1. INTRODUCTION

Advertising is a specific form of communication, a unique industry, and an important institution in Indian society. Advancement in communication technology has opened up new possibilities in marketing communication and advertising industry has become more creative, rewarding and challenging. As a means of mass communication, innovative methods of advertising are being tried to win the consumers and to keep them. But the impact of mass media advertisements on consumer behaviour is subject to continuous discussion and debate.

Advertising is addressed to millions of people daily through different forms of mass communication media. Consumers’ exposure to advertisements is increasing day by day. As consumers have easy access to mass media like Television, Newspapers, magazines, postures etc., they are constantly exposed to new ideas, products and advertisements. According to Eldridge (1958) the objective of advertising is to change the minds of those to whom it is directed, to create an image of a product or idea and thereby to move those people, possibly immediately, but more frequently gradually, towards an acceptance and a use of the advertised product or idea. Its aim is not only to promote sales but also to educate, inform the consumers and enable people to exercise their right of choice. Therefore, the effectiveness of advertising is of great concern both to society and to the individuals who comprise our society. As advertising is designed to influence the consumers’ behavioural aspects like brand awareness,
need recognition, brand evaluation etc., its impact is difficult to be measured. The present investigation is an attempt to understand the impact of mass media advertisements on consumer behaviour.

There is a universal assumption that media advertisements influence the behaviour of the consumer. Assumptions of the theories of consumer behaviour and advertising suggest that the mass media advertisements can influence the consumers at different stages of the decision process. Though many researches have been conducted, there is no definite answer as to the extent of influence of media advertisements on consumer behaviour. In spite of the progress that advertising has made over the years, no improvement has happened in the measurement and evaluation of its effectiveness. Mass media advertising is subject to great deal of criticism with respect to the increasing amount spent on the same on one hand and its effectiveness on the other hand. Hence an issue arises as to whether an increase in the advertisement expenditure results in increased advertisement impact on consumers.

In the absence of clear understanding of the impact of advertisements on consumers, there is a difficulty in investing in it. In this context, an understanding of the consumer behaviour and the extent of influence of advertisements on it will be of great use to marketers. The present study examines the nature of urban consumer behaviour for household durables and also ascertains the extent to which the media advertisements can influence the consumer behaviour at each stage of the decision process. The literature on the consumer behaviour and communication theories on advertising suggests that the mass media advertisements can influence the consumers at different stages of the consumer
decision process. Hence the purpose of this study is to develop a theoretical model approach that relates the effect of advertising efforts to consumer behaviour patterns.

Advertising strategies are usually changed in response to the changes in its environment. Advertising is an economic force, a social institution, a communicative art and a factor of world trade. Hence the measurement and evaluation of advertising influences on purchase behaviour patterns is a challenging task before the researchers, advertisers and business people. The purpose of advertising is to change the attitude of the people towards the purchase of a product which in turn may cause changes in the consumer behaviour. Though the increase in consumption is the apparent evidence for the success of advertising, it is argued that mostly advertising influences the consumer behaviour which in turn may result in actual purchases.

Consumers’ behavioural response to advertising is the focus of the present investigation. Individuals are motivated towards more consumption and upward mobility and society is driven to produce more. Understanding and adapting to consumer requirements is an absolute necessity for competitive survival. While making advertising strategies the unique consumption pattern, tastes and needs of consumers should be understood by examining the decision making process of the consumers. Advertising industry needs innovative and constructive advertising strategies to be more effective in terms of translating into sales. Hence an understanding of the influence of advertising on various stages of the consumer behaviour is important to the individual consumers, the industry and the society in general. The present study is designed to evaluate how the media
advertising efforts affected the consumer purchase behaviour dynamics reflected through the decision process.

Careful planning and choosing, information seeking and brand evaluation are some of the important considerations which accompany major purchases. A common feature of descriptions of consumer decision making is the notion of separate stages of thinking linked together over time. A potential buyer is assumed to pass through these stages in a specified order before approaching the final decision to buy and hence this idea of sequential decision making process has strategic importance. The attraction of this idea is that it promises more effective marketing efforts based on more effective predictions of consumer information needs. As explained by Del, Roger, and Kenneth (1998), the firm can succeed only if the consumers see a need that can be solved by its product, become aware of the product and its capabilities, decide that it is the best available solution, proceed to buy it and become satisfied with the results of the purchase.

Knowledge of consumer behaviour is helpful to the marketing manager in understanding the needs of the different consumer segments and developing appropriate marketing strategies for each. The study of consumer behaviour also provides an insight into how consumers arrive at the purchase decision and the variables which influence their decision. A consumer's decision to purchase a product is influenced by a number of variables which can be classified into four categories, namely psychological, personal, social and cultural (Gupta and Pal, 2001).
High lighting the importance of research on advertising influence on consumer behaviour, Gupta and Pal emphasizes that the whole purpose of business communication is to keep the goodwill of the consumers, to make the consumer aware of the brand, to persuade the consumers to buy the product, to reduce the post purchase dissonance etc. Satisfactory customer care gives industry a competitive edge over its rivals. No communication is complete without a two way flow and hence consumer feedback is as important as the original message from the marketer to the consumer.

Lavidge and Steiner (1961) pointed out that realistic measurements of advertising effectiveness must be related to an understanding of the functions of advertising. According to him advertising must be considered as a force which if successful moves people up a series of steps toward purchase. Therefore measurements of effectiveness of advertising should provide measurements of changes at all levels of these steps and not just at the levels of the product awareness and final purchase.

Advertising’s job is to communicate, to a defined audience, information and a frame-of-mind that stimulates action (Colley 1961). According to Colley advertising succeeds or fails depending on how well the ad communicated the desired information to the right people, at the right time at the right cost.

