

Consumer Beliefs And Attitudes Towards Advertising Media: A Study of Indian Women

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INTRODUCTION

Advertising is the most visible and noticeable component of the communication mix (Coulter, Zaltman and Coulter, 2001) but marketers, policy makers, academics and executives continue to debate its merits (Macias and Lewis, 2003). It has been evidenced that attitudes toward advertising in general is a major determinant of brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Mackenzie and Lutz, 1989, Ashill and Yavas, 2005). Thus, advertising has long been used to influence customers towards consuming brands and to develop perceptions of the consumers towards advertised brands thus influencing brand attitudes (Teng et al, 2007, Till and Baack, 2005). According to Smith and Swinyard's Integrated Information Response Model (1982) (cited in Smith and Swinyard, 1983), advertising as an information source affects product trial purchase and post trial advertising has a higher impact on information acceptance leading to repeat purchase (thus affecting both purchase decision and post purchase behavior).

The understanding of consumer behavior is necessitated by the fact that access to powerful new media and information tools to compare brands, products and services has made the consumer more informative and knowledgeable. (Pitt et al., 2002 and Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000). The informed, connected and active consumers are challenging the company-centric model of brand management (Pitt et al, 2002, Moynagh and Worsley, 2002). Using new technologies like internet, email and the mobile phone, consumers are able to acquire more detailed information about brands, products and services to help them make smarter and more personalized choices on their own terms. They can validate a company's marketing and can more easily reject claims or statements based on their own knowledge (Ind and Riondino, 2001). The net result of the changing role of the consumer is that companies can no longer act independently. They need to understand how the consumer is behaving, how they are gathering information and the factors influencing the purchase behavior (Lawer and Knox 2006).

India is a diverse country with the population mainly residing in the urban and rural areas. Given the consumer diversity in India, brand managers need to educate the customers about their brands in terms the consumers understand so as to build the bond that enhances the organization's credibility and fosters brand related attitudes and purchase intentions. It is, therefore, imperative that the marketers and practitioners be aware of the various factors influencing attitudes of the consumers towards advertising in general and the various media of advertising to derive maximum results.

ADVERTISING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Olson (1978) pointed out that consumers may use informational cues to develop beliefs about products and that task response (i.e. choice or evaluation) may be a direct function of these mediating beliefs. According to Zeithaml (1988), price, brand name and level of advertising are three extrinsic cues frequently associated with quality in research and are the general indicators of quality across all types of products. He further studied that these extrinsic cues are used as quality indicators when the consumer is operating without adequate information about the intrinsic cue (i.e. physical composition of the product). Milgrom and Roberts related the level of advertising to product quality. For experience goods i.e. goods whose attributes are determined largely during use, higher levels of advertising signals higher quality. It has also been found in the exploratory study that many subjects perceived heavily advertised brands to be generally higher in quality than brands with less advertising (Zeithaml, 1988). Thus attitude towards ads, in turn, predict brand attitudes in many cases and attitude towards ads predict the incremental product sales attributable to advertising. Thus, understanding public opinion toward ads can have direct implications for understanding ad effectiveness (Shavitt et al., 2004).

The brand or company's marketing communication can be an effective means to carry out either of the brand attribute modification mechanisms. Also, attitude towards the advertisement impacts the attitude towards the brand which influences the purchase decision of the customers (Goldsmith, 2000); thus, reiterating the importance of

