertisers can better predict the effect of an advertisement is by pro-actively encouraging specific schema comparisons. Instead of allowing consumers to elicit a schema that may not prove favorable to the target brand, an advertisement can explicitly advertise a more favorable comparison schema (Bettman and Sujan 1987). In expansion advertising, product comparison and situation comparison ads can be used to try and encourage a favorable evaluation. As we noted previously (see also the Appendix), product comparison ads associate the target brand with the target situation by comparing the target brand with another product already favorably associated with that situation. Situation comparison ads associate the use of the target brand in the target situation with its use in another situation that is already favorably associated with the brand. Situation comparison and product comparison ads explicitly attempt to control the schema that consumers use as their point of evaluation.<sup>1</sup>

### **How Expansion Ads Are Processed**

In  $H_1$ , we hypothesize that a consumer's perception of how congruent a new use is with an existing usage schema influences whether the new use is accepted and remembered. We propose that the *association strategies* used in expansion advertising can also influence how congruent the new use is perceived to be—thus, influencing attitude, recall, and usage. Although the two association strategies most often used in usage expansion ads are situation comparison and product comparison ads, there is no direct research that indicates how they influence the perceived congruity of this new use.

Some insight can be gained from Kahneman and Miller's (1986) norm theory. When assessing whether a new use is congruent with the existing schema, norm theory suggests that consumers focus on the points of difference between two objects. The more differences that are observed, the less congruent the two objects will be perceived.

The point of difference in a situation comparison ad is the two situations noted in the advertisement. When consumers cannot articulate the specific points of incongruity between two objects, they are less able to contrast the two and will tend to perceive them as congruent on some level. Belk's (1975) work indicates that consumers are simply not familiar with making comparisons across two or more situations. Differences between situations—for example, breakfast and lunch—are difficult to articulate and are thus likely to be perceived more as congruent than as incongruent. If situation comparison ads generate greater perceptions of congruity, we expect consumers who see a situation comparison ad to evaluate the new use in a schema-based manner. Consistent with  $H_1$ , this would be evidenced by (1) positive thoughts (support arguments) that are of a simple eval-

<sup>1</sup>In contrast, noncomparison ads represent a control condition or baseline. For the sake of clarity and because noncomparison ads are not required to test the framework developed in Figure 1, we make no hypotheses regarding them. Because of their managerial relevance, however, we note their results in Table 4.

uative nature (e.g., "good idea," "might try it," "might be good for a change") and (2) fewer attribute-oriented thoughts and counterarguments.

The point of difference in a product comparison ad are the two products. Because food choice is typically seen as a zero-sum decision (Rudell 1979), product comparison ads imply a trade-off or substitution that must be reconciled; for example, eating soup for breakfast precludes a person from eating hot cereal for breakfast that morning. Not only are consumers accustomed to contrasting competing products (Muehling, Stoltman, and Grossbart 1990), they are also often motivated to do so (Meyers-Levy and Sternthal 1993). This is consistent with Mandler's (1982) view that incongruity is piecemeal processed and characterized by a focus on inconsistent attributes, thereby resulting in unfavorable thoughts (counterarguments).

Along with norm theory, a framing explanation also predicts that situation comparison ads are perceived as more congruent with existing usage schemas than product comparison ads. Situation comparison ads essentially frame the new behavior as a *complement* to an existing behavior, whereas product comparison ads frame the new behavior as a *substitute* for an existing behavior. Therefore, situation comparison ads encourage a focus on the similarities (congruity) between the situations, whereas product comparison ads force a focus on the dissimilarities (incongruity) between the products that facilitates the substitution.

These two converging rationales lead us to believe that situation comparison ads are perceived as more congruent with existing usage schemas than product comparison ads. Consistent with  $H_1$ , we expect the processing of these advertisements to be reflected in the thoughts that are generated by consumers:

$H_2$ : Relative to product comparison ads, situation comparison ads encourage (a) a greater number of simple evaluative thoughts, (b) a greater number of support arguments, (c) a smaller number of attribute-oriented thoughts, and (d) a smaller number of counterarguments.

### **How Expansion Ads Affect Attitudes, Recall, and Usage**

As we noted earlier, when a stimulus is perceived as relatively congruent with a schema, it is favorably evaluated on the basis of affect transfer (Fiske 1982; Pavelchak 1989). When a stimulus is perceived as incongruent, it requires greater cognitive effort to process and leads to unfavorable attitudes when the incongruity is unresolved (Mandler 1982; Sujan 1985). There are two reasons why we expect situation comparison ads will have a more positive effect on  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  than product comparison ads. First, situation comparison ads are believed to encourage perceptions of greater congruity than product comparison ads. Second, when product comparison ads imply a substitution or trade-off with a favored product, the schema incongruity is less likely to be resolved. Thus,

$H_3$ : Situation comparison ads are more effective than product comparison ads in enhancing a person's attitude toward using a particular brand in a situation in which the brand is not currently used ( $A_{\text{new-use}}$ ).

To ultimately affect usage, it is not sufficient that an expansion ad encourage a favorable attitude toward using the product; it must also develop strong cognitive associations between the brand and the target usage situation. In this way, the brand is more likely to be evoked into a person's consideration set when it is cued with the target usage situation. Situation-cued recall reflects the extent to which an advertisement enables a consumer to associate the target brand with this target usage situation. These associations can be made between and across situations, products, and attributes (cf. Anderson 1990). As is noted in Figure 2, some associations may already exist, whereas others, such as between soup and hot cereal or between lunch and breakfast, must be explicitly encouraged through advertising.

