

Advertising and Social Concern: A Perceptual Analysis of Youth

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Abstract: Advertising as a part of communications mix, has positive value by providing information, entertainment, generate employment and stimulates growth in economy. It has also been accused of being pervasive, intrusive, economic waste, cynicism, debased language, envy, disrespect for tradition and authority, an obsession with sex and stereotyping. The paper focuses on measuring youth perception with regard to social awareness and community expenditure, social utility and unfavourable impact of advertising. Data was collected from 300 university students visiting 6 canteens namely, University cafeteria, Eat point, YP canteen, Renuka's, Nescafe and Raina canteen in the campus of university of Jammu, Jammu. Mean values indicates that students view social aspect of advertising favourably. Mean value of utility of advertising and unfavourable impact of advertising varies according to demographic profile of students. The result suggests use of socially acceptable advertising by involving diverse social norms and keeping in view the expectations and perceptions of the youth in designing their advertising campaigns. Rational buying motives be popularised in ad copy than evolving materialism, manipulation, exaggeration, use of sexual themes and fear appeals etc. Any claims made in advertisements should be adequately substantiated in order to avoid misleading promotion.

Keywords: Advertising, Social concern, Perceptual analysis,

1. INTRODUCTION

Organisations today operate in a highly competitive environment characterised by constant change in market place wherein consumers have a greater selection with regard to products and services requiring organisations to be more conscious of their advertising efforts (Zyman & Brott, 2002). Organisations now view advertising as an investment and tend to value over-communication with consumers, resulting in greater budgets for advertising departments than in the past (Zyman & Brott, 2002). Just as a company would invest in technology and innovations, it must also invest in advertising and promotion if it is to succeed (Wentz, 1993). The entire matrix of activities involving promotion, production & distribution has a strong and significant impact on the importance of advertising (McFall, 2004). Marketers by using persuasive communication, seeks to transfer a set of meanings, feelings and tones about a product to their target audiences, such that the viewer's perception of the product will match the same set. Advertising as a part of communications mix, has positive value, in that it relates information, provides entertainment, generate employment and stimulates growth in economy. It is credited with creating good will and providing a progressive, educative and civilizing influence (Presbrey, 1929 and White, 1978). It has also been accused of being pervasive, intrusive, economic waste to purveying of harmful products, from sexism to deceit & manipulation, from triviality to intellectual and moral pollution (Mittal, 1994). Critics associate it with health afflictions, unbridled materialism and manipulation (Pollay, 1986 & 1993). Advertising is seen by many as a threat to the cultural identity and self realisation of many developing countries: it brings to many people alien ethical values; it may deviate consumer demands in developing countries to areas which can inhibit development priorities; it affects and can often deform ways of life & lifestyles (Mac Bride, 1980). Pollay (1986) argued that modern advertising promotes materialism, cynicism, debased language, envy, disrespect for tradition and authority, an obsession with sex and stereotyping. With regard to