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consumer attitude towards the advertisements. Consumers have more control over their ad exposure and they make their exposure choices based on their opinions of advertising in the medium. A large national survey of the general public by Shavitt et al., 2004 revealed people's perceptions/feelings about advertisements depends on the medium in which the ad appears. It is therefore argued that a good understanding of consumer's attitude and perceptions toward advertising in specific media is essential. Since advertising influences both the brand attitude and purchase intention, special attention needs to be given to this aspect of marketing communication. It is therefore important to understand how the consumers' perceive advertising and their reactions to the different media options available for the marketers to formulate effective strategies and how the picture varies across urban and rural India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on primary data collection with a sample size of 113 respondents. Out of these, 60 respondents were living in and around the National Capital Region of New Delhi (for the urban perspective), and 53 respondents were living in rural areas of western Uttar Pradesh (for the rural perspective). The questionnaire used for the sample survey is a structured and non-disguised questionnaire. The first question focused on capturing information about the consumer attitude towards advertisement in general. A five point Likert scale was used to draw out the consumers' responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A 'neutral' or 'no-opinion' option was deliberately not provided, as in this case, the sampling unit was defined as someone who has prior experience of advertisements and hence, the respondents are expected to have an opinion as 'experts' as far as attitude towards advertisements is concerned. The different statements regarding attitude towards advertisements were generated based on literature review as well as expert opinion in an iterative manner. To study the media choices and capture the feelings of the consumers towards various media like print (newspapers, magazines) electronic (like movies, radio, TV, Internet) and out of home (like on roads or at public places), the customers were asked to determine the relative importance for the different media and rank their feelings for the following:

a. Informative. b. Helpful as a buying guide. c. Irritating. d. Exaggerated. e. Believable. f. Uninteresting. g. Misleading. h. Has a negative impact on children.

Data analysis was done using SPSS software. The statistical analyses method employed was factor analysis. This was carried out for both urban and rural areas separately to highlight the difference between the two. To study the feelings of the consumers towards the different media, mean importance score for each source was calculated and ranks were then assigned.

DATA COLLECTION

The study entailed data collection with the help of a questionnaire from in and around Delhi (including Ghaziabad, Noida and Gurgaon) and from rural areas of western Uttar Pradesh. Data was collected by personally contacting the respondents and explaining in detail about the survey. Care was taken to conduct interviews at different locations, on different days and at uniformly distributed time intervals in order to reduce location, date and time-related response bias. A total of 148 respondents from different areas were contacted and 113 correctly completed questionnaires were obtained from all the customers.

The respondents were selected based on the following criteria:

1. The respondents for urban areas were of National Capital Region (NCR) Delhi (including Noida, Delhi and Gurgaon).
2. The respondents for rural areas were from rural areas of western Uttar Pradesh.
3. All the respondents were women.
4. They all had an exposure to different advertisements in various media for at least two years.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Factor Analysis

Principal Axis Factoring was performed to identify the key dimensions with factors accounting for eigenvalues greater than 1 being included in the model. Respondents' ratings on items were subjected to principal axis factoring with Varimax Rotations (orthogonal rotation) to reduce potential multicollinearity among the items and to improve reliability on the data as well. The coefficient alpha of reliability was computed for each factor to see each dimension's internal consistency.

A. Result of Principal Axis Factoring

Data obtained from the urban and rural areas were analyzed separately using Principal Axis factoring in order to identify the underlying factors for the fourteen attitude statements. The initial solutions were rotated using varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization and factors with eigenvalues greater than one were retained. For the rural respondents, the 14 items were reduced to two orthogonal factor dimensions, which explained 56.14% of the overall variance (see table 2). This indicates that the variance of the original values was captured fairly well by these two factors (see table 1). For the urban areas, the 14 items were reduced to five orthogonal factor dimensions (see table 3) which explained 57.635% of the overall variance (see table 4). Again, the original values were fairly well captured by these five factors.

Table 1: Rotated Factor Matrix For Rural India

	Factor 1 Believability and trust	Factor 2 Control
Informative	.771	
Like to see	.679	
Use information in purchase process	.763	
Confident about using information	.659	
Do not feel offended		.454
Better value for money from advertised brands	.689	.354
Advertisement results in lower prices	.686	
Can trust advertising	.761	
Quality and performance is as promised in ad	.714	.394
Ads are not misleading	.774	
Ads for children should be regulated and controlled		.770
Ads can have an undesirable misleading effect	.411	.651
Advertisers should be more responsible for ads		.700
Ads meant for adults should be aired after 10 p.m.	.652	

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Table 2: Total Variance Explained For Rural India

