



THE EFFECT OF ADVERTISEMENTS ON HOW PEOPLE COMPREHEND THE WORLD

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SYNOPSIS

Not a single day goes without people being subjected to the din and noise of Advertisement commercials on the TV or other media. Some have become oblivious to this while others consider it as a distraction and very few are there who see the commercials with any interest. We need to understand the reaction of listeners to this, as many advertisers sincerely think that their advertisement is informative and attractive and will increase the market value of their offerings. Is this so? This is the topic of the current research paper. When people see advertisements and particularly visuals they form some mental pictures and try to make some sense out of it. Their comprehension and understanding will result in action in favor of or against the theme of the advertisement. Their perception goes a long way for advertisers to design their text and visuals so that the desired message goes across to the targeted audience. The present research paper will analyze how advertisers and media are efforts in this direction. The ultimate success of an advertisement would depend on the right comprehension and prompt action from the audience. There is an effort through this research paper to analyze how the audience sees the world as depicted by advertisers! This paper would try to precisely understand how the audience receive the advertisement message and make sense out of it.

Key words: Advertisement noise, how customers discern the advertisement message, the consumer perception and comprehension.

INTRODUCTION

Everywhere we go, we are bombarded with advertisement messages and propaganda and we are clearly affected by those. Every time we walk past an advertisement board or TVCommercial, our brains remember certain key points on that ad and that eventually affect our daily lives. There are positive and negative consequences. We get a lot of useful information about products that we may need in our daily lives and create awareness about new products and ways of buying. We get a comparative idea of various competing products to make our decisions more informed and precise. With the proliferation of digital media messages bombard us at regularly and the younger people are the most desired targets. Sometimes youngsters are misled because they do not understand! At other times they are led by mob and peer pressures! Such consequences may be detrimental for the long term health and decision making capability of individuals.

Advertisements affect our daily lives by causing us to think a certain way. For example, shoe advertisements would want you to think that their shoes are the best shoes and will make you want to buy them. However, not all that information may be true. Although there is some truth about information, most of that is false and is just used as a marketing tool. In addition, most ads include pictures which may not even be true and are just fake photoshopped photos making people want to buy their products. Advertisements affect our actions and the things that we buy. Whenever we see an advertised brand, we are more prone to buy that than an unknown brand. Therefore, the brand symbol is very important. If you see a certain brand more often, you will want to buy that certain product more. However, that doesn't mean that that certain brand is necessarily better.



Figure 1: Effect of Social Advertisements

In the so called digitalized world of mobiles and networks, the youngsters tend to believe or made to believe what comes to them through SMS and mobile messages; it is a field day for advertisers – particularly the unscrupulous type! It is sad to see teenagers have more confidence and lap up what they get through messages even when they do not comprehend fully the impact and purport of such messages. Every time you switch on the TV and you will see some products being pushed on you with some assurance. This is advertising. Your mind is being sold to these advertisers. Advertising is the promotion of product or services. This gives companies a way to expose their products to people and hence maximize their sales. Advertising is the mostly debated topic now. Like every other thing it has also some positive as well some negative points. If it has some positive aspect of social and economic impact on society then it do have some negative impact also. Advertising a public welfare program has positive social impact whereas exposing woman in an advertisement has negative impact on society.

METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

The subject matter of this research paper is quite understood by many and is a matter of discussion in various forums. A lot of research has gone into this and a large volume of published literature is available in print and the web media. For the purpose of this research work and paper the Objectives have been identified as given below:

1. A review of current advertisements and their purpose
2. Advertisement media currently popular and reasons thereof.
3. Positive and negative impact of various advertisements in the media.
4. Effect of advertisements on consumer comprehension.
5. Role of advertisements in shaping consumer opinion and reaction
6. Analysis, Conclusions and recommendations.

The nature of research and the topic lends itself convenient to draw from a large volume of published literature. An overview of available literature on the subject made it possible to zero down on specific literature relevant for the topic under consideration. From published research and available data on the web pages, data was compiled and reviewed to arrive at suitable and appropriate conclusions keeping in mind the specific objectives of the research as mentioned above. The results can be seen in the following pages.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Advertising is a mass marketing technique. Assorted techniques are used for advertising which persuades the consumers why they need the product which is being advertised. They focus more on the benefits, which consumer will get from that product, rather than the product itself. Through advertising, products can be known to public easily. They can decide which product they need and why, thus increasing the consumption and as a result also increasing the demand of the product. Advertising can also be used to generate awareness among public that which product they use and to which product they can say no. It can also be used to educate people about certain diseases or danger (example: - AIDS, TB, viral diseases, etc.). Even the backward people are now aware of many diseases and their problems. And all these credits goes to proper advertising. Diseases like Polio could never been controlled if the timings for polio drops aren't advertised regularly. Advertising can also be used to inform public about social events like concerts and performances. Charities can use media to advertise about the illnesses and encourage people for donations. Social organizations and NGOs can use the mean of advertisement for promoting their campaigns. Seeking help through advertisement during epidemics or natural calamities can help a lot.



