

‘ADVERTISING’ A MIRROR OF THE SOCIETY: A REVIEW

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Abstract

Advertising is deemed as a communication tool to persuade the prospective buyers. Its major role is to sway the mind of the consumers to purchase a particular product. However, the advertisement has some more roles to play. It is also called as reflection of a country's situation. The paper will discuss the role conflict of advertisement. The paper will revolve around the role of advertisements as a mirror of the society and its influence on the customers with special reference to the societal point of view. The major focus will be on the examination of the statement that advertisement is a mirror of the society. Other aspects in allusion to this concept will also be touched upon. Advertising as persuading factor, advertising timeline will be a focal point to verify the assertion. Moreover, the dark side of advertisements will also be enlightened. The misleading commercials, erroneous impact on children will also be taken into account. The idea behind the paper is to illustrate the benefits a society can acquire from the advertisement.

Keywords: Advertising, Persuasion, Society.

Introduction

“Advertising is considered as a metaphor of genuineness in context to the societal image”. On the other hand, advertising without any qualm is considered as an influence factor for our culture. These two lines are contradicting to each other but this is the truth which is coming across as a dilemma for the advertisers and the audience as well. The advertisements shown in the print media, and television and broadcast at one point in time showcase the cultural remarks of the society and on the other hand, it has been seen that it attempts to influence the society, culture and norms.

Advertisements are considered as cultural indicators. Advertising is considered as a literature of the society. It represents certain meanings and values which contributes into culture of a society. Moreover, advertising content signify some aspects of the societal origins of the audience. This is supported by a thought that advertisements differ from society to society. The differences between societal structures, values, culture, lifestyles are beautifully pictured by advertisements. The advertisements of global brands differ from culture to culture.

Advertisements are not only considered as reflection of consumers need but, also a creator of ideals and wants. Consumption standards and pattern have been greatly influenced by the advertisements. The image formation and buying manner of the consumers have been immensely subjective to advertisements. There are some products available in the market which has created their need and more than need for a particular class, it has become a necessity. All the beauty products not only for women but also for men have greatly tapped the market. It is an instrument which arrives to the customers and allows them to frame their wishes and desires for the products they want.

The research paper will present a content analysis on the evolution of advertising from the societal viewpoint. The paper will contemplate the legitimacy behind stereotypical role of advertising. It will also illustrate the credibility of the advertising world both for the consumers and advertisers. The paper is written to show the history of advertisements relating to the women, children, consumers products, and other important aspects relating to the society. Advertisements are considered as mere a persuading factor. An effort has been made to throw some light on this traditional role of advertisements. Moreover, the attempt is made to discover the right role of the advertisement with special reference to the society.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine that whether some kind of relationship exists between the advertising and the society or not.
- The basic idea behind this study is to determine that whether advertising tends to show case the structure of the society or it tries to influence the cultural pattern of the society.

Research Methodology

This paper is based on the conceptual study. The secondary data has been used for this paper. Extensive literature review has been used to reach to a meaningful conclusion. The sources for the secondary data include internet journals, database available in the library, catalogues, national and international journals and television.

Relationship between Advertising and the Societal Pattern

Advertising : As a Persuading Factor

Advertising is considered as an important element of modern operations. It has come up as a primary vehicle of mass communication. Advertising has a multidimensional nature and scope for which it has been able to perform functions of promotions across product categories and consumers' desires, interest and motives. Advertising is basically a driver to sell more merchandise because of its persuasive nature. It is a paid form of persuasion. Persuasion emphasises on finding out the most influential way to change the attitudes and behaviours of the recipient. The mental and emotional condition of a person affects his buying decision. Advertisers use various appeals to persuade the prospective consumers. Advertising appeal stimulates the emotions and grabs attention. Appeals here by means the strategies an advertiser uses to present a product or service. Appeals can be of two types, emotional or rational. Emotional appeal consists of an individual's psychological and social needs for buying a product or service. While second appeal include an individual's functional, utilitarian or practical needs for a particular product or service. Advertisements of products like Nescafe, where an emotional appeal of a stammering comedian person is shown in an inspiring manner is praiseworthy. An advertisement of insurance companies like LIC where a mother praises the functioning of the company on the occasion of her daughter's marriage is again a masterpiece.

