

Attitude Towards Advertisements: An Empirical Study on the Antecedents

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ABSTRACT

Advertising can be used both for short term benefits like creating awareness, conveying information etc., and for long term benefits like building brand image and reputation to the brands. But, it is estimated that only half of all the advertisements actually result in positive effects on the consumers' purchase behavior. So, there should be a better understanding about the consumers' preferences before designing ads so that it reaches the prospective customers and in turn results in a sale. The purpose of the research study is to investigate the factors that influence youth's attitude towards advertisements and its effect on the likelihood of adopting appropriate behavior. Structural equation modeling (SEM) is used to assess the influence of the factors on attitude towards advertising. It is found that among the four factors studied, only credibility, informative and pleasure/hedonic factors influence attitude towards the advertisement.

Keywords: Attitude Towards the Advertisement, Credibility, Informative, Pleasure/Hedonic

INTRODUCTION

Mass media advertising can be used to inform, educate and persuade audience to shape their attitude and intentions and push them to the next level, which is the buying process. Advertising can be used both for short term benefits (conveying new information, creating awareness, enhancing credibility, etc) and for long term benefits (building brand image, reputation and attaching emotional values to the brands). But, it is estimated that only half of all the advertisements actually result in positive effects on the consumers' purchase behavior or brand choice¹. According to National Youth Policy (2014)², youth are defined to be people in the age group of 15 years to 29 years. The sample unit for the study is the youth. A lot of previous studies have found that Indian youth represent a potential market for different products and their perceptions regarding different products and their advertising would be useful for marketers.

The purpose of the research study is to investigate the factors that influence youth's attitude towards

advertisements and its effect on the likelihood of adopting appropriate behavior. Structural equation modeling (SEM) is used to assess the relationship between factors and the difference of their effects. Through this research, attitude towards advertising among youth will extend the knowledge on young consumers and advertising effectiveness. The focus of this study is to find out the behavior towards advertising among youth in Chennai city only.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sciffman & Kanuk (2010), in their book on consumer behavior defined attitude as a learned tendency of individuals to behave in a positive or negative way consistently with respect to a given object. It can only be understood and not observed as it is an outcome of psychological process, and must be understood from what people say or what they do. Philip Kotler (2000) defined attitude as an emotional attachment towards an object or an idea which happens after personal evaluation of the same. An attitude is the result of a person's continuous

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evaluation of a concept or object, such as a person, a brand or a service (Arnould, et al., 2002). According to Thurstone (1928) attitudes are the sum of a person's feelings toward a given object.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE ADVERTISEMENT

Attitude towards the advertisement is among the most accepted measures of advertising effectiveness employed in academic research (LaTour & Henthorne, 1994; Pope, Voges, & Brown, 2004) and it mediates the relationship among advertising, brand attitudes and purchase intention (Lutz, MacKenzie, & Belch, 1983). Also, Mehta (2000) in his article on advertising attitudes and effectiveness found consumers' attitude towards advertising as an influencing factor for advertising effectiveness. (Lutz, 1985) defines attitude toward the advertisement as "a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion." Attitude toward the advertisement is "the recipients' affective reactions to the advertisement (Lutz et al., 1983)." Advertisements have been found to influence an individual's brand attitudes by modifying their beliefs regarding product attributes (Moore, 1983). Also, (MacKenzie, 1983) states that when consumers first develop an attitude toward the advertisement (Aad) after seeing the advertisement that in turn influences their attitude towards the brand and their purchase intentions (Wang, Sun, Lei, & Toncar, 2009) in their article to investigate attitudes toward online advertising, found five belief factors which were entertainment, information seeking, credibility, economy, and value corruption.

Credibility

Credibility of the advertisement refers to how truthful or believable the audience perceives the assertions made about the brand to be (West, 1994) defined credibility as the perceived believability of media content "beyond any proof of its contentions." Credibility along with message characteristics and audience characteristics, play an important part in effective communication (Zhu & He, 2002; Self, 1996) defined credibility as believability, trust, reliability, accuracy, fairness, objectivity, or a combination of these factors (Eisend, 2006) defined credibility as a person's perception of the truth of a piece of information.

