

Examining Postgraduate University Journalism And Communication Students' and Advertising Agency Employees' Attitudes About Advertising Discourses

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Abstract

People gain from advertising by receiving information about the availability, characteristics, and costs of particular items and services. However, in Ethiopia, it is not clear whether people have a positive or negative attitude about advertising. To ascertain the attitudes toward advertisement discourse, the study attempts to examine from the perspective of university students and some media and advertising agency employees. The total number of participants of this study was 64 and they were journalism and communication postgraduate students from three selected universities and a few advertising agency workers in Ethiopia. In the selection of the participants of the study, both purposeful and convenience sampling methods were used. Data were gathered using closed and open-ended questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, i.e. means and standard deviations and thematic analyses respectively. The analysis of quantitative data shows that the majority of participants have an unfavorable attitude toward advertising discourse, for they agree with the majority of statements ($M=3.695$). On the other hand, the qualitative data reveal the reasons for disliking and liking advertising discourses that may contribute to the development of positive or negative attitudes respectively. From the two sets of data analyses, it is possible to conclude that the majority of participants have negative attitudes about advertising because of their belief that it distorts reality and deceives people.

Keywords: Advertising, discourse, attitudes towards advertising, customers

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Language is an indispensable tool for communication, which is a prerequisite for development. Effective communication that helps to implement every development activity properly. As confirmed by Nyasulu (2013, p.1) “language use facilitates socio-economic development, unity and attainment of education.”

Sustainable social development is achieved through effective communication. Effective communication is also enhanced by skillful communicators like public relations professionals whose roles are not well known in different sectors of Ethiopia. However, they have the potential

to create positive relationships between organizations and their public. In other words, public relations practitioners play vital roles in organizations. For instance, they are organizational planners, information disseminators, members of the decision-making body, researchers, counselors and advertisers (Gilaninia, Taleghani & Mohammadi, 2013). However, in many organizations and offices in Ethiopia, public relations professionals are not observed participating in advertising the organization and office products or services to sell them effectively.

In Ethiopia, the discipline of advertising is still in its infancy and is not well-known, researched, or used on a large scale (Henok, & Yemane, 2012). Globally, however, advertising is considered as one of the most fascinating fields of study and many researchers are attracted to it (Chand & Chaudhary, 2012). However, based on the knowledge of the present researchers, studies on advertisement discourses are very scarce in Ethiopia. Therefore, this study is initiated to fill the literature gap by exploring the advertising attitudes of postgraduate students and selected media and advertising agency workers.

As explained by El-daly (2011, p.25) advertising is a term that is derived from the medieval Latin verb “advertere” which is equivalent to “to direct one's attention to”. Based on this conception El-daly defines it as “... any type or form of public announcement intended to direct people's attention to the availability, qualities, and/or cost of specific commodities or services”

Advertisement discourse can be defined as a unit of meaningful spoken or written language used to influence people to take action on buying a product or service. In other words, an advertisement discourse is an approach to publicize the availability of goods or services.

Announcing the promotion of particular products or services creates people's familiarity with the products or brands or forms a positive or negative attitude toward those particular products. This familiarity with products may breed the credibility of the products (Wills, 2011); whenever people want those products or recommend those products to others, the business will continue to flourish and both the owners and customers will benefit from the advertisement services.

Although advertising discourse has the potential to benefit organizations and customers, many people may not have positive attitudes toward advertising discourses. For example, many people comment that product and service advertisements are exaggerated and unbalanced with the quality of actual products and services. This view seems to have a high prevalence in the society in Ethiopia. If people have negative attitudes towards advertising, its effectiveness and efficiency as a communication tool could be impeded (Wright, 1986, as cited in Beard, 2003). However, we are in the era of advertisement where we can encounter many advertisements in our day-to-day life since many company products and services are produced in bulk, and they need marketing tools. Thus, attitude towards advertisement discourses needs proper evaluation through research.

Advertising has an immense role to play in the modern world. For instance, the following quote highlights the role of advertising.

Everywhere one turns, one is bound to find some ad message designed to persuade people to buy a product. All this leads to the inescapable conclusion that advertising has developed, since the first decades of the 20th century, into a privileged form of social discourse that has unparalleled rhetorical force. (El-daly, 2011, p.26)

El-day emphasizes that advertisement has become a tradition in the modern world and people cannot avoid it by will. Rather it has become a day-to-day phenomenon. In other words, advertising is recognized as one of the most distinguished and alluring social media platforms that people in society are exposed to (El-daly, 2011)

Therefore, it is useful to assess customers' attitudes about advertising, which is a recurring research topic that helps researchers reveal people's shared values, beliefs, views and biases about certain products or services. Since advertising is a means to direct people's attention to a particular object or service, usually, people talk about the advertisement of specific objects or services in certain contexts in which they exchange information and make shared evaluations of an object or service. Thus advertising discourse influences people's decision either to purchase the object or the service or to develop negative attitudes about that object or service.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Advertising is an important social phenomenon that has been a common experience of many companies, organizations and/or offices and the public. Nowadays people encounter advertising in their daily to day activities in different media, such advertisements on television, print media, periodicals, billboards signs and electronic media. Using these, advertisers convey advertising messages in the form of texts, visuals, or semiotics (Cook, 20001).

