advertising message. Imagery-provoking language, puns, or metaphors are often used to facilitate decoding of the main advertising points (Leigh 1994). On the other hand, overly technical or confusing language may be used to convey important information such as health warnings, legal restrictions, or guarantee information (Rossiter 1980; Funkhouser 1984).

Motivation, Ability and Opportunity to Process Advertising Information

It is helpful to think in terms of three factors affecting the manner in which consumers react to and encode advertising information: motivation, ability and opportunity to process (Batra and Ray 1986; MacInnis and Jaworski 1989). Motivation to process information refers to the allocation of mental resources to process information from advertisements; it is a function of consumers’ goals and needs. Motivation is requisite for generating certain types of inferences (Alba and Hutchinson 1987; Kardes 1993), and for elaborating on presented information (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). In the absence of personal relevance, motivation to elaborate is low (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). Motivation may also be low when consumers have high levels of product or brand knowledge (e.g., Johnson and Russo 1984), or when they feel sufficiently familiar with the information (Kardes 1993). In such instances, consumers may process information very superficially if they process it at all.

In order to process advertising information consumers’ also require a certain level of ability, usually conceptualized as knowledge about products and brands (Batra and Ray 1986; Alba and Hutchinson 1987), or even advertising (Friestad and Wright 1994). Prior knowledge is necessary to infer missing information, since consumers must know