

TO STUDY THE EFFECT OF DISCLAIMERS IN ENGLISH PRINT ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE ADVERTISING, ON THE BUYING BEHAVIOR OF YOUNG ADULT INDIAN READERS

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to study the willingness of reading magazines and to explore the impact of disclaimers in magazine advertisements on young Indian readers. The researcher began investigating the most used media platforms by advertisers using two magazines namely Cine Blitz (lifestyle) and Stardust (entertainment). The most important aspect to understand was what forms of advertisement is used in magazines by marketers to attract readers to its brand creativity and messaging, ultimately leading its readers to buy the product.

The study discovered that in both these magazines, the most used form of media was 'display advertisement' and least used was 'advertorials' with 'editorials' by marketers in magazine advertisements. Less than 50 % of ads in both of the magazines had disclaimers in it, which clearly says that the ads used in magazines deliver their brand message but without disclaimers. It was also found that out of all the forms of media options (display ads, editorials, and advertorials) majority of the disclaimers were used in display advertisements.

After the ad analysis, a survey was conducted among 200 respondents aged 17 to 35 years. Through the data collected and interpreted through SPSS, the research revealed that 60% of people read English print entertainment magazine and out of 60%, 44% of young Indian readers read disclaimers in magazines. The finding of the study stated that 21% of young Indian readers between 17-29 years old read and understand the disclaimers and still tend to buy the product/service because they want to be updated as per the changing trends.

Keywords: Magazines, Readers, Advertisements, brand

INTRODUCTION

Most Advertising

Mass media come in many forms (i.e., television, movies, newspapers, magazines, radio, internet, video games, etc.) and serves as an educational function in contemporary society, keeping the readers up to date on the news and the latest music and fashion trends. Everywhere they go, everywhere they look and they are inundated with messages. From how to look, what to wear, what to eat, what their homes should look like, how to meet people, what to drive, practically every facet of youngster's lives is taken care of. That is the power of advertising (Monita Rajpal).

The standard definition of advertising is as follows:

"Advertising is the non-personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products, services, or ideas by identified sponsors through the various media." (Boove 1992, 7)

Advertising is considered multi-dimensional. It helps in several marketing activities. It is a technique of sales promotion. Sales volume is increased by advertising. Consumer's knowledge about the product is increased by advertising. Advertising helps the consumer to save their time in purchasing. It also helps the manufacturers to sell their products (Gose). Hence quick selling is possible which leads to more production at less cost. The relation between wholesalers and retailers is improved through advertising. Advertising introduces new products, stimulates markets regarding the existing product, and repeated sales. Thus, a good advertisement tells people if they need something even before they believe they do. It offers them a glance into the best life, the ideal body, the ideal mate, all wrapped in an ideal world. Advertising represents an important means by which brands/marketers can communicate with their customers, both current and potential.

Print Advertising

Print advertising is a generally used form of advertising. Marketers advertise their brands in newspapers or magazines and are at times included as brochures or fliers. Anything written in the print media to grab the attention of the specific target audience comes under the purview of print advertising. While today the society is filled with technologically-obsessed young people, print advertising is a long way from dead. Website, search engine, and social media promotions are a general part of most marketing campaigns. But the business world hasn't entirely shunned print advertising in favor of the digital world.

When people think about newspaper and magazine, images of the large, glossy, national publications often come to mind. The strength of magazines begins with the fact that people have strong interests and needs, and these interests vary from person to person. The magazine medium's essential strength lies in the active way in which readers choose and use their magazines making magazines an active medium for advertisements, with the reader in control. Since different categories of magazines fulfill different needs they work in different ways, which are well adapted to their readers' requirements (Consterdine, 2005). This wide range of needs creates a demand which magazines can meet because there is such a variety of them. And it is a growing variety. The increasing number of consumer magazines not only declares a very healthy market but is also a visible sign of increasing fragmentation. Each subject area tends to be broken down by magazines focusing on more and more specialist areas within it, giving each title its own unique positioning. Thus, striking an increasingly personal link with those readers who are especially interested in a given subsector (Consterdine, 2005).

