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# The effect of advertising on Iranian audience: a study of male and female attitudes

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of advertising on Iranian audience using the total sample of 274 Iranian male and female. The study used the t-test model to determine the significant differences between Iranian male and female attitudes on different facets of advertising if any. As the researcher found that there is a statistically significant difference between the Iranian male and female in advertisements which create needs but do not fulfill them perfectly, this type of study would help the industry to realize the need of measuring the pulse of the general consumers from time to time and fulfill their needs. Knowledge of these in different segments of society will help the industry and advertising agencies in the development of creative strategy and media planning for targeting specific groups. At the same time, the practice of advertising should be improved and its credibility has to be enhanced among its recipients. This research has tried to demonstrate that there are some people who always think the positive consequence of advertising and at the same time there may be others who think negatively the consequences of advertising. Therefore, the long-term goal of the industry should be to improve its performance over time.

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## Introduction

Advertising in the present world, is not only being used by business organizations but also by a large numbers of non-profit oriented organizations. Advertising has been a major communication tool, is highly pervasive and reaches to people through various mass media vehicles. Advertising influences everyone, like other important institutions in the society, such as schools, marriage and religion. Hence advertising has become an institution in itself. It is needless to say that advertising in this era of modernity has gained profound recognition and importance all over the world as an indispensable tool of business. On account of its role in the business, advertising has grown tremendously both qualitatively and quantitatively. Today advertising is omni present if not omni potent. Consumers are confronted with substantial daily doses of advertising in multiple media. Every one seems to hold on opinion about various aspects of advertising ranging from negative to positive opinion. Advertising is not only the subject study of business practitioners, but also of economists, social thinkers, and anthropologists and public policy makers (Poolay, 1986). Most of these people have made an attempt to study communication impact of advertising on the society and consequently raised many social issues arising due to advertising.

Advertising has been both praised and criticized since quite long time therefore there are two schools of thought, in this respect. The first school belongs to business people including managers, who argue that advertising helps the business by providing the relevant information and by persuading the consumers, thus it helps the business to flourish. This group feels that advertising is a marketing tool and therefore it should be used to promote the products and services. The protagonists of advertising claim that by informing prospective and current consumers about the various products and services, it helps them

to take wise purchase decisions. On the other hand those who criticize advertising, which include mostly non business people such as economists, historians, sociologists, public policy makers and politicians, think that advertising creates an adverse influence on the people, particularly in terms of its social and economic impact (Poolay, 1986).

Keeping in mind the controversial nature of advertising the present study makes an attempt to discuss the different roles -- both positive and negative-- advertising plays in the society in general and in the business in particular. This study is divided to four sections. The first section deals with the general role advertising plays in the business. This section looks at the various aspects of advertising and its role in helping the business in general and in developing the marketing strategies in particular. The second section deals with the role of advertising in the development of various marketing strategies. Here an attempt has been made to cover the influence of advertising on various marketing components. The third section deals with the criticisms leveled against advertising from various quarters, and discuss as various issues of advertising related to its regulations, competitiveness, ethical and social issues. Last section attempts to come out with the rationale and of the present study the statement of the research problem.

It is needless to say that on account of establishment of small scale as well as large scale industrial units all over the globe and production of thousands of goods has increased the importance of advertising in the cooperate world today. Therefore, advertising emerged as an indispensable tool of marketing. Hence, both profit and non-profit organizations are increasingly using advertising for furthering their objectives. In fact, advertising has witnessed a tremendous growth during the last few decades. The competition has become extremely intense in consumer and industrial goods. In the changed market scenario there is increased concern for the role of advertising in

society and its necessity as a business and marketing tool. In the light of sweeping changes on the marketing front, there is need to study and analyze on different facets of advertising. Advertising not only attracted the attention of people who are connected with business but people from different fields also expressed their opinion on various aspects of advertising. Some of their opinion goes in favour of advertising and some against it. These opinions basically reflect their attitude towards various facets of advertising. One important question is whether these opinions also coincide with the attitudes of all people who are exposed to advertising in their daily lives. Therefore, the present study also tries to verify whether the general public shares the intellectual criticisms of advertising. Keeping this in mind, various facets of advertising have been delineated. The attitudes of the respondents have been investigated in terms of various facets of advertising. For this purpose, a comprehensive scale was developed after an exhaustive literature search.

