

PERSUASIVE ADVERTISING INFLUENCE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF DISSONANCE

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ABSTRACT

Persuasion through advertising has become an issue that consumers are facing in their daily routine. In today’s scenario of tough competition, marketer use different approach of advertising of which many of them are misleading because of their controversial content and nature. This study divided persuasive advertising into two types: ethical and unethical advertising. This research paper explores how persuasive advertisements influence consumer behaviour in the context of durable products. This study also elucidates the persuasive techniques used by marketers and its impact on the post-purchase (action) regarding the product. Finally, the study analyzes the impact of dissonance on consumer behaviour. The data has been collected using structured questionnaire method. This research utilizes the simple random sampling method to gather the data from 457 respondents consisting of consumers using durable products in Coimbatore city. Structural equation model (SEM) was applied to analyze data using AMOS (v24) software. This study reveals persuasive advertisement negatively impacts the post purchase (action) behaviour.

Keywords: *Persuasive Advertising, Post Purchase (Action), Dissonance, Consumer Behaviour*

INTRODUCTION

Advertising is a form of sponsored communication that utilizes various media to persuade consumers to purchase products (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). Both businesses and governments use marketing communications to educate, inform, and convince consumers about the products they offer. This process does not involve brainwashing but aims for authentic, subtle changes that can lead to positive outcomes (Clark, 1985). While political and ideological advertising is widespread, the main objective remains to influence consumer behavior in alignment with commercial offerings (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998). Advertising plays a crucial role in creating product perceptions, which can sometimes extend beyond their intended purpose. Persuasive advertising operates under the assumption that consumers are already somewhat familiar with the product and simply need to be convinced of its benefits and appeal to distinguish it from competitors (Tatum, 2003). It seeks to identify consumer needs and desires, persuading them through various assertions about the product or service.

It is important to note that not all forms of advertising share the same level of moral responsibility, as they do not all use the same types of persuasive techniques (Andrew Gustafson, 2005). According to Neuner, Raab, and Reisch (2005), consumers face increased pressure from persuasive advertising. This is part of the process of shaping product perceptions, which can occasionally veer off course. While manufacturers and retailers aim to profit from these developments, a particularly vulnerable group—compulsive buyers—may suffer significantly from the effects of advertising. Many authors have proposed theories on persuasion, with Beauchamp (1983) and Danciu (2014) categorizing it into four types: factual information, rational persuasion, manipulation, and coercion. This study differentiates persuasive advertising into two categories: ethical and unethical persuasion. Ethical persuasion in advertising involves presenting a product or service in the best possible light without resorting to deception, omissions, or intimidation. Advertisers using ethical persuasion communicate truthful information—where the facts are real and the presentation is clear and logical—aiming to convince consumers through informed choices (Grover, 2011). In contrast, unethical persuasion involves misleading consumers and compelling them to make a purchase. Some argue that misleading advertising can be beneficial, while many believe it is inherently negative (Andrew Gustafson, 2005). These discussions raise important ethical considerations regarding the role of advertising. This study expands upon Beauchamp’s spectrum of persuasion, ranging from the least rational (coercion) to the most rational (rational persuasion).

Table 1: Spectrum of persuasion

| Ethical persuasion | | Unethical persuasion | |
|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Factual information | Rational persuasion | Coercion | Manipulation |
| Qualities | Logical arguments | Force/threat | Deceitful advertising |
| Price | | | Fallacious arguments |
| display | | | Emotive persuasion |

Source: Danciu, (2014)

ETHICAL PERSUASION

Informative advertising, also known as factual information, seeks to change a user's opinion by providing data and facts that bolster the significance and value of a product. Every claim must be verifiable by users. As a result, instructional commercials boost consumer confidence in a business and support the establishment of brands' authority (Clifford Chi 2021). When customers are aware of the availability and price of horizontally differentiated goods, more items can be substituted by (Michael, 1992). This kind of informative advertising is overdone, as there are times when the benefits to the private sector outweigh the benefits to society. Rational persuasion is credited with developing the use of logical argumentation as a valid form of reasoning for the audience. According to sample research, tripling, together with qualitative and quantitative indicators, explains the logically based persuasive technique's appeal to reason (Irina 2010). Triple-expressing logical arguments are used in advertising to enumerate the benefits of the offered product and explain it.

