

Perception towards the Direct – to – Consumer Advertisements of Health Care Products-Advertisers' Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Direct-To-Consumer advertisements of the health care products have grown popular. It is one very important area in advertising. When it comes to the non prescribed health care products the risk of advertising gets high. Advertisers' generally fail to communicate the main aim of advertising such products. Especially when such advertisements are using television as a medium, different factors should be taken care of. The viewers are free to develop their perceptions on such products after watching such advertisements. The present study was an attempt to highlight the perception of the advertisers towards the Direct-to-consumer advertisements. The study was conducted by taking primary data collected from a focus group comprising of Five Advertising agencies in India. The research design considered for the study is Descriptive. The study reveals the perceptions held by an advertiser of a Direct-To-Consumer health care product on the basis of seven factors recognized by the researcher to understand the advertisers' views. Further five popular non prescribed health care product advertisements aired on Indian television were also considered for studying the perception of the advertisers.

Keywords: Direct-to-Consumer, Advertisements, Health Care Products, Advertisers.

INTRODUCTION:

Direct To consumer advertisements of the non prescribed health care products have grown popular with consumers' innovativeness for products. However, there is a great risk in advertising such products as they are health care products. The advertising of the prescribed drugs are not yet legally recognized in India. Direct-to-Consumer advertisements of such health care products are generally targeted to the consumers (patients) more than the medicinal practitioners' and as such these are being prepared in an attractive manner to make the viewers choose these products and use them for any health issue referred to in the advertisement. Television medium is used generally for such advertisement which implies targeting the entire population irrespective of several other factors of concern. The viewers watch the advertisement, relate it and go for a purchase. Such products are readily available today and the sale of such products is significant. The advertisers follow a perception while designing such advertisements. The perception held by the advertisers differs from that of the viewers. Understanding the perceptions of the advertisers would help to educate the viewers as such products are related to health.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Samu, Sridhar., Wymer, Walter. (2008)¹ investigates the consumer processing of cause marketing communications featuring a brand and a cause in the context of the communication format (perceived fit and dominance) on consumer attitudes and behavioural intentions. Two studies using different forms of

¹ Samu,Sridhar,Wymer,Walter, 'The Effect of Fit and Dominance in Cause Marketing Communications', Journal of Business Research, 62 (4), 432-440

communication, public service announcement (PSA) and cause-related marketing advertisement (CRM ad), are used to examine these effects. Findings suggest that both factors are important to consider in any joint communication. While high fit is critical for brands, dominance is shown to be important for both in joint communications.

Sonkusare Geeta, (March, 2013)² makes an attempt to test the Impact of television advertising and on women consumers' buying behaviour. The study was conducted taking both primary and secondary data. A sample of 30 respondents was considered for the study. The factors like social and personal influence the women to make a purchase decision. Further, the word of mouth plays a big role in case of FMCG products. The women consumers consider the advertisements as the main source of information about the FMCG product before taking a buying decision.

Dr. Sharma Lokesh, Singh Archana & Dr. Agarwal D. Paul, (2014)³ aims to measure the impact of TV advertisements on consumer buying behaviour. A sample of 840 respondents was surveyed. The major findings of the study are-adults strongly believe that the TV advertisements have considerably influenced their buying process, rural respondents are found more influenced by advertisements in their product purchase decisions in comparison to the urbanites, most of the respondents are fond of watching TV advertisements, females being dominant, adults irrespective of their gender and area of residence strongly consider that TV advertisements have impact on their mind and the exposure to TV advertisements have not only enhanced their involvement in purchasing but has resulted in increasing their frequency of purchase.

Vats Shweta(2014)⁴ analyse the effect of social media promotion of prescription medicine on behaviour of working youth, the adoption of social media by working youth for collecting information on prescription drugs and also aims at getting an insight into correlation between demographic factors and attitude and perception for social media based prescription drug advertisement. The study also measures the difference in the positive and negative impact of social media based advertisement of prescription drugs. The study was conducted taking a sample of 120 respondents' collected using judgemental sampling technique. The major findings of the study were there is no significant difference in male and female perception and a positive impact of social media based advertisement of prescription drugs.