Print VS Digital

While digital is cost-effective and easy to test but would that mean, it is an end for print? That seems to be the general catch-cry among marketers, but brands shouldn't discount print just yet. Especially magazines – they're just as popular today as they were before the digital revolution. There are magazines about subjects that simply didn't exist 20 or even 10 years ago. One reason is that the world is constantly embracing new fads, creating niche cultures, and developing new and exciting technologies, and to be a part of these trends, hosts of indie publications have appeared. So if digital is the latest way to reach new and existing customers and ads in newspapers and magazines is still a viable option, it is important to weigh the pros and cons of both the mediums. In a nutshell, though digital advertising is great for immediate results, especially for running a promotion or an offer print advertising is the way to go if a brand wants to build its identity and establish credibility in the minds of new and existing customers. But the best option could be a mix of the two. It's no secret that the digital age has become increasingly integrated into young people's daily routine, that they are capable of doing both, their work and communicating globally and reading publications electronically almost anywhere. Thus, harmonizing social media and print media efforts can be the best way to catapult ROI by (O'Loughlin):

Use print media to direct audiences to online platforms:

Brands should take advantage of any print appearance they make to showcase the brand's digital presence. Listing the social media URLs, hash tags for customers to use, the website URL, or a QR code that directs audiences to the brand's website. This encourages consumers to learn more about the business via those handy digital devices they have become reliant on.

Use social media to promote print successes:

Every time a brand appears in print media, marketers should pimp it out on all social channels. Not only does this provide a neat little 'instant content' package, but press releases are also particularly powerful in adding a big dose of credibility to your business. Showing the audiences that the brand is worthy of the print media's attention by creating a unique social post to showcase the brand's latest achievements, and adding social tags to amplify the print circulation and reaching new readers/customers.

Thus, at the end of the day, perhaps the situation shouldn't be approached as 'social media versus print', but rather how the two can complement one another to turbo-charge the brand exposure. However, at the crux of the issue lies the inherent need to maintain consistency across all platforms (O'Loughlin).

Disclaimers in Advertising

While various forms of branding, advertising, and marketing are ways of communicating information about a product to consumers, warnings and disclaimers are special kinds of communication: unadorned, declarative statements purportedly intended to cause a consumer to act in a particular way or reach a specific cognitive result (Heymann, 2010).

The fact that warnings and disclaimers are counter-narratives does not, however, mean that consumers are powerless to interpret them in the face of the emotional appeal of the primary narrative of the brand. For instance, as one court noticed, "a brew producer's commercial images, albeit alluring, are insufficient to kill or nullify the immense body of knowledge a reasonable consumer possesses about the dangers of alcohol." In different words, any conventional consumer can get, and even be showing emotions influenced by an emotional

account of a TV business and still accommodate a contending story, whether or not that story came from a particular statement from an advertiser ("Please drink responsibly") or from other sources (Heymann, 2010). If this were not the case, regulators would not require manufacturers to include disclaimers or warnings on product packaging or in advertising, and courts in product liability cases would not fault manufacturers for failing to adequately warn shoppers of the risks posed by their product. Thus, product warnings, as noted, have two purposes: to "inform shoppers of the risk level associated with a product or an activity," and to encourage users of the product or participants in the activity to exercise appropriate care, such as by wearing safety goggles or taking different precautionary measures (Heymann, 2010).