Credibility as an area of advertising research became popular amongst researchers for its role in the persuasion process. Communication researchers have been using three different yardsticks such as message credibility, source credibility and media credibility to analyze credibility of an advertisement (Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus, & McCann, 2003; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986) discussed the determinants of Ad Credibility in terms of these three factors, the perceived claim discrepancy of the ad (message credibility), the credibility of the advertiser (source credibility) and the credibility of advertising in general. Herbig and Milewicz (1995) suggested that credibility is related to the extent to which, what is said matches with what is done and in other words the credibility of the message. The exaggerations in the ad may lead to consumer think that the ad is not credible. Message content is evaluated by the customers keeping in mind the past experiences and/or information with respect to the advertised brand. Advertiser Credibility or source credibility is the perceived truthfulness and honesty of the sponsor of the advertisement. If the marketer for the brand is credible enough, then the ad given by the marketer is also credible. The consumers' accepting or rejecting a message in the advertisement depend directly on the marketer's positive image or otherwise the source credibility (Ohanian, 1990). Credibility of the medium of advertising is also as important as the credibility of the advertisement itself (Bae, Wright, & Taylor, 2001). Bae et al. (2001) in their study found media credibility as a dimension of advertisement credibility and concluded that credible medium of advertisements result in effective advertisements. Goldsmith and Lafferty (1999) in their research on corporate credibility and consumers' attitude found that advertising credibility is a key factor that affects the formation of consumers' attitude and behavior. In this research, credibility of the advertisement is measured with the help on two statements on message credibility (believable, genuine), one each on source credibility (trustworthy) and advertising credibility.

Informative

Advertising is attractive to firms as a means through which they may convey information to consumers. Advertising gives useful information about which products to buy. Informative advertising conveys information to prospective customers about a product's features, price,

and availability. Economists have contended that there is a direct relationship between value of advertising and the information it provides the consumer. However, it is not clear exactly how much information, consumers need, is actually conveyed in most advertisements.

Stigler (1961) in his model on optimal consumer search behavior explains that by conveying the information which consumers were searching for consumers' search costs is reduced through informative advertising. Stigler explains that such informative advertisements results in a reduction in price dispersion which is good for the consumers. Nelson (1974) in his article on advertising as information argues how much information does advertising provides to consumers. Advertising is not the only aid consumers have to get information about the product rather they rely on other sources such as information from relatives and friends (Nelson, 1974). It all depends on the type of product, if it is a search product advertisements give direct information whereas if it is an experience good, advertisements give indirect information. When the advertisement contains direct information about the existence, availability, usage or price of a product, the informative content in the clear advertisement is perfect. Providing information to the consumers about any product, its availability, quality and other aspects is one of the most important functions of advertising (Rubin, 2002). The ability of the consumers to seek particular information from the advertisement acts as a positive predictor for the formation of their attitude towards the advertisement and thereby the particular brand (Wang, et al., 2009). Ramaprasad and Thurwanger (1998) found from their study on the informative aspect of advertising that there is a strong positive relationship exists between the informative advertisements and consumers' attitude towards advertising. Haghirian and Inoue (2007) study on informative aspect of advertising too found similar results.

Good for Economy

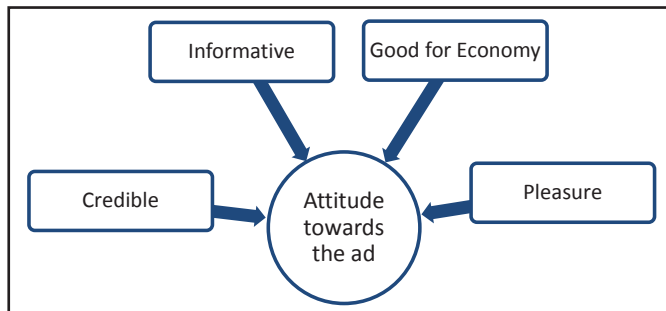
Marcel Bleustein-Blanchet, the father of modern French advertising says that the level of advertising investment in a country is directly proportional to the standard of living of the people in that country. Advertising is seen as a vehicle for helping consumers assess value, through price as well as other information such as quality, availability