RESEARCH GAP:

Most of the studies conducted earlier were on the prescribed drugs or health care product. A study was however conducted on the marketing communication of the advertisements of non prescribed health care products. The study was a viewer's perspective. The impact of television advertising on women's consumer buying behaviour (Geeta Sonkusare, 2013) and also on the overall consumer behaviour (Dr. Lokesh Sharma, Archana Singh & Dr. Parul D. Agarwal,2014) was also studied specifically considering the non prescribed health care products. Further, the effect of self promotion of prescribed drugs was also studied.(Shweta Vats,2014).The available literature within the reach of the researcher indicates that there was no study conducted in order to understand the perception of the advertisers preparing the direct-to-consumer advertisements of the non prescribed health care products. Therefore, the study was an attempt to highlight the perceptions of the advertisers by considering their responses.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1) To observe the perception of the advertisers towards the Direct-to-Consumer Advertisements of health care product.

HYPOTHESIS TAKEN:

To fulfil the objective the following hypothesis was set

H₀: There is no difference in the views of the advertising agencies.

H₁: There is a difference in the views of the advertising agencies.

² Impact of television advertising on buying behaviour of women consumers' [With special reference to FMCG Products] Chandrapur city, International Journal of Business and Management Invention ISSN (Online): 2319 – 8028, ISSN (Print): 2319 – 801X www.ijbmi.org Volume 2 Issue 3 | March. 2013| PP.31-38

³Dr. Sharma Lokesh, Singh Archana & Dr. Agarwal D. Paul, (2014) The Impact of T.V. Advertisements on Buying Behaviour of Indian Adults: An Empirical Study', Anveshanam- The Journal Of Management Vol. Ii, No. 1, August 2013-July 2014

⁴Vats Shweta(2014) Impact of Direct to Consumer Advertising Through Interactive Internet Media on Working Youth in Select Cities Of Maharashtra & Gujarat', International Journal of Business and Administration Research Review. Vol.I, Issue No.2, Nov-Jan2014, ISSN No. 2347-856X

SCOPE & METHODOLOGY :

Scope of the study:

In the present study, the researcher covers the advertisements of only non prescribed healthcare products. The health care products include also the pharmaceutical products which are not prescribed by the doctors or are generally termed as Over the Counter drugs. Since in India the advertisements of such products are taken up by the advertising agencies exclusively for health care products therefore these agencies are taken as respondents for the study are considered and therefore the advertising agencies preparing such advertisements were taken as respondent. Only one medium of such advertisements i.e. television is considered by the researcher.

Nature of the study:

The present study is descriptive in nature as it highlights the perception of the advertisers'.

Data Collection-source and method:

The primary data were collected and used by the researcher for the study.

Source of collecting primary data: The source of collecting the primary data was the advertisers of the pharmaceutical/healthcare products.

Methods for collection of primary data: For reaching the responses of the advertisers a questionnaire was prepared which was sent through mail.

Questionnaire design: A two page questionnaire was designed keeping in mind the objective for which the advertisers' responses were looked for. The questionnaire consisted of eighteen (18) statements framed using the 5 point likert scale.

Sampling Design:

The researcher in the present study has collected the data using the help of focus groups. The main aim behind choosing the focus groups for gathering the responses is because of the nature of the study and in order to get sound information from the respondents. For the study the researcher has approached a focus group comprising of the Advertisers/advertising agencies and a few advertisements are considered.

Advertisements chosen for the study:

In order to know the perception of the advertisers a few Health care product advertisements were considered which are as follows:

- Strepsils
- Crocin
- Eno
- Vicks
- Dabur Pudina pearls
- Dabur Honitus

Sampling Techniques:

The researcher has used the Judgemental technique while selecting the focus group and the members in it .The purpose of the present study is to gather a deeper view and evaluate the same and therefore judgemental technique was adopted by the researcher.

Sample Size:

The sample size of the focus group for the present study is presented as under:

Advertising agencies: The sample size of this focus group is five .Five advertising agencies were considered for the study. The researcher on the basis of the purpose and requirement of the study and accessibility of the required responses has chosen to select the five agencies. However the name of the advertising agencies are not revealed by the researcher in the study.

Analysis Technique:

In the present study both quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis are considered. For the quantitative analysis statistical tools are considered. Following tools are used by the researcher while doing the quantitative analysis in the study.

a) Impact Index: For the present study it has been modified and used for the analysis by the researcher. In order to calculate the Impact Index following measures are required viz-Maximum score, weighted score and the sample size.