As explained by Weilbacher (2001), advertising is generally seen as a measure of persuasive communication. If successful this communication process ultimately results in sale of the product to at least some of the consumers who
had been exposed to the advertising. If such sales do not happen, the advertising is judged not to have been effective.

According to Dichter (1949), a purchasing action is seldom a direct and immediate result of an advertisement. A number of intermediary processes take place in the minds of the potential buyer. When an individual reads an advertisement or listens to a radio commercial, a number of mental processes are stimulated. As such real commercial effects of an advertisement are difficult to be ascertained solely in terms of actual sales. As pointed out by Dichter, a psychologist on advertising effectiveness, what is more important is the impact of ads on the consumers’ behaviour. According to him every time a reader views an advertisement three successive steps are set in motion: a) an attempt to get into the advertisement. b) registration of the psychological effects and c) registration of the commercial effects of the advertisements.

The impact of advertisements on sequential stages of decision making was explained by Deighton (1984). According to him much of the effect of advertisements may depend not on immediate acceptance of advertised propositions, but on product experience, evidence recalled from memory or opinion of friends and relatives. The implication is that while studying the impact of advertisements the effects of communications, not only at the time of exposure but also later, after some experience with the product shall be examined.

Nelson (1970) pointed out that consumers are continually making choices among products, the consequences of which they are but dimly aware. According to him consumers lack full information about the prices of goods and the quality
variations of products. In a very simplified theory of the consumers’ quest for information about the quality of goods, he predicted that the recommendations of others will be more reliable source of information for purchases of durables.

O’Brien (1971), while tracking the consumer decision making process, examined the hierarchy of effects description of consumer decision making. He examined the chain of events taking place in the consumer’s mind in connection with the purchase of a convenience food and its effects on marketing policy. The purpose of the study was to develop an understanding of what goes on behind purchase decisions. For this purpose a system of individual consumer decision making was constructed based on the hierarchy-of-effects model of individual behaviour. Scales were constructed to measure three variables of the hierarchy: awareness (for cognitive), attitude (for affective), and intention (for conative). The study revealed that commercial information (advertising) has no direct influence on ultimate purchase of the product studied. Such influence begins solely with personal sources like word of mouth. Advertising had some effect, but it was not prominent in the consumer’s decision path.

Punj (1987) examined the relationship between pre-search decision making and external information seeking in automobile purchases and constructed consumer profiles corresponding to different levels. Majority of the consumers were found to have exhibited a high level of pre-search decision activity. A large number of consumers was found to use stored information from memory which they collected by virtue of their previous purchase experience and long term exposure to advertising.
The role of advertisement in brand reinforcement is brought out by Joyce (1967a). According to him opportunities for increasing sales may come from increasing frequency of purchase or from repeat purchase by brand loyal consumers who are already users of the brand. The implication is that advertising must be judged largely on its performance among present users, i.e., those who are already favourably disposed to the brand. According to Preston and Thorson (1984), the dominant effect and a major goal of most advertising are to reinforce existing, positive attitude toward the brand.

Paul (2000) conducted an empirical study on creativity in advertising and its impact on communication effect and consumer purchase behaviour. The sample for the study was taken from Cochin Corporation, the only metropolitan city of Kerala and the universe was the households in Cochin Corporation. It was found out that highly creative advertising has better communication effect both in terms of advertising effectiveness and communication objectives. Such advertisements lead to higher advertising response in terms of consumer purchase behaviour.

Increasing importance of Kerala as a ‘consumer state’ is brought out in the unpublished proprietary research by Edison (1993). As explained by him, Kerala is a highly developed market for consumer products and is the target of many leading national marketers. According to him some of the prevailing assumptions about the trends of consuming class in Kerala are worth mentioning. Purchasing power of the average household is comparatively high, conspicuous consumption is relatively more, rural -urban differences are less pronounced and the whole state can be considered a an extended urban market.
Response to advertising is a complex phenomenon having various dimensions. The expectations of the hierarchy of effects model of advertising suggests that increase in the communication effectiveness of ads increase the behavioural responses to ads at the different stages of the decision process. It has long been proposed that the problem recognition, information search, evaluation of brand alternatives and post purchase evaluation are important stages in the consumer decision making process and consumer continually pass through these stages as they repeatedly deal with common human needs. While Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2001) have written in detail about the consumer decision process model of consumer behaviour, they have offered little empirical confirmation for the proposed relationship between the variables.

These different frameworks from literature therefore suggest that the advertisements influence the consumer behaviour at different stages of the consumer decision process. The researcher therefore seeks to examine different stages of the consumer decision process and the relationship between communication effect of advertisements and consumers’ behavioural responses to the same. The analysis of influence of advertising is done by providing a link between consumers’ exposures to advertising media and the consumer behaviour dynamics expressed through the sequential stages of the decision process.

Most of the citations given above are related to the studies conducted in developed countries. There is little discussion in Indian literature, of the fundamental stages of the decision process of the consumes. The review of articles from several journals dealing with the consumer decision process
revealed that need recognition, external search for information, evaluation of brand alternatives and post purchase evaluation are areas covered by literature on consumer behaviour in western countries. The studies are found to have covered only some aspects of these key areas. Analysis of the consumer behaviour in the Indian context is relatively an ignored topic. Individual’s behavioural responses to advertisement at different stages of the decision process are examined in the present study.

The present study designed to analyse the influence of media advertising on consumer behaviour with reference to consumer durables. The study is directed towards an understanding of how consumers make their buying decisions and how the media advertising affect the consumer purchase dynamics that includes need recognition, information search, brand evaluation, purchase decision, consumption, post consumption evaluation and disposal or replacement of the product. The analysis of effectiveness of media advertisement on consumer behaviour is a task in the light of media explosion consumers experience today.

**Significance of the study**

Advertising as a form of mass communication is a powerful marketing tool, a component of the economic system, a means of financing the mass media, a social institution, an entertainment, an instrument of business management, a field of employment and a profession. Advertising is multi dimensional in nature. Above all, advertising is a big business.