and reputation (Wells, et al., 2009). It provides price-value information, thereby creating a more rational economy. Rauch (2013) found two different views of the economic aspect of advertising. When the advertisement for products was persuasive in nature, it was able to convince people to buy more of the products and thereby increased the price of the products. But on the other hand, when the advertisement for the products was informative in nature, it gave people better information about products and allowed them to make more discerning choices and thereby reduced the price of the products. But nowadays, advertisements for different products are both informative and persuasive, which makes it difficult to analyze the effect on prices. Belch and Belch (2008) in their book on advertising explains how advertising can be good for the economy. They explain that advertising creates a demand which expedites the adoption process of new products and technologies by consumers which in turn creates employment opportunities, reduces the cost of production. Also, advertising creates healthy competition between producers which results in reduced price of the products, bringing in innovative products in the market and thereby increase the consumption and increases the standard of living of the consumers.

Pleasure

Woltman Elpers, Wedel, and Pieters (2003) explain the measure of entertainment in an advertisement as the degree to which it contains "exciting, warm, and fun loving material that makes the commercial pleasant to watch". Other authors have explained entertainment in promotions as substance that is lively, imaginative, inventive, or sharp (Aaker & Bruzzone, 1981). Either humor or creative messages or soothing music are some of the entertainment aspects present in most advertisements today. The presence of positive entertainment in commercials can make them more engaging and is thought to be a powerful technique for catching viewers' initial attention and holding their enthusiasm to see the whole advertisement. MacKenzie et al. (1986) found that entertaining advertisements evokes positive influence on the advertisement which directly affects the consumers' purchase intent. Research on creative content has additionally demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between entertaining content in advertisements and brand assessments and purchase intentions (Keller, 1987; Yang & Smith,

2009). Entertainment aspect in advertisements increases the persuasiveness of an advertisement and influence purchase both directly and indirectly. Also, (Ducoffe, 1996) explains that an advertisement's perceived levels of entertainment, information, and irritation influences advertising value and that in turn influence attitudes toward ads.



Source: Ling, Phew, and Chai (2010)

Fig. 1: Factors Influencing Consumers' Attitude Towards Advertising

Hypotheses Developed

After analysing past research on attitude towards advertising and after understanding the research gap, hypotheses were developed for this research. The four hypotheses are:

H1: Credibility of the ad message positively influence consumers' attitude towards advertising.

H2: Informative of the ad message positively influence consumers' attitude towards advertising.

H3: Pleasure of the ad message positively influence consumers' attitude towards advertising.

H4: Good for economy of the ad message positively influence consumers' attitude towards advertising.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted on youth belonging to the age group of eighteen years and twenty nine years using structured questionnaire. Studies on youth have been important in consumer research for many years because, youth seek to identify and establish their own personalities and behavior (Holbrook & Schindler, 1989). Secondly,

youth can easily influence people around them with their opinions and decisions (Grant & Waite, 2003). Thirdly, from the marketing point of view, youth are a specialized market segment that forms a prospective customer base (Feldman, 1999). This research was exploratory in nature as an attempt was made to identify how youth in Chennai is influenced by a few factors that enable them to derive an understanding about advertisement and formation of attitude towards the advertisements in question. A primary research was conducted on a sample of 300 students studying in various colleges in and around Chennai. The researcher used multistage sampling method to select the 300 respondents for the study. To identify the different strata for data collection, first Chennai city was divided into four regions based on parliament constituents. From among each constituency three colleges were selected and twenty five students from each college were selected as respondents. The twenty five respondents were selected after collecting names from different departments of the college and then ordering them based on date of birth. Then the students corresponding to the odd numbers were selected as respondents. The basic objective was to get a sample which was able to closely represent the population to be considered for the study. Two hundred and sixty seven respondents returned the questionnaires, of which there were seventeen incomplete questionnaires which were rejected and a total of 250 valid questionnaires (response rate of 83.33%) were accepted for the study. The questionnaire consists of two parts, first part with questions on the demographic details of the respondents and the second with questions based on the conceptual variables. Five point likert scale ranging from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree was used as the measurement scale for the variables. Previous studies used similar scales (Munusamy & Wong, 2007; Wang, Sun, Lei, & Toncar 2009; Eze & Lee, 2012).