On the basis of different facets of advertising the researcher has made an attempt to analyze and compare the attitudes of Iranian male and female respondents. The attitudes of the respondents have been measured on a five-point scale. Further statistical techniques have been used to find out the significant differences, if any, among Iranian respondents.

#### **Literature Review**

A number of studies have been conducted to measure the attitudes of people towards advertising. In the majority of attitude towards advertising studies, survey research has been used to assess opinions about the institution of advertising systematically (i.e., attitude toward advertising in general), as well as attitudes about specific economic, social, and personal functions of advertising. Research investigating perceptions of the value of advertising has involved not only U.S. consumers (Barksdale and Dargen 1972; Barksdale, Darden, and Perreault 1976; Barksdale and perreault 1980; Barksdale et al. 1982; Pollay and Mittal 1993; Shavitt, Lowrey, and Heafner 1998; Yoon, 1995), but also consumers from Britain, Chile, Germany, and Russia (Andrews, Durvasula, and Netemeyer 1994; Franch, Braksdale, and Perreault 1998; Manso-Pinto and Diaz 1997; O'Donohoe 1995; Wills and Ryans 1982; Witkowski and Kellner, 1998). Other studies have examined the attitudes of CEOs, marketing managers, and managers in other functional areas (Greyser and Reece 1971; Kanter 1988/89; Webster, 1980). Furthermore, students have often served as respondents in studies investigating opinions about advertising (Andrews 1989; Durvasula et al. 1993; Haller, 1974).

During the literature survey the researcher has come across large number of studies, both theoretical and empirical, which have thrown light on various aspects of advertising. Some of these aspects highlight the positive dimensions of advertising in the business and some aspects point out towards the negative dimensions of advertising on the society, economy, consumers and people at large. Several studies have illustrated that attitudes toward the institution of advertising are a function of a consumer's perceptions of the various aspects of advertising, such as its informational value and its use of idealized images (Andrews, Durvasula, and Netemeyer 1994; Muehling 1987; Pollay and Mittal, 1993). Other research streams have addressed public policy issues relevant to marketing and advertising practices (Calfee and Ringold 1994; Ford and Calfed, 1986) and advertising as it relates to societal concern, such as its impact on the moral fabric of societies (Belk and Pollay 1985; Ewen 1988; McCreacken 1988; Pollay 1986;

Tharp and Scott, 1990). These investigations have yielded important insights about consumers' opinions of advertising, but most have done so in the context of subjects' responses to researcher-generated questions.

The above discussion on advertising as a business tool has shown that marketers consider it an important tool in persuading consumers to purchase their products and services. Bauer and Greyser (1968) suggest that advertising has two broad effects on society: economic and social. Their work and that of Polly and Mittal (1993) have served as a foundation for researchers examining consumers' attitudes toward advertising. Keeping this in mind an attempt has been made to measure attitudes of Iranian consumers on this facet of advertising i.e. advertising as business tool. As this facet is multidimensional, it has been converted to seven statements. On these statements the attitudes of consumers was measured on a five-point Likert scale. These seven statements encompass the various dimensions of "advertising as a business tool"

With regard to advertising as a source of product information, it appears that sentiment has become more favorable during the past three decades. Barksdale and colleagues' studies in the 1970s and early 1980s (Barksdale and Darden 1972; Barksdale and Parreault 1980; Barksdale et al. , 1982) find that, on average, a majority of respondents do not think that advertisements are reliable sources of information about either product quality or product performance. However, Calfee and Ringold (1994), reporting on an investigation of studies from 1974 to 1989, state that a "strong and unchanging majority" (approximately 70%) endorse advertising as a source of information. Pollay and Mittal (1993) and Shavitt, Lowrey, and Hefner (1998), in more recent studies, concur that audiences use advertising to find out about local sales and particular brands, as well as product and service availability. Both of these latter studies report that younger audiences think of advertising as an information source more than do older audiences.