Indian advertising industry has witnessed a phenomenal growth, increasing its billings from Rs.10 crores in 1955, to about Rs.160 crores in 1978 and to about
Rs.10,000 crores in 2005 (Chunawalla and Sethia, 2000). In India the advertising business was growing at the rate of 30 to 35 per cent per cent during this period. As reported by Sinha and Dogra (2007), the Indian advertising industry is expected to grow 61 per cent by 2010 with advertisement expenditure increasing from 22,721 crores in 2007 to Rs.36,731 crores in 2010. India’s total advertising expenditure will be Rs.26,532 crore in 2008 in comparison with Rs.22,721 crore in 2007. The phenomenal growth of traditional media like television, radio and cinema was one of the reasons for this. The large number of new products introduced as result of the industrialization and economic development of the country also contributed to the increasing expenditure in the mass media advertisement sector.

Effectiveness of advertising is of great concern to individuals, advertisers, business men and to the society. The advertisers are concerned with the results of their advertising communication. Before spending substantial media costs advertisers usually analyses the effectiveness of their ads. Advertising is valuable for new companies as well as established ones. As Dhella (1978) explains it is even more important for well-established businesses to develop customer loyalty and corporate image.

The world today is changing fast, India is no exception. Specially after the opening up of the economy, the pace of change that Indians are experiencing can never be measured accurately. Advertising has become an integral part of Indian economic system due to mass production of goods. Exposure to media is transforming the tastes and aspirations of people in India. Higher disposable incomes and easy financing options are contributing to the demand for consumer
Companies try to influence what consumers buy, when they buy, and where they buy. Obviously, a company’s long term success heavily depends on its ability to influence consumer behaviour. As the consumer is becoming a complex entity, consumer behaviour research is gaining more importance. Consumer behaviour and the impact of information sources on it are studied by various disciplines like psychology, sociology, economics etc. Before spending huge amount of money and effort in advertisement it is worth knowing whether it is going to have the expected results in the right direction.

Kerala is emerging as one of the biggest consumer markets in India. Many of the test marketing programs are being conducted in Kerala. Improved literacy rate, increase in the number of salaried class and improved standard of living are some characteristics of Kerala consumers. The traditional outlook is being replaced by newer trends and the role of media is significant. Kerala consumers are being enlightened about products and newer possibilities. Consumers are getting richer and intensity of brand competition is increasing. Study of consumer behaviour has got special relevance in this context.

Advertising often results in overspending and over consumption by creating artificial needs. Such over consumption is unsustainable in the long run. In the paper prepared by the Consumer Unity & Trust Society, CUTS (2005) on ‘Advertising and Consumption: The Unholy Nexus,’ the role of advertising in promoting unsustainable consumption trends is examined. The paper examines how the rich and the middle class are over consuming by getting influenced through aggressive advertising strategies and how the poor are getting badly affected. The paper also suggests the positive measures that advertising can
play in promoting sustainable consumption. The role of consumer organizations and the government policy makers are also discussed in the paper.

On account of crowding of advertisements and lack of technical and scientific Knowledge, consumers are unable to make right decision at the time of choosing a brand. Many companies are not able to understand consumer needs and hence not able to sell what the consumers want. In this context the study of consumer behaviour and the influence of media advertisements on urban consumer behaviour for consumer durables are worth learning. Among the different variables influencing consumers' buying behaviour, impact of advertising is one area which has received little attention in Indian marketing literature. Much less attention has been given to consumers’ responses to advertising. A study of this kind has not been undertaken either by business houses or by the academicians and hence the study is significant. The communication effectiveness of media advertisements on the decision making process of the consumers is the focus of the study.

Advertising Research has received good attention over the years in the marketing literature of advanced countries where full fledged industrialization happened much earlier than India. How the consumer forms a purchase decision, why he ultimately decides for or against a purchase and how the promotional tools works on the decision procedure, have always been the interest of researchers in the area of consumer behaviour studies in general and advertising in particular. Contrary to this very few studies have been conducted in Indian marketing context. The type of thinking which goes on in the minds of an Indian consumer while forming an important and complex purchase decision, the structural
elements and procedures of the decision making etc., have not received sufficient attention of the researchers in India. A systematic analytical approach to the consumers’ search for information at different stages of the decision process has not been developed yet.

In spite of its popularity as a promotion tool, the communication effectiveness of media advertisements on consumer behaviour have received little academic research attention. The impact of advertising communication on the sequential decision making process has to receive proper attention. Theoretical discussion and empirical support are lacking in this area. The current study is designed to reduce the gap in research by examining the buying behaviour of consumers and exploring the impact of advertisements on their decision process. It is useful to analyse this because of the universal assumption that ads influences purchase behaviour. The methods used in the investigation would be facilitating better marketing actions by an understanding of the important behavioural segments.

Earlier times copy testing received more reputation than the research on information content and overall persuasiveness of the ad. Advertising copy tests try to measure the immediate effect of advertising stimulus. Even when the consumer finds an advertisement very interesting and recallable, there may not be any outcome in terms of purchase decisions. Hence many advertisement researches based on mere advertisement copy tests fail to give desired result. Substantial sums of money are spent on evaluating individual advertisements as well as the entire campaign. But the test results are often inconsistent and confusing as the objective and technique are different each time in the case of copy testing conducted by forced exposure to ads. Hence to improve the
advertising research and to get meaningful decision making information, an integrated framework based on effectiveness of advertisements on actual consumer decisions is needed. In the present study a new framework for improving the understanding of influence of advertisements is developed by examining the data on consumer responses at different stages of the decision making process. A detailed study of the consumers decision process, exposure to media advertisements, attitude towards advertisements, their beliefs, perceptions etc., would reveal the extend of the influence which would be of immense help in future analysis. The above observations led the researcher to give special attention to the study of advertisement influence on the total consumer behaviour.