The items for the questionnaire were adopted from different sources. The statements for 'Credibility' variable were taken from (Kargaonkar & Wolin, 2002) with Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.86. The statements for the other independent variables, 'informative', 'pleasure' and 'good for economy' were adopted from (Ramaprasad & Thurwanger, 1998) with original Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.772, 0.759 and 0.658 respectively. The statements for dependent variable 'attitude towards the ad' were adopted from (Yang, 2000) with original Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.807.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 1 illustrates the demographic profile of the respondents who participated in the study. Majority of

the respondents were male (61.6%) compared to female respondents (38.4%). Most of the respondents' Family monthly income is Rs. 10000 to Rs. 19999 (40.4%) followed by Rs. 20000 to Rs. 39999 categories (30.8%).

Table 1: Table Showing the Demographic Profile of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	154	61.6	61.6
	Female	96	38.4	100.0
Income level (per month)	Below 10000	12	4.8	4.8
	10000 to 19999	101	40.4	45.2
	20000 to 39999	77	30.8	76.0
	40000 to 59999	38	15.2	91.2
	60000 and above	22	8.8	100.0

Table no.2 presents the mean values, standard deviation values for the each variable. The mean values for the variables (Credibility, Good for economy and Informative) are more than 3, which mean that the respondents agree that the factors are useful in assessing the attitude of consumers towards advertisements. Whereas, Pleasure/hedonic variable yielded a mean value of 2.47 which

indicate the respondents tend to be neutral towards this variable. The Cronbach's Alpha was used to verify the internal consistency of the factors. The Cronbach's Alpha value for all the variables is more than the acceptable level of 0.7 as specified by (Nunnally, 1978). Therefore, the reliability of all variables of the study is acceptable.

Table 2: Table Showing the Mean, Standard Deviation and Reliability Value for the Variables

Particulars	Credibility of advertisement	Pleasure /Hedonic	Good for the Economy of the country	Information source	Attitude towards advertisement
N	250	250	250	250	250
Mean	3.5720	2.4780	4.2947	3.6633	3.7400
Std. Deviation	1.05488	1.17987	.73500	.87957	.88233
Cronbach Alpha	.801	.865	.807	.749	.902