One of the major social criticisms against advertising is with the so-called encouragement to materialistic comforts by advertisements. Critics blame that there is a definite link between advertising and materialism. Materialism has been conceived or defined by people in different ways, but in essence it means the desire to obtain tangible goods and to give undue importance to material interests (weight, Winter and Zeighler, 1989 ; Aaker, Batra and Myers, 2000). Prior studies on attitude toward advertising have employed items such as "Advertising persuades people to buy a lot of making us a more materialistic society, overly interested in buying and owning things" and found that many consumers are concerned that advertising is causally related to people making unneeded purchases (Haller 1974; Pollay and Mittal, 1993). Research has also considered compulsive buying and materialism as they relate to advertising (Belk 1985; O'Guinn and Faber 1989; Richins, 1996). Advertising engages consumers in excessive buying and /or compulsive shopping. Some believe that advertising causes people to buy things that may not need. Some were concerned about the materialistic value associated with this excessive purchasing.

Iran has undergone profound social, political and ideological changes over the past two decades, following the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The current research is focused on the ways in which these changes are so have been reflected and embodied in language, and in particular in the language of commercial press advertising in Iran. Mohammad Amouzadeh

(1998) on the basis of his findings tried to describe theories and analyzed the changes found before 1979 and after 1990, with regard to the varying effects on sociolinguistic norms and to relate the changes to external factors in the ideology and social history of Iran. His findings also address the wider issues of relations between language and ideology in indifferent kinds of societies, in particular Islamic societies. His investigations also shed height on Persian commercial advertisements from abroad, where minority migrants groups use the Persian language. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of advertisements from pre- and post revolutionary times, as well as advertising from abroad, form part of empirical foundation of his investigation. Mohammad Amouzadeh study demonstrates that advertising language in Iran does not directly reflect the society. He concludes that advertising language in Iran does not function the same way as it does in western countries.

Advertising as a concept has always been one of the main pillars of any healthy free market economy. In Iran, like the rest of the world, it has been used by various industries for years in order to make their presence known to the public. Nonetheless, unlike other countries, this dynamic industry in Iran has gone through a number of phases that are rarely seen elsewhere in the world.

Before the Islamic revolution, advertising as a whole was modeled after those in the western countries. During this period, the industry had adapted to all the effective promotional tools needed for the Iranian market by using various media mix. The most commonly used advertising tools during this period were: print advertising, billboards, sweepstakes, & TV & radio commercials. However, with the revolution, the face of advertising in Iran completely changed overnight. The situation was further worsened with the onset of Iran-Iraq war when the presence of the government became more conspicuous in the economy and the private sector became less important.

As a result of these changes and the new atmosphere of anti-capitalism in the country, advertising was completely rejected as a by-product of westernization. As a result, it became less and less visible in most media mix, except for those in the print media. Unfortunately, even in cases where advertising was deemed to be appropriate and non-western, it was done in such a manner that it did not have the same level of creativity and intelligence present in the previous era. This trend of advertising bashing continued for a number of years until the end of the war. Once the war was finished, Iran started a new era of economical development and expansion. These economical reforms did not take place at once, but rather the government started to relinquish its control on the economy by allowing various private individuals to bid for its assets.

From the beginning of 1990's, the Iranian economy has started to change once again, becoming freer market oriented. In such a new atmosphere, advertising has also become more acceptable and less taboo as a way of promoting one's product or service. Numerous companies have started their activity in Iran, by focusing their attention to the needs & characteristics of the Iranian market. The growth of these agencies has also changed the face of advertising related media mix, especially that of TV & Radio. Nowadays, commercials have become an integral part of any TV program in Iran. Likewise, it has become more difficult to go anywhere in any of the big cities in Iran and try to avoid big billboards. At the present time, advertising is running a very interesting course in Iran, & as the Iranian consumer market reaches a level of maturity and competitiveness, it will

get bigger. The situation will be further influenced as the Iranian economy becomes more open to foreign investments in the future.