More specifically, the purpose of the reported study is to examine how a consumer forms a purchase decision and to explore the main and interactive communication effectiveness of mass media advertising on their pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase decision processes. The study is conducted in a single, natural, non-experimental setting and adopts retrospection method to examine the consumers’ decision process in buying and using household durables. A study of this kind will facilitate the understanding of the decision process of the consumers of durables. The consumer response profile compiled from the household purchase data will be a significant contribution made to the available research at large.

By understanding how the consumer forms a purchase decision and examining procedures of decision making, better promotion strategies can be developed and relevant product information can be offered to the consumer. The study is a
direction to advertisers to review their advertising budgets and strategies. Insight into the consumer behaviour and analysis of the behavioural responses to advertisements add substantial value to the optimisation of advertising effectiveness. An understanding of this form of mass communication, will enable individual consumers to evaluate advertising wisely, making them informed consumers. The findings of the investigation will also give important guide lines for the public policy makers interested in economic and social welfare. Knowledge of consumer behaviour can be employed to protect consumers and design programs to improve the quality of their lives.

Present study is designed to understand the consumer behaviour of the respondents by examining three phases of the buying decisions for house hold durables (the pre-purchase, purchase and post purchase phases.) Consumer responses to advertising is a complex phenomenon. The study also investigates the hypothetical link between communication effectiveness of advertisements and the behavioural responses of consumers at pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase phases of their decision process during the year ending 2007. The study will be conducted on individual consumers who may be heterogeneous with respect to exposure probability, purchase rate and advertising sensitivity.

Problem statement

In the light of the above explanation, the research problem is formulated and important variables to be studied are identified. The primary question motivating this research was whether careful planning and choosing, through consideration of alternatives and information seeking accompanied every major purchase of
durables. If the respondents were passing through identifiable decision path, an understanding of the sequential stages of the consumer decision process would be of great strategic importance. The second problem posed for investigation was whether the mass media advertisements had any influence on consumers’ behavioural responses at the pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase phases of consumer decision making process of the respondents. The relationship between important decision process variables is also explored. The following are the series of questions opened up for investigation:

1. What are the characteristics of consumer decision process of the urban consumers of house hold durables?

2. Is there any relationship between level of ad exposure and the consumption pattern of respondents?

3. What is the overall attitude of respondents towards media advertisements?

4. Does the communication effectiveness of ads measured in terms of ‘Ad recall’ and ‘Liking for the ad’ vary significantly among respondents of different ad exposure categories?

5. What is the extent of consumers’ perception of ad influence on their consumer decision process?

6. Is there any relationship between communication effectiveness of advertisements and the respondents’ behavioural responses to advertisements?
7. Do the ad exposure categories of respondents vary significantly in their behavioural responses to advertisements?

8. Do the socio economic categories of respondents vary significantly in their behavioural responses to advertisements?

9. Does the level of advertisement exposure vary significantly among the 'influenced' and 'uninfluenced' categories of respondents?

10. What are the managerial implications of the study?

**Objectives of the study**

Major objective of the study was to assess the impact of advertisements on the sequential stages of the consumer decision process. With this intention the investigation was undertaken to examine the consumer decision process of the respondents and also to ascertain the communication effectiveness of advertisement on the consumers' behavioural responses at the pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase stages of the consumer decision process. On the basis of the above broad objectives, the following sub-objectives were framed:

1. To examine the characteristics of the consumer decision process of urban consumers of branded household durables.

2. To study the respondents' level of exposure to media advertising.

3. To understand the relationship between ad exposure and consumption pattern.

4. To assess overall attitude of the respondents towards advertisements in general and to examine its relationship with their perception of ad influence.
5. To ascertain whether the communication effectiveness of the ads measured in terms of ‘Ad recall’ and ‘Ad Liking’ vary significantly among the different advertising exposure categories.

6. To examine whether the behavioural responses of the consumers at pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase phases of decision making are significantly related to the communication effectiveness of ads.

7. To examine how the different advertising exposure categories vary in their behavioural responses.

8. To examine how the different socio economic categories of respondents vary in their buying behavioural responses.

9. To assess the impact of media advertisements on consumer behaviour of the respondents.

10. To explain managerial implications of the study and offer suggestions to serve the consumers better.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were framed for the purpose of the study:

H1. There is significant relationship between the respondents’ level of media ad exposure and their consumption pattern.

H2. Media ad exposure categories of respondents vary significantly in their perception of ad influence.

H3. There is significant association between respondents’ overall attitude towards advertisements and their perception of ad influence.
H4. There is significant relationship between respondents’ recall of the advertisement and the liking for it.

H5. The communication effectiveness of advertisements vary significantly among respondents of different media ad exposure categories.

H6. Media ad exposure categories of respondents vary significantly in their behavioural responses to ads at the a) pre purchase, b) purchase and c) post purchase phases of the decision process.

H7. Socio economic classes of respondents vary significantly in their behavioural responses to advertisements at the a) pre purchase, b) purchase and c) post purchase phases of the decision process.

H8. Respondents’ perception of ad influence is determined by their responses to ads at the a) pre purchase, b) purchase and c) post purchase phases of decision process.

H9. There is significant association between consumers’ recall of the advertisement and their behavioural responses to ads at the a) pre purchase, b) purchase and c) post purchase phases of the decision process.

H10. There is significant association between consumers’ liking for the advertisement and their behavioural responses to ads at the a) pre purchase, b) purchase and c) post purchase phases of the decision process.

H11. ‘Ad influence’ categories of respondents vary significantly in their level of ad exposure.
H12. Mass media advertisements have significant influence on consumer behaviour of the respondents.

