ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Commerce

A STUDY OF FACTORS DRIVING BRAND SELECTION & SWITCHING BEHAVIOR AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS AND EFFECTIVE ADVERTISEMENT APPEALS FOR THIS SEGMENT

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ABSTRACT

The paper intended to examine the effect of advertising appeals on brand switching of youngsters. A survey was conducted among 400 college students regarding their purchase in six product categories along five dimensions of product discovery, product research, purchase drivers, advertisement recall factors & brand perception. It was found that brand switching was not limited by frequency of usage & pricing of product. Online presence was found to be significant in converting interest into actual purchase. Brand perception & familiarity with the brand were more important than product's features or its monetary value. Visuals & celebrity endorsements of the advertisements were the key factors recalled by the respondents with the exception of practicality being emphasized in case of mobile phones & shampoo. Advertisements were reported to reveal the quality as perceived by the respondents.

INTRODUCTION

Advertising seeks to change perception and thereby the behaviour of the people. Its form & focus have evolved drastically since the time of its inception i.e., after the industrial revolution. From interruption to engagement, from functionality to experience, from stimulating rational thought to encouraging impulsive behaviour, from information to emotion; the focus has shifted to the customer from the product and the industry has become more intrusive and data driven.

Over the years, with new channels/mediums & audiences, advertisements have changed both in terms of content, frequency, platform & personalization. The biggest change was brought in by the advent of internet which made both studying of consumer behavior & its usage for boosting sales quite convenient. Consumers have now become the brand ambassadors & their reviews affect customer base of an organization thus making brand engagement more important than ensuring brand awareness.

With greater use of technology in production & distribution of goods & services, the number of manufacturers & mediums for promoting products have proliferated. Though this provided increased opportunities for companies (behavioural profiling, data points, cookies, programmatic buying), it empowered consumers as well. With the choice & ease to reject advertisements, they now wield same power as that of companies. This together with advertising fatigue & advertising avoidance has made targeting customers difficult. Social media platforms can secure attention of people via likes & shares but they can't guarantee the conversion of that engagement into actual purchase. Other challenges for companies while using such platforms include difficulties in measuring ROI, keeping track of performance across different platforms, developing suitable content & developing comprehensive strategy.

Several factors determine the effectiveness of advertising of a product, like advertising budget, type of message, media used, frequency of advertisement, market threats, time of advertising, interactivity, incentive, advertiser's credibility, advertisement appeal, product involvement, size, language & content of advertisement etc.

Advertisement appeals stem from the rhetorical triangle of Aristotle in context of communication wherein he discussed the appeals of credibility, emotion & logic. Berkman and Gilson (1987) defined advertising appeal as an attempt at creativity that inspires consumers' motives for purchase and affects consumers' attitude towards a specific product or service. The significance & influence of advertising appeals has been investigated in several studies. Mattila (2001) examined the effectiveness of rational appeals as compared to emotional ones in advertisements of hotel brands specifically for potential new customers. Ruiz and Silicia (2004) studied the relationship between individual prefer ences for information processing and effectiveness of types of advertisement appeals. Moon and Chan (2005) tried to ascertain whether cross cultural differences between Hong Kong & Korea affected the advertisement appeals used there. Leonidou and Leonidou (2009) explored the effectiveness of rational & emotional appeals in print medium, focusing on differences in advertisement copy, art & layout of newspapers. Lin (2011) studied how advertising appeals and advertising spokespersons affect advertising attitudes and buying intentions of people. Geuens, De Pelsmacker and Faseur (2011) analyzed the effectiveness of emotional appeals in four different product categories.

The paper intends to analyze the effect of advertisement appeals on brand switching of youngsters with special emphasis on the factors of product, people & promotion. Six product categories are chosen with differing nature (personal vs social), purchase frequency, price, utility & value, as people's choice in brands & advertisement elements may be impacted by them. Then the consumer behavior has been compared on basis of its distribution on 5 dimensions of product discovery, product research, purchase drivers, advertisement recall factors & brand perception.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Anne Marie Vincent & Alan J Dubinsky (2005) analyzed the impact of fear appeal of a print advertisement for a new sunscreen through a theoretical framework of protection motivation model. 193 students participated in the survey which measured participant's fear, coping responses & purchase intention and the data collected was analyzed through two-way MANCOVA. Higher level of fear was found to increase the possibility of purchasing the product. Nationality did not have a significant impact on fear of respondents. Adaptive coping was found to be able to play a mediating role between fear & purchase intention.