Fig. 2 Showing the CFA for the Attitude towards Advertisement Factors

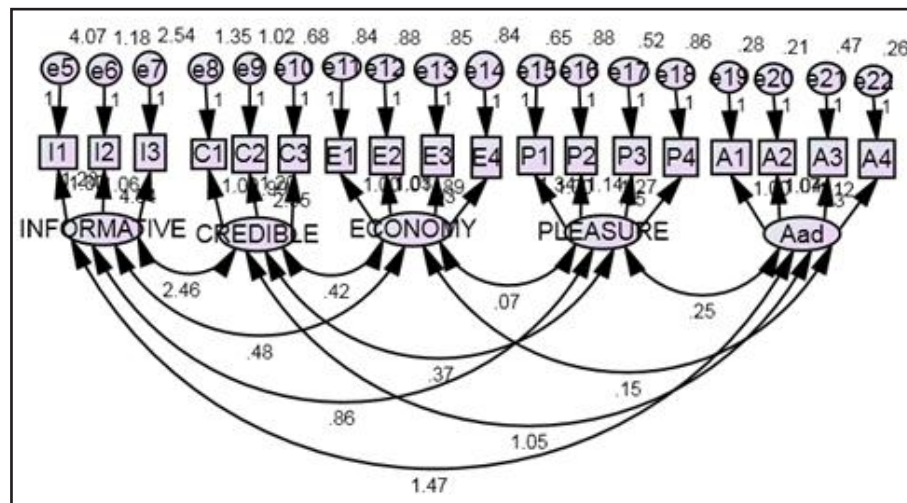


Table 3: Table Showing the Model Fit Indices Values for the CFA

<i>Model</i>	<i>CMIN</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>CMIN/df</i>	<i>GFI</i>	<i>AGFI</i>	<i>NFI</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	<i>RMR</i>
Attitude towards Advertising	137.413	125	.211	1.099	.944	.923	.952	.995	.020	.086

The chi square value of 137.413 is large and significant and the number of variables considered and the parameters calculated are large enough to explain model fit. The goodness of fit indices like GFI, AGFI, NFI and CFI values are more than 0.9, the CMIN/DF value is less than 3 at 125 degrees of freedom, and the badness of fit index RMSEA is 0.020 is within the acceptable fit range of 0.05 to 0.08. Also, the low and high values of RMSEA range from 0.00 to 0.038. Only RMR value of 0.086 is more than the acceptable limit of 0.05 to 0.08. The goodness and badness model fit indices explain that this

model is good enough and explain the attitude towards advertisement factors.

Construct validity is the extent to which a set of measured items actually reflect the theoretical latent construct they are designed to measure. Construct validity is made up of four important components: - convergent validity, discriminant validity, nomological validity and the face validity. Confirmatory factor analysis is used to assess the construct validity of the proposed measurement theory.

Table 4: Table Showing the Factor Loadings for the Five Factors Considered

	<i>CREDIBLE</i>		<i>PLEASURE</i>		<i>INFOMATIVE</i>		<i>ECONOMY</i>		<i>Aad</i>
C1	0.681	P1	0.755	I1	0.632	E1	0.723	Aad1	0.812
C2	0.843	P2	0.797	I2	0.627	E2	0.726	Aad2	0.873
C3	0.815	P3	0.826	I3	0.884	E3	0.726	Aad3	0.79
		P4	0.787			E4	0.689	Aad4	0.877

Convergent validity shows the extent to which indicators of a personality factor converge or share a high proportion of variance in common. The factor loadings values, the construct validity values and the average variances extracted values all should exceed 0.5 for acceptable

model fit for internal consistency. Here, in this confirmatory factor analysis of the attitude towards advertisement model, all the convergent validity determinant values are above acceptable limit.

Table 5: Table Showing the Average Variances Extracted and the Composite Reliability

	<i>CREDIBLE</i>	<i>PLEASURE</i>	<i>INFOMATIVE</i>	<i>ECONOMY</i>	<i>Aad</i>
Items	3	4	3	4	4
AVE	0.60788	0.62489	0.510272	0.511225	0.702244
Construct Reliability	0.801	0.865	0.749	0.804	0.902

Average variance extracted (AVE) = (sum of the square of factor loadings) / {(sum of the square of factor loadings) + (sum of the error variances)}.

Composite reliability (CR) = (square of the sum of factor loadings) / {(square of the sum of factor loadings) + (square of the sum of error variances)}.

Table 6: Table Showing the Squared Inter-Construct Correlation between Factors

			<i>Inter-construct Correlation</i>	<i>Squared correlation</i>
ECONOMY	<-->	CREDIBLE	0.254	0.065
ECONOMY	<-->	PLEASURE	0.21	0.044
ECONOMY	<-->	Aad	0.308	0.095
ECONOMY	<-->	INFORMATIVE	0.297	0.088
CREDIBLE	<-->	PLEASURE	0.082	0.007
CREDIBLE	<-->	Aad	0.195	0.038
CREDIBLE	<-->	INFORMATIVE	0.26	0.068
PLEASURE	<-->	Aad	0.339	0.115
PLEASURE	<-->	INFORMATIVE	0.385	0.148
Aad	<-->	INFORMATIVE	0.591	0.349