Figure 2: Intrinsic and Extrinsic value of advertising.

There are also various blames that advertising is causing negative social impact on lives. Even if advertising has a vast good impacts on society, it cannot be ruled out that it has no bad impact. It plays with the emotions of general public and encourages them to think that buying and depleting are the activities of life. Advertising posters of modern films, where sexuality is shown much more than the actual theme of the movie, can divert the society a lot. Materialism is being much glorified through advertisements, which can again have dangerous consequences Society is becoming ignorant towards social or world issues because we are too obsessed to satisfy our newly created needs. We want to earn more and more money so that we can buy happiness in forms of products, being advertised as they can bring all the happiness in our lives. We are starving for material goals, because we always just want to have more.

Products which are heavily advertised are expensive due to the cost spent on advertising. It is true that advertising increases consumption, but it is also true that the more we consume, the more we destroy the environment, because if demand increases because of conspicuous

consumption and production also increases. Thus the need of raw materials also increases. So, we can say that advertising has positive as well as negative impact on society. The balance, of what is necessary and what really not needed should be focused more. Advertisement can create contentment but can also simultaneously create discontentment. Our society and the marketing of products depend so badly on advertisement that even its negative impact on society can't outweigh the many positive social and economic effects.

Advertisements are messages paid for by a business or advertiser and delivered via a mass medium with the attempt to persuade a target audience to like a brand, develop a more favorable attitude or intend to buy. Small businesses often have limited budgets to spend on advertising, but the positive effects are often worth it. Advertisement is a means of disseminating Product information and Company performance to build brand equity. Many advertisements are educative with respect to new products and opportunities like employment and business. With better awareness of consumers the return on investment of companies also indirectly improve.

Negative Impacts of Advertising

Advertising aims to present a product in the best light possible. There is some leeway in the creative process. The problem arises when the dramatization crosses the line into falsely representing a product. Hefty fines can result from false advertising when levied by the Federal Trade Commission. Direct-to-consumer advertising for prescription drugs has resulted in unrealistic expectations about the effectiveness of drugs and their side-effects, according to the Food and Drug Administration's study "Patient and Physician Attitudes and Behaviors Associated. With DTC Promotion of Prescription Drug" Voice-overs give the downside to the drug, but the visual images show healthy, happy people. It's not unusual to hear that even death may be a side-effect of a prescription drug. Beauty and health products may also not live up to their promises, resulting in wasted consumer dollars. Disclaimers are often hidden in very small print on product packaging and in out-of-the way spots in ads. Advertising is ingrained in the culture, from children's programs on Saturday/ Sunday morning to talk shows and prime time TV. Advertising even invades movies through product placement. It's not an accident when a movie hero holds up a can of Coke instead of Pepsi. Advertising influences how people feel about themselves - often in a negative way. Based on the images they see in advertising, women often feel they should be thin and beautiful and hold down full-time jobs while also being full-time mothers. Advertising communicates that men should be handsome, tall, athletic, caring

husbands, thoughtful fathers and virile at all times. These images are often unrealistic and unattainable.

In his study "Review of Research on the Effects of Food Promotion to Children," Professor Gerard Hastings found there is a link between food advertising and children's preferences regarding what they will consume. Ads for many sugary cereals encourage children to ask their parents for those particular products - regardless of whether the products are good for the children. It's not coincidental that the most heavily advertised toys during the holiday season end up being the top sellers. Children are susceptible to advertising



Figure 3: THE CULTURAL IMPACT OF ADVERTISING

In a new report from WWF and the Public Interest Research Centre takes its title from a quote from a notable advertiser who remarked that he “would rather be thought of as evil than useless,” and it’s an analysis of how advertising impacts culture. Obviously advertising is a useful thing to the businesses that use it, and that’s all of them if they expect to have any customers. It’s a means of informing choice, and it’s vital to new entrants in any market. When it comes to society however, and the big picture effects of advertising in general, it’s not pretty. The report’s conclusion is that advertising promotes values that are directly opposed to human wellbeing, environmental sustainability and a fair society. It ought to be considered a detrimental influence, and regulated accordingly. That’s not how advertisers see it of course. As far as they’re concerned, they simply redistribute consumption, directing spending from this brand to that one. They promote choice, and simply reflect existing cultural values. In reality, advertising doesn’t just expand market share, it expands the size of the market. “It seems,” says the report, “that

advertising may be encouraging society to save less, borrow more, work harder and consume greater quantities of material goods.”