Orth et al. (2007) analyzed the reactions of 864 business students in Croatia, Hungary, Poland & The Czech Republic towards positively & negatively framed message appeals in 4 advertisements of food & beverages category. Data collected via survey was analyzed using ANOVA & structural equation model. Significant effects of pleased dimension on cognition, attitude towards advertisement and brand attitude were found. For positively framed ad message, significant differences were found among countries for emotional responses & brand attitude but not for cognitive responses, attitude towards the advertisement or purchase intention. In case of positive frame of ad message, direct effects of

emotions on attitude towards advertisement was seen among respondents of all the countries though their extent & direction differed. In Hungary & Poland, no indirect effects were visible. Except in case of Croatia, no direct or indirect effects of emotions were found on brand attitude. Advertisement cognition affected brand cognition both directly & indirectly in all four countries but due to different emotional dimensions. In case of negative frame of ad message, direct effect of emotions on attitude towards advertisement was evident for all countries. However, the indirect effects were seen only in Croatia, Poland & The Czech Republic. Brand cognition was affected directly by advertisement cognition in all countries while; indirect effects were visible for Croatia & Czech Republic only.

Rahim Hussain et al (2007) analyzed the click-through rate of banner advertisements focusing mainly on the moderating effects of type & appeal of such advertisements. They developed two factorial design matrixes for the study using a convenience sample of 200 university students. Data collected was analyzed through logistic regression. The frequency of the banner advertisement was found to have a positive impact on both static & popup ones, with it being more pronounced in case of latter. However, it had no significant impact on emotional & rational banner advertisements.

Jessica A.Mahone (2009) investigated the use of issue & image advertisements and the different functions of advertisements during presidential & federal elections in United States & Canada. The comparative analysis of political advertising found that Canadian federal elections used issue advertisements more as compared to American presidential elections. Also, winners of elections in both the nations were found to use issue advertisements more. Out of the functions of advertisements, namely, attack, acclaim & contrast, attacks were more commonly used than acclaims in United States elections.

Shintaro Okazaki, Barbara Mueller, and Charles R. Taylor (2010) studied the hard sell & soft sell appeals in advertising through content analysis, literature review, free association task, expert judgement & focus groups. After ensuring initial measurement instrument validation & nomological validity, index values of the advertisement measures were computed based on data collected from 193 respondents regarding six advertisements. Then, Stone-Geisser test was used to test the predictive relevance of hard sell & soft sell appeals. They found that these appeals should be measured separately so as to be effective. They developed a 12-item index for soft sell appeals based on factors of feeling, implicitness & image and a 15-item index for hard sell appeals based on factors of thinking, explicitness & fact.

Huang et al (2011) investigated the advertisement effectiveness of endorsements from animated spokes-characters & their impact on purchase intentions activated by consumer liking levels. Data was collected by conducting a survey on 387 people on 2 animated characters (one high involvement and other low involvement one) and analyzed afterwards through structural equation modeling analysis. They found that attraction towards the character not only led to increased liking but also generated trust for both characters & the products. Attraction towards the characters influenced the respondents comparatively more than that of their trustworthiness & nostalgia inducing factors. Respondents' liking of the animated characters was found to improve the communication effects of advertisement namely, advertising attitude, product attitude & brand attitude. However, the positive advertisement communication effect did not lead to increased intention to purchase the product.

Shavitt et al (2011) conducted content analysis of 1211 magazine advertisements in 5 countries to study horizontal & vertical cultural differences in content of advertising appeals. Data analysis was done through multiple linear regression. Advertisement appeals of vertical cultures (U.S., Korea, Poland & Russia) emphasized on status benefits comparatively more than horizontal ones (Denmark). Advertisement appeals in Denmark focused more on uniqueness benefits compared to other countries. Advertisement appeals emphasizing pleasure benefits were found to be more common in individualist countries (Denmark & U.S.) compared to collectivist ones (Korea, Russia & Poland). No significant difference was found between individualist & collectivist cultures in case of advertisement appeals emphasizing on specific relationship benefits. Advertisement origin {local or mixed (local & foreign)} did not predict advertisement benefits but it influenced impact of relationship benefits in individualist countries.