Discriminant validity shows the extent to which a personality factor is distinct from other personality factors (uni-dimensional). From Table 5, it can be inferred that all the construct average variance extracted estimates are larger than the corresponding squared inter-construct correlation estimates. This proves that the measured variables have more in common with the factors they are associated with than they do with the other factors. So, each factor is distinct from the other factors. For acceptable convergent validity and discriminant validity, each factor loading should be greater than 0.50, average variance extracted (AVE) should be greater than 0.50 and square root of AVE should be greater than each

correlation coefficient. All constructs in the model satisfy the requirements for construct validity and cronbach alpha for the factors are greater than 0.70, which also proves the reliability of the scales used.

Measurement Model

The structural equation modeling on attitude towards advertisement model is developed and analyzed using AMOS software. The exogenous variables are the factors like credibility, informative, good for economy and pleasure which influence the endogenous variable, attitude towards advertisement.

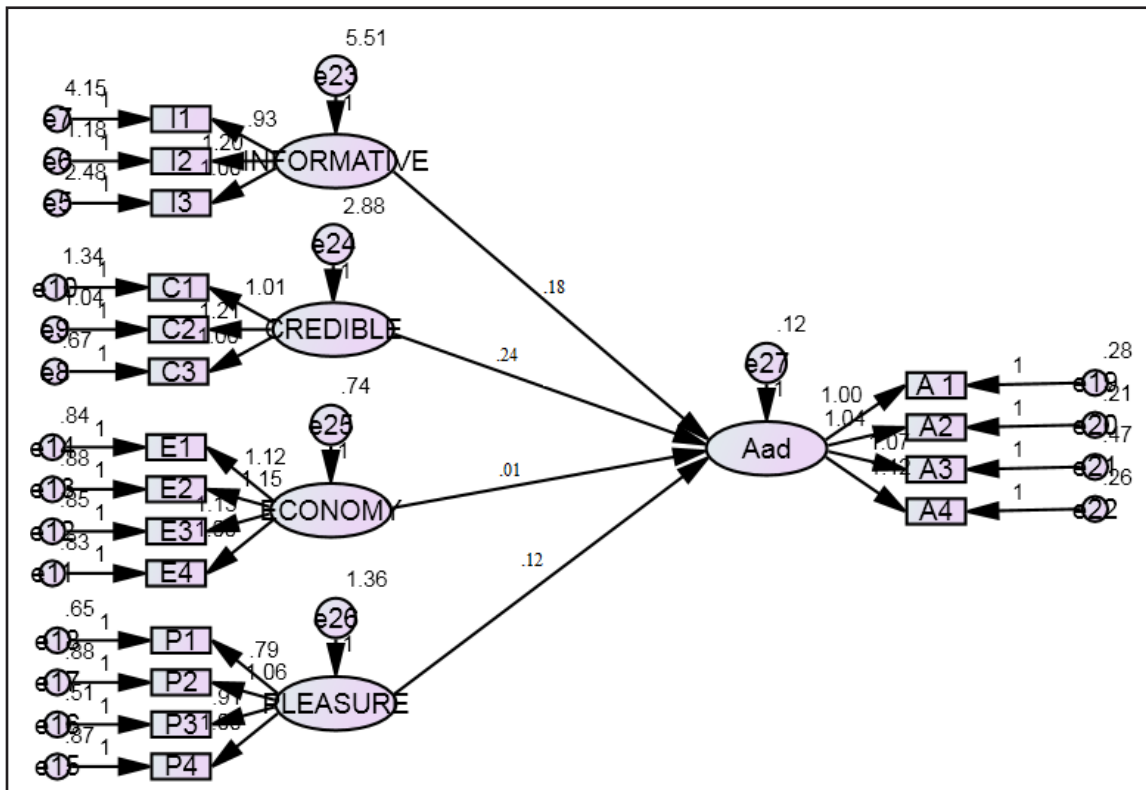


Fig. 3: Figure Showing the Attitude Towards Advertisement Model

Table 7: Table Showing the Estimates for the Attitude towards Advertisement Model

