

Attitude of Younger Consumers Towards Advertising: A Study on University Female Students

Nazneen Jahan Chowdhury*

Abstract: *Advertising – the frequently used and effective marketing tool – receives an undue amount of criticism from most of the sectors. This article is an endeavor to depict the influence of advertising from dual angle. One is social perspective and the other is economic perspective. The analysis is based on the survey of 52 female students are in the age of 20 to 25 years of BBA program of International Islamic University Chittagong which were drawn from 438 population. While still respecting advertising as a selling tool, businessmen of ours are increasingly uneasy about other aspects, such as its truthfulness and social impact. So students have mixed attitudes towards advertising. This is a principal finding of a survey recently conducted on 52 students. Views on advertising's power, responsibilities and ethics are also presented in this article. The article concludes providing some suggestions to the civil people or concerned quarters as well as govt. to curb some sort of distortion and exaggeration in advertisement to make the advertising worthwhile, meaningful and informative.*

Keywords: Advertisement, Female Students, Students' Attitudes

* Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, International Islamic University Chittagong

1. Introduction

Advertising is one of the four components in marketing promotion mix. It has been considered as an important tool in business arena, is mainly used to let the consumers know about the product and services to be marketed. Through advertising, a marketer can successfully emit and disseminate the required information to the target people spending short time and effort (Kashem S & M.M Rahman 1994). Advertising has a large responsibility within our economic system for providing information to facilitate consumers' decision making. If the information provided is misleading or deceptive, then the responsibility is not properly fulfilled (Aaker D.A. & G.S. Day 1982).

There are about 500 advertisement companies operating in the country but the top 15 companies control 65% of the tk. 1000 crores advertisement market (Bangladesh on line news, published daily – 6th March'2008). The impending growth in advertising has incited several criticisms. Advertising is believed to have influenced and manipulated consumer's everyday lives (Packard, 1957). It has provided the advertising agencies the skills in molding buyers' thought processes and purchasing decisions. According to Lutz et al. (1983), the attitude towards advertising is a significant mediator of purchase attitude for both low knowledge/low importance products and high knowledge/high importance products. They suggest that affective reactions to the advertisement appear to be almost automatic and require minimal processing any influence affective reactions to the advertised brand. Positive (or negative) feelings associated with the advertisement may become associated with the advertised brand, usually without consumers' awareness. Gardner (1985) found that brand attitudes formed a non-brand set appear to be influenced by both attitudes advertisement and brand related beliefs.

Various studies have shown that consumers' brand related beliefs affect brand attitude formation, and further research evidence indicates that brand attitudes may be affected by consumer's attitudes toward the advertisement themselves (Gardner, 1985; Mitchel and Olsen, 1981). Krugen (1965) asserted that attitude change may follow behavior change. When the product involvement is low, advertising acted directly on behavior without changing the attitude towards the product. The influence of advertising for these low involvement products was supposed to be gradual and facilitated by message repetition. This conclusion is supported by Sawyer (1971) and Silk and Vavra (1974).

In our economic system the consumer is an amateur, after all, the producer is an expert. In the commercial area, the consumer is an impotent midget. He is certainly not a king. The producer is a powerful giant. It is an uneven match. In this setting, the purifying power of competition helps the consumer very little

especially, in the short run, when his money is spent and gone, from the weak hands to strong hands.

To get only a lead in the market, most of the marketers adopt different patterns of mal-practices in the advertisements, which stir-up the felling of consumers to buy goods (Kashem S. & M.M.Rahman 1994). Being induced by the advertisements when a consumer buys something, he/she does not get such benefit as stated in the advertisements. As a result, consumers become the victim of the situation. They are just being used as a tool in the miserable and disgraceful mission of giant sellers or producers.

Although 'advertisements are the symbols of man's aspirations. They are not the real things' (Lavitt T. 1970). The so-called distortion complain is an unreality. Without distortion, embellishment and elaboration life would be drab, dull, anguished and at its existential worst (Lavitt T. 1970). Whatever the contradictory utterances are, ideally advertising should be factual and meaningful. Being an important instrument in marketing arena, the attack on advertising comes from most of the quarters. Recent studies show that the people most agitated by advertising are precisely those in the higher income brackets whose affluence is generated by the industries that create the advertisement (Baur R.A & S.A-Gyeysen 1978). While these studies show that only a modest group of people are preoccupied with advertising's constant presence in our lives, they also show that distortion and deception are what bother people most (Stainer G.A. 1973).

2. Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study has been conducted with the following objectives:-

1. To evaluate the young as consumers' confidence created by advertising.
2. To assess the influence of advertising on economic issues.
3. To analyze the influence of advertising on social issues.
4. To reveal the feelings of the Young as consumers to different advertising media.
5. To identify the causes of feeling of dissatisfaction toward advertising.
6. To suggest some measures to get rid of such feeling of dissatisfaction.