As a result, it is logical to expect that as time elapses, more companies will be employing advertising as an important part of their marketing strategy in order to achieve successful market coverage. Only time can tell how long this new trend will last. By the invention of the Internet, a brand new channel has opened up to many companies. If the government is keen on improving Iran's economy, it should always view advertising as one of the main venues of keeping the economy healthy and thus stimulating competition amongst the various parties. This in itself will indirectly lead to the reduction of prices and the improvements of the products offered by various industries to consumers in Iran.

### Research Hypotheses

In order to accomplish the above-mentioned objectives, delineated in the proceeding section, the researcher has formulated the following null and alternative hypotheses for each facet of advertising and for each group of consumers. These groups are Iranian male and Iranian female consumers

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Various groups of consumers hold similar attitudes towards advertising as a business tool

**H<sub>a1</sub>:** Various groups of consumers differ significantly in holding attitudes towards advertising as a business tool

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Various groups of consumers hold similar attitudes towards advertising's informative role

**H<sub>a2</sub>:** Various groups of consumers differ significantly in holding attitudes towards advertising's informative role

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Various groups of consumers hold similar attitudes towards advertising and materialism

**H<sub>a3</sub>:** Various groups of consumers differ significantly in holding attitudes towards advertising and materialism

**H<sub>04</sub>:** Various groups of consumers hold similar attitudes towards influence of advertising on adults and children

**H<sub>a4</sub>:** Various groups of consumers differ significantly in holding attitudes towards influence of advertising on adults and children

**H<sub>05</sub>:** Various groups of consumers hold similar attitudes towards advertising and media

**H<sub>a5</sub>:** Various groups of consumers differ significantly in holding attitudes towards advertising and media

**H<sub>06</sub>:** Various groups of consumers hold similar attitudes towards present status of Iranian advertising

**H<sub>a6</sub>:** Various groups of consumers differ significantly in holding attitudes towards present status of Iranian advertising

### Research Methodology

In order to accomplish the stated objectives of the study and the research hypotheses there was a need for a research instrument, which can measure the attitudes of Iranian male and female consumers towards the various facets of advertising. The researcher had surveyed various studies in this area and found one research instrument most suitable for the purpose of the present study, which was developed by Khan and Khan (2002). In their study they have also measure the attitudes of consumers on the six facets of advertising. in the above mentioned.

To encompass the different facets of advertising, a comprehensive literature search was carried out. This review examined the viewpoints of those who criticized the role of advertising in the society as well as of those who feel that advertising plays a positive role. On the basis of this review of literature, a detailed list of different facets of advertising was

prepared. The main aspects that were considered were listed below:

1. Advertising as a business tool (seven statements)
2. Advertising and information (five statements)
3. Advertising and materialism (six statements)
4. Advertising influence on adults and children (seven statements)
5. The role of advertising in media (five statements)
6. Status of Iranian advertising (eight statements)

Keeping in mind of these aspects, a large number of statements and questionnaires were generated. In order to strike a balance, statements having both negative and positive connotations were prepared. At this stage it was thought proper to generate as many statements as possible in the item pool and finally the breakdown were thirty-eight statements with respect to different facets of advertising.

After considering different types of attitude scales, their choice was narrowed down to Likert type scale because of its versatility, ease of construction, ease of administration and the ability to simultaneously measure the intensity and direction of attitudes. The use of Likert scale also allows inclusion of large number of diverse statements believed to be necessary to comprehensively measure all types of constructs. A five-point interval scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” was used to measure the response to each statement (items).

As this instrument was developed and tested and further documented by Khan and Khan (2002) it was thought to use the same instrument in its exact form. In the present study therefore the attitudinal questionnaire has been used both for Iranian male and female consumers. In order to facilitate proper understanding of the statements (items), in addition to the English version of the questionnaire a Persian translation has been done for each statement for the Iranian consumers. This was necessary as most of the Iranian respondents were not aware of English or even if they were aware they are not good in understanding English. Therefore Persian version of the same instrument (questionnaire) was prepared to get the accurate and honest responses from Iranian consumers who do not have good understanding of English.