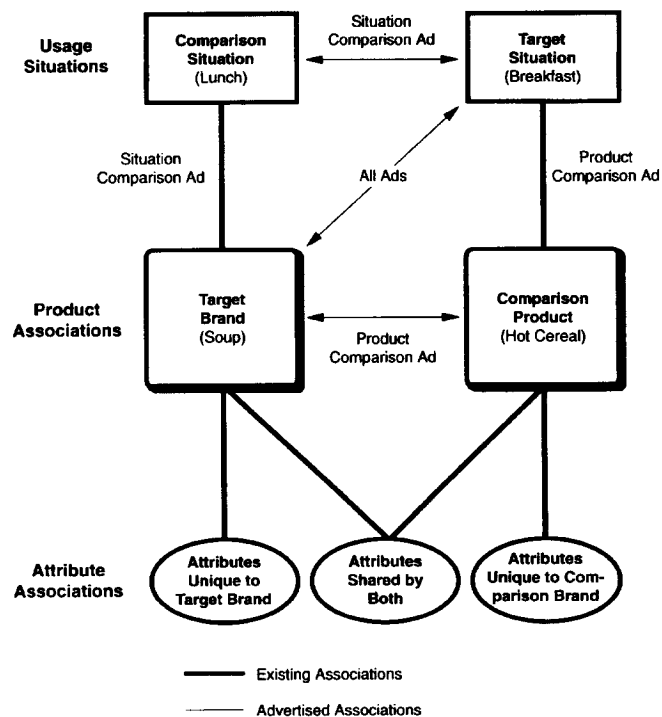
The schema congruity framework predicts that the more incongruent a new use is perceived to be, the more intensely it is processed and the more memorable it becomes (Stangor and McMillan 1992). There are two reasons why we believe product comparison ads will have a greater impact on situation-cued recall than situation comparison ads. First, product comparison ads are hypothesized to encourage the perception of greater incongruity than situation comparison ads ( $H_2$ ). Second, unlike situation comparison ads, product comparison ads focus attention on a product (e.g., hot cereal) that is already strongly associated with the target situation (e.g., breakfast). As a result, such advertisements may stimulate both direct and indirect cognitive associations between the target situation and brand (target situation  $\leftrightarrow$  comparison product  $\leftrightarrow$  target brand). Even if the target brand cannot be recalled directly, recalling the comparison product could prompt the recall of the target brand. Therefore,

$H_4$ : Product comparison ads are more effective at stimulating situation-cued recall than situation comparison ads.

We hypothesize product comparison ads to be superior at increasing the situation-cued recall of the target brand and situation comparison to be superior at increasing  $A_{\text{new-use}}$ . Knowing whether  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  or situation-cued recall has a greater effect on usage enables us to predict which advertisement has the greater impact. Unfortunately, there is little theory directly related to this issue, and the question is largely empirical. Nonetheless, two pieces of research suggest  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  may be a better predictor of usage than situation-cued recall. First, it has been shown that the relationship between attitude and behavior becomes stronger as the specificity of the attitude increases (Fishbein and Ajzen 1985). Unlike general measures of attitude (e.g.,  $A_{\text{brand}}$ ),  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  specifically measures a person's attitude toward using the target brand in the target situation. This increased specificity increases the correlation between  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  and usage beyond what we would expect from attitude-behavior studies in which attitude is more broadly measured.

Second, when determining which type of advertisement has the greater impact on usage, it is necessary to acknowledge that attitude and recall may not be independent. An advertisement that increases attitude favorability (i.e., a situation comparison ad) may also increase recall. A related notion was supported by Chattopadhyay and Alba (1988); they show that recall is correlated with attitudes that are formed

**FIGURE 2**  
Expansion Ads and the Cognitive Associations They Encourage



while a person is "determining the relative value or situation suitability of a brand" (p. 10). Because only the most favorable consumers (i.e., *top box* consumers) are likely to alter their use of the brand, there is a possibility that an advertisement that generates extremely favorable attitudes also encourages recall. If situation comparison ads increase favorability toward the new use, these advertisements may also increase recall among the top box consumers, thereby, encouraging more usage. Although this is an empirical question, we take the position that:

$H_5$ : Situation comparison ads are more effective than product comparison ads in stimulating use of the target brand in the target situation.

These hypothesized effects can be mapped onto Figure 1. We believe that situation comparison ads encourage schema-based evaluation ( $H_2$ ) and positively affect  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  ( $H_3$ ) and usage ( $H_5$ ). Product comparison ads, in contrast, encourage a piecemeal-based evaluation that increases situation-cued recall ( $H_4$ ), while having weaker effects on usage.

## Method

We used mature, dominant brands of packaged goods in our study, but niche brands would also be appropriate. Multiple brands and multiple usage situations were selected to minimize unintended influences of a single brand or a single situation and increase the generalizability of the study within the general category of food consumption. Doing so enables

us to generalize more confidently across a range of food products and across different congruity levels, such as those noted in Table 1. A 3 × 2 between-subjects design with three replication brands was used. The design consisted of three types of usage expansion ads (product comparison, situation comparison, and noncomparison ads), two levels of usage situation congruity (congruent and less congruent), and three replication brands (Campbell's soup, Ocean Spray cranberry sauce, and Jell-O gelatin).

### Preliminary Studies

After a series of focus groups, we developed a structured questionnaire for presentation to 61 Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) members of a local school district in the United States. We asked how frequently and in what situations they ate each of 17 different brands. We also asked them to indicate how congruent (1 = incongruent; 7 = congruent) each of four alternative uses for each of the 17 brands was with their current usage pattern of each brand. Because of the results of this preliminary study, we chose three mature, dominant brands and two different usage situations (one congruent with current usage patterns, one less congruent) for each brand.

These situations were ones in which the majority of the subjects (84%) had not used the target brand in the previous year. The three products and their congruent (less congruent) usage situations were Campbell's soup with dinner (with breakfast), Ocean Spray cranberry sauce with a family dinner (for a snack), and Jell-O gelatin for a snack (with breakfast). The results of these preliminary studies (summarized in Table 2) led to the development of experimental stimuli consisting of the relevant comparison combinations. For example, one of the two situation comparison ads for Campbell's soup compares eating soup at the start of a family meal with eating it for lunch. The other compares eating soup for breakfast with eating it for lunch. One of the two

product comparison ads for Campbell's soup compares eating soup at the start of a family dinner to eating a lettuce salad at the start of the dinner. The second compares eating soup for breakfast to eating hot cereal for breakfast.

To determine what claims to include in the advertisements and what comparison products to select for the product comparison ads, we asked another 27 subjects from the same population what products they typically ate in the target situations, the product attributes they felt were important in each of those situations, and their beliefs about consuming the target brands in those situations. To determine the claims to be used in the advertisements, we asked these same subjects open-ended questions about why they did not currently use the target brands in the target situations.

These findings were discussed in a focus group (of seven PTA members); and we asked a different group of 26 subjects to rate various advertisement claims for both the target brand and the comparison products. The two claims selected for each target situation were selected on the basis of their importance in the situation and their equal relevance to both the target brand and the comparison product. The products and the claims used for congruent (less congruent) usage expansion ads were (1) Campbell's soup: convenient and nutritious (convenient and hot), (2) Jell-O gelatin with fruit in it: nutritious and tasty (nutritious and fun to eat), and (3) Ocean Spray cranberry sauce: convenient and adds variety (convenient and tasty). Seven-point semantic differential scales indicated that these attributes were perceived as similar (mean of 5.8 out of 7.0) across each pair of products (target brand and comparison product) and that they were important (mean of 6.2 out of 7.0) in each of the target situations.