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.151	51.077	51.077	6.726	48.046	48.046	5.440	38.860	38.860
2	1.578	11.271	62.348	1.133	8.096	56.142	2.419	17.281	56.142
3	.991	7.082	69.430						
4	.966	6.902	76.331						
5	.657	4.692	81.024						
6	.555	3.961	84.985						
7	.516	3.687	88.672						
8	.413	2.950	91.622						
9	.315	2.247	93.869						
10	.279	1.995	95.863						
11	.246	1.760	97.623						
12	.151	1.081	98.705						
13	.109	.779	99.484						
14	7.225E-02	.516	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Table 3: Rotated Factor Matrix For Urban Areas

	Factor 1 Trust	Factor 2 Information / Believability	Factor 3 Control	Factor 4 Responsibility	Factor 5 Value for money
Informative		.683			
Like to see		.813			
Use information in purchase process		.691			
Confident about using information		.460	.386		
Do not feel offended	.117	.186	-.532	.178	.254
Better value for money from advertised brands					.754
Advertisement results in lower prices	.671	.152		-.231	.255
Can trust advertising	.893	.101			
Quality and performance is as promised in ad	.684		.116	.238	

Ads are not misleading	.467	.153	.445	.340	.191
Ads for children should be regulated and controlled	.346	.130	.646	.258	
Ads can have an undesirable misleading effect	.222		.604	.531	
Advertisers should be more responsible for ads				.602	
Ads meant for adults should be aired after 10 p.m.		.109	.116	.690	.209

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a Rotation converged in 16 iterations.

Table 4: Total Variance Explained For Urban Areas

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.797	27.125	27.125	3.415	24.394	24.394	2.173	15.520	15.520
2	2.190	15.641	42.766	1.803	12.879	37.273	1.944	13.889	29.409
3	1.696	12.115	54.881	1.294	9.239	46.512	1.562	11.157	40.566
4	1.451	10.361	65.242	.950	6.788	53.300	1.550	11.070	51.636
5	1.060	7.573	72.815	.607	4.335	57.635	.840	5.999	57.635
6	.814	5.812	78.627						
7	.611	4.367	82.994						
8	.536	3.827	86.820						
9	.416	2.969	89.790						
10	.395	2.822	92.611						
11	.356	2.546	95.157						
12	.288	2.055	97.212						
13	.212	1.512	98.725						
14	.179	1.275	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Advertisements are found to influence the rural consumers more and they view them as believable and place a lot of trust on the ads. The social aspect was found to be secondary. The urban consumers also have a positive attitude towards advertising in general.

B) Reliability Test

A measure of construct reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) was computed for each dimension to assess the reliability of the set of items forming that dimension. (see table 5, 6). These α coefficients for rural areas ranges from 0.9241 to 0.7831. As a rule, α of 0.70 or more represents satisfactory reliability of the items measured. Thus, the items measuring the dimensions appear to be sufficiently reliable. For the Urban areas, the cronbach's Alpha for the first three factors is above 0.70. The factors four and five need to be explored further.

Table 5: Cronbach's Alpha For Factors Affecting Advertisement Perception By Rural Respondents

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha
1	0.9241
2	0.7831

Table 6: Cronbach's Alpha For Factors Affecting Advertisement Perception By Urban Respondents

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha
1	0.7789
2	0.7493
3	0.7614
4	0.5152
5	0.3737

C) Media Analysis

To determine the relative importance of the various media sources, mean importance score for each source was calculated and ranks were then assigned within the two groups. It was observed that for the rural areas (see table 7), TV was taken to be the most informative and helpful as a buying guide but was also perceived to be the most exaggerated and had a negative impact on children. This can be so as in the rural areas, as TV still is the primary source of entertainment. Newspapers are the number two source for information, and are most believable of all the

medias. It was also found to be least irritating, exaggerated, misleading and had least negative impact on children. Magazines were also found to be informative and helpful as a buying guide but were believed to be irritating, exaggerated and uninteresting. Movies and radio were found to be most irritating and exaggerated. They were also uninteresting and misleading and scored low on believability aspect. The Internet though contributed towards information and believability, but was also found to be uninteresting and exaggerated. Out of home emerged as the most irritating, boring and exaggerated. It also scored low on believability, buying guide and information aspect.