After the questionnaire was developed, the next research dimension was to administer it to a representative sample of the population from Iran. As it was difficult to administer the questionnaire on the entire national populations of the country, therefore, it was decided to select two cities—Tehran and Qum—from Iran. The selection of cities from was largely based on the convenience and easy approach by the researcher. The procedure of selecting the sample from these two cities is given below.

#### Sample

As the present study attempts to measure the attitudes of people belonging to two countries i.e. India and Iran, the second sample had to be selected from Iran. For this purpose the researcher has drawn the samples from Iran. The researcher keeping the viability as well as easy approachability decided to draw samples from two Iranian cities i.e. Tehran and Qum. Tehran being the capital city of Iran as well as the researcher also hails from Tehran itself and having close as well as personal contacts with people residing there. Qum was chosen because it is only 120 Km from Tehran hence it was relatively easy to administer the questionnaire among the Iranian residing. In order to select the sample that researcher again need telephone directories of Tehran and Qum as sampling frames as

she did for selecting Indian samples. Researcher randomly selected 400 telephone numbers and could succeed in contacting 252 respondents, 204 agreed to cooperate. And only 154 filled up the questionnaire from Tehran. Thus the researcher contacted them personally at the appointed time and collected the required data. Similarly the researcher selected 300 telephone numbers and contacted 250 respondents from Qum, 189 agreed and finally 120 respondents agreed and gave appointment to fill up the attitudinal questionnaire & so researcher succeeded in collecting the required information from 120 respondents hailing from Qum. Thus the researcher succeeded in drawing a total sample of 596 respondents representing Indian and Iranian population. The break up of the total Iranian sample comprises 274 representing male & female respondents.

The breakup of the respondents from the four cities is given in the following table.

**Table: 3.1 Breakups of Sample Respondents from two Cities**

Sample	City	Selected	Contacted	Agreed	Final Response
Iran	Tehran	400	252	204	154
	Qum	300	250	189	120
<b>Total</b>		<b>700</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>274</b>

#### Date Analysis Procedure

The advertising attitude scale comprising of thirty-eight statements was distributed to the respondents personally and they were requested to go through each statement and then given their degree of agreement or disagreement on a scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. In order to bring about consistency, scoring was done according to the nature of statement. For those statements, which reflect *positive* feelings, 5-points were assigned to “strongly agree”, 4 to “moderately agree”, 3 to “neither agree nor disagree”, 2 to “moderately disagree” and 1 to “strongly disagree”. The scoring pattern was reversed for those statements, which reflect *negative* feelings, i.e. 5-points were assigned to “strongly disagree”, 4 to “moderately disagree”, 3 to “neither agree nor disagree”, 2 to “moderately agree” and 1 to “strongly agree”

Researcher stated that the higher score for positive statement meant that the respondent held positive attitude towards that advertising facet and higher score for negative statement meant the same positive attitude towards that facet of advertising. Researcher concluded as scoring pattern in negative statements were reversed, when respondents are given high score meant they are disagree towards that negative statement, so they are against the negative nature of the statement and holding positive attitude. The mean score for each statement was calculated for two groups i.e. men and women.

After the collecting the data from the questionnaire on consumer's attitudes towards various facets of advertising the next step was to analyze the raw data. As the data were on a likert type scale it was decided to convert the raw data into the tables and mean scores of groups of respondents were calculated for each statement on each dimensions.

For the purpose of analysis the data were arranged on the six facets of advertising. The analysis was carried out with respect to the respondent of each country with respect to male and female category. In order to find out any significant differences among the two samples, the researcher use t-test as list of significance.

#### Research Analysis

The scheme of analysis and interpretation for each facet of advertising has been carried out in the following manner: Comparison the attitudes of Iranian male versus Iranian female respondents on all five facets of advertising.