television ads specifically, common complaints center on frequency, timing, and loudness (Rutherford, 1997).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several research streams have addressed public policy issues relevant to marketing and advertising practices (Calfee & Ringold, 1994 and Ford & Calfee, 1986) and advertising as it relates to societal concerns, such as its impact on the moral fabric of societies (Belk & Pollay, 1985; Ewen, 1988; Mc Cracken, 1988; Pollay, 1986 and Tharp & Scott, 1990). Various investigations have yielded important insights about consumers' perceptions of advertising's effects on the society and findings have been mixed. For example, some research indicates that consumers believe advertising is a necessary component of the market place is good for the economy and on average raise the standard of living (Muehling, 1987 and Reid & Soley, 1982). Other studies suggest more neutral feelings about these social effects of advertising (Andrews, 1989; Andrews, Durvasula and Netemeyer, 1994 and Pollay & Mital, 1993). In addition, whereas some findings support the idea that advertising results in better products and promotes competition (Andrews 1989; Anderson, Engeldow & Becker, 1978; Muehling, 1987 and Reid & Soley, 1982), others are less favourable in this regard (Haller, 1974 and Pollay & Mittal, 1993), the majority of studies suggest that consumers do not believe that advertising lowers prices of products (Andrews, Durvasula & Netemeyer, 1994; Muehling, 1987 and Shavitt, Lowrey & Haefner, 1998). As documented in the literature, the societal effects of advertising include the encouragement of materialism, the corruption of societal values and falsity, or failure to present an accurate picture of the product and/or reality (Bauer & Greyser, 1968 and Pollay & Mittal, 1993). Findings spanning three decades have indicated that consumers perceive advertising as encouraging unnecessary purchases and promoting materialism (Anderson, Engeldow & Becker, 1978; Andrews, 1989; Calfee & Ringold, 1988; Haller, 1974; Pollay & Mittal, 1993 and Reid & Soley, 1982), as well as corrupting society's values by reinforcing stereotypes (Wills & Ryans, 1982) and promoting undesirable behaviours (Pollay & Mittal, 1993). In addition, advertising has been viewed as less than truthful, often misleading and insulting to consumers' intelligence (Anderson, Engeldow & Becker, 1978; Andrews, 1989; Barksdale & Darden, 1972; Barksdale, Darden & Perreault, 1976; Barksdale & Perreault, 1980; Durand & Lambert, 1985 and Reid & Soley, 1982). Haller (1974) reported that US college students found advertising 'irritating, misleading, unnecessary and insulting to their intelligence.' Finally, research also indicates that US consumers are more negative about the social effects of advertising than are Russian (Andrews, Durvasula & Netemeyer, 1994) or German (Witkowski & Kellner, 1998) consumers. For the most part, consumers seem to be somewhat ambivalent about the effects of advertising on the society.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the paper is as under

1. To measure youth perception regarding impact of advertising on social awareness and community expenditure.
2. To assess demographic-wise mean perception of students regarding social utility of advertising and
3. To analyse demographic-wise youth perception regarding unfavourable impact of advertising .

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary data were obtained from 300 students of University of Jammu using a self developed questionnaire sub-divided into demographic profile and specific information regarding level of brand awareness, media usage, relative influence of various factors in purchase decision, ethical, social & regulatory perceptions about advertising asked in open-ended, closed-ended form, dichotomous questions, ranking questions and finally statements in 5 point Likert scale (where 5 denotes strongly agree and 1 denotes strongly disagree). Suggestions for making advertising socially desirable and aiding consumers in rational decision-making were kept in open ended form. The total number of regular students enrolled in all post graduates departments were

obtained from the Administration block of university which was 2842. Out of 9 canteens, 6 canteens namely University cafeteria, Eat point, YP canteen, Renuka's, Nescafe and Raina canteen were selected. The excluded canteens from the survey were those which are visited by staff and specific category of students only like hostellers and correspondence students. For pre-testing 50 students from 6 university canteens were contacted using judgement sampling. The pre-testing results were tabulated and final sample size came out to be 299 rounded off to 300 using a statistical formula (Sharma, 1999). The break hours of departments and peak sale hours from the selected canteen owners were collected which were found to lie between 1.00 pm to 3.00 pm during a day. 50 students each from 6 selected canteens were contacted for data collection using judgement sampling. The collected data was purified through factor analysis on SPSS (Version 16.0). The process of R-Mode Principle Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation identified three factors in 'Social aspects of advertising'. Further Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, KMO value, Bartlett's test of sphericity and Cronbach alpha were within the threshold level. The convergent validity of the data was proved by the positive correlation matrix of the different factors. The content validity of the construct was duly assessed through review of literature, discussion with the subject experts, owners of university canteens & cafeteria etc., for the selection of items in the questionnaire.

Information from secondary sources were collected from books, journals, reports, web search engines and other published and unpublished advertising related documents.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Demographic-wise perceptual analysis regarding social awareness and community expenditure by advertising

Table 1 exhibits the students' perception regarding impact of advertising on social awareness and community expenditure along six demographic variables namely, gender, age, religion, disposable income, parental occupation and faculty. The mean value of male and female respondents came at 3.51 and 3.49 respectively. Age-wise, 22-24 group exhibited higher mean score (3.59) followed by 20-22 age group (3.54) and above 24 age group (3.34). The mean values depicted by students of different religions came at 3.64 (Hindu), 3.05 (Muslim), 3.32 (Sikh) and 2.75 (Others). Disposable income category is divided into four groups. Mean score of these groups in descending order arrived at 3.58 (<Rs.500), 3.58 (Rs.1000-Rs.2000), 3.46 (above Rs. 2000) and 3.45 (Rs.500-Rs.1000). Students whose parents are pensioners ('others') exhibited higher mean score (3.60) followed by service (3.51), business (3.49) and profession (3.42). 32 departments of the university were divided into eight groups. Students of behavioural sciences showed higher mean score (3.78) than students of other faculty. Overall mean value of 3.5 indicates that students view social aspect of advertising favourably.