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Decision
Aad <--- INFORMATIVE	.177	.032	5.557	***	SUPPORTED
Aad <--- CREDIBLE	.236	.037	6.427	***	SUPPORTED
Aad <--- ECONOMY	.013	.046	.275	.784	NOT SUPPORTED
Aad <--- PLEASURE	.120	.047	2.555	.011**	SUPPORTED

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

From the estimates shown in Table 7, it is inferred that among the exogenous variables, credible, informative and pleasure are having an influence on the endogenous variable, attitude towards the advertisement whereas good for economy does not influence attitude towards the

advertisement. From the model regression values, it can be inferred that, credibility (0.24) and informative (0.18) nature of the advertisement are the most important factors that influence attitude towards advertisement followed by pleasure/hedonic (0.12). Good for economy (0.013) has the weakest influence on attitude towards advertisements.

Table 8: Table Showing the Model Fit Indices Values for the Attitude Towards Advertisement Model

<i>Model</i>	<i>CMIN</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>CMIN/df</i>	<i>GFI</i>	<i>AGFI</i>	<i>NFI</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	<i>RMR</i>
Attitude towards Advertising	248.139	131	.000	1.894	.902	.872	.890	.944	.06	.350

The chi square value of 248.14 is large and significant ($p=0.000$) and the number of variables considered and the parameters calculated are large enough to explain model fit. The goodness of fit indices like AGFI, and NFI values are nearer to 0.9, and GFI and CFI value are more than 0.9, the CMIN/DF value is less than 3 at 131 degrees of freedom, and the badness of fit index RMSEA is 0.06 is within the acceptable fit range of 0.05 to 0.08. Also, the low and high values of RMSEA range from 0.048 to 0.071. Only RMR value of 0.350 is more than the acceptable limit of 0.05 to 0.08. The goodness and badness model fit indices explain that this model is good enough and explain the attitude towards advertisement factors.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this study, there is a positive effect of credibility and product information on attitudes towards advertising with a p -value significant at 0.001 levels. This finding is similar to that of (Petrovici, Marinova, Marinov, & Lee, 2007) in their study on personal uses and perceived social and economic effects of advertising in Bulgaria and Romania. Hence, hypotheses 1 and 2 are supported. In addition pleasure/hedonic aspect of advertising were supported with a p -value significant at 0.05 levels. This means, this variable is also important in designing adverting campaign for businesses, because belief in the entertainment aspect of advertisement, tend to generate positive attitudes towards advertising. Tsang and Tse (2005) in their study on a hedonic model for effective web marketing made similar findings. Only good for economy does not have an influence on the attitudes towards advertising. This finding indicates that there is no significant impact of economic aspect of advertisements

with respect to consumers' attitude towards advertising. Hence, hypothesis 4 is not supported.

It is therefore concluded that youth in Chennai, maintain their belief that advertising mainly provides information. This relates well to their concern about the truthfulness of messages in advertisements. Moreover, being young adults, they generally find advertising with hedonic or amusing elements more appealing. Product information, hedonism and credibility are shown to be consistent predictors of attitude towards advertising. This understanding will improve communication in advertising activities by conveying the right message to the right people. Among the different integrated marketing communication tools, advertising will continue to be one of the main choices of the organizations to demonstrate their superiority over their competitors and knowing more about youths' attitudes towards advertising will surely give them an advantage over others (Munusamy & Wong, 2007). This will also help to predict consumers' attitude towards specific advertisement, thus reinforcing the organization's competitive advantage.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study would assist researchers who may be interested in conducting similar studies in the future and would find this paper useful to understand the market conditions in Chennai with respect to youth. In addition, the findings from this study will be useful to the advertising agencies to understand the various effects of advertising towards consumers and their preferences and their behaviour. Although the research findings provide some new insights, there are limitations to the study. The restriction of the boundary set in selecting youth as

samples resulted in the findings cannot be generalized across all the age groups and also the sample is taken from Chennai city, which even though a cosmopolitan city, the results cannot be generalized with the population of different cities in the country.

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