### Advertising as a Business tools

Table 1 shows the mean score and corresponding 't' values of Iranian male and female respondents on the seven statements of advertising as business tool. After perusing these statements with regard to the two group i.e. Iranian male and female, one can observe that in all seven statements no significant differences were found between the two groups neither at 5% nor 1% level of significance. In terms of direction and intensity on attitudes on the seventh statements one may find perceptible differences. In these statements, the attitude ranges from positive to negative but in some of them both the groups have shown neutral attitudes.

**Table 1. Attitudes of Iranian Male Versus Iranian Female Towards Advertising as Business Tool**

Statement	Mean Scores		
	Male	Female	"t" Value
1. Advertising contributes very importantly to Iran's industrial prosperity	3.38	3.08	1.44
2. The Iranian public would be better off without advertising	2.95	2.92	0.16
3. Advertising is O.K. for new products but for established products it is a waste of consumer's money	2.62	2.73	0.6
4. I wish there were more advertising than there exists now	2.80	2.95	0.88
5. Advertising is the most powerful tool in the hands of business companies to sell their products	3.51	3.59	0.47
6. There is no need for stringent laws by the government in regulating advertising. However, the advertisers should device code of conduct for themselves based on ethical norms	3.55	3.61	0.27
7. Large companies do not allow other smaller companies to grow or survive in the market	2.04	2.25	1.35

a= Significant at 1% Level

b = Significant at 5% Level

On statement 2, 3 and 4 both male and female respondents have shown almost their neutral attitudes and 't' values also indicate that both the groups have same attitudes. Statement seven which is related with the power of the larger companies in allowing smaller companies to survive and grow, it seems that both groups feel this is true. They think that larger companies because of their financial growth do not allow smaller companies to grow and prosper. This perception of the respondents may be based either on their own experience or what they may hear or read from mass media. Another interesting finding is that majority of both Iranian male and female consumers do not think there is a need for laws to regulate advertising. One of the possible reasons may be that in Iran the amount and extend of advertising is much less as compared to developed countries. As far as statement number one is concerned, both groups have shown slightly positive attitudes. It means that substantial number of respondents from both the groups think that advertising is instrumental in the industrial prosperity of Iran. However, one can find that the attitudes of male respondents (3.38) are more positive than female respondents (3.08). The 't' value (1.44) also comes nearer to the significant level. One may surmise that male being more exposed to advertising and better knowledge of advertising than their female counterpart, it is possible that they may have exhibited slightly positive attitude. This is a good signal for advertisers and companies operating in Iran. In addition to this

they also feel that advertising is a powerful tool in the hands of companies to sell their products. This means that they acknowledge the role of advertising in persuading the consumers in purchasing various products and services.

### Advertising and Information

In a competitive business environment consumers do not have complete information and therefore they seek information from various sources including advertising. Thus, as an important business and promotion tool advertisements main role is supposed to provide judicious information about the product, company and competitive brands to the target market.

Table 2 show Iranian male and female respondents comparison on the five statements of advertising informative role. In most the cases we can notice that both the groups of Iranian male and female having the same attitudes which is almost negative in approach.

**Table 2 Attitudes of Iranian Male Versus Iranian Female Towards Advertising and Information**

S.No	Statement	Mean Scores		
		Male	Female	"t" Value
1.	Advertising merely increases the prices of the products which people have to pay without giving them any useful information.	2.46	2.41	0.3
2.	Advertising does not inform the public and is not worth its cost	2.93	2.62	1.7
3.	Majority of advertisements today give false or misleading information.	3.09	2.79	1.71
4.	Advertising helps people in learning about the different product characteristics and this enables them to choose the right brand with the right quality.	3.21	3.58	1.88
5.	Often advertisements give incomplete information, half-truths, and are deceptive in nature.	2.80	2.74	0.3

a= Significant at 1% Level

b = Significant at 5% Level

It is only on statement number four that we can find the positive attitudes between both the groups. This table shows that both the genders are having mostly neutral attitudes with their negative approach towards the statements. At the same time they also feel that advertisements apart from providing pertinent product information also sometimes give incomplete and false information. Iranian women consider advertising helps them to choose the right brand with right quality.