Based on advertising messages, people seem to have different attitudes and understandings. For instance, some are seen condemning and distrusting advertising reasoning that it gives an inaccurate impression of the goods; some are found appreciating information obtained through advertising. Some do not give due attention to advertising. Some have positive attitudes and some have negative attitudes. For instance, earlier research on the opinions of college students on advertisement have indicated that they had negative attitudes toward advertisements (Haller, 1974; Larkin, 1977; Taylor, 1982, as cited in de Run, Ting, Jee, & Lau, 2013). On the other hand, the study conducted by Roberts and Manolis(2000) showed that it was discovered that college students had positive opinions on marketing and advertising. There is also an increased interest in surveying attitudes towards advertising globally. As explained by Salam et al., (2018) prior studies conducted have disclosed differences "both in the attitudes toward advertising and the antecedent factors explaining these attitudes. These differences necessitate that every market and consumer segment should be researched discretely, rather than generalizing results of a particular market to others." (p.85) Studying customers' attitudes towards advertising also helps managers to understand consumers better which in turn can lead to more effective advertising (Mehta, 2000).

Many people complain about advertising image problems that it does not tell the truth about goods or services rather it exaggerates or distorts information on a particular product or service. This may have a severe image problem on the development of the industry that produces the product (Crawford, 2006). Sometimes because of the bad image a factory has, people may stop buying goods from that industry and gradually it becomes bankrupt and stops flourishing. Asking people to know about their attitudes towards advertising discourses, can contribute to revealing their perspectives on products and services (El-day, 2011).

The other problem of advertising, as the review made by Wang and his associates (2002, p.1143) indicates that "Literature in advertising and information systems suggests that advertising in both traditional media and the Internet is either easily ignored by the audience or is perceived with little

value.” This gap is also observed in the Ethiopian context and necessitates an investigation to be undertaken to address the problem.

In relation to the values of advertising discourse, different researchers argue in different ways. Jhally (1998), for instance, argues that advertisement encourages conspicuous consumption which causes environmental damage. Other researchers, such as Sells and Gozalez (2002, cited in El-day, 2011) argue that advertising is believed to be irrational and it is expected to balance between emotional and rational persuasion. In other words, “An advertisement does not have to be factually informative but it cannot be factually misleading.”(as cited in El-day,2011, p.27).

Indeed, advertising appeals to people, if it is skillfully crafted and amusing and may affect people’s choice of a particular product. Thus, the discourse of truth in advertising should be assessed before it is publicized. It should present the true pictures of the product that attract the attention of customers and achieve its goal of eliciting the desired response of customers.

The other image problem of advertisements which is commonly mentioned is that some people comment that organizations that produce quality products do not announce that much. Rather, organizations with low products and services announce regularly. Because of this image, some people do not pay attention to advertisements. However, in this era, advertising cannot be ignored as it has been flourishing in this materialistic world, so we need to identify the attitudes of people towards advertising.

Therefore, it is good to assess some groups of people’s opinions or perceptions about advertising. According to earlier research, university students' attitudes about advertising were generally negative (Haller, 1974; Larkin, 1977; Taylor, 1982, as cited in DeAla, Dolores, & Reboira, 2019). On the hand, the study conducted by Tanyıldızı and Yolcu (2019, as cited in Şenkal, 2023) indicated that associate degree students were found to have positive attitudes towards advertising. In the recent study conducted, it was found that undergraduate students find advertisements less informative and credible compared to associate and graduate students because graduate students assess more thoroughly because of their degree of experience(Senka 2023). In addition to these conflicting findings, studies conducted on university students’ views about advertising attitudes in Ethiopia are scarce. Therefore, the present study aims to identify postgraduate students' and advertising agency workers’ attitudes toward advertisement discourses.

1.3. Research question

What are the attitudes of the participants towards advertisement discourses?

What are the reasons for liking or disliking advertisements?

1.4. Significance of the Study

The study's findings are believed to be significant to advertisement discourse writers (professionals and communicators), the community and various organizations and companies that supply products and services. For instance, the findings of the study will increase the awareness of advertisers about the influence of attitudes toward advertisement discourses. The antecedent factors of attitude under investigation in this study show that some or most of them may create favorable attitudes toward the advertisement, and lead customers to pay attention to the advertisement and to take action. Studying customers’ attitudes towards advertising also helps

managers to understand consumers better which in turn can result in more successful marketing campaigns (Mehta, 2000)

The findings of this study have a significant contribution to increasing public awareness about advertising. As a tool of communication, advertising enables people to know about new services and products that may help them overcome problems or make life easier and enjoyable. It is through research that we can build public trust in advertising. Studying advertising can also help to identify persuasion techniques used by advertisers. These have valuable contributions to promote effective communication in a free market economy. In general, the findings of the present study may help to improve market communication.

2. Literature review

2.1 Advertisment functions and attitudes

Advertisment is defined as “a tool of marketing communication to transmit the message through particular media” (Khan et al., 2017), p.5). Another definition of advertising is given by Arens (2002, p.22) as “a form of structured and impersonal communication, composed from information, usually persuasive in nature, regarding the products, in the broad sense, paid by an identifiable sponsor and transmitted through various media” Arens’ definition is more comprehensive, for it describes the nature of advertisement as an impersonal, persuasive, sponsored commercial tool of communication.