These hypotheses guided the research by ensuring that the variables measuring the level of exposure to advertisements, overall attitude towards advertisements in general, communication effectiveness of advertisements, consumers’ behavioural responses to advertisements at various stages of their decision process and their overall perception of influence of advertisements were included in the research design.

**Key variables studied**

The dependent and independent variables studied are presented below:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Advertisement recall</td>
<td>Liking for the advertisement</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Advertisement recall and Liking for the advertisement</td>
<td>a) Need recognition</td>
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<td>b) Information search</td>
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<td>c) Evaluation of alternatives</td>
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<td>d) Purchase</td>
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<td>e) Consumption</td>
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<td>f) Post-consumption evaluation and</td>
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<td>g) Disposal of the product</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Advertisement exposure</td>
<td>Consumption pattern</td>
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<td>4 Post-purchase satisfaction</td>
<td>Intention for repeat purchase</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Overall attitude towards advertisements</td>
<td>Consumers’ perception of advertisement influence</td>
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Methodology

The core area of the study is confined to the examination of the consumer decision making process of the respondents and assessment of the influence of ads on different stages of the decision process. The information collected for the purpose of this study is analysed quantitatively after classification, tabulation and processing.

An exploratory cum descriptive research design in the form of multi-stage stratified random sampling survey method was used to describe the influence of advertisements on consumers’ decision process. Primary data was collected by interview method using structured interview schedule. The secondary data was collected from national and international books in the area of study, published records, journals, magazines, and web sites. Information from published records like The National Council of Applied Economic Research Report, National Sample Survey Organisation Report, publications of the Economics and Statistics Department, Census data along with population registers of the Cochin Corporation was used for the study. Articles from journals like Harvard Business Review, Journal of Marketing, Journal of Advertising Research, Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Consumer Research, Indian Journal of Marketing etc. were collected and reviewed. Secondary data was used to develop the conceptual framework for the study and to identify the variables to be studied.

Survey design

The sample for the study is taken from the metropolitan area of Cochin. The Cochin city is one of the prime cities in Kerala and it is considered as the
industrial, business and tourism capital of the State. Cochin is the commercial hub of Kerala and has a cosmopolitan mixture where people from various places gather. Cochin city (Kochi) is in the district of Ernakulam and is the economic engine of the Indian state of Kerala. Cochin city is the only metropolitan area in Kerala State. According to Census of India 2001, the city is spread over 94.88 Sq. Km and has an estimated population of 6,50,000. The current metropolitan limits of Cochin include the main land of Ernakulam, Old Cochin, the suburbs of Edappally, Kalamassery and Kakkanad to the northeast, Tripunithura to the south east and a group of islands closely scattered in Vembanad Lake. Density of population is considerably high and higher consumer orientation is visible. The place is covered by print and electronic media, outdoor display etc. Cochin is centrally located, and many of the test marketing by multinationals are being done here. An urban location like Cochin is chosen for the study related to consumer durables as the users of established brands of the consumer durables may not be easily available in non-urban areas.

The universe of the study was constituted by the households in the metropolitan area of Cochin. The sampling units consisted of the heads of the households who had purchased at least one of the selected brands under study during the last twelve months prior to the survey. This was to ensure the regulation of time element for recalling the decision process. Multi stage stratified random sampling technique was used for selecting the respondents and the stratification was based on geographical divisions of Cochin Corporation. The survey was conducted during the six months ending December 2007. To identify the households, a sampling frame was prepared. The ‘List of buyers’ of the selected
brands, prepared from the sales vouchers of the dealers of household appliances constituted the sampling frame for the study. The dealers were identified with the help of BSNL Telephone Directory of Ernakulam district. The names in the ‘List of buyers’ were arranged on the basis of the administrative division of the zone to which the buyers belonged. This enabled the selection of the required sample for each division at random. 210 buyers were selected and contacted from a total of 1920 buyers, but only 200 completed schedules were finally considered for the study.

**Sampling Procedure**

The study employed the multistage stratified random sampling technique to select the required sample respondents. In Cochin Corporation there are seven zones and fifty divisions spread across these zones. In the first stage, one division from each zone (stratum) was selected using simple random sampling method. In the second stage the pre fixed number of households corresponding to each division were selected at random from the ‘List of buyers’. The number of households to be selected from each division was based on the ratio of the total population of individual zones. The census document of 2001 was used to fix the ratio of population of different zones. Thus the total sample of 200 households was divided in this ratio to get the sample to be drawn from each division of the zone. The multistage stratified random sampling technique provided a fairly representative cross section of the buyers for durables in the Cochin metropolitan area. The objective of using this method is to reduce the sampling error and to increase the precision. Variability between strata does not affect the standard
error of sampling. The rule-of thumb method suggested by Ramachandran (1993) was followed to fix the sample size as 200.

**Product category**

All the products chosen for the study belonged to the consumer durables category. Consumer non durables are excluded from the purview of the study as the consumers’ decision making process may not be evident here. The demand for non durables does not vary much with change in price or income. Product categories chosen are such that respondents of the different socio-economic classes and of both sexes can be expected to have had experience with them. Use of different product classes in the analysis is expected to increase the scope of generalization of findings. The product categories selected to investigate the media influence were major household appliances and automobiles. The list consisted of colour television, washing machine, computer, microwave oven, vacuum cleaner, refrigerator, music system, passenger car and two wheeler.

These product categories were selected for several reasons as under:

Home appliances and household automobiles are product categories for which consumers are likely to make deliberate buying plans and consequently experience a decision making process. This should improve the likelihood of the hypothesized relationships being measured if they exist. Home appliances and automobiles are considered important product purchases and consumers are likely to recall their purchase history. The information sources available for these products are many and varied.
Five established brands in each of the nine product categories were brought under investigation. The brands under each were selected on the basis of the discussions held with experts in the field of marketing. The brands were chosen along several criteria. The criterion for selection was that they be neither too well known nor too little known. Only established brands which existed in the market for more than two years were considered. It was ensured that only those brands which were promoted by means of advertising through different media are considered for the purpose of the study. New brands were excluded from the purview of the study. By the inclusion of multiple brands for each product category, the findings can be more generalized.