Harald J. van Heerde et al. (2013) analyzed how business cycle affects the effectiveness of price & advertising by finding short run & long run advertising and price elasticities of 150 U.K. brands categorized into 4 types in 4 product categories during 1993 to 2010. They found that long run price sensitivity decreases during expansions & increases during downturns of the economy. The long-run advertising elasticity, in turn, becomes stronger during economic expansions. In case of premium mass brands, high advertising reduced negative price effect over the long term through brand differentiation. Advertising was found to be ineffective for value mass brands & their sales were vulnerable to competitive pricing. Advertising could not be used to counter rising price of premium niche brands but they were in better position than value mass brands. Value niche brands were found not to advertise much but yet it was effective. Among the product classes, business cycle had the strongest impact on beverages affecting both its price & advertising effectiveness. Prices of food brands were affected to a lesser extent by business cycle with its advertising effectiveness being impacted hardly at all. Price of household care brands were not that affected by business cycle but its advertisement effectiveness went down by 50 percent. Personal care brands were the least affected by price & business cycle.

Rubi Khan & Shilpa Sindhu (2014) examined the effect of typology of service as a moderating variable regarding advertising appeal and consumer response. They constructed a scale to measure the attitude towards advertisement, brand and purchase intention. Survey was conducted to study dummy advertisements with fictitious brand names with 158 respondents filling the questionnaire about 18 advertisements of mobile services & 7 advertisements of restaurant services. Data analysis was done through factor analysis, content analysis & independent sample T test. Emotional appeal was found to be more effective in assessing respondent's attitude towards advertisement & brand and also his purchase intention. Typology of services significantly influenced advertisement appeal. Emotional appeal was found to be more effective in case of experiential services while rational appeal was more effective for utilitarian services.

3. OBJECTIVES
- To find out the effect of advertisement appeals on brand switching of youngsters
- To analyze the factors that led to trying out of the new brand

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. A self-administered questionnaire was used to conduct a survey regarding recent purchases of respondents in 6 different product categories, namely, toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant, chocolate, mobile phone & accessories. The questionnaire had close ended questions with some of them allowing the respondents to select multiple options as their answers. It

collected information regarding what respondents sought during purchase, how they found about the product, how they researched about it, what they remembered from its advertisements & how they perceived the brand. About 450 undergraduate & postgraduate students of St. Thomas College, Bhilai voluntarily participated in the survey. After discarding the incomplete questionnaires, 400 question naires were considered for data analysis.

5. FINDINGS

The data collected from the survey was grouped into five categories.

- The first category dealt with the factors linked with product discovery. Its subcategories included store (in store), social (family or friends) & screen (tv/online /magazine).
- The second one was related to the research undertaken by the respondents before deciding to buy the product. It had the subcategories of factors based on examination (examining demo product or relying on shopkeeper's judgement) & experience (leveraging online reviews & others' experiences).
- Next one was that of the important factors that influenced the purchase of the new brand. It had three sub categories, namely, factors relating to the manufacturer (brand reputation, desire to try out a new brand & not too many brand options being available in the product category), material benefits (product's features) & monetary value (perception of product being "value for money or any promotional offers/discounts).
- The fourth category included the factors playing a crucial role in advertisement recall by the respondents. It included the sub categories of presentation (visuals or endorsement by celebrities), persuasion (the advertisement's skit or a catchy tagline) & practicality (features being highlighted in the advertisement or offers called out).
- The last category was of brand perception & it had the subcategories of reasonable (brand perceived as a "value brand"), relatable ("modern" or "young") and reputed ("market leader", "expert" or "premium").

Factors influencing new brand purchase, advertisement factors stimulating brand recall and perception of the new brand were also analyzed collectively with the following findings:

- 63% of the respondents chose a brand based on advertisement's presentation for 1 or more of the 6 products.
- Half of them were also influenced by advertisement's practicality.
- 30% of them were also influenced by the persuasion of the ad, i.e. the skit or the tagline.
- 38% of these respondents were only influenced by presentation (for any of the products they buy) of the advertisement.
- 81% of the respondents reported monetary value of the product as the important factor that they considered while purchasing a product
- Out of them, 86% mentioned the manufacturer brand as a key factor for purchase
- 63% of them were also influenced by material benefits.
- 52% were also influenced by both material benefits of the product & the manufacturer brand
- 66% of the respondents reported the perception of their new brand as reputed.
- Out of them, 56% found the brand to be "relatable" too
- Only 36% of them found the purchased brand to be reasonable, in terms of pricing
- Only 21% of them considered the new brand as both reasonable & relatable.