Advertising is an indispensable tool of communication for those companies engaged in the production of goods and services for marketing. Emphasizing the significance of advertising, Nichifor (2014, p.180) states, “In today's society, advertising has evolved into a complex system of communication, important for both organizations and the general public. The ability to deliver messages carefully prepared to its targets gave over time to advertising a major role in marketing programs of most organizations.”

Advertising which is an important social phenomenon has many values for both companies and the public. It entertains people and stimulates growth in the economy (Coulter, Zaltman & Coulter, 2001). It is a tool of communication that enables people to know about new services and products that may help them overcome problems or make life easier and more enjoyable. It increases competition among companies and leads to improved products for the general public.

Nowadays people encounter advertising in their daily to day activities in different media, such as advertisements on television, print media, periodicals, billboards, signs and electronic media. Using these, advertisers convey advertising messages in the form of texts, visuals, or semiotics. Based on advertising messages, people seem to have different attitudes and understandings. For instance, some are seen condemning and distrusting advertising reasoning that it gives an inaccurate impression of the goods; some are found appreciating information obtained through advertising. Therefore, how people construct different meanings and attitudes should be studied.

Attitude is an inference made on the basis of an assessment or judgment people make about something (Gardner, 1985). Similarly, Ajzan (1988) defines attitude as a judgment made on an object, person, or event. Advertising attitude can be formed by observation, practice, or interaction. For instance, after being exposed to advertising messages, people may exchange information about

products or services among themselves and develop certain feelings and thoughts that may lead them to purchase or reject the products or services. These aspects of attitudes are in line with the three elements that Wenden (1991) identified as constituting attitudes: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral.

Wenden (1991) further clarifies the cognitive component of an attitude consisting of the beliefs and ideas or thoughts that people have about the object. She also elaborates on the affective component as the feelings and sentiments people hold about a thing; they express their “likes” or “dislikes” of an object. Finally, the behavior element is elaborated as actions or behavioral intentions people demonstrate towards the object.

Business-wise, advertising is any activity that aims to persuade consumers to purchase, rent, subscribe, or, more often than not, just pay attention to a particular good or service (Jaworska, 2020). Thus, exploring people’s attitudes towards advertising discourses enables researchers to identify participants’ perspectives which may vary from individual to individual. For instance, some people do not give due attention to advertising. Some have positive attitudes and some have negative attitudes. For instance, prior research on college students’ views on advertisements has revealed that they had unfavorable opinions of them (Haller, 1974; Larkin, 1977; Taylor, 1982, as cited in de Run, Ting, Jee, & Lau, 2013). On the other hand, the study conducted by Roberts & Manolis, (2000) showed that positive opinions regarding marketing and advertising were discovered among college students. These conflicting findings about college students’ attitudes require further investigation. There is also an increased interest in surveying attitudes towards advertising globally. As explained by Salam et al., (2018) prior studies conducted have disclosed differences “both in the attitudes toward advertising and the antecedent factors explaining these attitudes. These differences necessitate that every market and consumer segment should be researched discretely, rather than generalizing results of a particular market to others.” (p.85) Studying customers’ attitudes towards advertising also helps managers to understand consumers better which in turn can result in more successful advertising (Mehta, 2000). In Ethiopia studies conducted on university students’ views about advertising are limited; on the other hand, university post graduate students may have significant purchasing power of certain products.

Therefore, it is useful to know about the views of customers about advertisements, for purchasing behavior and intentions are mainly affected by attitude (Farley, *et al.*, 1981; Oliver & Bearden, 1985). This is because attitude is believed to be the antecedent for advertising behavior. This function is revealed in the definition of attitude given by Fishbein & Ajzen, (1975), “a person’s general feeling of favorableness or unfavorableness toward some stimulus object” (p.216). In this case, attitudes tend to have an evaluative and affective component. In fact, as explained above, attitude has three essential elements: a cognitive (thought), an affective (feeling) and a behavioral (action) element. The process of attitude formation and change takes place through persuasion. The report of the previous studies revealed that with time, attitudes are likely to shift. Even, there was “a change from positive evaluations of advertising to increasingly negative ad attitudes at later stages” (e.g. Tsang, Ho, & Liang, 2004, as cited in Harms, Bijmolt & Hoekstra, 2019, p.7)

Advertising discourse is believed to play “a central role in shaping and constructing our attitudes, values and notions towards lifestyle, choices, public roles and the decision between the right and the wrong” (Shaikh, Bughio, & Kadri, 2015, p.109). Furthermore, advertisements have the power

to inform, convince, and exert influence and may bring behavioral and attitude changes (Cook, 2001). Similarly, the result of the studies conducted by Salam, Muhamad & Leong, (2018) showed that “Attitudes toward advertising had a significant positive influence on advertising behavior” (p.93)

2.2 Advertising discourse

Advertising provides information that may invite the community to talk, discuss, and exchange information. This refers to discourse, which generally involves any communicative exchange or discussion on advertising. Discourse itself is the term that refers to a particular form of social practice (Fairclough, 1989) and it is viewed as a spoken or written text, which is in use to transmit meanings that are sociopolitically orientated (Gee, 2005, as cited in Vahid & Esmaeli, 2012).

Nowadays advertising is considered a powerful institution of socialization (Kilbourne, 1999).