Table 1. Demographic-wise impact of advertising on social awareness and community expenditure

S.No	Demographic Variable	Sub-Class	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	Gender	Male	104	3.51	1.25
		Female	196	3.49	1.29
		Sub-mean	300	3.50	1.27
2.	Age (Yrs.)	20-22	37	3.54	1.41
		22-24	164	3.59	1.23
		Above 24	99	3.34	1.29
		Sub-mean	300	3.50	1.27
3.	Religion	Hindu	219	3.64	1.20

		Muslim	55	3.05	1.45
		Sikh	22	3.32	1.36
		Others	4	2.75	0.50
		Sub-mean	300	3.50	1.27
4.	Disposable income	< Rs.500	48	3.58	1.20
		Rs.500 – Rs.1000	133	3.45	1.31
		Rs.1000 –Rs. 2000	62	3.58	1.14
		Above Rs.2000	57	3.46	1.42
		Sub-mean	300	3.50	1.27
5.	Parental occupation	Business	107	3.49	1.28
		Service	171	3.51	1.27
		Profession	12	3.42	1.44
		Others	10	3.60	1.35
		Sub-mean	300	3.50	1.27
6.	Faculty	Life sciences	27	3.16	1.50
		Arts/Oriental languages	61	3.50	1.22
		Sciences	73	3.47	1.25
		Commerce	15	3.27	1.39
		Mgt. studies	33	3.37	1.38
		Beh. Sciences	19	3.78	1.08
		Law	23	3.46	1.39
		Social sciences	49	3.71	0.90
		Sub-mean	300	3.50	1.27

Demographic-wise perceptual analysis with regard to utility of advertising

In Table 2 demographic-wise mean perception of students regarding utility of advertising in society has been depicted. Both male and female believe that ‘Advertising helps in rational buying decisions’ indicated by their lower mean score of 2.73 & 2.52 from the ranks so assigned. Older respondents of 22-24 and above 24 age group also hold the same belief whereas 20-22 age group consider advertising’s role in creating awareness about social issues (2.48) as more important than other aspects. Religion-wise Hindu exhibited lower mean score for ‘Advertising helps in rational buying decisions’ (2.52). Muslim believe that advertising helps in rational buying decisions, creates awareness about social issues and uplifts standard of living indicated by same mean score of 2.69. Advertising creates awareness about social issues is the opinion of students with disposable income of <Rs.500 and above Rs.2000. Students of Rs.500-Rs.1000 and Rs.1000-Rs.2000 income category believe that advertising play an important role in rational buying decisions than other aspects. Parental occupation-wise students whose parents are businessman believe that advertising uplifts standard of living indicated by lowest mean score of 2.80 whereas students whose parents are employed in service consider the most important aspect of advertising is that it enables one to take rational buying decisions.

Table 2. Demographic-wise mean perception of students regarding social utility of advertising

S.No	Demographic variable	Sub class	Helps in rational buying decisions	Creates awareness about social issues	Uplifts standard of living	Generates employment opportunities	Ensures better quality products at reasonable prices
1.	Gender	Male	2.73	2.59	2.82	3.45	3.41
		Female	2.52	2.77	3.22	3.28	3.20
		Average	2.59	2.71	3.09	3.34	3.27
2.	Age(Yrs.)	20-22	2.97	2.48	3.17	3.10	3.28
		22-24	2.60	2.75	3.13	3.30	3.21
		Above24	2.45	2.72	3.00	3.48	3.36
		Average	2.59	2.71	3.09	3.34	3.27
3.	Religion	Hindu	2.52	2.69	3.21	3.35	3.23
		Muslim	2.69	2.69	2.69	3.39	3.53
		Sikh	3.14	2.95	2.71	3.24	2.95
		Others	1.67	2.67	4.00	3.00	3.67
		Average	2.59	2.71	3.09	3.34	3.27
4.	Disposable income	< Rs.500	2.67	2.58	2.93	3.29	3.53
		Rs.500-Rs.1000	2.61	2.78	3.12	3.32	3.17
		Rs.1000-Rs.2000	2.55	2.93	3.15	3.36	3.02
		Above Rs.2000	2.53	2.45	3.09	3.40	3.53
		Average	2.59	2.71	3.09	3.34	3.27
5.	Parental occupation	Business	2.90	2.94	2.80	3.22	3.14
		Service	2.48	2.59	3.24	3.34	3.35
		Profession	1.60	3.20	3.50	3.90	2.80
		Others	2.00	1.63	3.38	4.13	3.88
		Average	2.59	2.71	3.09	3.34	3.27