The above three factors were also compared on the product level (taking 2 products at a time), comparing factors affecting purchase of expensive & durable products vs those for cheaper & consumable ones.

a) Mobile Phones & Shampoo - Of the total respondent base of 400, 80 have purchased a mobile phone recently. Of them, 34 have also purchased shampoo recently. Based on the responses of these 34 respondents on these two products, it was found that:
- Less than a quarter (23.5%) of respondents who reported being influenced by material benefits while purchasing mobile phones held the same for shampoo. Just 21% of respondents who reported being influenced by monetary value while purchasing mobile phones held the same for shampoo. Only 38% of respondents who reported being influenced by brand reputation while purchasing mobile phones held the same for shampoo.
- About half of respondents who were influenced by practicality factor of advertisement while purchasing mobile phones held the same for shampoo. Only 38% of respondents who were influenced by presentation factor of advertisement while purchasing mobile phones held the same for shampoo.
- Only 31% of respondents who perceived the new mobile phone brand as relatable reported the same for shampoo. 59% of respondents who perceived the new mobile phone brand as reputed reported the same for shampoo.

b) Mobile phones & deodorant - Of the total respondent base of 400, 80 have purchased mobile phone recently. Of them, 34 have also purchased deodorant recently. Based on the responses of these 34 respondents on these two products, it was observed that:
- Only 29% of respondents who reported being influenced by material benefits while purchasing mobile phone held the same for deo. Merely 25% of respondents who reported being influenced by monetary value while purchasing mobile phones held the same for deo. Only 32% of respondents who reported being influenced by brand reputation while purchasing mobile phones held the same for deo.
- Only 35% of respondents who were influenced by practicality factor of advertisement while purchasing mobile phones told the same for deo. 42% of respondents who were influenced by presentation factor of advertisement while purchasing mobile phones told the same for deo, so the same factor was important for less than half such respondents.
- Only 27.5% of respondents who perceived the new mobile phone brand as relatable reported the same for deo. 48% of respondents who perceived the new mobile phone brand as reputed reported the same for deo.

6. OBSERVATIONS

1) **Toothpaste**: In case of toothpaste, customers are likeliest to discover a new brand in the store. However, they research about the product both in-store and outside. They are most likely to go with a product from a reputed brand that they perceive to be priced reasonably. Their perception of the brand after the purchase was that of it being "expert" & "modern".

2) **Shampoo**: Respondents got to know about a new brand of shampoo in store & also through advertisements in magazines, tv &/or online media. The most important factor that influenced the purchase of the new shampoo was its brand name. However, before going for the reputed brand, customers were likely to check about its performance on online product review sites as well as by gauging experiences of acquaintances who have already used it. After the purchase, they perceived the brand to be "expert" & "premium".

3) **Deodorant**: Information about a new brand of deodorant was found to be obtained largely from television, print & online media. After getting the primary information, more

information was sought from people via online and offline mode. Manufacturer was the most important selection criterion, with people opting for the brand having a strong reputation in the market. The respondents perceived the brand to be a "premium" one after having bought it.

4) **Chocolate**: Respondents were drawn by both monetary value of the new chocolate they tried & its manufacturer while making the purchase decision. Initially, they came to know about it through advertisements and in-store browsing. They not only checked the product out with others who had used it but also checked the product in the store itself (demo unit or packaged unit) before taking the decision to buy it. Later on, respondents used the word "value" while describing the brand.

5) **Mobile Phone**: The principal sources of information about the new brand of mobile phone purchased by the respondents were advertisements. Further research was heavily biased towards reviews of people in the form of their ratings on sites &/or experiences shared online/in person. Here too, the manufacturer emerged as the deciding factor for the respondents who chose a new brand over their old one & respondents described the brand as "modern" after purchase.

6) **Accessories**: Advertisements of the accessory brand piqued the interest of respondents, which was followed by researching about the product on online platforms & in social circles. The name of the manufacturer played a major role in finalizing the purchase. Brand description after purchase was reported as "modern".

7) **Products taken collectively:** Skit or tagline used in the advertisements emerged as the least effective appeal when considered both on individual product level and also when 1 or more products were analyzed. Though brand reputation (in terms of manufacturer) of the product was found to be most important factor while purchasing a new brand when products were considered individually, offers &/or value for money proved to be more effective when they were analyzed together.

8) **Mobile phones & shampoo:** Purchase influencing factors differed a lot between the two products, among consumers who bought both recently. The only factor with significant overlap (more than 50%) was brand being perceived as "reputed".

9) **Mobile phones & deodorant:** Given the similar nature of shampoo and deodorant as products, the results were very similar for this group of customers as for the one above. And the overlap of customers perceiving brand as "reputed" was 48%.