3. Rationale of the Study

It appears that consumers have mixed attitudes towards advertising. Nonetheless, negative attitudes towards advertising could affect its effectiveness and profitability of the producer of goods and services. Therefore, it is the purpose of this study to examine the young as consumers' attitudes towards advertising. The focus on young people as a consumer group is important as they like looking at most of the advertisements they see. They need to be less offended, less insulted by advertising. Though they may have a relatively low level of purchasing power,

they exert significant impact on special consumer goods such as clothing, magazines, bottled drinks, music and others. Because of the increasing volume of advertising, the emergence of consumerism and evolving regulatory patterns- a section of BBA program female students in the Department of Business Administration of International Islamic University Chittagong decided that updating research information is needed regarding the advertising. Especially female students are chosen because no research was earlier done exclusively on the female student's attitudes.

4. Methodology of the Study

At the beginning of the study, an intensive literature survey has been made. These included books, periodicals and journals related to the role of advertisement in creating younger consumers confidence. The total no of sample size for this study was 52, which were drawn from 438 population using convenience sampling method. Younger respondents are those which belong to the age group of 20 to 25 years. A self-constructed questionnaire was prepared to collect the primary data considering the objective of the study. The data were collected during the month of July' 2009, following the personal interview and questionnaire method. Questionnaire consists of only close – ended questions. Data collected through questionnaire survey was checked and edited properly and finally frequency distribution, percentage of frequency of each variable was estimated.

5. Major Findings of the Study

Table 1. Showing the confidence created by advertising in products/services

Comments	No. of Respondents	%
Create confidence	44	85
Don't create confidence	03	05
No comment	05	10
Total	52	100

Source: Field Survey – July, 2009.

Today there is hardly any existing product or service which is offered to the market without advertising. Respondents still almost unanimously agree that advertising is essential to business and that public places more confidence in advertised products than in unadvertised ones. Table no. 1. reveals that about 85% respondents believe that advertising is an integral part of business and general consumer places more confidence in advertised products as compared to unadvertised ones. Students' opinions also, to some extent, justify the rationale that the huge amount of money as spent by leading companies is purposeful.

Table 2. Showing the influence of advertising on economic issues

Issues	% of respondents who say		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Advertising raises the standard of living	80.76	09.62	09.62
Development of markets for new product	75.00	13.46	11.54
Lower prices results from advertising because it causes increased sales	34.00	13.00	53.00
Reductions in advertising expenditures would decrease sales	94.23	5.77	00
Advertising adds cost to the products, thereby increasing the price	86.30	04.00	09.70

Source: Field Survey – July, 2009

Respondents think that advertising speeds the development of markets for new products; helps to raise our standard of living. And they acknowledge that large reductions in advertising expenditure would decrease sales. It appears that students have positive attitudes on the economic impact of advertising. An interesting finding derived from the students' opinions is that advertising does not always help to increase the prices of goods or services. Because if advertising boosts-up sales, the additional amount of expense on advertising head would be offset by the per unit cost reduction of products or services. The reliability of the response was confirmed when 53% of the respondents disagreed that lower prices result from advertising. Similarly 86.30% respondents agreed that advertising adds costs to the product, thereby increasing the price. It shows that the students have negative attitudes on the price effect of advertising.

Table 3. Showing the influence of advertising on economic issues

Issues	% of respondents who say		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Advertising persuades people to buy things that they need	65	16	19
Advertising has an unhealthy influence on children	71	14	15
Amount of attention paid to it	40	29	31
Helps to diversify the taste of consumers	96	04	00

Source: Field Survey – July, 2009

Opinions obtained from the students surveyed demonstrate that people pay more attention to advertising. Opinions also register that advertising has divergent impact on the consumers. It helps diversify the taste of consumers and most cases, it often persuades the consumers to buy those products that they need- implying does not induce the consumers to buy unnecessary goods. It shows that the students have positive attitude on audience effect of advertising. On the other hand a good number of students (71%) believe that advertising has an adverse or unhealthy influence on the children. This, therefore, suggests the persuasive

message affect of advertising.

Table 4. Showing the feeling of students of different media advertising

Students' feeling	% of respondents who say			
	TV	Radio	Newspaper	Magazines
Informative	30.77	00	69.23	00
Irritating	51.92	36.54	9.62	1.92
Enjoyable	90.38	00	5.77	3.85
Attractive	96.16	00	1.92	1.92

Source: Field Survey – July, 2009

Respondents are asked to express their views on how they perceive different advertisements. In collecting opinions, they are given four options to comments on advertisements on four different media. Survey results exhibit that, TV advertisements are perceived by most of the respondents (about 51.92%) as boring or irritating. Table reveals that most of the respondents are very much contented with TV advertisements which they term as enjoyable and attractive.