Advertising is so influential that legislation is required to control it. Many government rules and regulations have been made to keep a watch over it. Ad campaigns also play an important role in the success of the product. Some of the most famous ad campaigns have helped the companies to not only increase the profits but also the goodwill of the company.

Advertising Methods:

The advertisement uses a medium to commune to the customers and this could prove a deciding factor of the success of a product. For this matter, organisations have continuously evolved methods to increase reach to the consumers. Advertisement methods have been evolved over the period of time. Earlier, the advertisements used to come up in print media, radio, hoardings and television (¹Aaker, Batra and Myers). Nowadays, the advertisements are also displayed on social networking sites. The companies have used the most used media to reach the prospective buyers for the product.

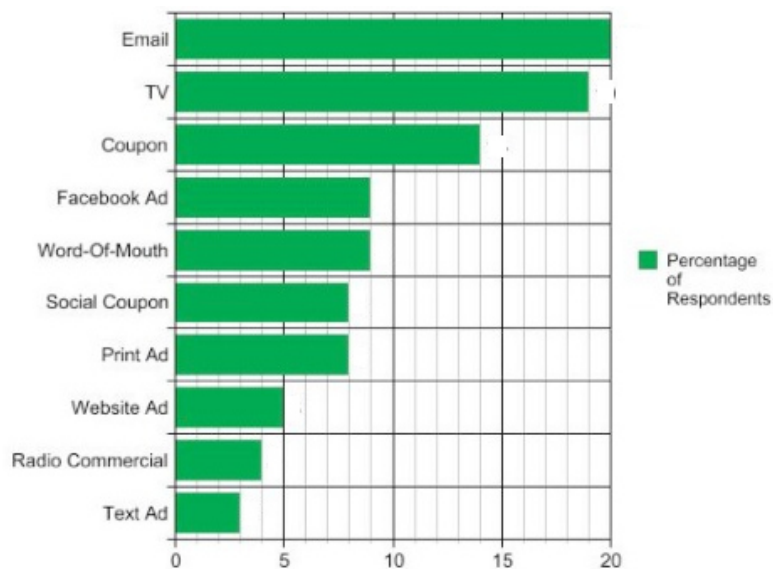


Figure 1 : Preferred Method of Receiving Advertisements

This graph shows that today, the most favoured method of receiving advertisements is social media, internet and television (youth marketing, 2012). It indicates the advertisements methods over the period of time.

Women in advertising:

Representation of women in advertisements has always been an area of interest for advertisers and practitioners. There has been a shift in the role of women in society which is evident from the increasing number of women-centric ads. Now, women are shown pursuing career, changing family role, responsibilities and contemporary attitudinal shift. A study shows that today 30% employees in a software industry are women. Increasing female employment would increase GDP significantly in countries like India and Egypt (Economic contribution of women, 2012). This has been realised by the advertisers and in context to this, they have formulated advertisements to persuade women as a target customer. It has been said that the customer is not a king but the customer is a queen. There are certain roles defined for the women. The common stereotypical role of women has declined in the advertising world. Now they are shown in neutral ways unlike their traditional roles where they were shown as weak, disappointed, and sex objects (Correa, 2011). The non-traditional role comprises of equality where women are shown equal to men. A table is shown to display the changing roles of the women in advertisement:

Table 1: Modified Female Role Categories by Decades

Role Portrayals	1980s	1990s	2000s
Traditional	68.6	63.5	55.1
Neutral	-	16.01	12.34
Non Traditional	31.4	20.49	32.56

Although the traditional role of women is still dominating the advertising field, the non-traditional role of women is increasing (Moorthi, Y., Roy S, Pansari, A,2014).

Advertisements of brands like Fair and Lovely are an absolute example of the changing image of women in the society. Previously, Fair and Lovely used to demonstrate a worried father about his dark complexion girl and said that “kash mera ladka hota”, the girl then used Fair and Lovely and gets a coveted job as air hostess. But, now the advertisement of Fair and Lovely shows a father who tries to convince his daughter to get married and the girl replies by saying that she will get married when she gets the same status as her prospective groom. (Gelles, 2011)

There are also advertisements of products like Bournvita, in which a very strong mother is shown, who prepares her child to only fight against her. This Bournvita film is a tribute to the mother who sets an example. This advertisement was made under the campaign ‘Bournvita celebrates the modern mom’ and the ‘habit of winning’.