### Main Study

*Subjects and design.* Adult subjects were recruited through PTAs, and six dollars were donated to the respective

**TABLE 2**  
**Target Brands and Relevant Comparisons**  
**(Pretest: n = 61)**

Target Brand	Target Situation	Comparison Situation	Comparison Product
Campbell's soup (84%) <sup>a</sup>	Start of family dinner (4.9) <sup>b</sup>	With lunch	Lettuce salad
	Breakfast (1.9)	With lunch	Hot cereal
Jell-O gelatin with fruit (82%)	Afternoon snack (4.6)	Dinner dessert	Granola bar
	Breakfast (1.5)	Dinner dessert	Granola bar
Ocean Spray cranberry sauce (67%)	With a family dinner (4.8)	Holiday dinners	Canned peaches
	Afternoon snack (2.1)	Holiday dinners	Fresh fruit

<sup>a</sup>Percentage of subjects who currently had product in home.

<sup>b</sup>Mean rating of how congruent the expansion appeared relative to typical uses (1 = incongruent and 7 = congruent).

organizations for each of the 195 group members who completed the study. The subjects ranged in age from 25 to 61 years, and 84% were between the ages of 30 and 45 years. The subjects were all women, and the majority (82%) were not employed outside the home. Their educational background ranged from high school degree only to post-graduate degree, with the modal education being some college.

The experiment examined three different types of usage expansion ads (product comparison, situation comparison, and noncomparison), two types of usage situation congruity for each brand (a congruent use and a less congruent use), and replications across three brands (Campbell's soup, Jell-O gelatin, and Ocean Spray cranberry sauce). In total, 18 different stimuli were examined in a  $3 \times 2$  between-subjects design (with three replications, which were also between-subjects, but which are pooled in the analyses).  $H_1$  examines the processing differences between congruent and incongruent new uses, whereas  $H_2$  and  $H_3$  examine the independent effects of the three different types of usage expansion ads.

*Stimuli.* Each subject read transcripts for television commercials for one of three brands. Transcripts were used both to precisely control treatments and because such formats are commonly used for testing alternative messages in the advertising industry. The initial drafts were edited by a copywriter who had substantial experience with consumer brands and then reedited to eliminate any irrelevant variation across conditions. The results of the prestudies were used to develop the 18 different advertisements. Each transcript included the two claims determined relevant for each brand. (See Appendix for samples of each form of advertisement).

The *noncomparison ad* (control condition) begins with a woman serving the target brand in the target situation. She mentions why attribute<sub>1</sub> and attribute<sub>2</sub> make the brand a reasonable choice for the situation. The commercial then ends with a slogan naming (1) the target brand, (2) the target situation, and (3) the two attributes.

The *product comparison ad* begins with a woman serving the prototypical food (one already associated with the situation) in the target situation. She mentions why attribute<sub>1</sub> and attribute<sub>2</sub> make it a reasonable choice for the situation. The scene then changes, and she is now serving the target brand in the target situation. She says that just as attribute<sub>1</sub> and attribute<sub>2</sub> made the comparison product reasonable in the target situation, they also make the target brand reasonable for that situation. The commercial ends with a slogan including (1) the target brand, (2) the target situation, (3) the two attributes, and (4) the comparison food.

The *situation comparison ad* begins with a woman serving the target brand in the situation in which it is most typically served. She mentions why attribute<sub>1</sub> and attribute<sub>2</sub> make it a reasonable choice for the situation. The scene then changes, and she is now serving the target brand in the target situation. She says that just as attribute<sub>1</sub> and attribute<sub>2</sub> make the brand reasonable in the typical situation, they make it a reasonable choice for the target situation. The commercial ends with a slogan naming (1) the target brand, (2) the target situation, (3) the two attributes, and (4) the typical usage situation.

*Procedure and measures.* The study was conducted at the schools where the PTAs met. Fourteen sessions were conducted, with group sizes ranging from 6 to 29, but averaging around 12. The groups were seated so that there was an empty seat on either side of each subject. The subjects each received a closed packet of materials containing a cover sheet of instructions and several consecutively labeled booklets. To ensure that the subjects would direct their attention to information in the advertisement, they were told that they would be asked to compare transcripts with storyboards to evaluate the understandability of commercials (Batra and Ray 1986). They saw two advertisements: a transcript for a target advertisement and then a storyboard for a filler advertisement, which was shown only to be consistent with the cover story.

Immediately after reading the transcript (and prior to seeing the filler advertisements), subjects were asked to write down the thoughts and feelings they had when reading it. These cognitive responses were subsequently coded by two people. Each thought was first coded as to its valence—whether it represented a support argument, a counterargument, or neither. Then, each thought was coded as to whether it was a simple evaluative thought (e.g., “good idea,” “might try it,” “might be good for a change”) or an attribute-oriented thought (e.g., “too spicy for breakfast,” “quick to make,” “fewer calories than cereal”). This coding scheme is the standard method for distinguishing schema-from piecemeal-based processing (Sujan 1985).

A modal scoring convention was used (MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch 1986), and the blind coding yielded agreement on 93% of the cognitions. The protocols on which there was disagreement were then discussed by two judges until a consensus was reached. Further validation of the coding was accomplished by the author, who coded a random sample of 20% of the cognitive responses. The validation indicated agreement among all three coders on 88% of the cognitions.

After the cognitive response task, subjects indicated their  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  (on 7-point scales) in terms of whether they believed a particular use of a product was “bad-good,” “unappealing-appealing,” “incongruent-congruent,” and “unreasonable-reasonable.” Cronbach's alpha (.92) was high enough for  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  to be analyzed as the average of the four items (Nunnally 1967). A series of 7-point scaled questions were asked as manipulation checks (e.g., “I compared serving soup for breakfast with serving soup for lunch”). Finally, each subject was asked how many times (in the past year) she had used the target brand in the target situation and how frequently she had used it.

*Three-month callback.* To determine subjects' situation-cued recall of the brand and their reported use of it, we telephoned them three months after their participation in the experiment. Because most subjects had reported that they had enough inventory of the target brand to last between three and six months, a three-month callback period was used. This delay has been used in other studies involving food usage (Cassidy 1981), and prestudies suggested that the unique nature of the claims and the behavior under consid-

eration were unlikely to be forgotten with current users of the brands.