Kettemann, (2013) elaborates on discourse as a means to get truth saying that “A regime of truth is constructed through discourse. We are embedded in discourse. We read newspapers, we listen to the radio, we watch TV, we talk to people, and everything we get is discourse about something. ... We are constructing reality through discourse.” (p.57) When we construct reality through discourse, its interpretation and representation are formed in our minds. If that interpretation and representation of something is accepted by the society, it becomes a reality. In fact, “There are only different truths at different times. If we here in our society agree on something, then this is true for us here and now. If we do not agree, it is not true. There is no truth independent of our current interpretations which in turn depend on our culture” (p.54). Language is the means to transmit socially- negotiated reality to people in a certain society. After all language is a “social act”, in which people create meanings by discussing discourses. (Halliday, 1994).

The main objective of advertising discourse is to persuade people to buy goods produced by the factories or to agree with the idea. To do this, advertising makes use of “... fiction, wordplay, compressed, story-telling, stylized acting, photography, cartoons, runs and rhythms in ways which are often memorable, enjoyable and amusing.” (Cook, 2001, p. 8) The words and the details of advertising are easily captured by people’s minds and frequently recalled with greater zeal and humor. There are also other purposes of advertising discourse what Cook (2001) calls non-product advertising which intends to give warning, inform, or encourage people towards important issues. Advertising discourse is addressed to the public and it is open to everyone for interaction (O’keeffe, 2011). During the analysis of advertising discourse, the analysis primarily focuses on language. However, it also has to do with “the context of communication: who is communicating with whom and why; in what kind of society and situation; through what medium; how different types and acts of communication evolved; and their relationship to each other” (p.8). If other modes of communication such as music (sound) and pictures (visual) along with language (spoken and written) are used, they are also included in the analysis. In fact, in analyzing the language used in advertising, the context of communication should be taken into consideration, for communication, acts require the involvement of participants, situations, paralanguage and substance (Cook, 2001).

Previous research has shown that persuasive knowledge influences determining the effectiveness of advertising (Boerman et al., 2012; Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Kirmani & Zhu, 2007, as cited in Harms, Bijmolt & Hoekstra, 2019). The effectiveness of advertising is determined by its power to persuade people to buy certain products or to have a high-level consumption-oriented

population. To have a high-level consumption-oriented population is to make the advertising compatible with the values of consumers.

2.3. Framework of the study

There are several theories and models used in advertising studies and this shows the dynamic nature of advertisement. To have a theoretical framework for the present study, we select theories relevant to advertising discourse. First, for studying people's perceptions of advertising, we follow Pollay and Mittal's (1993) framework.

Based on Pollay and Mittal's (1993) framework, the study examines people's perceptions from three perspectives: advertising effects on the economy, (2) advertising values for individuals, and (3) advertising effects on society. The economic advantages of advertising are revealed in different ways. Research has shown that advertising is an essential component of economic development, for it encourages the production of quality goods and promotes competition (Andrews, 1989; Muehling, 1987). On the other hand, if people develop a distrust of advertising, they will not be encouraged to buy goods which reduces marketplace efficiency. Advertising has value for individuals. For instance, advertising will provide people with information about products, social roles, and lifestyle pictures. It also entertains individuals; people get pleasure out of it (Coulter & Coulter, 2001). Societal effects of advertising are revealed in the development of materialistic views, disregarding social values and presenting incredible information about products. It influences people to make unnecessary purchases. Furthermore, by promoting undesired actions and perpetuating stereotypes, it distorts society's ideals (Wills & Ryans, 1982; Pollay & Mittal, 1993). For instance, alcohol advertisements may lead to excessive alcohol consumption that results in health problems or serious social harm.

The framework of Pollay and Mittal (1993) has been effectively implemented by many researchers who studied advertising attitudes (Salam et al., 2016).