At present in India, there is no central legal office or uniform enactment controlling the advertising industry. The Indian advertising market as a whole in general is managed and controlled by a non-legal body, the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI). ASCI is a voluntary self-regulatory council established in 1985 that has been drawn up by experts in profession and industries in or connected with advertising in close association with representatives of people affected by advertising and has been accepted by individuals, and corporate bodies concerned with advertising to achieve the acceptance of fair advertising practices and to enhance public confidence in advertisements. The guidelines relating to disclaimers:

"Free" gifts/samples:

The Consumer Protection Act 1986, Section 2 (3) (a) states that (i) the contribution of gifts, prizes or other items with the aim of not providing them as offered or creating the impression that something is being given or offered complimentary when it is completely or partly covered by the amount charged in the transaction as a whole, or (ii) the conduct of any contest, lottery, the game of chance or skill, to promote, directly or indirectly, the sale, use or supply of any product or any business interest, is an unfair trade practice. The Norms for Journalist Conduct issued by the Press Council of India has stated that gifts including those given by the advertisement agencies for publication of material relating to their clients or otherwise should not be acknowledged by the editor (Jurix, 2012).

The lettering of "supers":

For print advertisements, the font size of the brand's a product/service advertisement "supers" shall be a minimum of 6 and 7 points for 100 column centimeters or less and more than 100 column centimeters or equivalent size advertisements respectively (Jurix, 2012).

In 2016, the country's advertising watchdog had proposed new guidelines on how disclaimers in advertisements should be disseminated across media platforms in a move to ensure that consumers understand claims better and do not get misled. The draft guidelines from the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) specify standards for the display and duration of disclaimers, tagged to advertisements, and intended to guide consumers while making decisions to purchase products or services (Bureau, 2018).

The effect of disclaimers on readers is such that they are accustomed to dealing with biased information in all areas of life, including when making decisions as consumers. These consumers are aware from experience and from the knowledge of human nature that magazines are fallible, sometimes biased, and sometimes duplicitous in the information they provide. As a consequence, consumers may fail to respond to disclaimers in the ways that the regulators intend them to (Armstrong).

The purpose of this research is to determine the effect of various forms of disclaimer placement in magazine advertisements in regards to the Reader-response theory, Social comparison theory and user and gratification theory.

Reader Response Theory:

In the present study according to the Reader-response theory, the product/service communication of a brand targeted towards young readers would involve two authors and two readers. The author attempts in making the respective product/service desirable and presents the product warning with an authoritarian voice. And there are two consumers (ideal consumer and actual consumer) merged in one physical being for the advertisement whereby they process the counter-narrative readings in a way that the product can be good and also not good depending on the understanding of the text and the prior knowledge about the product/service that consumer entails.

Social Comparison Theory:

In this study as per social comparison theory, people compare themselves and the current study is about young people who have a natural tendency to compare themselves to one another. One type of social comparison occurs when an individual looks to someone else to gauge his or her abilities, characteristics, or worth. In sync with the theory, upward social comparisons would involve celebrities endorsing brands, magazine editors with their product/service recommendation, active marketing by brands, and influencers.

Uses and Gratification Theory:

In this study as per the uses and gratification theory, avid young magazine readers consume different forms of magazine advertisements to satisfy their desires. For example, a big fan of some celebrity would check out the advertisement endorsed by his/her favorite star or an ardent follower of some influencer would read an article on their favorite YouTube or Instagram influencer's skin routine. They all would do this to seek out entertainment, to find information, to communicate with like-minded individuals, or to pursue self-expression. And connecting the Uses and gratification theory with the current study, young readers media choices in terms of magazine advertising (like advertorials by brands or editorials by editors, celebrities/influencers) with disclaimers can determine the motivations behind media consumption by readers. Each of these uses gratifies a particular need, and the needs determine how media is used. By examining factors of young reader's magazine routine, this research can determine the motivations behind advertisements in magazines with disclaimers. A study of uses and gratification theory would explain the role disclaimers in magazine advertisements take in young reader's buying decisions and the reasons for its appeal.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objectives of the study is to analyze various forms of advertisements with disclaimers in English print entertainment magazines, also to examine how young adult Indian readers judge the disclaimer in magazine advertisements and finally to examine how disclaimer advertisements affect the attitude or belief of readers towards products and warning information memory.

