

Public Opinion towards Advertising: Factor Analytic Findings From Pakistan

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the public opinion about advertising in Pakistan. A survey of respondents studying at various universities was conducted [N = 575]. This study uses Polly and Mittal (1993) model of beliefs and attitudes towards advertising. The data was collected from SEC A and B classes through survey method using quota sampling technique. The public opinion was first analyzed using Factor Analysis and resulted in seven opinion categories i.e., a) Skeptic; b) Ecstatic; c) Sarcastic; d) Trendy; e) Rationalist; f) Dogmatic; and g) Sagacious. These opinions were finally summarized into two schools of thoughts i.e., a) Sanguine; and b) Antagonist. This piece of research will provide tremendous opportunities to marketers in understanding consumers and their attitudes towards advertising in Pakistan. Advertisement is a ubiquitous part of modern life and previous research shows that consumers around the globe hold a negative view of advertising (Shavitt, lowrey & Hafner, 1998). Consumers are deluged by advertisements and media in a variety of ways every day. In an era where communication with customer is considered critical, it becomes crucial to assess the attitudes and confidence of general public towards advertisement (O'Guinn, Allen, and Semenik, 1998; Krugman, Reid, Dunn, and Barban, 1994).

Keywords: Public opinion, advertising, Factor Analytic

1. Introduction

The perceived benefits & value of an advertisement is central to the success of a product therefore it is very important for the advertisers to know about the perceptions, beliefs and opinion of targeted consumers (Ducoffe, 1996; Sandage & Leckenby, 1980; Rettie, Robinson & Jenner, 2001; Zhang 2000). Consumers' exposure and attention towards advertisement is likely to be influenced by their personal attitudes. Customers' attitude and perception plays an essential role towards the success of any product campaign (Bond and Griggs, 1996). Therefore public attitudes towards advertisements have been a researched area for quite a long (Mittal, 1994; Polly and Mittal, 1993; O'Donohoe, 1985; Zanot, 1984). Public opinion research involves collecting information on the ideas, perceptions, attitudes and opinions of general public.

Regardless of the objectives and intention of the advertisers if the perception and opinion of target consumers is not receptive or favorable all the efforts of the interested parties will be wasted (Ducoffe, 1996; Alwitt & Prabhaker, 1994). Hence it is imperative to explore consumers' attitudes, beliefs, values, benefits, and opinion about the usage and benefits of advertising from the perspective of advertisement policy makers, designers and marketers.

This study mainly focuses on exploring the beliefs and attitudes that are used to form the opinion of general public towards advertisement in relationship with product information, publicity, benefits and the role of advertisement in the selection process of a product. Marketers need to explore the behavior of the customers towards advertisements, which actually decides their buying behaviors afterwards. The research results will be beneficial for the advertisement strategists from both domestic and international market to enhance the effectiveness of the advertisement design as per the general attitude/behavior of the customers by keeping in mind that how consumer understands publicity and advertisement.

2. Literature Review

By the very structure of information advertising is non-personal and by the very nature it is persuasive by known sponsors through a collection of media (Bovee & Arens, 1992). Advertisements have become an integral part of today's consumer life. Consumers are bombarded daily with huge number of advertisements through a variety of media and there is a constant increase in the variety of media carrying advertisement messages (Krugman, Reid, Dunn and Barban, 1994). In the recent past much research has focused on public attitude towards advertising (Polly and Mittal 1993). During past decades several researches have been made on public attitude towards advertising. However in Pakistan very few researchers have worked on the concept of public attitude towards advertising (Usman and Ilyas, 2010). More people think positively about advertising than negatively and positivity leads to the belief that advertising is essential (Bauer and Greyser, 1989).

For several years consumer attitude has been researched (Zanot, 1981). Variation in the study exists in terms of samples used and data collection methods (Gallup, 1959; Read & Soley, 1982; Andrews, 1989). The conclusion of Gallup survey was that majority of respondents liked advertisements because in their opinion advertisement was informative. More people hold positive attitudes about advertisement than negative attitudes (Bauer & Greyser, 1989). In their assessment they used the tool of personal interviews over a large set of national probability sample. In few studies conducted in Romania and Bulgaria (Andrews et al 1994) respondents believe in the informative value of advertising but they were skeptical about the claims made by advertisers.

3. Research Methodology

Research instrument: The purpose of this study was to examine public opinion towards advertising based on their perception. For this purpose instrument developed by Poly and Mittal (1993) was used to measure the factors associated with the perception of general public towards advertising. Five-point Likert scale was used for measurement of perceptions. For the purpose of validity proof coefficient alpha for those factors with three or more items was 0.7. (Bearden, Netemeyer & Haws, 2011).

Sampling: The sample used in study was comprised of [N = 575] student studying at graduate and under-graduate level of universities. In order to make sure that respondents are regular viewers of print and electronic media, students were chosen as sample. To maintain research rigor and for statistical analysis, demographics, sample size and response rate were considered appropriate. (Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black, 1995).

Data Collection: In order to provide motivation and convenience to participants, class room group survey technique was used. Total of 575 participants were involved in data collection out of which 200 (35%) were female and 375 (65%) were male.

4. Analyses

Data analysis was carried out in three vivid steps; a) First Order exploratory factor analysis of 31 items resulting in seven-factor solution; b) Naming and creation of summated scales for the seven-factor solution; C) Second Order Factor Analysis of 7factors from the first order resulting in two-factor solution; d) Naming and summated scales for two-factor second order solution.

First Order Exploratory Factor Analysis: Method of extraction was principal Component Analysis and rotation method was Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. SPSS Version 15 was used and first order EFA on 31 items of questionnaire was carried out. Criteria for factor loading was applied as prescribed by (Hair, Black, Anderson, Tatham, 2006) and as a result a seven factor solution was emerged in the form of component matrix. A seven-factor solution produced 50.78% of the total variance explained (Table – I).With Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.83. Summated scores were calculated for seven public opinion factors.