**Pilot study**

A pilot study was conducted to test and finalize the structured interview schedule. In order to test such factors as the nature, content and coverage of the interview schedule, and also to prepare the instructions to be given to the respondents, the pilot study was set with 20 respondents residing in the heart of the city. In depth interviews were conducted among five focus groups of four members each and later on personal interview was conducted before finalizing the schedule to be used for collection primary data through the consumer survey. This detailed interview schedule prepared on the basis of the pilot study, was used in the descriptive phase of research.

**Interview schedule**

The schedule had three main sections and included questions related to demographic variables as well as measures of dependent and independent
variables. It contained questions concerning the purchase decision process, information search behaviour, brand awareness, attitude towards advertisements, consumption pattern, their post consumption satisfaction and a self reported description of their perception of impact of advertisements. Some filler questions were included to get most reliable responses. Both open ended and close ended questions were used to elicit responses. Included dichotomous and multiple choice questions. The interview schedule consisted primarily of groups of agree-disagree statements related to the advertising influence on the consumers’ decision making process. The correctness of the ad message recalled by the respondents was checked with the help of the dealers in the respective product category.

**Variables measured**

The key variables chosen for this study are the communication effectiveness of advertisements and the behavioural responses of the respondents at different stages of their decision making process. The independent variable, ‘communication effectiveness’ was studied by using ‘recall’ of different elements of the advertisement and ‘liking for the ad.’ The dependent variables were seven behavioural responses i.e., need recognition, pre-purchase information search, evaluation of brand alternatives, purchase decision, consumption pattern, post-consumption evaluation and disposal or replacement of the product. These seven response variables or the outcome variables are the operational statements of the seven stages of consumer decision process. Other variables studied included the intensity of media exposure to ads, the overall attitude of the consumers towards the advertisements, overall post consumption satisfaction, intention for
repeat purchase and consumers’ perception of media ad influence. Demographic variables like household income, gender and socio-economic status of the respondents, were also used for analysis.

**Scales for the measurement of variables**

All the key variables were measured primarily by using retrospective method, requiring each respondent to recall how they felt about the advertisement when exposed to it, what all decisions were made by them in connection with purchase and consumption, right from need recognition to disposal of the product. Empirical studies reveal that no single measure in isolation can measure the effectiveness of advertisements on consumer behaviour. Hence scales had to be developed to investigate the relationship between variables. Self-administered instruments, similar to Likert Scale and adjective check lists, which are commonly applied in earlier studies of this nature, are used in the present study. Five-point Likert Scale was used widely in this study for measurement of the opinion of the test respondents on general attitude towards advertisements, their perception of ad influence and their behavioural responses at different stages of the decision process. Respondents were requested to indicate their agreement/disagreement with each statement using a five-point disagree/agree scale. The important variables under study and the scales of measurement of each are explained as follows:

*Communication effectiveness of advertisement*

The communication effectiveness of the advertisement for the brand purchased by the respondent is the key independent variable of the study. It was measured
with the help of three common measures used in earlier studies of this nature i.e.,
a) ‘advertisement Recall,’ b) ‘Liking for the Advertisement’ and c) ‘Attitude
towards the advertisement’. As the results of analysis of ‘Attitude towards Ad’
highly resembled with that of ‘Ad Liking’ measure it was excluded in the later
stages of analysis.

a) Advertisement recall

The ‘Ad recall’ was measured as a categorical variable and the number of
elements of the content of the ad that could be recalled was considered as the
recall measure. Respondents who claimed to recall any of the advertisements for
the product purchased by them, were asked open ended questions regarding the
message/theme, caption/slogan, contents, illustration/characters, story etc. The
score values ranged from one to five, one being low recall and five being the
highest score for recall of five or more elements of the ad. The proved ad recall
was considered as very low, low, medium, high and very high degrees of
attention getting power and memorizing the advertisements.

The recall measure was taken to ensure whether the message or idea in the
advertisement had been communicated and registered in the minds of the
consumer. The elements of the advertisement recalled by the respondents were
cross checked with experts in the field, for correctness. These measures ensured
that all the respondents were exposed to advertisements. Another interesting
feature of the use of the recall measure is that it permits a better understanding of
how well the ad message reached the consumers.
b) Liking for the advertisement

‘Liking for the ad’ or ‘Ad liking’ was used as the second measure of the ad communication effectiveness. Liking for the ad is a reflection of both the attitude of the respondent towards the ad and the comprehension of the ad message by the respondents. Liking for the ad is widely used as a measure of advertising effectiveness among the researchers (Walker and Dubitsky, 1994). The responses were collected on a five point Likert type scale ranging from ‘I disliked it very much’ to ‘I liked it very much.’ In order to improve the validity of the liking measure, the respondents were also asked to mark their responses for the reasons for liking the advertisement. The reasons for liking the ad are the important affective reactions to advertisements usually studied in the contexts of advertisement research. The list of reasons for liking the ad included adjectives like ‘attractive,’ ‘imaginative and entertaining,’ ‘informative,’ ‘interesting,’ ‘meaningful,’ and ‘relevant and believable.’ All these variables were measured on five point Likert Scale.

c) Attitude towards advertisements

No universal operational definition of this construct has emerged so far, though the techniques typically used to assess individuals’ attitudes often are quite similar (McCann and Miehling 1993). Numerous studies have used more than one semantic-differential pair of items to measure ‘Attitude towards the ad.’ Typical end points used in these researches include “like-dislike,” “favorable-unfavorable,” “appealing-unappealing,” “enjoyable-un-enjoyable,” “entertaining-unentertaining,” “interesting-uninteresting,” and “pleasant-unpleasant.” Some authors have suggested that ‘Liking for the Ad’ is so closely associated to
‘Attitude’ measure and hence both are more or less the same. For the purpose of the present study this variable is studied on a five point Likert type scale ranging from ‘Very much unfavourable’=1 to ‘Very much favourable’=5