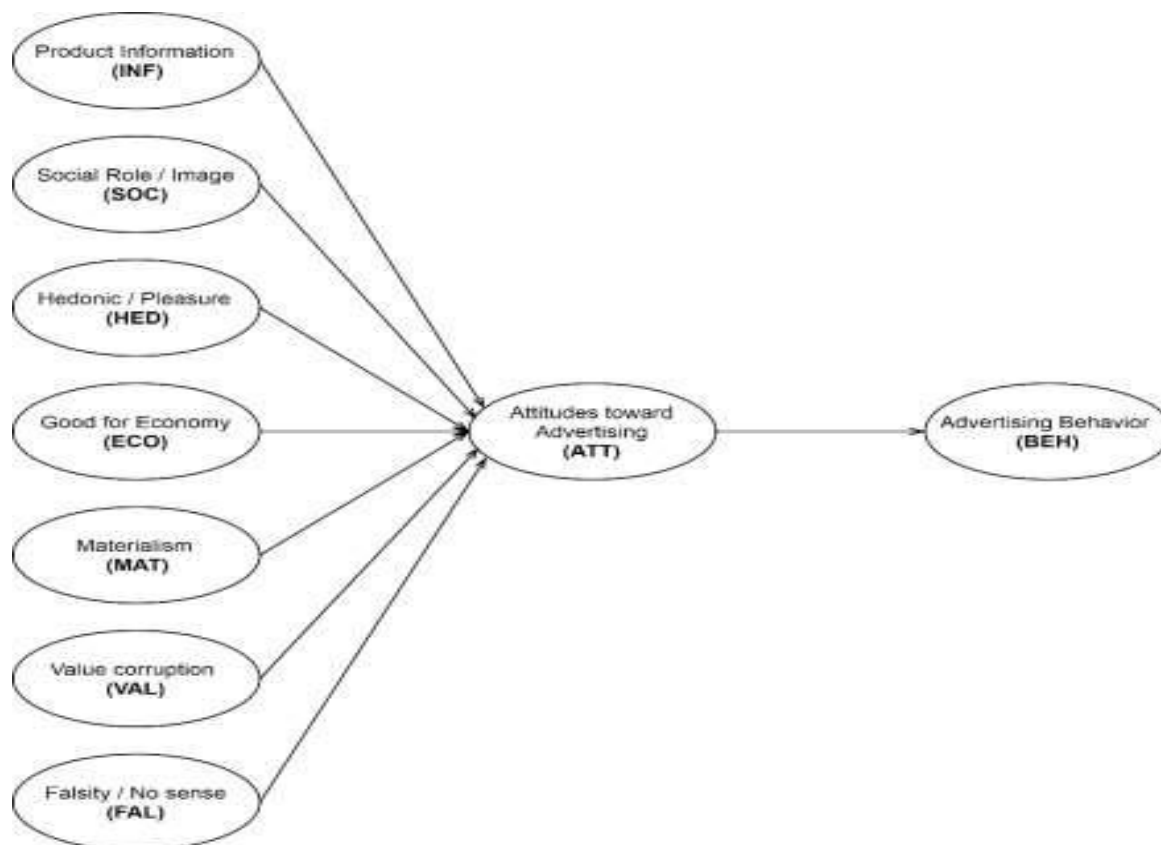


Fig. 1. The Attitudes toward Advertising framework was modified by Salam et al (2018,p.)

The above framework of attitudes of advertising shows the association between seven belief factors and attitudes that lead to the manifestation of advertising behavior. These seven belief factors are the ones proposed as antecedents of attitude toward advertising by Pollay and Mittal (1993). This model has been implemented in five distinct nations in Asia and two countries (Romania and Bulgaria) in Europe and it is powerful and comprehensive (Salam, Muhamad & Leong, 2018).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Design of the Study

To accomplish its goals, the study uses mixed methods research, which combines quantitative and qualitative techniques, building on a descriptive research design in the form of a cross-sectional survey. Mixed methods research can refer to “research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study or program of inquiry” (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007a, p. 4)

3.2 Study setting and Time Frame

The research was carried out in three public universities—Jimma, Addis Ababa, and Hawassa—as well as advertising agencies over the period of October 2019 to October 2021. These universities were chosen because of the researchers’ familiarity with staff members who facilitated the data collection.

3.3 Population

The study's demographic comprising largely postgraduate journalism and communication department students at universities were chosen because they are expected to have a better awareness of advertising communication and its role in the modern era. Second, these students are also expected to be active consumers and viewers of advertising to keep themselves up-to-date with new products or services (Arnett, 2000). Third, graduate students assess things more thoroughly compared to undergraduate students because of their degree of experience (Senka, 2023). Media/advertising agency workers from Fana Broadcasting Corporates, and some selected private media advertising agencies, namely Zeleman Communications, Berry Advertising and INAD Promotions were chosen because they may represent some portion of educated people who have a direct connection with advertising so as to see how they perceive advertising,

3.3 Sampling Method and Sample Size

The study had 64 volunteers; of these 50 postgraduate students were selected from three universities, These were Jimma(=25), Addis Ababa(=9) and Hawassa Universities (=16) and one Media Company(=10) and some selected private advertising agencies (=4). These include Fana Broadcasting Corporate, one of the mass media companies(=10) and private advertising agencies, such as Zeleman Communications(=1), Berry Advertising(=2) and INAD Promotions (=1). To select the participants of the study, both purposeful and convenience sampling methods were used. These participants were informed about the objectives of the study in order to obtain their consent to fill in the questionnaire.

3.5 Data Collection Tools

Data were gathered using closed and open-ended questions. Data collected using an open-ended questionnaire were offered as verbatim quotations. The quantitative data collected through a close-ended questionnaire were displayed using a table.

.3.5.1 Questionnaire

The data-gathering tool for this study was adapted from the survey instrument items from the original Pollay and Mittal framework (1993) and Wolin et al. (2002). In researching attitudes towards advertising, Pollay and Mittal's instrument has been widely used. This instrument has items that deal with different aspects of advertising (i.e., belief items, attitudinal items), whereas, advertising-related behaviors items were adapted from Wolin et al. (2002). All these items were measured based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree. The open-ended questionnaire was also used to collect qualitative data. This enabled the participants to articulate their own views and opinions clearly.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data gathered through open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires were analyzed thematically and using descriptive statistics respectively. Deductive coding was used to do a theme analysis of the open-ended survey replies. This was accomplished by extracting predefined themes from literature and answers to closed-ended questionnaire items. Each sample response was then read and assigned to the appropriate theme. Lastly, a discussion and interpretation of the sample replies under each theme were conducted. On the other hand, descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviations were used to examine the data collected via a closed-ended questionnaire.