Impact Index=Weighted Score divided by Total Weighted Score

Total weighted score=5xSA+4xA+3xN+2xD+1xSD

[SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, N-Neither agree nor disagree, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree]

Maximum score=Total Number of respondents x 5

Table 1 showing the Impact Range (%)

Range (percentage)	Impact
0-25	No Impact
25-50	Somewhat Impact
50-75	Moderate Impact
75-100	High Impact

b) ANOVA-one way: The acronym ANOVA refers to analysis of variance and is a statistical procedure used to test the degree to which two or more groups vary or differ in an experiment. The researcher uses this statistical technique to find if there is any variance in the views presented by the advertisers. In order to test the first hypothesis set by the researcher, ANOVA one way is used to find the result.

Statistical tools: The researcher has used MS Excel for the study.

Analysis & Discussion: The five agencies chosen for the study provided their response. As the responses may vary, the researcher has set a hypothesis initially stating:

H0: There is no difference in the views of the advertising agencies.

H1: There is a difference in the views of the advertising agencies.

The hypothesis set by the researcher to test if there can be any variances in the views provided by the five agencies preparing such advertisements for the health care products.

In order to prove this hypothesis ANOVA-one way was considered

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
Row 1	7	63	9	18		
Row 2	7	59	8.42857143	14.28571429		
Row 3	7	61	8.71428571	10.9047619		
Row 4	7	54	7.71428571	9.904761905		
Row 5	7	64	9.14285714	11.14285714		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	8.97142857	4	2.24285714	0.174573758	0.949730302	2.689628
Within Groups	385.428571	30	12.847619			
Total	394.4	34				

The calculated p value is greater than 0.05 and therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. It implies that there is no difference in the views of all the advertising agencies considered for the study. Hence, the researcher in the study has interpreted the data on the views of the advertisers in a generalised way considering that no advertising agency have a different say or view on any of the factors taken for the analysis

Advertisers views on the Factors considered and their interpretation:

The questionnaire prepared for the respondents focused on seven factors on the basis of which the perception can be studied. The researcher have categorized the statements and presented the views to highlight the advertisers' perceptions on the individual factors.

Table A showing the advertisers views on 'Design'

S. N.	Category	Statements	%	Impact
A	Design	Comparative advertising is generally avoided in case of pharmaceutical/healthcare products	84%	High
		Advertisements are always designed in a multidimensional way in case of pharmaceutical/healthcare products.	64%	Moderate
		Aggressive Strategy in case of pharmaceutical/healthcare products is generally not adopted.	48%	Somewhat

Source-fileld

In case of pharmaceutical/healthcare products comparative advertising is not adopted by the advertisers as it is a sensitive category where the viewer may face some issues with their health by taking the wrong decision. In case of advertisements of such type the advertisers designs it in a multidimensional way, because it is necessary for the advertisers to enlighten the positive and negative sides of the product and as it is related to the health of a viewer it is to be focussed especially in special products which needs much highlight. The advertisers use aggressive strategy while designing the advertisement wherever necessary .To adjust with the brand and the product requirement the advertisers have to prepare the advertisement in a manner adopting aggressive strategy. But in no way the advertisers intend to mislead the viewers and they do use the required precautions saying ‘Terms & Conditions’ finally leaving the decision on the viewers to consult a doctor before using the said product.

Table B showing the advertisers views on ‘Message Content’

S. N.	Category	Statements	%	Impact
B	Message Content	The message content for a pharmaceutical/healthcare product advertisement is prepared in a persuasive manner.	64%	Moderate
		The message content of a pharmaceutical/healthcare product advertisement usually includes the information and use of the product.	76%	High
		The message content and the information of a product make the advertisement appealing.	68%	Moderate
		In case of some products, the message content has to be created in a way to highlight the brand.	84%	High

Source-Field

The advertisers while preparing the ‘message content’ of advertisements under discussions they give importance to factors like persuasiveness, content, appeal and the brand. Further the information of the product and its use is the main highlight of advertisements of such types. Brand is another important factor to be considered by the advertisers because viewers hold certain perceptions towards the well known brands .The advertisers while preparing the message content for products of such types highlight the brand to make them more promising and useful.