**Behavioural Responses to the advertisements**

Behavioural responses to advertisements are the key outcome variables or dependent variables of the study. The behavioural responses to advertisements are the advertising outcomes at the pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase phases of the consumer decision process as explained in the CDP model of consumer behaviour by Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2001). It is hypothesized in the present study that advertisements might influence one or more of the consumer responses in the decision making process: need arousal, information search, evaluation of alternative brands, purchase, consumption, post-consumption evaluation and disposal of the product. Measures of these dependent variables were done by constructing explanatory statements rated on five-point Likert Scale with ‘Strongly disagree-strongly agree’ statements. Each explanatory statement expressed consumers’ opinion of the influence of ads on the decision process variables.

**Intensity of advertisement exposure**

The intensity of ad exposure was ascertained at three levels, i.e., ‘low exposure’, ‘medium exposure’ and ‘high exposure’. For this purpose the responses of the subjects on the intensity of media exposure to advertisements was collected on five point Likert Scale ranging from ‘Very unfavourable’=1 to “Very much favourable= 5.” A score of less than three was considered as ‘low exposure’,
score of three was considered as ‘medium exposure’ and above three was considered as ‘high exposure’ to media advertisements.

**Overall attitude towards advertisements**

Overall attitude towards advertisements measured the general attitude of the respondents towards advertisements. The overall attitude towards the ads was measured on a five point Likert type rating scale similar to the scales used in measuring recall and liking. The respondents were asked to mark their response on five point ‘Very much unfavourable -very much favourable’ scale. The overall attitude towards the ads are developed by certain beliefs and opinions about advertisements in general. Hence the respondents’ overall attitude was further analyzed by measuring the beliefs or opinion they hold about the beneficial as well as the offensive aspects of the advertisements. These were collected using fourteen statements rated on five point Likert ‘Strongly disagree- Strongly agree’ scales.

**Consumers’ Perception of advertisement influence**

The ‘perception of ad influence’ referred to the respondents’ overall opinion of the influence of the advertisement on their consumer behaviour. Advertisement for the brand selected for investigation was considered for the purpose. The respondents’ perception of ad influence was measured on Likert type five point Scale ranging from ‘Not at all influenced’ to ‘Very much influenced.’ At the next level the perception score obtained was compared with the elements of Consumer Response Profile of the respondents to check the reliability of the
measure. The Consumer Response index was prepared from the consumers’ behavioural responses to ads at different stages of the decision making process.

On the basis of the ‘perception of ad influence scale’ the respondents were grouped into three categories namely, ‘The influenced,’ ‘Not influenced,’ and ‘Undecided.’ All the three groups were further examined in the light of the important decision process variables studied.

**Post-consumption satisfaction**

The post-consumption satisfaction of the respondents was measured with the help of ‘overall satisfaction’ scale. The overall satisfaction of the consumers were measured on Likert type five point scale ranging from ‘Extremely dissatisfied’ to ‘Extremely satisfied.’

A composite measure known as the ‘Satisfaction Index’ was prepared on the same lines as that of ‘Secure Customer Index’ as explained by Malhothra (2004). The ‘Satisfaction Index’ was prepared by finding the average of three measures of ‘Overall satisfaction,’ ‘Willingness to recommend the brand’ and ‘Intention for repeat purchase’ all of which were measured on five -point Likert type scales. The maximum average score would be five, the minimum score being one. The secured customers are those who are “Very much satisfied,” “Definitely would recommend the brand,” and “Definitely would buy the same brand again.”

**Socio-economic classification of the sample**

In order to analyse the sample with respect to the different socio-economic status of the respondents, the entire sample was grouped into three socio-
economic classes i.e., Lower class, Middle class and Upper class. The basis of categorization or the factors of socio-economic differences were monthly household income, education, occupation and the consumption pattern of the respondents.

**Statistical tools used**

Non parametric statistics were used to test the relationship between the variables. Statistical tools like averages, percentage, Chi-square test, Spearman’s Rank Correlation Coefficient, Kruskal Wallis one - way analysis of variance, Kendall’s Tau and Regression analysis were used to analyze the sample. The details are given as follows:

1. Chi-square tests of independence was used to find whether there is any significant relationship between demographic variables.

2. Spearman’s Rank Correlation coefficient was used to find the association between:
   a. Key variables viz., communication effectiveness of advertisements and behavioural responses to ads at different stages of the consumer decision process.
   b. Overall attitude towards ad and the respondents’ perception of ad influence
   c. Post-purchase satisfaction and Intention for repeat buying and
   d. Liking for the ad and reasons for liking.
3. Kruskal Wallis one-way analysis of variance was used to ascertain the variations in the attitude towards ad, perceptions, behavioural responses and ad influence of different categories of respondents.

4. Kendall’s tau-b was used to ascertain the significance of correlation between each item of purchase criteria and important source of information.

5. Regression analysis was used to find whether the consumption pattern is a function of monthly house hold income of the respondent. It was also used to find the functional relationship between perception of ad influence and behavioural responses to ads.

**Reliability and Validity**

Different measures were taken to ensure validity of the testing system. The study is based on many different product categories and multiple brands for each category. Responses of the consumers to multiple numbers of ads were considered for the study. These measures were used so that the findings could be generalized.

The study does not include new product categories. Home appliances and automobiles commonly used by consumers are brought under the purview of the study.

