Chapter 4

HOW DO INDIVIDUALS PROCESS ADVERTISING?

We now examine theories that have been used to explain how people attend to and process advertising. We look first at traditional sequential models such as AIDA. These models define some necessary requirements for ads to work but the causal relationships that have been claimed on their behalf are often in doubt. The ATR (awareness, trial, reinforcement) model is a better description of how advertising functions but also gives a limited explanation of the processes that are involved in effective advertising.

Turning to these processes, we examine first those that relate to attention and then those that are more concerned with processing. We assess the evidence for a number of mechanisms that could provide an automatic response to advertising and describe the Elaboration Likelihood Model, which provides an explanation of how people shift between conscious thought and automatic mechanisms.

Hierarchical Models of Ad Response

Traditionally, the influence of advertising has been explained as a hierarchical sequence of effects, passing from attention to the ad through to action, usually purchase. Strong (1925) attributed the earliest of these sequential models, AIDA, to St Elmo Lewis (late 19th Century). Figure 4.1 illustrates AIDA and the more extended model proposed by Lavidge and Steiner (1961).

Colley (1961) also claimed that there was a sequential process underlying ad effect and proposed the DAGMAR (Defining Advertising Goals and Measuring Advertising Results) procedure for developing and assessing advertising. According to Colley, effective advertising took the audience down the path of Awareness, Comprehension and Conviction to Action (ACCA), see Figure 4.2.

Hierarchical models deal only with the individual response and leave out any carryover effects of advertising (reviewed in Chapter 3). These models have some affinity with the social psychological work of the Yale School, which focused on the effects of different communication designs. In Yale
The Effect of Advertising and Display

Lavidge and Steiner

**AIDA**
- Attention
- Interest
- Desire
- Action

**Awareness**
- Knowledge
- Liking
- Preference
- Conviction
- Purchase

*Figure 4.1. Hierarchical models of ad response*

*Figure 4.2. The model behind DAGMAR*

research, different message elements were compared, their order was varied, and the endorsement of experts was manipulated. The Yale work was