Advertisements Related to Current Issues:

Advertisements are designed to reflect the literal happenings in the society. Advertisements tend to show the current issues which are prevailing in the market. Many companies are even famous enough to create such advertisements which demonstrate the running circumstances of the general public, politics and economy. Companies like Amul, Pepsi and Coca Cola are a few names in this category. Although, there are other companies also which are working in the same manner like, Relispray but, these above mentioned companies have gained title for their work.

Advertisements of Amul always have quirky ideas, humorous concepts and witty taglines. The ads have always been creative in their own sense. Some of the best advertisements are “Bread in India foren khao” symbolising Rahul Gandhi, “kha na, hazzare ! amul lok priya makhan” at the time of Anna Hazzare’s revolt against Lokpal Bill and an advertisement with a tagline “He came. He sat. He conquered. Amul tons of butter” when Sachin Tendulkar made his 100th century. Amul also takes inspiration from movies for getting new ideas for its advertising strategy. (Amul (1976 - 2012): 20 utterly butterly best ads over the years, 2013) Advertisements of Pepsi are very appealing. They show current things like it showed “Nothing Official About It” at the time of World Cup when Coca Cola was the official sponsor of the World Cup. Ad campaigns like *Yehi hai Youngistan meri jaan*, *Oh Yes Abhi!* are the examples of advertisements of Pepsi which explain phenomenon of the society.

Advertisement of brands like Relispray, a pain relief ointment demonstrates the ongoing “Clean India Campaign” in a very beautiful manner. It shows the spell of “MODI” which is distorted and last letter gives effect of broom which symbolises Narendra Modi.

Advertising: Influencing the Cultural Habits of the Society

Culture is a set of rules to live life in the society. Generally, accepted cultural norms and values of a given society can influence the behaviour of consumers towards certain products and services; for instance, pork is not likely to make optimum sales in areas where religious sentiment is attached to pork. Culture, therefore, is shaped and shared by homogenous groups of people. Personal factors such as a buyer's demographics and psychographics, personality and self-concept affect his purchasing behaviour. The occupation of an individual plays a significant role in influencing his/her buying decisions (S. A., Kenekwukwu, Asemah, Ezekiel, & Edegoh, Leo). In addition to it, sometimes advertisements also tend to build a persuasion for a particular product.

Advertising is a medium of communication to sway the consumers. Sometimes, advertisements showcase the “must haves” for consumers, before they realise that whether they actually need that product or not. Especially, the children are very much affected by the advertisements. Advertising makes the kids aware of the new products available in the market. It enhances the knowledge about the recent innovations in every field. It encourages the children to persuade their parents to purchase the products shown in the commercials. Nowadays, the advertisements of luxury items are also shown on channels like Cartoon Network as well. Children usually misinterpret the ads and concentrate on the negative side of them. Many advertisements showcase dangerous stunts, which could be dangerous to perform at home. Personal choices of the clothing, food, toys are also altered by the advertisements.

Not only children but the advertisements sometimes negatively motivate adults too. The thin models displayed in the advertising influence the young ladies to look like them and for that matter; they unnecessarily become a patient of anorexia.

There are some products also which create their need by faulty advertisements. There are some advertisements which are misleading in nature. Advertisements of brands like Axe and Colgate are misleading up to some extent because the kind of impact they showcase is actually not true in reality. Advertisements of male fairness cream are another example in this context.

Advertisements in many ways are creating a ‘throwaway’ society where, the need for any product is replaced very frequently. This is without any doubt increasing consumerism which in turn supports our economy but the fundamental behind the society is somewhat distorted.

Conclusion

Advertisements are a major component of modern economics. The societal impact of advertisements is prominent enough to impart an impression on the minds of the consumers. Advertisements imitate the societal procedures and also influence the society. The above discussion lays down the statement that there is a strong relationship between the advertisements and the cultural pattern of the society. Moreover, there are some product categories which boast the actual functioning of the product, which sometimes prove futile. It lays a foundation element that advertisements, if they are able to communicate to the audience at a large level then they should be utilised for betterment of the society. The advertisers could use the tactics to persuade the customers towards the upliftment of the society. Although, many companies are doing the same but more and more companies should come forward for a cause. The advertisers can also showcase the country's changing picture which could help in building the image of the society.

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