UNETHICAL PERSUASION

Coercion is the intentional and successful use of force or an actual risk of unintended, preventable, and significant harm by one party to compel another to act in a certain way (Beauchamp 1984). A person who is compelled loses all control over their decision; a person who is convinced maintains that control. According to Daniel et al. (2019), compulsion thereby retains an individual's capacity to make consciously informed judgements, even when it takes away their freedom of choice. Marketing manipulation communication refers to the methods and approaches employed by traders that impact human cognitive, social, and memory biases and weaknesses, which in turn influence customer behaviour in their favour (Tina Vukasović & Kristina Ljubičić, 2022). Given that persuasion through coercion appears to place responsibility on the advertiser, and persuasion through reason and truthful information appears to place responsibility on the consumer, the crux of the responsibility dilemma appears to lie in the fourth persuasion category: manipulation. Generally, we believe that the more someone manipulates us, the less we will hold them accountable for their actions. There is a lot of discussion regarding what manipulative advertising is and if it has any advantages. Richard T. De George (1982) described deception as a truly immoral practice. In actuality, he describes manipulation as "using deceit or unfair, sneaky, or insidious methods to play upon a person's will."

The first kind of manipulative advertising is deceitful advertising, which makes use of false information in its facts. False advertising is another name for this type of advertising that promotes products by making assertions that are plainly incorrect, ambiguous, or misleading.

Although facts are provided, some of them are either untrue or omit important information. Another form of deceptive advertising involves the use of weak arguments. The form of persuasion that plays on customer emotions is called emotional persuasion and is probably more common.

The consumer will feel a certain amount of happiness or discontent following the purchase of the goods (Strydom et al., 2000). After a product is purchased, the marketer's work does not finish. It continues into the post-purchase phase. Following a purchase, marketers need to keep their focus on consumer happiness, actions, and cognitive dissonance. Future behaviour will be influenced by the buyer's level of happiness or discontent. A happy customer will repurchase the product and tell others about it. Customers who are not happy will react differently. Instead of buying that product again, they could return it or take official action. In this study, pre-purchase (belief) (expectations) are defined as what customers think about a product before they buy it, and post-purchase (action) (experiences) are defined as how the product performs (Olson and Dover, 1979). Consumer expectations, satisfaction, and loyalty are related to each other (Del Bosque et al. 2006). It can result when a consumer makes a comparison based on their expectations of the product and their experience of the product; this comparison is not positive, and the consumer experiences dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance consists of both cognitive and emotional components. According to Sweeney et al. (2000), p. 374, the cognitive dimension pertains to an individual's understanding that their beliefs are not aligned with a decision that they have made, while the emotional component is associated with their psychological distress that follows the purchasing decision. Consumers who suffer from post-purchase dissonance may attempt to undo the consequences of their choice by sending the item back (Gilovich and Medvec, 1995; Powers and Jack, 2013). Many studies have devised behavioural, psychological, and cognitive measures as well as other ways to quantify dissonance. While psychological assessments could take comfort, sentiments, or fear into account, cognitive measures might assess the purchase or decision's wisdom. That dissonance creates both positive and negative effects on consumer behavior (Park, Cho, and Rao 2015).

To our knowledge, no study has ever looked at how durable product (TV) consumers behave when they experience cognitive dissonance brought on by persuasive advertising, despite the fact that there has been a lot of research on how people respond to discontent and cognitive dissonance. This study makes a distinction between three categories of consumer behaviour: non-visible negative behaviours, like moving to a different brand and warning friends to stay away from the product; and visible negative actions, like complaining to the retailer or manufacturer and buying the product again (a positive action).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Shavitt et al. (1998) assert that consumers' exposure to and attention to advertisements are influenced by their own sentiments towards them. Commercial avoidance, which is described as "any actions by media users that differentially reduce their exposure to ad content," can be brought on by consumers' unfavourable sentiments towards advertisements, as shown by Speck and Elliott (1997) and Cho (2004). Since avoiding advertisements lessens the likelihood of seeing idealised pictures from advertisements, which may cause compulsive consumers to make unfavourable comparisons and feel more pressure to purchase the offered product (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989).

H1: Persuasive advertising is negatively related to post purchase (action)

The consumer's choice of store will not be justified if their post-purchase (action) are inconsistent with a high degree of anticipation. The consumer will feel dissonance as a result of the discrepancies between anticipation and actual experience since his post-purchase encounter does not support his initial decision. Dissonance is caused by such circumstances, which have a detrimental impact on consumers (Stephen Wilkins, Carina Beckenuyte, Mohsin Butt, 2016).

H2: Post purchase (action) is negatively related to dissonance

According to Losciuto and Perloff (1967), consumers who experience less dissonance may grow devoted to a brand and, hence, be less likely to trade it in. Dissonant customers, on the other hand, are more likely to return the item, choose a different brand, and have lower intentions to make another purchase (Hunt, 1991; Kim, 2011). Scholars have examined many facets of post-purchase conduct subsequent to encountering dissonance. Richins (1983) looked at complaint conduct and unfavourable word of mouth. Sort products into three categories based on their behaviour after purchase: positive behaviours like repurchasing them; visible negative behaviours like complaining to the manufacturer or retailer; and non-visible negative behaviours like moving to a different brand and advising friends not to buy the product (Stephen Wilkins Carina Beckenuyte Mohsin butt, 2016).