SPSS version 22 was used for data processing. At the end, recommendations were sent out in accordance with the conclusions that were reached based on the data.

3.7 Quality Assurance

To ensure the quality of this study and validate the data collection instruments, a pilot study was conducted on some journalism and communication students at Jimma University. Furthermore, a manageable sample size of the study participants was selected via a purposeful sampling technique. Then, the researchers applied their knowledge and skills and collected reliable data using questionnaires. To ensure data quality, consultations with colleagues and experts were also made on the instruments of data collection and proposal of the study.

4. Results of the Study

To investigate the attitudes of postgraduate journalism and communication students and advertising agency workers towards advertising discourse, data were gathered in both quantitative and qualitative forms, and they were examined using the appropriate methodologies. The presentation and the analyses of the two types of data take place turn by turn.

4.1 Quantitative Findings

4.1.1 Participants' Attitudes towards Advertising Discourses

Assessing customers' attitudes about advertising is a recurring research topic that helps researchers reveal people's shared values, beliefs, views and biases about certain products or services. One way of measuring advertising effectiveness is by assessing the attitudes of customers. In Ethiopia, it is not clear whether there is a positive or negative attitude about advertising. Therefore, knowing about the attitudes of customers about advertising helps to assess its effectiveness. The table below presents the descriptive statistics of the responses given to statements about advertising attitudes by the participants.

Table 1: The descriptive statistics of the responses given to statements about advertising attitudes by the participants

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
9. There should be a ban on the advertising of harmful or dangerous products.	64	4.1406	1.30770
2. There is too much exaggeration in advertising today.	60	4.1000	1.00338
7. Advertisements should be more realistic	63	4.0635	1.14825
10. There should be more government regulation of advertising	63	4.0476	1.14199
1. There is a critical need for more truth in advertising.	59	4.0000	.98261
6. There is a crying need for better taste in most of today's advertisements.	62	3.6290	.96213
3. Too many of today's advertisements attempt to create a trivial or imaginary difference between products that are actually identical or very similar in composition.	57	3.5614	1.08591
8. Advertising just tends to confuse people by presenting them with a bewildering choice of items and claims	64	3.5156	1.30921

4. Advertising increases the cost of goods and services.	64	3.3594	1.30161
5. Advertising is socially wasteful since it only transfers sales from one manufacturer to another without actually adding any new money to the economy.	64	2.8594	1.21977
Grand mean		3.695	

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation values of ten items designed based on a 5 point Likert scale where 5 denotes “Strongly Agree” and 1 “Strongly disagree”. Of 10 items used to assess the attitudes of the participants, four items (9, 2, 7 and 1) had higher mean values (i.e. $M \geq 4.00$). These results indicate that the majority of participants agree with the five statements that stress the deceptive and misleading nature of advertising, which reveals the negative perceptions of the participants. Similarly, the grand mean of 10 items was 3.695 from which we can conclude that the participants almost agree with most of these statements. This interpretation of mean is line with the scheme suggested by Pimentel, (2010). On the other hand, items 4 and 5 yield low mean values of 3.358 and 2.859 respectively, which represent the neutral attitude of the participants on the two items. In general, the participants have unfavorable attitudes, for they agree with the majority of statements.

4.2 Qualitative findings

To assess the attitudes of the participants of the study, two questions were asked in the open-ended questionnaire that read “Do you like or dislike commercial advertisement of an object or a service? And “What did you like or dislike about commercial advertisement in general?”

The open-ended questions help us to gather more ideas and explanations as to why participants like or dislike advertising. The responses given to address these questions demonstrated the positive or the negative attitudes of participants are presented below turn by turn; first, the reasons for liking advertising, and next reasons for disliking advertising. The thematic analysis of the data was based on predefined themes extracted from literature and answers to closed-ended questionnaire.

4.2.1 Reasons for Liking Advertising

As observed in the responses to the open-ended questionnaire, participants like advertising due to its informativeness (i.e., product quality, brand, newness, consumer choice, durability, utility, promotion, and pricing information), entertaining nature (artistic presentation), economic value, and trustworthiness.

4.2.2 Resourcefulness of advertising

The responses from the open-ended questionnaire showed that 22 out of 64 of the participants (34.5%) tend to like advertising because of its resourcefulness. The following statements, for instance, demonstrate participants’ views toward advertising. Each statement provided by the first participant is in parenthesis, whereas the others in each parenthesis carry the same meaning as that of the statement. For instance, Participant 47 provided the direct statement below, and it was discovered that the responses of the other six participants were similar to that of P47.

I like a commercial advertisement for an object because I get a new brand and quality object. (P47, P54, P40, P17, P30, P35, P33, P1)

I like advertisements because I can get a lot of information about a particular service or product. I will decide whether to buy it or not. (P44, P48, P36, P31, P53, P28, P27, P26, P25, P20, P32, P6, P24, P52)

I like advertisements because they help to promote agricultural products (P42)

It depends, there are commercial advertisements, I like and I dislike. I like them when they convey factual and relevant information to people. But I dislike those who manipulate the customers. (P60, P3, P7)

As the responses to the open-ended questions above show, the respondents have a favorable attitude toward advertising because of its informational value. For instance, one of the major reasons (mentioned by 14 respondents) for liking advertising is that it is the source of information to make a decision that leads to action to purchase goods or services. Another view emphasized in the above statements (8 respondents) is the usefulness of advertising as a means of providing new product information that keeps them up to date. The other reason mentioned for liking advertising is its credibility (if it tells the reality) (three participants). In short, the respondents' responses indicate that people like advertising if it is informative and trustworthy.