Demographic-wise perception of youth with regard to unfavourable impact of advertising

In Table 3 demographic-wise students mean perception of unfavourable social aspect of advertising has been depicted. Both male and female assigned lower mean score of 2.00 and 2.24 respectively for ‘Advertising creates materialism’ than other aspects. Younger respondents believe that advertising creates artificial need (2.00) whereas older respondents believe that ‘Advertising creates materialism’ as more important social issue. Hindu believe that advertising creates materialism (2.09), Muslim believe that it creates materialism and artificial need (1.83), Sikh believe that that it creates artificial need (1.00) and students of ‘other’ religion are more concerned with the exaggeration and perversion in advertising (1.00) than other aspects. Students belonging to business and service parental occupation indicated lower mean score for ‘Advertising makes us materialistic’ whereas students whose parents are professional and pensioners indicated lower mean score for ‘Advertising creates artificial need’.

Table 3. Demographic-wise mean values of unfavourable social aspects of advertising

S.No	Demographic variable	Sub class	Responsible for higher prices	Makes us materialistic	Creates artificial need	Taxes our time	Exaggeration & facts perverted
1.	Gender	Male	2.62	2.00	2.08	4.08	4.23
		Female	2.65	2.24	2.29	4.06	3.76
		Average	2.63	2.13	2.20	4.07	3.97
2.	Age(Yrs.)	20-22	2.38	2.38	2.00	4.38	3.88
		22-24	2.93	2.20	2.33	3.87	3.67

		Above24	2.29	1.71	2.14	4.14	4.71
		Average	2.63	2.13	2.20	4.07	3.97
3.	Religion	Hindu	2.41	2.09	2.32	4.18	4.00
		Muslim	3.17	1.83	1.83	4.00	4.17
		Sikh	2.00	3.00	1.00	4.00	5.00
		Others	5.00	4.00	3.00	2.00	1.00
		Average	2.63	2.13	2.20	4.07	3.97
4.	Disposable income	< Rs.500	2.00	2.00	2.00	4.33	4.67
		Rs.500- Rs.1000	2.50	2.31	2.31	4.00	3.88
		Rs.1000- Rs.2000	3.14	1.43	2.57	4.14	3.71
		Above Rs.2000	2.75	2.75	1.25	4.00	4.25
		Average	2.63	2.13	2.20	4.07	3.97
5.	Parental occupation	Business	3.00	1.63	2.38	4.13	3.88
		Service	2.50	2.17	2.33	4.00	4.00
		Profession	2.50	4.00	1.00	4.00	3.50
		Others	2.50	2.00	1.50	4.50	4.50
		Average	2.63	2.13	2.20	4.07	3.97

6. CONCLUSION AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

On the basis of above analysis, it is suggested that marketers should present socially acceptable advertising by involving diverse social norms and keeping in view the expectations and perceptions of the public in designing their advertising campaigns. Use of exaggerated facts and sexual themes be controlled by regulatory agencies as they trigger purchase intent and behaviour on irrational basis than rational ones among students. Ethical aspects of advertising be strictly enforced through consumer associations, compliance to code of advertising ethics by advertisers, media owners and ASCI so that purchase decision are made on rational than emotional consideration. Rational buying motives be popularised in ad copy than evolving materialism and artificial need. In order to encourage advertising viewership and less avoidance of advertising, advertisers may need to be more concerned with providing information and be less concerned with trying to capture attention by unfair means like manipulation, exaggeration, use of sexual themes and fear appeals etc. Any claims made in advertisements should be adequately substantiated in order to avoid misleading promotion.

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