H3: Dissonance is positively related to consumer behaviour

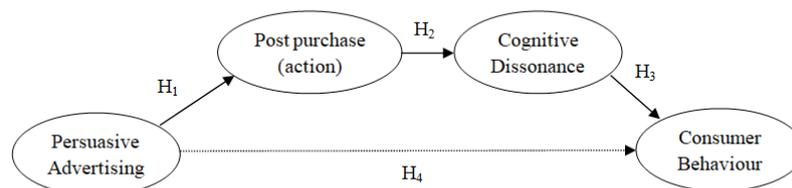
This paper is an attempt to identify the direct relationship between persuasive advertising and dissonance-affected consumer behaviour.

H4: Persuasive advertising is directly significant relationship to consumer behaviour

The conceptual model represent figure1 summarize the relationships and hypotheses for this study.

Figure 1

Conceptual model



Source: Danciu, (2014), Safna, (2018)

Note: thick lines are the hypothesis that are confirmed by empirical results, while the dotted lines are not supported by empirical results

METHODOLOGY

The data were gathered from consumers of durable products in Coimbatore city. A survey was the existing measuring scale in this study. This cross-sectional study was employed using the self-administration survey method; to utilize convenience sampling, voluntary participation was required. A total of 469 responses were gathered on consumers; 12 responses were removed for missing data. 457 valid responses were used for this study. Descriptive research design was used to conduct the study. Structural equation model (SEM) was applied to analyze the data using AMOS software.

MEASURES

This study utilizes existing survey instruments for post-purchase (action), dissonance, and consumer behaviour, and some questions were newly included for this study. Based on the study, some of the words and items were modified. The study items are represented in Table 2, and the questionnaire covered these constructs. This study adopted five point Likert's scale of strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1) measures the variables.

Table 2: Construct in the conceptual framework

| Variables | Sub variables | Statement | Code | Source |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|-------|---|
| Persuasive advertising | Factual information | Advertisement brings more factual information about the product | PA1 | Newly included |
| | | Advertisement highlights the functional features & benefits of the product | PA2 | |
| | Rational persuasion | Advertisement induced me giving more focus on the product attributes, quality, its problem solving capacity and performance | PA3 | |
| | | Advertisement influenced buying decision by logical interpretation of convincing proofs | PA4 | |
| | | Advertisement enhanced brand image of the product by cognitive messages and Rational appeals | PA5 | |
| | Coercion | Advertisement targeted my emotion and forced to purchase | PA6 | |
| | | Advertisement forced to make false decision | PA7 | |
| | Manipulation | Advertisement created false impression of products | PA8 | |
| | | Advertisement gave Inconsistent claimed facts | PA9 | |
| | | Advertisement created an impression of product or features but it was not true | PA10 | |
| | | Significant facts were hidden or not mentioned in advertisement | PA11 | |
| | | Advertisement exaggerated the product feature and benefit of the product | PA12 | |
| | | Advertisement contained an argument or statement that was too broad to have a clear meaning | PA13 | |
| | | The conclusion of the advertisement didn't supported the arguments but it reached the emotion of the consumer | PA14 | |
| | | Purchased a product only for favourite celebrity in that advertisement | PA15 | |
| Post purchase (action) | | After purchase were you satisfied the product | POST1 | Newly included |
| | | Will you recommend that product to others | POST2 | |
| | | I want to continue to use of the product | POST3 | |
| | | The product is emotionally attached to you | POST4 | |
| | | The product fulfils your expectation | POST5 | |
| Dissonance | Emotional discomfort | I was in despair | D1 | Jillian C. Sweeney 2000 |
| | | I resented it | D2 | |
| | | I felt scared | D3 | |
| | | I felt angry | D4 | |
| | | I felt frustrated | D5 | |
| | Wisdom of purchase | I wonder if I really need this product | D6 | |
| | | I wonder whether I should have bought anything at all | D7 | |
| | | I wonder if I have made the right choice | D8 | |
| | | I wonder if I have done the right thing in buying this product | D9 | |
| | Concern over deal | After I bought this product I wondered if I had been fooled | D10 | |
| | | After I bought this product I wondered if they had spun me a line | D11 | |
| | | After I bought this product I wondered whether there was something wrong with the deal I got | D12 | |
| Consumer behaviour | PB (positive behaviour) | Do you want to repetitively purchase the product | CB1 | Day and Landon (1976), Stephen Wilkins (2016) |
| | NVB (non visible negative behaviour) | After I bought this product I wondered alternative products are better | CB2 | |
| | VB (visible negative behaviour) | I would contact the shop to complain | CB3 | |

RESULTS

The CFA results indicate that all item estimates were statistically significant, and the model fit indicates that the data had a good fit with the model $X^2 = 52.323$, $P < .001$, $X^2/DF = 2.274$, $CFI = .978$, $IFI = .991$, $RMSEA = .055$ (Byrne, 2009). The final result of the modified measurement model suggests the model fit indicates $X^2 = 54.491$, $P < .001$, $X^2/DF = 2.413$, $CFI = .975$, $IFI = .990$, $RMSEA = .056$.