The methodology used for this study is a mixed For Qualitative: Advertisement analysis, to study the various forms of advertisements displayed in one Indian lifestyle and entertainment magazines each were selected, i.e. Cine Blitz and Stardust. For Quantitative: The survey was conducted online with the help of Google Forms. In preparing for the advertisement analysis, two entertainment monthly magazines were chosen to draw the sample advertisements. The issues selected for the present study included copies of three months ranging from February 2019-March 2019. Therefore, the sample size was restricted to all the ads appearing in the issue of the mentioned months. For a survey, the demographic variable that was involved was age and gender. The sample age of young Indians ranged from 17 to 35 years old. The type of sampling used was stratified sampling.

FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

The objective of this study is to examine various forms of advertisements used by marketers in magazine advertisements. Also, to analyze which media form in a magazine advertisement has more number of disclaimers. For the same, advertisement analysis has been conducted whereby the research method used for this study would be advertisement analysis. In preparing for ad analysis, two monthly magazines (i.e., Cine Blitz and Stardust) were chosen to draw the sample advertisements from which included copies of three months ranging from February 2019 - April 2019. Therefore, the sample size was restricted to all the ads appearing in the issue of these months.

The research analyzed the most used media form by advertisers and also investigated the number of disclaimers that are being used in the advertised product/service in these two magazines. The study discovered that in both of these magazines, the 'display advertisement' form of media was the most used by marketers followed by 'advertorials' with 'editorials'. The number of disclaimers seemed very low i.e. in Cine Blitz, out of 28 display ads only 3 brands had disclaimers to their ad. And in Stardust, out of 20 display ads, only 6 brands had disclaimers to its product/service advertisement. Thus, Stardust carries more disclaimers. It might carry less display advertisement but has comparatively more disclaimers in its magazine.

After the ad analysis, it was important to target the purpose of the study which was to understand the willingness of reading magazines followed by magazine advertisements and the disclaimers in the advertisements. A survey was conducted among 200 respondents aged 17 to 35 years. The research tool was designed to determine the choice of preference of the viewer respondent and find answers to the research questions. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis and interpretation.

The research revealed that 60% of people read English print entertainment magazine. Out of those 60%, 23% of people notice the product/service advertisement in the form of display ads because they feel that they find the ad glossy and interesting. The finding of the study stated that 21% of young Indian readers between 17-29 years old read and understand the disclaimers and still tend to buy the product/service because they want to be updated as per the changing trends.

DISCUSSION

The scope of the research is to know the most used form of media option in magazine advertisements and the number of disclaimers each form of advertisement carries. It is about understanding the percentage of people reading disclaimers and their judgment towards these disclaimers in magazine advertisements. This research would help advertisers understand the factors that make young Indian readers notice the advertisements and

what media options in magazine advertisements are more noticeable. This research will help in understanding their views on the importance of disclaimers and their placement in the advertisement. This research has limitations, given that advertisement-analysis was done of various forms of magazine advertisements, but there cannot be a conclusive comment upon all the marketing and promotion strategies of all the brands. Issues selected for study included copies of only three months ranging from February 2019 - April 2019. The genre selected for the study was limited to entertainment magazines. The survey only included young Indians. The time frame for this research was 2 months.

CONCLUSION

Disclaimers can provide important information to consumers and they have been widely used since the beginning of advertising. The research was about readers understanding of the disclaimer and its affect on their buying behavior.

Through content analysis of 3 month issue of both magazines, Cine Blitz had more display advertisements (28 ads: 3 ads with disclaimers) than Stardust (20 ads: 6 disclaimers) but it can be fairly noted that Stardust might have fewer advertisements but has more advertisements with disclaimers released compared to Cine Blitz. This shows that brands not necessarily would want to release advertisements with disclaimers.

Also, the purpose of the study was to find out to what extent do people read and comprehend disclaimers in magazine advertising. The finding of the study stated that 21% of young Indian readers between 17-29 years old read and understand the disclaimers and still tend to buy the product/service because they want to be updated as per the changing trends.

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