Of the subjects who had completed the laboratory part of the study, 165 agreed to participate in this test (85%). The attrition of the other 30 subjects was randomly distributed across all the cells. Of these people, 17 had provided phone numbers that were no longer in service, 9 could not be reached, and 4 declined to participate. We made attempts to contact each subject on a weekday morning, a weekday evening, and a weekend afternoon. When subjects were contacted, they were given the appropriate situation cue for the advertisement they had seen (breakfast, dinner, snack) and were asked, "What was the product you saw advertised for breakfast (or for dinner or for a snack)?" Subjects' recall of the target brand thus depended on the associations they had in semantic memory for the target situation. Although this measure of situation-cued recall does not prove that the target brand would be evoked into a consideration set for this target situation, it provides an indication of how strongly the brand is associated with the situation.

The usage measure was obtained by asking subjects how many times (since the experiment) they had consumed the target brand in the relevant target situation, and how many times they consumed the brand in total. We were careful to minimize inaccuracies in usage recall by asking subjects about their usage of the brand in a specific situation and encouraging them to take their time when recalling their use of the brand. This approach has been shown to improve accuracy and is less prone to demand effects than usage diaries (Rudell 1979).

Demand effects (priming and yea-saying) and reliability problems can be sources of error when using recall estimates of usage. To investigate the presence of such error, usage estimates of nontarget brands were taken at the time of the experiment and were compared with usage estimates taken at the time of the call-backs (three months later). Because these brands were not ones for which subjects saw advertisements, we did not expect to see any differences in their estimates of usage. Indeed, there was no change in the average monthly usage of these nontarget brands ( $F_{1,143} = 1.37$ ; ns). Furthermore, the average monthly usage of these nontarget brands after the experiment was highly correlated ( $r = .82$ ;  $p < .001$ ) with usage prior to the experiment. Food consumption methodologists consider this to be an excellent level of reliability for usage recall estimates (Cassidy 1981).

## Results

### **Manipulation Checks and Overview of Analyses**

Our study focuses on consumers who are already users of a brand. A *user* is defined liberally as someone who has consumed a product in the category at least once in the past year. The typical person in our study consumed the target brand 82% of the time he or she consumed a product in its particular category. Subjects who had not consumed the target brand at least once in the past year (9% of the sample) were eliminated from the study. Subjects were also eliminated if they had used the target brand in the target situation at least once in the past year (4% of the sample). The re-

maining subjects in the three advertisement conditions were similar in their volume ( $F_{2,143} = .8$ ; ns) and frequency ( $F_{2,143} = .1$ ; ns) of brand usage. Nearly all of the subjects (93%) had the target brand currently in their household inventory.

The manipulations of the product comparison and situation comparison ads were successful. Measures of processing indicated that subjects who saw a situation comparison ad compared the target situation to the typical situation more than subjects who saw either a product comparison ad ( $F_{1,143} = 29.2$ ;  $p < .01$ ) or a noncomparison ad ( $F_{1,143} = 13.2$ ;  $p < .01$ ). The means are 5.6, 2.3, and 2.6, respectively. Similarly, subjects who saw a product comparison ad compared the target brand with the comparison product more than subjects who saw either a situation comparison ad ( $F_{1,143} = 13.1$ ;  $p < .01$ ) or a noncomparison ad ( $F_{1,143} = 11.3$ ;  $p < .05$ ). The means are 5.9, 2.7, and 2.9, respectively.

As expected, the hypotheses appear to be generalizable across all three brands. Three-way analyses of variance (ad type  $\times$  situation congruity  $\times$  brand) were conducted on several key dependent variables. We found no significant brand-treatment interactions across  $A_{\text{new-use}}$ , situation-cued recall, or across the four categories of cognitive responses. Because the basic patterns of the data are similar, each brand was represented by a dummy variable in the analyses to account for mean-level response differences. Similarly, it is expected that  $H_2$  to  $H_5$  are generalizable across a reasonable range of congruity, such as the range examined in this study. This is also confirmed with the analyses conducted. There are no statistically significant interactions between ad type and schema congruity across any of these key dependent variables. Because of the absence of these interactions, we examine the main effects of situation congruity for  $H_1$  and the main effects of advertisement type for  $H_2$  to  $H_5$ .

We first examine how the processing of expansion ads depends on the perceived congruity of the usage situation being advertised ( $H_1$ ) and on the way it is advertised ( $H_2$ ). We then investigate how different ways to advertise the new use (situation comparison ads versus product comparison ads) influence  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  ( $H_3$ ), situation-cued recall ( $H_4$ ), and reported usage ( $H_5$ ). Analyses of covariance are conducted, and each consumer's total prior usage of the brand (over the past 12 months) is used as a covariate. Contrasts are conducted using the overall error term for the three level ANCOVA and a Bonferroni interval test to protect against Type I errors.

### **How Expansion Ads Are Processed**

In  $H_1$ , we predicted that, relative to incongruent uses of a brand, consideration of advertisements showing congruent uses of a brand encourages (a) a greater number of simple evaluative thoughts, (b) a greater number of support arguments, (c) fewer attribute-oriented thoughts, (d) fewer counterarguments, (e) higher ratings toward  $A_{\text{new-use}}$ , and (f) lower situation-cued recall. The univariate analyses reported in Table 3 support five of these six hypotheses.

When compared with incongruent uses for the brand, advertisements for congruent uses generated a greater number of simple evaluative thoughts (1.6 versus 1.2;  $F_{1,143} = 3.6$ ;

**TABLE 3**  
**How the Congruency of a New Use Influences Processing**

	Means (Standard Errors in Parentheses)		F-Values (Degrees of Freedom)
	Congruent use of brand (n = 73)	Less congruent use of brand (n = 79)	
<b>Dependent Variables</b>			
Simple evaluative thoughts	1.5 (.8)	1.2 (1.0)	3.6(1,143)**
Attribute-oriented thoughts	1.1 (1.2)	.9 (1.1)	.4(1,143)
Support arguments	1.8 (1.3)	.7 (.8)	7.3(1,143)**
Counterarguments	.7 (.7)	1.3 (.9)	10.1(1,143)**
Ratings of A <sub>new-use</sub> (1 = Bad; 7 = Good)	5.1 (1.5)	3.1 (1.7)	64.1(1,143)**
<b>Three-Month Delay</b>			
Probability of product recall (given situation cue)	34/73 = .47 (.5)	53/79 = .67 (.5)	5.5a**
Average units consumed/month in target situation	2.0 (3.7)	.3 (1.7)	5.9(1,68)**
Total unit increase in monthly usage (in all usage situations)	1.7 (3.3)	.3 (1.5)	9.8(1,122)**

\* $p < .05$ .