Table C showing the advertisers views on ‘Literacy’

S. N.	Category	Statements	%	Impact
C	Literacy	A pharmaceutical/healthcare product is aimed for both literate & illiterate classes of viewers.	68%	Moderate
		Literate viewers can better understand the content of a pharmaceutical/healthcare advertisement, so, such advertisements are not aimed for the illiterate viewers.	48%	Somewhat

Source-Field

The advertisers were of the opinion that they don’t consider the literacy level of the viewers while preparing an advertisement of such type as they prepare it in a way which would be convenient for both literate and illiterate viewers to draw the basic meaning out of the advertisement.

Table D showing advertisers views on ‘Medium-Television’

S. N.	Category	Statements	%	Impact
D	Medium (Television)	Television is a better medium for advertising a pharmaceutical/healthcare product.	68%	Moderate
		Humor in case of some pharmaceutical/healthcare product advertisements becomes necessary in order to make the viewer realize that the problem focused is a common one and not to panic	84%	High
		Celebrity endorsement brings in strength to a pharmaceutical/healthcare product advertisement.	64%	Moderate

Source-field

The advertisers consider television to be a better medium because they find it easier for them to communicate via this medium in a better way about the product details and the use of it. As the viewers are shy to speak about some health problems therefore humour and celebrity endorsement is considered while advertising health care products.

Table E showing the advertisers views on ‘Emergency’

S. N.	Category	Statements	%	Impact
E	Emergency	A pharmaceutical/healthcare product advertisement is created with an aim to help a viewer at the time of an emergency.	32	Somewhat
		Advertisements of pharmaceutical/healthcare products help the viewers in avoiding the unnecessary rush at the Doctor’s clinic.	44	Somewhat

Source-field

The advertisers while designing an advertisement of a health care product don’t consider the emergency factor. Rather they design to make the viewers aware about the product and leave the decision on the viewer if the product can be used during any emergency or not. They never intend to make the viewers avoid consulting a doctor.

Table F showing the advertisers views on ‘Ethics’

S. N.	Category	Statements	%	Impact
F	Ethics	Consulting a doctor/expert before preparing the content of an advertisement has always been our priority.	88%	High
		The ethical guidelines are always followed in case of a pharmaceutical /healthcare product advertisement.	72%	Moderate

Source-field

Following the ethics for such type of advertisements has always been the first preference for the advertisers. The advertisers follow the required ethical norms wherever applicable while designing an advertisement of such type. They give due preference to the viewers health and as such they always comply with the health related ethical procedures while planning the advertisement.

Table G showing the advertisers views on ‘Essentials’

S. N.	Category	Statements	%	Impact
G	Essentials	Feedback& Interactivity is essential for a pharmaceutical/healthcare product advertisement.	76%	High
		Content Marketing forms an important point even in case of pharmaceutical/healthcare products.	80%	High

Source-field

While designing the health care product advertisements, the advertisers consider ‘essentials’ like feedback interactivity and content marketing. It is done because they want the viewers to write about their views regarding the advertisement and also look for suggestions through such interaction to make the necessary changes in the advertisement. For better understanding of such a product, content marketing is also given due importance.

The seven factors analysed by the researcher for the study shows the advertisers’ perception while they are preparing the message content for the Direct-To-Consumer Advertisements.

CONCLUSION:

The direct to consumer advertisements of the non prescribed pharmaceutical/ healthcare products have become popular today. The most common and preferred medium for such advertisement is the Television. The present era is all about technology, speed, literacy and rational buying behaviour. Viewers as consumers show a positive response for such products. The seven factors considered for understanding the perception of the advertisers’ presents their good aim for advertising such products. But since the advertisements are a public announcement which is carried on for the profit motive of a brand and its profit hence it cannot be considered to be a right option at all types of health emergencies. The advertisements must consider the health of the viewers as the

first preference and therefore prepare the content in a manner enlightening the worse part also. Since it is not a product from the FMCG category, its advertisement shouldn't be prepared in a general way. The viewers should be given the proper information and since all the population are not alike therefore proper segmentation has to be done before advertisement content is prepared. The advertisements using the television medium can express much more rather than giving importance to some unnecessary content like brand highlighting, celebrity endorsements etc. Since it is a matter of health the importance of a human's life should be the main concern. Ethical codes followed by the advertisers should be well pronounced and ethics should not include the profit motive in this sector. The importance of such advertisements today cannot be overlooked but the procedure for making such advertisements useful and harmless should start from the grass root. Here, the customers are patients and that should always be taken care of by the advertisers.

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