Some advertisement messages can have a powerful impact as shown by the above social advertisement advising people of the consequences of talking and using mobiles indiscreetly while driving (See Figure 4). Advertising also impacts values. While it reflects society to a certain degree, it also has the effect of ‘normalizing’ values or behaviors. With the average citizen exposed to between 500 and 1,000 commercial messages a day, it wields considerable power over what we consider normal. An example that came to mind for me was the idea of cosmetics for men. Only a few years ago, the idea that men might want to use moisturizers would have been laughable to most British men. A sustained advertising campaign from Nivea later, including prominent billboards at football stadiums, and there’s nothing unusual at all about men using hand cream. Hand cream is benign stuff, and it’s not the products that are the problem here, but the values behind the ads. Research by Frederick Grouzet and Tim Kasser shows how advertising tends to promote ‘extrinsic’ values rather than ‘intrinsic’ values (See Figure 2). The former are those that rely on external factors for validation – the opinions and admiration of others. The latter meanwhile, are rewarding in themselves, such as a sense of family belonging, rewarding work, or self-development. This matters because “placing greater importance on extrinsic values is associated with higher levels of prejudice, less concern about the environment and weak (or absent) concern about human rights.” That’s bad for society, but it’s not great for the individual concerned either: “People who attach greater importance to extrinsic values are also likely to report lower levels of personal wellbeing.”



Figure 4: Bangalore Traffic Police: Don't Talk While Driving

Finally, advertising might not even promote choice after all. By subtly manipulating its audience, it may in fact stifle choice. Much advertising is subliminal, drip-feed, all about creating positive associations without prompting conscious thought. If we consciously sat down and decided to objectively analyze whether we preferred Coke or Pepsi, we'd probably conclude that we didn't care and that it doesn't matter. An active choice, in this instance, is bad for the brand. Instead, advertising "operates darkly, beyond the light of consciousness", in the words of Agnes Nairn and Cordelia Fine, two active participants in a research study. "Intuitive brand judgments are made instantaneously and with little or no apparent conscious effort on the part of consumers" says one Ad agency. "Intuition is now well accepted as a powerful driver of brand choice and brand affiliation." So if advertising circumvents our thought processes and subtly encourages further debt, selfishness, and a cavalier attitude to the environment, then maybe we do need to think of it as evil. Or if that seems a little dramatic, at least we ought to be more aware of advertising, be clearer about where the limits lie. And we certainly need more public debate about the ethics of advertising, which is ultimately what this report is calling for. The problem is the cumulative effect of advertising – another case of reaping as a society what we did not choose as individuals. So we can't do away with advertising, but we can examine it, ask more questions, regulate it better, and minimize its harmful effects on society.

Consider Fair & Lovely cream advertisement produced by Lowe, where the parents are worried about their dark skinned girl and express their frustration of having a son to take care of them. The girl eventually gains fair complexion by using the cream and becomes professionally successful. Don't you think this ad so rudely used the agony of dark complexion and gender biases? Hence, the ad agencies must be more careful and conscious of the ads they make. We can discuss two more such examples, the first of which had to be withdrawn and in second case, ASCI directed to modify the ad.

Surf Kid stains Challenge:This ad created by Lowe showed a child throwing ketchup on another's shirt and asking "tumhare ghar mein Surf hain?" (Do you have Surf at your home?) The major argument against this ad was that deliberately soiling someone else's dresses with a coloured food is a form of insulting and embarrassing, which could give rise to quarrels and fights among children.**Super Nirma detergent cake:**This ad created by Purnima Advertising depicted a child washing stains on his shirt and having succeeded in doing that, he kissed the

detergent cake in appreciation and joy. But doing so the wet detergent cake can leave a residue on the lips, which could possibly enter the mouth. This practice could have a dangerous and fatal outcome, as the detergents are skin irritants with toxicity potent.

The ad filmmakers are formulating fresh ways of enticing consumers to buy products. If an advertisement for a product attracts the consumer, they tend to purchase it frequently, or at least buy it once. If a company has to survive in this competitive world, they have to project the image of their products in such a way that they pick up the maximum sales, when they hit stores. The best way to persuade the consumer to stick to the product of the particular brand, when numerous choices are provided to them in the market – is through attractive advertisements. However, ad filmmakers should remember that the commercials can also have a negative IMPACT on people, especially young children. Positive Effects of Advertisements on Kids : Advertising makes the kids aware of the new products available in the market. It increases their knowledge about the latest innovations, in the field of technology as well as otherwise. Convincing ads, which center around healthy food products, can help improve the diet of a child, if they are attractive enough.