The above responses imply that people seem to develop the habit of seeking information about the products they want to purchase and this shows their inclination towards seeking advertising media that gradually will create a positive attitude about advertisements. The availability of numerous mass media that provide advertising services encourages customers to look for different goods and services. The information mentioned above and other pieces can be obtained from different media, namely, print media (i.e., newspapers, magazines, journals, handbills), electronic media, (radio, TV, Video, multimedia and internet), outdoor media (poster) and other media such as direct mail (broachers, leaflets, pamphlets, letters), and handbills. (Asemah, 2020) These media are addressed to the masses as options for customers.

4.2.3 Entertaining Nature of Advertising

Advertising by its nature is believed to be an art, science, and profession. As an art, it requires creativity; as a science, it is based on organized knowledge and as a profession, it has several professionals who have their code of conduct. Therefore, advertising as one means of attracting people's attention, should be artistic and amuse consumers. To do so, it is expected to be well-crafted and presented in effective language and images. The construction of advertising messages requires careful choice of words and patterns of sentences that stimulate people's imagination and link the products to their mindsets. (Coulter, Zaltman & Coulter, 2001) This feature of advertising is implied in the following responses to the open-ended questions about why participants like advertising.

Yes, I like advertisements because their entertaining features attract me. (P62)

It depends on the nature of the advertisement and the quality of its presentation. For instance, I like Diana soap advertisement because of its quality product and artistic presentation. (P29)

I like advertisements because they entertain me and enable me to get a beautiful product (P46)

Modern advertising of a product should be short, precise, real and artistic (P27)

I like an advertisement because it has a grain of truth and is entertaining (P22)

To some extent, commercial advertising affects consumers to boost their interest in the targeted products. (4)

The strategy used to advertise the product could develop the positive attitudes of customers (P10)

The analysis of the qualitative data implies that the construction of advertising requires the involvement of various professionals to make advertising impress customers. These may include artists, photographers, typographers, layout designers, editors, and other creative people. To produce effective advertising, these professionals are required to be involved in the process so that people may be attracted to advertising to get pleasure out of it and develop a positive attitude. A similar finding was reported by Petrovici et al. (2007) that effective advertising includes hedonic benefits to entertain or provide pleasure for customers.

4.2.4 Economic value for customers

Advertising encourages competition among producers of goods and services, which often results in a reduction of price or getting better quality products. In addition, as reviewed by Pollay and Mittal (1993) advertising accelerates the quick acceptance of new goods and innovations, which promotes full employment. These functions of advertising are implied in the following statements of the participants.

I like advertisement because it is one means to increase the production of a particular object for it gets high demand (P15)

I like commercial advertisements because they promote a new thing to me and create a competitive market that can benefit customers (P56)

I like commercial advertisements because I try to fetch more products or services using their advertisement which reduces the wastage of time and resources that I do for them by doing it actually (P50)

I like an advertisement of an object because it will introduce new products to the customers (P58).

Advertising enables to increase in a variety of products and boosting the kinds of products provides options for purchasers (P30)

As observed in the above statements, the views of the participants centered around the economic effects of advertising that helps to increase production and sells and the introduction of new products and services which are likely to create more job opportunities. Providing information about products or services is one of the key functions of advertising that creates a positive attitude towards advertising (Norris, 1984).

4.2.5 Reasons for disliking advertising

Participants' responses to open-ended questions about why they dislike commercial advertisements are many. However, here only a few statements that represent most of the respondents' views are presented to demonstrate the negative effects of advertising.

Exaggeration leads to the development of negative attitudes among consumers (P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P17, P19, P21, P23, P25, P26, P27, P28, P30, P31, P32, P33, P37, P39, P41, P43, P48, P49, P51, P52, P53, P54, P58, and P59)

I dislike commercial advertisements when they create exaggerated images in the mind of the customer to make more profit (P 52)

I dislike commercial advertisements because most of the time it communicates exaggerated or false information about the product. (P 39)

In Ethiopia, advertising is perceived as deceptive, misleading, and misrepresentation (P49)

I dislike commercial advertisements because they exaggerate and manipulate the nature of a product (P 51)

Generally, I dislike advertisements because some of them are idealistic and present false information about a product that misleads the public (P50)

The advertisement of a product does not consider the values and norms of society (P43)

I do not like an advertisement because it focuses on marketing and it is not based on reality (P 23)

It focuses on increasing the profit of the producer by neglecting the benefit of customers (P40, P44)

The absence of creativity and relevant messages in the advertisement can cause the development of negative attitudes of customers (P21)

I dislike advertisements because they force you to buy goods, which you do not want to buy

The above statements indicate that the participants have negative views about advertising because they believe that it distorts reality and deceives people. More than 20 respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the advertising reasoning that the messages and the meanings advertising conveys are deceiving. The other major reason for disliking advertising mentioned by a large number of respondents (31 respondents) is that advertising exaggerates the qualities, uses and functions of products. Other reasons expressed include disregarding the values and norms of society, profit-orientedness, devoid of creativity. These are mentioned as causes for developing negative attitudes towards advertising. These factors require strategic interventions to achieve advertising objectives.