\*\* $p < .01$ .

<sup>a</sup> $\chi^2$  test.

$p < .05$ ), a greater number of support arguments (1.8 versus .7;  $F_{1,143} = 7.3$ ;  $p < .01$ ), and fewer counterarguments (.7 versus 1.3;  $F_{1,143} = 10.1$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Contrary to what was hypothesized, advertisements for incongruent uses did not generate a significantly greater number of attribute-oriented thoughts than congruent uses (1.0 versus .9;  $F_{1,143} = .4$ ). Although this last result was not predicted, it may be that when a new use for a brand is perceived as extremely incongruent, few attribute-oriented thoughts are generated, because the new use is not fully considered (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989).

As hypothesized, advertisements for congruent uses stimulate higher ratings of A<sub>new-use</sub> (5.1 versus 3.1;  $F_{1,143} = 64.1$ ;  $p < .01$ ), but lower situation-cued recall (.47 versus .67;  $F_{1,122} = 5.0$ ;  $p < .05$ ). In other words, when given the relevant situation cue (e.g., "Did you remember seeing an advertisement about eating a food for breakfast?"), 67% (53/79) of the subjects who saw an advertisement for an incongruent use of a brand were able to recall the target brand, compared with the 47% (34/73) of those who saw an advertisement for a congruent use of the same brand. This result is consistent with Chattopadhyay and Alba's (1988) finding that generating counterarguments is more involving than generating support arguments. This increase in involvement thereby improves the likelihood of recall.

H<sub>2</sub> examines how the association strategy used in expansion ads influences processing. We predicted that relative to product comparison ads, situation comparison ads encourage (a) a greater number of simple evaluative thoughts, (b) a greater number of support arguments, (c) fewer attribute-oriented thoughts, and (d) fewer counterarguments. The results in Table 4 support three of these four hypotheses. Both advertisements generated the same number of total thoughts. When compared to product comparison ads, situation comparison ads stimulated a greater number of simple evaluative thoughts (1.6 versus 1.3;  $F_{1,143} = 4.0$ ;  $p < .05$ ), fewer attribute-oriented thoughts (.8 versus 1.2;  $F_{1,143} = 3.9$ ;  $p < .05$ ), and fewer counterarguments (.3 versus .6;  $F_{1,143} = 4.4$ ;  $p < .05$ ).<sup>2</sup> It was expected that situation comparison ads also stimulate more support arguments, but this difference was not significant (.7 versus .4;  $F_{1,143} = .5$ ; ns).

These results suggest an important point about expansion ad effectiveness: Situation comparison ads may suppress the generation of counterarguments, whereas product comparisons may suppress the generation of support argu-

<sup>2</sup>In contrast to noncomparison ads, situation comparison ads generated fewer counterarguments (.3 versus .7;  $F_{1,143} = 5.5$ ;  $p < .05$ ), and product comparison ads generated directionally fewer support arguments (.4 versus .8), though this was not statistically significant.

ments. This point is more vividly illustrated when we examine the net valence (support arguments – counterarguments) of the thoughts generated by these advertisements. The net valence of the thoughts generated by situation comparison ads (.40) was significantly higher ( $F_{1,143} = 6.3; p < .05$ ) than that generated by product comparison ads (-.20).

### **How Expansion Ad Comparisons Affect $A_{\text{new-use}}$ , Situation-Cued Recall, and Usage**

Of key importance to our study is  $H_3$ , namely, that situation comparison ads generate more favorable ratings of  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  than product comparison ads. This hypothesis is supported. The overall ANCOVA for advertisement type is significant ( $F_{2,142} = 8.5; p < .05$ ). The contrasts indicate that situation comparison ads are more effective (4.6 versus 3.7) than product comparison ads in influencing  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  ( $F_{1,143} = 6.3; p < .05$ ). As a point of reference, the ratings of  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  generated by noncomparison ads was 3.9.

$H_4$  hypothesizes that product comparison ads are more effective than situation comparison ads in stimulating situation-cued recall for the target brand. When given the relevant situation cue, 70% (30/43) of the subjects who saw a product comparison ad were able to recall the target brand, compared with 59% (22/37) of those who saw a situation comparison ad, and 45% (23/51) of those who saw noncomparison ads. The overall main effect of advertisement type across the three advertisements is statistically significant ( $X^2 = 5.9; p < .05$ ), but the hypothesized contrast between product comparison and situation comparison ads is not ( $X^2 = 1.0$ ). When contrasted with noncomparison ads, product comparison ads are relatively effective in influencing situation-cued recall, though they are relatively ineffective in changing  $A_{\text{new-use}}$ . As Figure 3 suggests, there is a negative correlation between  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  and situation-cued recall of the brand ( $r = -.24; p < .05$ ).

In  $H_5$ , we suggest that situation comparison ads increase usage frequency of the target brand (in the target situation) more than product comparison ads. The main effect of advertisement type on usage in the target situation was significant ( $F_{2,121} = 5.7; p < .05$ ). As shown in Figure 4, subjects who saw a situation comparison ad reported consuming more units of the target brand in the target situation per month (1.6 units) than those who saw a product comparison ad (.5 units;  $F_{1,122} = 3.8; p < .05$ ). This difference is notable because usage in the target situation was increased on the basis of only a single exposure to an ad. What may help make expansion ads so influential is that they are targeted toward current users. Indeed, the likelihood of reported usage in the target situation was significantly related ( $r = .32; p < .05$ ) to the total usage volume of the brand over the prior year. Should a current user of a product be given sufficient opportunity to think about the reasonableness of a new use, one exposure to an advertisement could affect his or her short-term behavior.

Although this hypothesis is supported, the argument as to why we expected this result is not supported. We believed this difference would occur because  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  is more strongly related to usage than situation-cued recall. However, because the differences on situation-cued recall are not signif-

icant ( $H_4$ ), we cannot make this relative statement. We find that  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  is more correlated with target brand usage ( $r = .28; p < .01$ ) than is situation-cued recall ( $r = .02; ns$ ), but all we can conclude is that situation comparison ads generate more usage than product comparison ads. Further research in usage behavior will add to our understanding of usage and to better methodologies for collecting this data.