Second Order Exploratory Factor Analysis: Method of extraction was principal Component Analysis and rotation method was Varimax with Kaiser Normalization as endorsed by (Hair, Black, Anderson, Tatham, 2006) and then a Second Order EFA was made to 7-factor solution. A two-factor solution produced 55.24% of the total variance explained where Bartlett's Test of sphericity was 632 and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.72 (Table – II).

5. Discussion

The earlier research shows that attitudes towards advertising are depicted as a function of a series of beliefs reflecting three personal uses and four societal effects. Personal usage include (a) Product Information; (b) Social Role and Image; (c) Hedonic / pleasure. The Societal Effects include (a) Good for Economy; (b) Materialism; (c) Value Corruption; (d) Falsity / No sense. This research has contributed to the literature that perceptions towards advertising may be classified in seven groups i.e., a) Skeptic; b) Ecstatic; c) Sarcastic; d) Trendy; e) Rationalist; f) Dogmatic; and g) Sagacious.

First it's the skeptic who believes that advertisement is a deceptive effort which misleads consumers towards a world of illusion and because of advertisers make people buy brands that are not affordable and not so necessary just to display their status and it is due to advertisements that people start making a world of illusions and fantasies around them.

Second Factor is ecstatic group of persons who think that advertisement is an overwhelming and extremely joyful experience. This opinion group believes that advertisement is very essential, entertaining and a vital source of the relevant and desirable information.

The third group is Sarcastic who see advertisement as an improvident effort. This opinion group has doubts about the value of advertisement and considers it to be wasteful of economic resources and misleading and insulting the intelligence of the average consumer.

The fourth resultant factor is Trendy. This group sees advertisement as an empirical source to keep updated about the latest styles and trends. Trendy opinion group believes advertisement satisfies their fashion instinct and helps them know about the latest styles and decide what to buy to impress others.

The fifth outcome is Rationalist factor having thinking pattern that says advertisement is practically important and has a reason and positive role to play in society. This opinion group considers advertisement to be offering a valuable contribution as it promotes competition and results in the availability of products at better price, quality and features to customers.

The sixth emergent factor is Dogmatic. This set of people thinks of advertisement as a source of distraction from standards and principles of society. This opinion group has very extreme set of beliefs and considers advertising to be harming and distorting societal values especially of youth.

The seventh factor is Sagacious: for this very group of persons advertisement is a continual effort towards growth and development of economy; they consider advertisement as a tool to help raise the standard of living and improving nation's economic resourcefulness.

These opinions were finally summarized into two higher-order thoughts i.e., a) Sanguine; and b) Antagonist. Sanguine (Ecstatic, Rationalist, Trendy and Sagacious). This school of thought has very encouraging, positive and hopeful and cheerful attitude towards advertising and its contribution towards society and economy. Antagonistic (Sarcastic, skeptic and Dogmatic) this school of thought have very negative cynical and distrustful attitude towards advertising.

6. Limitations

Obtained results may be affected by problems of data collection such as faulty questions, inexact answers and inappropriate knowledge of respondents. Questionnaires were initially piloted to remove vagueness, add more vividness and in turn to reduce the quantum of errors. Moreover participants were instructed clearly and vibrantly in order to ensure accuracy. Instructions were given to participants in a clear and un-ambiguous manner. A firm screening process was initialized to reduce problems which finally resulted in dropping out of various questionnaires.

7. Need for Further Research

As a way forward for future research, this study can be imitated with different products/ services in different counties across different cultures.

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Table – I: First order Exploratory Factor analysis

Items	Eigen Value	Factors						
		Skeptical	Ecstatic	Sarcastic	Trendy	Rationalist	Dogmatic	Sagacious
	%Variance explained	16.8	11.5	5.6	4.89	4.21	3.97	3.9
Makes people buy unaffordable products just to show off.	0.78							
Makes people live in a world of fantasy.	0.74							
Leads people buy a lot of things they do not really need.	0.69							
Persuades people to buy things they should not buy.	0.67							
Promotes undesirable values in our society.	0.48							
Is making us a materialistic society, overtly interested in buying things.	0.48							
Is entertaining.			0.70					
Is even more enjoyable than other media contents.			0.66					
Is a valuable source of Information			0.65					
Is essential.			0.63					
Is a good thing.			0.58					
Gives me pleasure of thinking about images depicted in advertisements.			0.46					
Helps me keep up-to-date about products available in the marketplace.			0.37					
Is unfavorable.				0.71				
Is wasteful of economic resources.				0.67				
Is misleading.				0.51				
Insults the intelligence of the average consumer.				0.46				
Taught me about fashions and about what to buy to impress others.					0.76			
Tells me what people with lifestyles similar to mine are buying and using.					0.75			
Tells me which brands have the features I am looking for.					0.66			
Results in lower prices.						0.67		
Results in better products for public.							0.62	
Present a true picture of the product advertised.								0.56
Promotes competition, which benefits consumers.								0.52
Distorts the values of our youth.							0.79	
Depicts too much sex today.							0.75	
Promotes products/services bad for our Society.							0.38	
Helps raise our standard of living.								0.60
Helps me know which products will reflect the sort of person I am.								0.55
Helps our nation's economy.								0.53

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.



Table – II: Second order Exploratory Factor analysis

Factors	Factors	
	Sanguine	Antagonistic
Eigen Value	2.36	1.51
% variance explained	33.64	55.24
Trendy	0.76	
Sagacious	0.73	
Ecstatic	0.73	
Rationalist	0.64	
Skeptic		0.77
Sarcastic		0.74
Dogmatic		0.74

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.