Negative Effects of Advertisement on Kids

Advertisements encourage the children to persuade their parents to purchase the products shown in the commercials, whether useful or not. The little ones tend to get adamant, if the product is not bought for them. Children often tend to misinterpret the messages conveyed in commercials. They overlook the positive side and concentrate more on the negatives. Many advertisements in the present times include dangerous stunts, which can be performed only by experts. Even though the commercials broadcast the statutory warnings with the ad, kids often try to imitate the stunts at home, with fatal results. Flashy advertisements broadcast in television generate impulse shopping in children. Children, after watching the glitter of commercials, often lose the ability to live a life without materialistic joy. Kids usually get more attracted towards costly branded products, such as jeans and accessories. They disregard the inexpensive, but useful ones that are not shown in the commercials. Advertisements have an indirect effect on the behavior of children. They might develop temper tantrums, when deprived of the latest toys and clothes that are shown in commercials. The personal preferences in clothing, toys, food and luxurious of

children are altered by advertisements, to a great extent. Junk foods, such as pizzas, burgers and soft drinks, are heavily promoted during children's TV viewing time. This develops a craving for fatty, sugary and fast foods in kids, thereby affecting their health adversely.



Figure 5: Advertisement impact on children

Image Source: [http://www.apa.org/Images/sep00-advertising_tcm7-42484.gif]

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

A review of current Advertisements in print and the electronic or mobile media shows that their primary purpose is to promote the product or service. As a mass marketing technique it creates Product awareness and product pull. It can have a positive or negative impact based on advertisement message and the visuals. Visual content in advertisement has increased as the competition between agencies and competing products have intensified.

There is a marked shift to electronic and mobile media advertisement as the print media has almost become irrelevant and very few people read the newspaper. This is because of the growth of TV and the other electronic media like the internet and mobiles. The younger generation finds these media useful as they want everything as a 'quick fix' and they do not seem to have the time or patience for tolerating other communication media. They hardly have time to meet or talk to their close relatives or even parents. Whether the advertisements have created this situation or

other peer pressure and influences have played a role is for the people at large to decide; particularly parents and society.

The paper has reviewed at length the positive and negative effects of advertisements. Advertisements are seen to provide more accurate and relevant information to the audience to make a decision and choice. This is a result of intense competition among product manufacturers and service providers to take a share of the decision making mind. Such campaigns have resulted in changes in consumption patterns with an emphasis on Quality. But advertisers are not far behind in offering free bees to increase consumption by offering 2 for the price of one etc. Negative impacts have been clearly identified particularly for children. This can be seen under the subheading of negative impact of advertisements on children. This is a critical area of concern for the future of our country as we would like children to be strong and independent to make wise decisions and not to depend on props like a media campaign!

Advertisement messages have recently been twisted to promote consumption. We need to guard against this tendency. Consumer psyche has taken a severe beating due to repeated din and noise of advertisements. By continuous bombarding through electronic media messages most of which youngsters do not comprehend, they have brain washed them and made them human robots with an appetite for conspicuous consumption – and that is the IN thing! Ideological changes are implanted in young minds like Pitza and Burgers in place of Iddli , Dosa or samosas. Coco-cola and other beverages at a cost have replaced plain water and coconut water or fruit juices. The present state of confused mind in a flux is difficult to repair! But unless conscious efforts are made to regain the lost ability to discriminate and understand the difference, it would be a lost cause.

From the above paragraphs and the review of literature, it is evident that advertisements have a big role in shaping young minds and their discriminative intelligence. Unless a conscious and concerted effort is made in this direction, we would lose the war though we have already lost the battle! In conclusion we can say that people need to comprehend the advertisement messages with a discriminative intelligence to discern the difference between positive and negative attributes. There is conclusive evidence that the multinational companies and corporate giants will continue to bombard people and particularly the young and the impressionable ones to sell their wares at any cost. It is for us to guard against this onslaught!

RECOMMENDATION

The author would strongly recommend more research and understanding of this, so that future generations of people can be saved from their wrong influence. It is a very important subject needing very close attention. Medical misguidance through advertisements have resulted in Obesity among children because of their addiction to wrong food as a consequence of peer pressure and parental negligence. The pig and other animal fat content in some of the products sold in India but not in other advanced countries because of their strong laws is a case for study and legislation. Corporate avaracity and greed should not lead us to destruction of our tradition and culture.

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