Although we make no predictions about how the advertisements influence a person's total usage of a brand (across all situations), this is also an important managerial issue. All three advertisement formats stimulate an increase in total monthly usage. As shown in Figure 4, subjects who saw situation comparison ads increased their overall usage more than those who saw product comparison ads (2.7 versus .8;  $F_{1,122} = 4.5; p < .05$ ). Because the average monthly usage of these brands before advertisement exposure was approximately 1.6 units, short-term increases of .8 and 2.7 units is promising.

## **Discussion**

### **Implications for Schema Congruity Research**

The schema-based approach to evaluation has been supported in a variety of consumer domains, including attitude formation, information search (Ozanne, Brucks, and Grewal 1992), and expectation disconfirmation (Stayman, Alden, and Smith 1992). Our research tests whether schema-based evaluation can ultimately predict the adoption of a new behavior. We also answer Meyers-Levy and Tybout's (1989) challenge to identify new ways in which congruity can be operationalized. First, congruity is operationalized here by the degree to which a proposed new behavior is perceived as congruent with existing behaviors. Consistent with Wyer and Gordon (1982) and Fiske and Taylor (1991), a proposed new use that is mildly discrepant with existing behaviors encourages schema-based processing and affect transfer. Alternatively, proposed new uses that are more discrepant or incongruent with existing behaviors are better remembered (Stangor and McMillan 1992), but less favorably evaluated.

A second way in which congruity is operationalized is by the manner in which an advertisement frames the new behavior. We find that some advertisements encourage stronger perceptions of congruity than other advertisements. Such perceptions, in turn, influence attitude and recall. Our results are consistent with other findings that comparison frames affect both attitude and recall (Keller 1991). Indeed, advertisements that frame the new behavior as a *complement* to an existing behavior (i.e., a situation comparison ad) are more effective at generating stronger attitudes and influencing behavior than those that frame the new behavior as a *substitute* for an existing behavior (i.e., a product comparison ad).

Because product comparison ads frame a new behavior as a substitute for an existing behavior, they may not be effective in breaking functional fixedness. They may instead only reinforce existing thoughts about what is acceptable and routine behavior. In contrast, because situation comparison ads frame the new behavior as a complement to existing behaviors, they may be more effective in changing this

**TABLE 4**  
**The Impact of Expansion Ads**

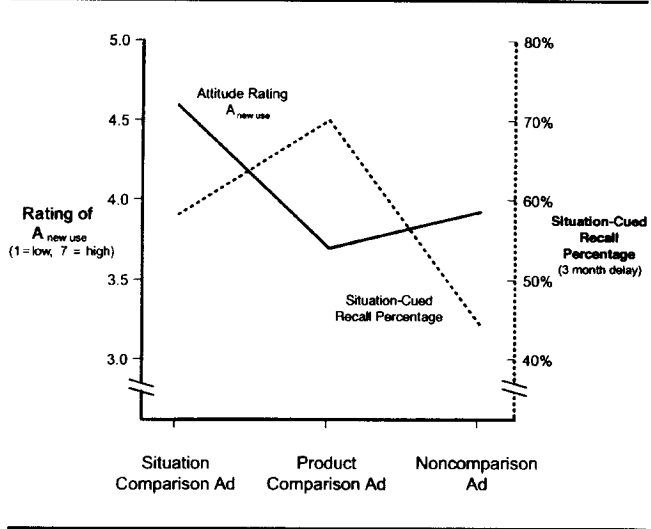
Dependent variables	Means (Standard Errors in Parentheses)			F-Values (degrees of freedom)		
	Situation comparison ad (n = 49)	Product comparison ad (n = 44)	Noncomparison ad (n = 58)	Situation comparison ads versus product comparison ads	Situation comparison ads versus noncomparison ads	Product comparison ads versus noncomparison ads
Number of simple evaluative thoughts	1.6 (.8)	1.3 (.8)	1.4 (1.0)	4.0 (1,143)**	2.1 (1,143)	.5 (1,143)
Number of attribute-oriented thoughts	.8 (1.1)	1.2 (1.0)	1.0 (1.1)	3.9 (1,143)**	.9 (1,143)	.4 (1,143)
Number of support arguments (SA)	.7 (1.1)	.4 (.8)	.8 (1.3)	.5 (1,143)	0.0 (1,143)	.7 (1,143)*
Number of counterarguments (CA)	.3 (.6)	.6 (1.0)	.7 (1.0)	4.4 (1,143)**	5.1 (1,143)**	.3 (1,143)
Ratings of A <sub>new-use</sub> (1 = Bad; 7 = Good)	4.6 (1.6)	3.7 (2.2)	3.9 (1.8)	6.3 (1,143)**	.5 (1,143)*	.9 (1,141)
<b>Three-Month Delay</b>						
Probability of brand recall (given situation cue)	22/37 = .59 (n = 37)	30/43 = .70 (n = 43)	23/51 = .45 (n = 51)	1.01	1.81	5.8**
Average units consumed/month in target situation (among all subjects)	1.6 (3.6)	.5 (1.2)	1.0 (2.5)	3.9 (1,122)**	2.2 (1,122)	.8 (1,122)
Total unit increase in monthly usage (in all usage situations)	2.7 (3.7)	.8 (2.4)	1.7 (3.4)*	4.5 (1,122)**	3.4 (1,122)	1.8 (1,122)

\*p < .10.

\*\*p < .05.

³χ² test.

**FIGURE 3**  
**The Impact of Expansion Ads on Attitude and Recall**



fixedness perspective. Their effectiveness, however, does not necessarily lie in their ability to change or directly address the routine. It instead lies in their ability to circumvent the routine by not raising it to salience in the first place.

Examining a relatively unexplored phenomenon such as expansion advertising enables us to serve a broadening function. In one sense, it broadens the operationalization of schema congruity to include the incongruity (or discrepancy) that exists between a proposed usage and an existing usage. It also shows how comparison frames made within an advertisement may have an additional influence on perceptions of such incongruity. Besides broadening the operationalization of incongruity, our research also broadens the dependent variables that are generally associated with schema-congruity research. Specifically, we show that a schema-congruity framework can be modified in ways that enable predictions to be made about cued recall and important usage behavior.

The model presented here also broadens the types of comparisons examined in advertising research. Most comparative advertising research focuses exclusively on brand comparisons within the same category (cf. Pechmann and Stewart 1990). For mature brands, cross-category and cross-situation comparisons are key issues that must be addressed by further research. Such research helps determine how advertisements can most effectively change deeply structured usage patterns by changing the “functional fixedness” that often accompanies them.