5. Discussion

Nowadays, advertising is considered as an important industry that has been flourishing in the business world. Advertising has a role to play in impeding or boosting the economy (Andrews, 1989; Muehling, 1987). Its role in boosting the economy can be realized by stimulating consumption and production of goods or services based on its effectiveness when it receives credibility and trust from customers. On the other hand, it impedes the economy when customers develop a negative attitude about an object or service (affective). This is because attitude by definition is a predisposition that triggers a person to respond positively or negatively toward

advertising of an object or service. It influences not only customers' feelings (affective) but also determines what the customers are likely to do (behavior) (Salam, Muhamad & Leong, (2018). In the current economy, since advertising is an important strategy for marketing communication, it is good to assess the attitude of stakeholders and customers to examine its effectiveness. This is because "By understanding consumers' attitude towards advertising, designers and marketers can better strategize their advertising designs." (Wang, Zhang, Choi & DiEredita, 2002, p.1143)

To assess the attitudes of the participants of this study, 10 close-ended items questionnaires and two open-ended questionnaires were used. As shown in Table 1 the overall mean value of 10 closed-ended items was 3.695. Of these items, four items (items 9, 2, 7 and 1) have higher mean values ($M \geq 4.00$). These indicate that most people are in agreement with these statements revealing their unfavorable attitudes toward advertising. Another interesting finding of this study suggests that the majority of the participants agree with the statement that urges (*There should be more government regulation of advertising*) the Government of Ethiopia plays a great role in controlling misleading advertising to address the negative attitudes of people.

In response to the open-ended questions about whether the participants like or dislike advertising, most of the statements observed indicate that the participants have unfavorable attitudes toward advertising, for advertising distorts reality and the messages and the meaning it conveys are unbelievable. Thus, it is possible to infer from their responses that the deceptive and misleading effect of advertising results in the formation of unfavorable attitudes toward advertising. This distrust of advertising in turn retards marketplace efficiencies (Beales, Craswell & Solp, 1981; Calfree & Ringgold, 1987; Nelson, 1974, as cited in Pollay & Mittal, 1993). This is because if the advertising lacks credibility, the advertised products will not get buyers.

Similarly, research has shown that if the advertising lacks credibility, it fails to form positive attitudes and behaviors (Moore & Rodgers, 2005; Indu & Raj, 2012) which play a vital role in building confidence in purchasing products. Other studies have also revealed that source credibility significantly boosts the intention of buying products (Weismueller, Harrigan, Wang, & Soutar, 2020). Indeed, to make advertising effective, it has to meet the trustworthiness criteria to elicit positive attitudes from the public.

Another concern that recurs repeatedly in the responses of the participants to open-ended questions is that advertising greatly exaggerates the features of the product. This also creates an unfavorable attitude on the consumers' side, for they refrain from purchasing that particular product. Understanding the reasons for disliking advertising that is the basis for the development of negative sentiments may help advertisers to control or avoid misleading communication. Therefore, according to Mehata (2000, as cited in Salam, Muhamad, & Leong, 2018) studying the attitudes of the consumers would help to make effective advertising by improving "the quality as well as productivity of advertising" (p.81). In addition to this, it was found that creativity in the production of advertisements and honesty may help to eliminate negative attitudes towards advertising.

In the present study, the most frequently mentioned reasons for disliking advertising are the exaggeration of the quality of the products and services and the distortion of the values and norms of society. These results agree with those of earlier research (Pollay & Mittal, 1993).

6. Conclusions

This study has documented both positive and negative attitudes of participants about advertising. From the analysis of the quantitative data, it is possible to conclude that a significant portion of the participants have negative opinions about advertising. Conversely, advertising is acknowledged as a source of information about goods and services that buyers are interested in learning about. The study's conclusions also show that the amusing quality of advertising helps people build a favorable opinion of it. Generally, this study provides insights into factors that contribute to the development of positive and negative attitudes toward advertising discourses.

The effectiveness of advertising is evident in the economic development of a country in terms of enhancing production, and innovations and increasing sales and demands of products. Although the participants of this study do not deny the importance of advertising in the economic development of the country, they have also communicated their concerns and dissatisfaction about the current advertising practices that require regulation and enforcement for its proper implementation in this business world. Particularly, the study's findings demonstrate that the participants are not satisfied with the current practices of advertising that exaggerate the quality of goods and services and violate societal values leading them to develop negative attitudes.

To make advertising more effective in Ethiopia, the Federal Government should establish an institution in charge of advertising. This institute should set policies on advertising, enforce rules and regulations, monitor and evaluate, create a system, and establish professionalism in advertising. These may help reduce complaints about advertising and improve advertising quality.

Advertisers should also prepare messages carefully by using their creativity and controlling or avoiding misleading communication before they deliver advertisements so as to elicit positive responses from people.

Finally, this study acknowledges its limitations. One is since the sample size is limited, the findings of the study cannot be generalizable. Second, since this study considered only some portion of educated people who have a direct connection with advertising, further research needs to recruit and study a more diverse and adequate sample of participants using a quantitative method to increase the generalizability of the findings. A further study is also required to identify factors that contribute to advertising success in Ethiopian contexts.

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