Table 5. Showing the causes for discontentment

Causes	No. of Respondents	%
Exaggeration or distorting	22	42.31
Insufficient information	04	07.69
Portrait of vulgar and nude woman	07	13.47
False guarantee/false description	16	30.77
Repetitive content	03	5.76
Total	52	100

Source: Field Survey – July, 2009

Respondents are asked to point out the reasons causing their discontentment with advertisement as viewed on different media. Most of the students (42.31%) blamed advertisements because of distorted or exaggerated product or service attributes, followed by insufficient information (7.69%), portrait of vulgar and nude woman (13.47%), false guarantee (30.77%) and repetitive content (5.76%).

Table 6. Showing the suggestions put forward by the respondents

Suggestions	No. of Respondents	%
Eliminating untruthful and misleading information	23	44.23
Curbing the use of nude and naked women	14	26.92
Framing specific code of ethics & assuring its implementation	07	13.46
Providing sufficient information	05	09.62
Avoiding repetitive content	03	05.77

Source: Field Survey – July, 2009

The growing in of public criticism of advertising's volume and content raises questions about the role and impact of advertising. Keeping this view in mind, the respondents are asked for suggestions in specific form to overcome the criticisms. Each respondent forwarded one's best suggestions to develop the quality of advertisement as well as to make it factual and worthwhile. A wide variety of suggestions come from the respondents, although few of them are unrealistic- tough to implement.

The highest numbers of respondents (44.23%) are of the opinion that each and every company will have to be sincere in eliminating misleading and untruthful advertisements, 26.92% respondents suggest for curbing the rampant use of nude and naked women to make the advertisement decent as well as suitable to our culture. To put these two advices into practice some specific code of ethics as well as their implementation is needed from business point of view, so that meaningful and worthwhile advertisement can be ensured. 13.46% respondents feel that government should come forward to play an active role in framing sufficient code of ethics and putting into practice. 'Providing more information' about products or services is recommended as a suggestion by 9.62% respondents, followed by 'avoiding repetitive content' 5.77%. In this regard, advertising agency people along with company's advertising department people should be careful for the development of advertisement.

6. Conclusion

Most of the advertisements in Bangladesh are not up to the mark. Misrepresentation, exaggeration, distortion etc have become the economic characteristics of advertisement in Bangladesh. Unhealthy competitions prevailing in business area instigate business people to adopt misleading advertisements to earn undue amount of profit. General people are rampantly victimized by these advertisements being induced to make purchase. Respondents have mixed attitudes towards these advertisements. Advertising agency people and company's advertising department people need to be sincere regarding the application of innovative techniques and meeting consumers' expectation to make the advertisement appealing and worthwhile. Advertisers must be sensitive to the negative attitudes and develop new ways of advertising to resolve the unfavorable image effects of advertising. But in all cases, ethical practice is inevitable. In this regard, the role of government is vital. Whatsoever measures may be suggested or steps taken by the civil people or concerned quarters ultimately everything will be in vain, if government does not come forward with helping hands. Because government itself has got the right to form necessary code of ethics (if needed) and logistics support to put these into practice.

References

- Aaker, D.A & G.S., Day (1982), "Consumerism," 4th Ed, (P.239), The Free Press.
- Baur, R.A. & S.A., Greyser (1978), "Advertising In America: The Consumer View", Division Of Research, Harvard Business School, Boston.
- Gardner, M.P., "Does Attitude Toward The Ad. Affect Brand Attitude Under A Brand Evaluation Set?". Journal Of Marketing Research, Vol XXII, May 1985.
- Kashem, S. & M.M., Rahman (1994), "Mal- Practices Followed In Advertising In Bangladesh," Journal Of ICMA, (P.46), Vol. XXII, No. 1, Issue Jan-Feb, Bangladesh.
- Krugman, H.E. (1965), "The Impact Of Television Advertising: Learning Without Involvement", Public Opinion Quarterly, 29, Fall.
- Lavitt, T. (1970) "The Morality (?) Of Advertising", Harvard Business Review, July-Aug.
- Lutz, R.J., Mackenzie, S.B., & Belch, G (1983). "Attitude Toward The Ad As A Mediator Of Advertising Effectiveness"; Determinants And Consequences, In "Advanced In Consumer Research, Vol 10, Richard Bagozzi And Alice Tybout, Eds., Association For Consumer Research, San Francisco: CA.
- Mitchell, A.A. & Olson, J.C.(1981, August) "Are Product Attribute Beliefs The Only Mediator Of Advertising Effects On Brand Attitudes?", Journal Of Marketing Research, 18, August, 1981.
- Packard, V.(1957), The Hidden Persuaders,: Pocket Books Inc.: New York.
- Sawyer, A.G.(1971), A Laboratory Experimental Investigation Of The Effects Of Repetition In Advertising, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Stanford University, Palo Alto: CA.
- Silk, A.J., & Vavra, Terry (1974), "The Influence Of Advertising Affective Qualities On Consumer Response, In Buyer/Consumer Information Processing", Eds., G. David Hughes And Michael L. Ray, University Of North Carolina Press, 1974, Chapel Hill: NC.
- Steiner, G.A. (1973), "The People Look At Television." (Newyork: Alfred A Knopf Inc.