**Limitations and Research Opportunities**

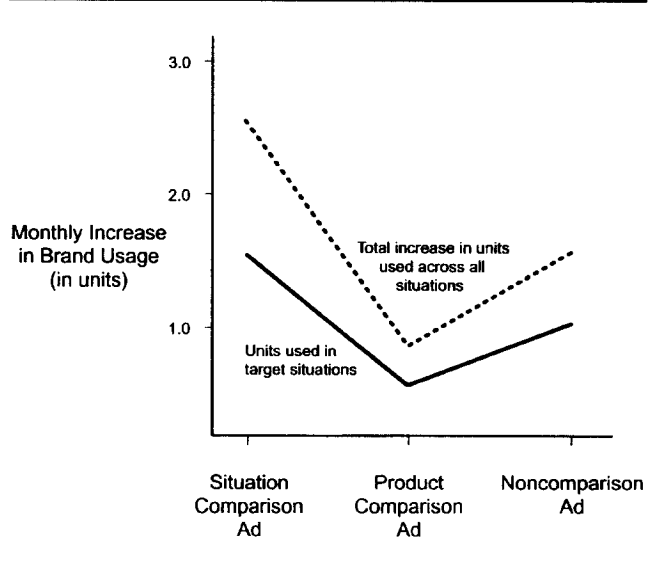
These findings generalize across different products and types of situations, but it is not clear how they generalize across different levels of consumer involvement. Because favorable, familiar brands were used in a forced exposure setting, involvement was higher than might be expected in other exposure environments. Although some work on comparative advertising has shown advertising effects to weaken as processing involvement decreases (Johnson and Horne

1988), this may not occur when there is an opportunity for schema-based processing to occur. Maheswaran and Chaiken (1991) show that schema-based processing actually becomes more pronounced as consumer involvement decreases. This suggests that the effects of these advertisements are strengthened in a low involvement context.

Special care was taken to minimize the bias that can occur when collecting reported measures of usage. Whenever subjects are asked about their previous usage of a product, there is a risk that asking that question may encourage or “prime” respondents to give the expected usage-related answer. Nevertheless, a priming explanation cannot account for the findings in our study. To predict that situation comparison ads have the strongest impact on usage, a priming explanation should also predict that these advertisements have the strongest impact on situation-cued recall. This was not the case. From a methodological and measurement perspective, examining behavior—such as usage—is more difficult than examining attitude or intentions. It is, however, the necessary next step in advancing the field in a direction that has relevance to managers. Results such as these will be better understood as more usage-related empirical data is gathered and methodologies and measures evolve.

The results underscore the effectiveness of situation comparison ads. Such advertisements may not, however, be more effective than product comparison or noncomparison ads if the target brand clearly dominates the alternatives currently used in this target situation. Yet, these ideal circumstances seldom occur. When they do, we suspect that *any* advertising strategy that raises the salience of the use will be effective. Ultimately, the best test for selecting the optimal advertising strategy is a copy-test. Copy-testing measures have been specifically developed to estimate the impact various usage-related advertisements have on actual usage frequency (Wansink and Ray 1992).

**FIGURE 4**  
**The Impact of Expansion Ads on Brand Usage**



## Implications

A manager who increases the number of units (e.g., canned soup) that a household uses from four to five each year, realizes a 25% increase in sales without once having to convert any new users. The tremendous potential of advertising to increase usage frequency has been largely unexplored by researchers and haphazardly explored by practitioners. For dominant brands, increasing usage frequency among current users may well be more cost-effective than encouraging nonusers either to switch brands or initiate trial (Ehrenberg 1972). Expanding usage can also be a key strategy for small brands that have a loyal niche following (e.g., Grey Poupon mustard) and industry associations that want to increase the use of the category they represent (e.g., American Dairy Council). Unfortunately, the majority of managers still behave as though the only way brand sales can be increased is through promotions or “recipe ads” (Wilke 1995). This limited vision of usage advertising helps explain why there have been so few success stories.

We directly address the question of what advertising strategy is most successful in encouraging users of a mature brand to use it in a new situation. Theoretical literature and our results suggest that in comparison to product comparison ads, situation comparison ads are superior in generating favorable attitudes and higher levels of new usage, but are not more favorable at generating situation-cued recall. These findings indicate that advertisements that try to change usage behaviors may fail if they attempt to alter existing usage patterns too directly. It is important for a manager to build off of existing brand associations. In other words, when encouraging the new use of a brand, it may be safest not to mention any product that would be substituted in the process.

### **Designing and Implementing an Expansion Advertising Campaign**

*Generating expansion opportunities.* The most common procedures for generating potential expansion situations for a target brand are through brainstorming meetings or focus groups involving loyal or heavy users. New usage situations can also be solicited from current users, such as Snyders of Hanover did when forming its “Creative Pretzel Eaters Club,” or as Tabasco Sauce did when launching its “How do you use it?” contest. A more methodical approach is to use cluster analysis to determine what seemingly unrelated products are associated with the target brand (Ratneshwar and Shocker 1991). Usage situations associated with these unrelated products may then be further screened as potential opportunities for expansion (Aaker, Batra, and Myers 1992, p. 142).

Offering an array of usage opportunities for a brand improves attitudes toward it (Assael 1995, p. 308). Nevertheless, care must be taken not to select a usage situation that might erode brand equity or alienate users. This concern over attitude erosion is reported to have prevented a California winery from moving forward with a campaign to encourage people to enjoy a glass of wine at special family dinners. Although this campaign might increase use among some wine drinkers, it might alienate others. Evidence exists

that new uses can be encouraged without damage to the brand if the new use is advertised by an industry association (Wansink 1995). In effect, having the California Wine Institute sponsor a category-level expansion campaign could increase usage among potentially favorable users without alienating potentially unfavorable ones.

*Determining the appropriate media.* Successful media strategies for expansion ad campaigns have been based on targeting and timing. Large share brands have successfully used targeted mass media vehicles effectively: Arm and Hammer, for example, advertises different installments of its “101 Uses” campaign in women’s magazines. In contrast, smaller share brands affordably target their users by advertising new uses on their labels. Trix Cereal uses a side panel to note complementary products (e.g., ice cream, yogurt, trail mix) on which Trix could be sprinkled, and Murphy’s Oil Soap prints a series of different usage ideas under peel-off stickers that are affixed to their spray bottles. Similarly, Roy Rogers restaurants uses their paper place mats to advertise eight situations (e.g., parties, picnics, meetings) in which customers can eat their carry-out chicken.