7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS/INFERENCES

1) **Toothpaste:** Toothpaste brands are most likely to convince customers to try their products through visually appealing ads or having the right brand endorsers, in addition to highlighting the practical strengths of the product.
a. Given that customers have shown an inclination to make decisions using value as a key criterion, this can also be incorporated into the marketing and advertising strategy.

2) **Shampoo:** Respondents got acquainted with their new shampoo brand via in store browsing. Practicality of the shampoo was the element they recalled from its advertisement.
a. Advertisers can thus highlight the features of the product along with the available offers especially in the print advertisements displayed in the outlets.

3) **Deodorant**: Respondents discovered their new brand of deodorant while searching online and also through online video ads. Presentation of its advertisement captured their interest, which later on they recalled when asked about the USP of the ad.
a. Marketers can focus on two things- first making their deodorants easily accessible/ascertainable on search engines and secondly, injecting appealing visuals &/or celebrities in their video ads on various sites.

4) **Chocolate**: Respondents were introduced to their new

brand of chocolate through store browsing & advertisements (especially tv ads)-eye catching visuals of the product and the celebrity endorsers.
a. The marketers can use appealing visuals to their advantage in the television advertisements. In addition to that, they can make optimum utilization of celebrities as influencers both in on screen & in store advertisements.

5) **Mobile Phone:** New brand discovery of the respondents in case of mobile phones was predominant through the online medium. They highlighted the features & offers of the product while discussing about its advertisement.
a. The marketing strategy can be oriented towards making the brand conspicuous via search engines and launching picture & video advertisements which emphasize features of the phone & also inform about current &/or upcoming offers.

6) **Accessories:** Respondents got familiar with their new brand of accessories through advertisements on different mediums with slight bias towards the online ones. They highlighted the presentation while recalling the advertisement of the said brand.
a. The marketers can increase the visibility of the product by placing it strategically on search engines so that its apparent on online searches. Also, the visual effects and /or celebrity presence can be used to enhance the stimulating capacity of the advertisements, especially visuals are to be given more importance.

7) **Across products:** Overall, marketing managers need to focus the most on visuals or celebrities while formulating the product advertisements for this set of products. However, in order to maximize effectiveness, they should have multiple appeals, and should also highlight product's features &/or offers clearly. Marketing managers can consider giving offers or discounts to take maximum advantage of their strong brand reputation.

8) **Product pairs/groups**: Companies and advertising agencies need to keep in mind that the same consumer would base his/her purchase decisions for two products on different sets of factors, depending on the product. So it's best to tailor advertisements to cater to what consumers are looking for in that specific product itself.

8. CONCLUSION

* Purchase of new brands was not limited to any 1-2 product categories as about half of the respondents tried a new brand in frequently used personal grooming products like shampoo & also in case of accessories. Thus, the nature of the product in the sense of frequency of usage & pricing didn't limit brand switching.

* Word of mouth was not found to be effective in influencing the purchase of new brands. Store display sparked interest for personal use products & advertisements on television /magazine/online mediums garnered more attention in case of products that are long term commitments.

* Online presence in terms of customer reviews were found more reliable (irrespective of the product category) by the prospective buyers & thus can prove instrumental in translating interest into future purchase.

* Youngsters are not influenced much by features of the product or the monetary value of the purchase (pricing or promotional offers). It's the familiarity, novelty (new brand) &/or the reputation of the manufacturer that is more important to them.

*Though youngsters prioritized the manufacturer of the brand while purchasing a product, they recalled the practicality of the advertisement in case of mobile phones & shampoo. Otherwise, it was either visuals or celebrities that was the key factor recalled.

*Brand reputation became the basis of youngsters' association with new brands and most likely it will be

highlighted when they recommend it to others.

*Advertisements of the new brands were effective in terms of revealing the quality as perceived by the respondents, with more than three fourths of them agreeing to it.

*Consumers' preferences & behaviour are not rigid and are driven by the product(s) they are purchasing.

9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
- Other factors affecting brand switching like price, education, durability, availability, technology etc. were not taken into consideration.
- The duration of television viewing/internet browsing or frequency of viewing the advertisement was not considered.
- The types of programs on television or sites visited wherein the advertisement was seen was not taken into account.

10. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS
I) Comparative analysis of type & effect of advertisement appeals used for products & services can be done.

ii) Use & effectiveness of different appeals used by brands within same product category can be analyzed.

iii) Advertisement appeals can be compared across different life stages, age-groups, location of residence etc. in the same product category.

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