Table 7: Average Ranking of Media Sources For Rural Areas

Media	Informative	Helpful in buying	Irritating	Exaggerated	Believable	Uninteresting	Misleading	Negative impact on children
Newspaper	2	2	4	3	1	2	5	5
Magazines	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	4
Movies	2	4	1	1	5	1	1	2
Radio	2	3	1	1	4	2	2	3
TV	1	1	3	1	3	3	2	1
Internet	3	3	3	2	2	1	4	3
ooh	3	4	1	1	5	1	3	3

Urban areas showed newspapers and magazines to be most informative and believable and also had an impact on the buying process. However, they were also found to be uninteresting and misleading. Movies, radio and TV were found to be irritating, misleading and had a negative impact on children. Internet was found to be helpful as a buying guide; believable, and informative. It was also found to be uninteresting and had a negative impact on children.

Table 8 : Average Ranking of Media Sources For Urban Areas

Media	Informative	Helpful in buying	Irritating	Exaggerated	Believable	Uninteresting	Misleading	Negative impact on children
Newspaper	1	1	3	2	1	2	2	3
Magazines	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	2
Movies	3	3	1	2	2	1	1	1
Radio	3	2	1	1	2	3	1	1
TV	2	1	1	2	2	3	2	1
Internet	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1
ooh	3	3	2	2	3	1	2	2

If we see the overall ranking (see table 9) (for information, helpfulness in buying, not irritating, not exaggerated, believable, interesting, not misleading and does not have negative impact on children), Newspapers, magazines, TV and internet occupy the first three positions followed by the radio at number four. This also reiterates the growing importance of the internet both in urban and rural areas. Out of home media in rural areas has scored low in comparison to the urban areas. This is not surprising taking the quality and quantity of this media in rural areas. Also, due to the cost differential in both the places for ooh, we can find a number of hoardings and wall paintings in the rural areas. The amount of time spent on the roads is more in urban areas (where traffic jams are now becoming a norm rather than rarity) and also due to the commute time involved, ooh gains importance here.

Table 9: Overall Ranking For The Medias

Media	Rural ranking	Urban ranking
NP	1	1
Mag	2	2
Movies	6	5
Radio	4	4
TV	3	3
Internet	3	3
ooh	5	4

CONCLUSION

The study delineated the dimensionality of advertising attitudes across rural and urban India. It was observed that advertising attitudes did consist of believability, trust and control dimensions. The delineated dimensions explained

approximately the same amount of variance in both the areas (56.14 for rural and 57.63 for urban) and seem to be constant enough to function as important and versatile measures of advertising attitudes. The prolific ads and the various media options available have resulted in the consumers losing interest in the ads giving rise to selective attention and absorption. The consumer attitude towards the media therefore needs to be evaluated to guide the policy makers in their marketing communication decisions. It is observed that traditional media (newspaper, magazines and television) scored better than the internet. These findings are in line with a study for examination of advertising credibility by Moore and Rodgers in 2005. In both urban and rural India, newspapers scored as the number one media but further analysis reveals that it also seems uninteresting to the respondents. Thus, the advertisers need to be more creative in their advertising copy to derive maximum results from this media. It is also observed that the internet is gaining importance in the media options in both urban and rural areas. With the penetration of the internet on the rise, this media needs to be carefully explored by the marketers. The negative impact of this media in general highlights the need for more governmental regulations to regulate the flow of information on the same.

Consumer attitude towards advertising impacts brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Mackenzie and Lutz, 1989). Thus, it is imperative for marketers to create advertisements that are believable and contain relevant information about the product. The advertising claims should be relevant and not deceitful. The message should focus on product benefits and attributes. The advertisers should depict social responsibility in their ads. Ads towards children should be controlled. The government and various regulatory bodies have come up with guidelines from time to time but the organizations should be self-regulatory as consumers are found to be concerned about this aspect.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The exploratory results offer some insights into the consumer beliefs and attitudes towards advertising and the advertising media. Further research can be conducted to cross validate the results.

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