Figure 2 Hypothesis Model

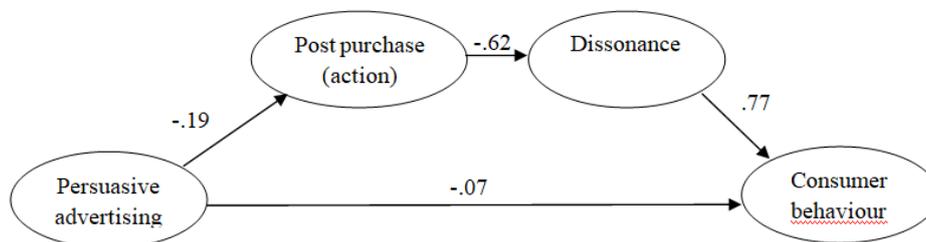


Table 3

| Hypothesis | Relationship | Estimates β | C.R | P value | Supported |
|----------------|---|-------------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| H ₁ | Persuasive Advertising → Post-Purchase (action) | -.19 | -4.922 | *** | Yes |
| H ₂ | Post-Purchase (action) → Dissonance | -.62 | -16.866 | *** | Yes |
| H ₃ | Dissonance → Consumer Behaviour | .77 | 17.712 | *** | Yes |
| H ₄ | Persuasive Advertising → Consumer Behaviour | -.07 | -1.698 | .089 | No |

Note: P value is less .001 is ***

All variables were significant except hypothesis H₄, which indicates that persuasive advertising has not directly impacted consumer behaviour. The result path shows that persuasive advertising ($\beta = -.19$), ($P < 0.001$) is negative influence on post-purchase (action), thus H₁ is supported to this study. Post-purchase (action) ($\beta = -.62$), ($P < 0.001$) negatively influences dissonance, thus H₂ is supported. Dissonance ($\beta = .77$), ($P < 0.001$) has positively impact on consumer behaviour, thus H₃ is supported. Persuasive advertising ($\beta = -.07$), ($P > 0.005$) were not directly relationship with consumer behaviour, thus H₄ is not supported.

DISCUSSION

This study focuses on analyzing the hypothetical relationship between persuasive advertising, post-purchase (action), dissonance, and consumer behaviour in Coimbatore city in the context of durable products.

First of all, persuasive advertising appears to be negatively influencing post-purchase (action); similarly, post-purchase (action) also appears to be negatively influencing dissonance. As we mentioned in the conceptual framework, prior studies show there is a negative effect between persuasive advertising and post-purchase (action) as well as post-purchase and dissonance because the consumers feel and assess that product with the advertisement claims if there is a gap between the claim of the product and their experience of the product or if they think it is misleading or does not fulfill their expectations. It creates a negative effect on the consumer; thus, hypotheses 1 and 2 refer to persuasive advertising that misleads consumers; it reflects the negative impact on post-purchase and dissonance; thus, H₁ and H₂ are significantly supported to the study. This study expects and prior studies show the dissonance has a positive impact on consumer behaviour. Because the dissonance is high, it reflects on consumer behaviour in both negative and positive ways, but this study only shows the relationship between the variables; the inner or sub-variables show the positive and negative effects of consumer behaviour (non-visible negative behaviour, visible negative behaviour, and positive behaviour). This study shows that the relationship between dissonance and consumer behaviour is highly significant; thus, H₃ is significantly supported to the study. Finally, this study attempts to identify the direct relationship between persuasive advertising and consumer behaviour, but the result shows there is no significant relationship between persuasive advertising and consumer behaviour.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that consumers are affected by persuasive advertising, and it's creating an imbalance between companies and consumers. When customers' interests conflict with the firms' objectives and they are unable to persuade them otherwise, the companies always choose to influence the customers. Due to its functions and position in the mix of marketing strategies used to satisfy consumer demands for more, better, and more diverse consumption, advertising plays a significant part in manipulating consumers. Advertisers ought to realise that more consumers especially the conscientious ones are aware of the interconnectedness of everything in their lives. As a result, they have to actively seek out the advantages that both parties stand to gain from an awareness of the influence of advertising. Advertisers need to understand that their content needs to be genuine. All of your communications with customers should be completely truthful and open. More than ever, a growing percentage of customers value authenticity, responsibility, and openness. It is imperative for advertisers to ensure that every element of their messaging is consistent with the values of their target audience. Businesses that live out their beliefs will gain the respect and allegiance of their consumers.

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