The situation-specific nature of expansion advertising underscores the importance of media scheduling. The ideal timing of an exposure should coincide with when a usage choice has the highest likelihood to be made (Deighton, Henderson, and Neslin 1989). Media scheduling has been used effectively to raise the salience of the brand at the appropriate time most relevant for a usage decision. Campbell’s soup schedules its radio advertisements to be broadcast just prior to lunch and dinner. Furthermore, they instruct radio stations to broadcast specially developed “Storm Spot Ads” during poor weather.

*Selecting comparison products and situations.* Note that the specific comparison situation or product that is selected can have a powerful influence on an advertisement’s effectiveness. In this study, additional analyses show that situation comparison ads are most effective when they underscore the similar characteristics between the target situation and a comparison situation. Likewise, product comparison ads are most effective when they underscore the similarities between eating the comparison product and eating the target brand in that situation. Emphasizing common attributes may be the least risky advertising strategy. Emphasizing dissimilar attributes may have a negative impact on  $A_{\text{new-use}}$  and may make the new use of the brand appear so incongruent that it erodes  $A_{\text{brand}}$  (Wansink 1994). This fear of attitude erosion is what reportedly prevented Pepsi-Cola from comparing itself to coffee in its “Pepsi A.M.” campaign (Winters 1989).

Pepsi-Cola’s concerns illustrate an important point about selecting an appropriate expansion advertising strategy: Under some circumstances, expansion ads may not be feasible, and the best alternative is to use a noncomparison ad. When a new use for Arm & Hammer Baking Soda—as a refrigerator deodorizer—was promoted, a noncomparison advertising campaign was used. There was no other option. The company could not use a situation comparison campaign because the product was not being used as a deodorizer in any other situation, and it could not use a product

comparison campaign because no other product was then being used to absorb odors in refrigerators.

### Implications for Changing Undesired Behaviors

The basic notion of altering usage patterns is not only relevant to brand managers. From a behavior modification perspective, it is related to changing any undesired behavior by changing beliefs about that behavior (Bandura 1969). This might include drinking juice instead of drinking alcohol, chewing gum instead of smoking cigarettes, or eating fruit instead of eating ice cream. Encouraging substitutions such as these is the objective of public policy campaigns and is suggested by both twelve-step programs and diet programs. The typical approach frames the choice between the two alternatives in a way favorable to the target product (i.e., juice, gum, fruit).

Our results suggest that these direct comparison campaigns may be less effective than a campaign that does not directly attack the undesired behavior. The direct, confrontational approach they take may be too disruptive to existing associations and may increase resistance to the message. By focusing on parallel situations in which the target product is used, favorable associations can be made in a less disruptive manner. For example, drinking juice at a cocktail party can be compared with drinking it at a conference coffee break.

More generally, when encouraging a change of any undesired behavior, it is important to show situations in which the desired behavior meets similar objectives to those in the target situation. In this way, recycling paper at home may be compared with recycling paper at work; not littering in the street may be compared with not littering in a person's own yard; and exercising as an adult may be compared with exercising as a teenager.

## Conclusion

We describe a new direction in advertising research that has been ignored for too many years. Usage-related advertising—such as usage expansion advertising—represents an opportunity to develop theory for practice. It is a context in which existing theories of consumer behavior (e.g., social norm theory, mere exposure, reasoned action, noncomparable alternatives, variety seeking) can be modified, rebuilt, and extended, and it is a context in which behavior can be measured. At a time when marketing research has been criticized for having little relevance for managers, the area of usage-related advertising is one in which relevant frameworks can be developed to examine relevant dependent variables. In doing so, research contributions influence both conceptual understanding and managerial practice.

## APPENDIX

### Sample Transcripts of Expansion Ads

Situation Comparison Ad		Product Comparison Ad		Noncomparison Ad	
Video	Audio	Video	Audio	Video	Audio
<i>Two young children are seated at the lunch table. Their mother is serving them soup and sandwiches for lunch. She turns to the camera and says...</i>		<i>Two young children are sitting at the breakfast table. Their mother is serving them hot cereal for breakfast. She turns toward the camera and says...</i>		<i>Two young children are sitting at the breakfast table. Their mother is serving them Campbell's Soup for breakfast. She turns toward the camera and says...</i>	
"Soup's a great food for lunch. It's a hot and nourishing way to start our afternoon."		"Sometimes I really like to start off our day with a hot and nourishing food like hot cereal."		"Sometimes I really like to start off our day with a hot, nourishing food like Campbell's Soup."	
<i>All of a sudden the scene changes and it's the morning of a different day.</i>		<i>All of a sudden the scene changes and it's the morning of a different day.</i>		<i>She finishes serving and walks away from the table as she continues talking...</i>	
<i>This time the children are sitting at the breakfast table. Their mother is serving them Campbell's Soup for breakfast. She says...</i>		<i>Again, the children are sitting at the breakfast table. This time instead of serving them hot cereal, their mother is serving them Campbell's Soup for breakfast. She says...</i>		"And with 42 different flavors and types—including chunky and low sodium—there's a Campbell's Soup that goes well with nearly anything I might want to serve with breakfast."	
"But someday I like to start off our mornings with Campbell's Soup for the same reasons I serve it for lunch. In both situations, it's a hot and nourishing way to start the rest of the day."		"But someday I like to start off our mornings with Campbell's Soup for the same reasons I serve hot cereal. Both soup and cereal are hot and nourishing."		But most importantly, starting the morning with soup gives us all a head start on the day. It's hot, and it's nourishing."	
<i>She finishes serving and walks away from the table as she continues talking...</i>		<i>She finishes serving and walks away from the table as she continues talking...</i>		<i>The following words appear on the screen next to a can of Campbell's Soup. An announcer's voice reads the words:</i>	

"And with its 42 different flavors and types—including chunky and low sodium—there's a Campbell's Soup that goes well with nearly anything else I might want to serve with breakfast.

But most importantly, starting the morning with soup gives us all a head start on the day. It's hot, and it's nourishing ... just like it is when we have it for lunch."

The following words appear on the screen next to a can of Campbell's Soup. An announcer's voice reads the words:

"Campbell's Soup...a Great Way to Start a Great Day, or a Great Lunch."

"And with its 42 different flavors and types—including chunky and low sodium—there's a Campbell's Soup that goes well with nearly anything else I might want to serve with breakfast.

But most importantly, starting the morning with soup gives us all a head start on the day. It's hot, and it's nourishing ... just like hot cereal."

The following words appear on the screen next to a can of Campbell's Soup. An announcer's voice reads the words:

"Campbell's Soup and hot cereal... Two Great Ways to Start a Great Day"

"Campbell's Soup...a Great Way to Start a Great Day"

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