Heads of households were the subjects of the study as they are the most appropriate group to ensure validity of the consumer response scale for the product group selected.
Data collection procedure

The data collection procedure utilized for the study was based on self-reporting by consumers. The reporting was retrospective in nature, trying to understand what thoughts and feelings people naturally had when they started thinking about a purchase and also when they saw related advertisements. The subjects were asked to reproduce as closely as possible, how they actually made their decision plans. They were also asked to indicate the extent to which the advertisement influenced their buying decision process. The communication effectiveness of advertisements was assessed by the 'Ad Recall' and the 'Ad liking' measures. The elements of the advertisements recalled by them were checked with the panel of experts for correction. They were asked to mark their agreement or disagreement with a series of statements indicating their responses to advertisements for the brand purchased. This method of tracking consumer decision process was selected over experimental design or observation because the researcher felt that it would present a more realistic portrayal of consumer thoughts and feelings.

Data for the study were collected from Cochin Metropolitan Area. 200 heads of households comprised the sample which provided information on media influence on consumer behaviour. Only those respondents who purchased at least one of the nine household durables during the twelve months prior to the survey were included in the sample. This was to ensure that the respondents would be able to recall the elements of the buying decision process. From the exhaustive list of dealers of household durables and automobiles in the metropolitan area, the sample frame was drawn by random selection. The dealers in the consumer durables properly represented each zone in the metropolitan area. Test
Instruments consisted of the Interview-schedule. All the variables were measured on personal interview with the respondents. Participation of the respondents was ensured by making telephone calls to them.

Data analysis

The primary data was collected from 200 respondents of the Cochin metropolitan area using interview schedules. The data was coded, tabulated and classified for computerized analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analysis. Percentages were used to report the results and nonparametric tests of statistical significance were used for hypothesis testing. Chi-Square, Spearman’s Rank Correlation Coefficient, Kruskal Wallis One Way Analysis of Variance, Kendall’s Tau-b, and Regression analysis were used to measure the association between variables under study. The parametric measures were not used as these usually require additional assumptions, such as normal distribution of the data, which may not be valid in the present study. The hypothesis formulated were tested at five percent level of significance. The results were discussed in the light of practical and theoretical insights available on the variables under study.

Methodological assumptions

The following assumptions were made to overcome the methodological limitations:

1. It is assumed that all respondents are having same exposure to intervening external variables other than advertising.

2. As there is no previously reported reliability and validity values for all the measures, the face validity offered by experts is assumed to be valid.
The data was analysed to reveal the communication effectiveness of advertisements on the consumer decision making process. ‘Advertisement recall’ and ‘liking for the ad’ were key independent variables measuring the communication effectiveness of ads. The dependent variables were the respondents’ responses to ads at different stages of the decision making process. The study also analysed explanatory variables like ‘Intensity of ad exposure,’ ‘overall attitude of the respondents towards the advertisements’ in general and the consumers’ ‘Perception of ad influence.’ The results of the analysis are presented in the chapters five and six.

**Constraints of the study**

Even though the study is comprehensive, it suffers from the following limitations:

1. The retrospective method used to get the report of the respondents could have led them to provide an edited version of their thoughts and beliefs; but it is also true that a forced exposure of advertisements in a controlled lab testing situation can never completely provide natural and accurate responses from the consumers.

2. The study focused on behavioral and intermediate effects of advertising. Hence aspects pertaining to general economic and social effects of advertising were excluded.

3. The study was conducted on the ‘purchasers’ of the selected brands as it would be easier for them to remember and associate recent experience with recent perception. The brands selected for the study were not based on random sampling.
4. An investigation of the sequence of stages of consumer decision making necessarily involves longitudinal study design covering different time periods. The impact of advertisement before and after the advertisement stimuli could have given more accurate results. If the data could be collected across two time periods the conclusion would have been stronger.

5. Several characteristics of the individual might explain the consumer decision process. Cultural background, individual differences in personality, values, lifestyles etc. may affect the variables under study. But analysis of these variables was not brought under the purview of the study.

6. This study focused on the opinion of the respondents regarding the impact of media Advertisements. It was conducted in a non-experimental setting without manipulating (handling) the preceding stimulus conditions like advertisement exposures, or product experience.

7. The present study covering behavioral responses to advertisements, attitude towards advertisements and the consumer’s perception of ad influence is highly behavioural in nature and hence accurate analysis is impossible.

**Scheme of Chapterization**

*Chapter 1* is *Introduction* in which the problem of the present study is introduced. The need and significance of the study are highlighted. The objectives of the study, the hypotheses to be proved and the methodology are given. In methodology section the methods used in carrying out the study is explained. This section covers the survey design, sampling design, data
collection procedure, measurement of variables, scales of measurement, tools of analysis etc.

Chapter II is Review of Literature and this section explains the theoretical and empirical studies reviewed by the researcher. Theoretical models related to communication effectiveness of advertisements and consumer behaviour are included in this section.

Chapter III explains the Concept of Advertising Effectiveness. Based on the theories and models, a conceptual framework for the study is developed by integrating the communication effectiveness of advertisements and the consumer responses to ads at different stages of consumer decision making processes.

Chapter IV presents the Structure of Indian Consumer Market. The secondary data related to the class of Indian consumers, their consumption pattern for durables and income distribution pattern are included in this Chapter.

Chapter V reflects the Analysis Of The Consumer Decision Process For Branded Durables. It contains the results of analysis of primary data on consumer decision making process of the respondents.

Chapter VI represents ‘Influence of Advertisements on Consumer Behaviour’. It contains the presentation of results of analysis of primary data with respect to level of ad exposure, communication effectiveness of ad, responses to ad and the influence of advertisements on consumer behaviour. The results obtained are explained in relation with the objectives of the study and the empirical review of the variables.
Chapter VII presents the Summary of Findings, Conclusion & Recommendations. In this section the major methods used in the study are reviewed, the results of the study are summarized, conclusions are forwarded and the implications and suggestions given on the basis of the results.

Bibliography