### Advertising and Materialism

One of the social criticisms against advertising is concerned with the so-called encouragement to materialistic comforts by advertisements. People blame that there is a link between advertising and materialism. Different persons have described materialism in different ways, but in essence it means the desire to obtain tangible goods and to give undue importance to material interests (Wright, Winter and Zeigler 1989; Aaker, Batra and Myers, 2000).

Keeping in mind of the different dimensions of this criticism i.e. "advertising and materialism", six statements were administered to the respondents for measuring their attitudes. Except for statement number 2, all the statements were framed in negative connotations.

In the table (3) we have compiled the responses of Iranian male and female respondents towards the criticism that advertising leads to materialism. Out of the six statements under

this category, one may find that only in case of statement number three, statistically significant differences was found. Both male and female respondents think that advertisements are in a position to fulfill the needs by making available the desired products to the people; however, male respondents have shown more positive attitudes than the female respondents. Another important point one can find that both male and female Iranian do not consider advertising as a major cause of inflation in the world in general and Iran in particular. It means these respondents do not link advertising with inflation as popularly believed by many economists and criticized. They also do not consider that advertising encourages gross materialism. On statements number one, two and four both the respondents are more or less neutral.

**Table 3. Attitudes of Iranian Male Versus Iranian Female Towards Advertising and Materialism**

S.No	Statement	Mean Scores		
		Male	Female	"t" Value
1.	Advertising persuades people to buy products and services that they should not buy.	2.81	2.92	0.59
2.	Advertising encourages people to work hard so that they can afford to purchase more and more goods and thus enjoy the life.	2.74	2.97	1.15
3.	For too many people advertisements create needs but do not fulfill them perfectly.	4.12	3.71	2.49 <sup>b</sup>
4.	Advertising creates desires and wants among those who are exposed to it.	2.58	2.50	0.43
5.	Advertising encourages gross materialism	3.72	3.47	1.34
6.	Advertising is one of the major causes of inflation in the world in general and Iran in particular.	4.18	4.11	0.47

a = Significant at 1% Level

b = Significant at 5% Level

#### Advertising influencing on adults and children

Sociologists, hold that advertising because of its pervasive nature and facility of repeating the message over different mass media vehicle, can influence the life styles of people and their behavior. At the same time many have expressed their fear that the freedom of people, in a free society, to make decisions of various kinds, including the freedom to select a particular brand would be circumscribed by the *power* of advertising. They feel that advertising is so effective that it can manipulate a buyer into making a decision against his or her will or at least against his or her best interests in allocating higher her financial resources. Communicating the factual information about brand's primary functions is usually accepted as being of value to the consumer. However, when advertising utilizes appeals to go beyond "reason why" the charge of manipulation via emotional appeals is raised. This section of inquiry deals with the attitudes of the respondents towards this *power* of advertising in influencing on adults and children. In order to encompass this facet of advertising the researcher has framed seven statements so that the attitudes of Iranian respondents can be measured.

Keeping the same pattern of analysis described earlier in this study the researcher analyzed this dimension of advertising on five groups of respondents as done earlier. All the seven statements were framed to be negative in connotations.

When the responses on this dimension of advertising are arranged taking male respondents and female respondents from Iran, we find the situation is somewhat different. These

responses are shown in table (4) in terms of mean scores and 't' values. Examining this table we find no statistically significant differences on any statements. We can easily conclude that in all the cases in this category one may find insignificant differences. Here, male respondents almost were found to be more positive than their female counterparts. One may find that both Iranian male and female respondents almost have shown their degree of disagreement towards negative influences of advertising (see table 4).

**Table 4. Attitudes of Iranian Male Versus Iranian Female Towards Advertising Influences on Adults and Children**

S.No	Statement	Mean Scores		
		Male	Female	"t" Value
1.	People do read/see/hear the advertisements, but generally they do get influenced them.	3.42	3.29	0.63
2.	Generally, there is a tendency on the part of the people not to believe what is said in most of the advertisements.	3.25	3.50	1.24
3.	In general, advertisements are basically created to persuade people to purchase goods and services but it also insults their intelligence in a subtle way.	3.73	3.88	0.81
4.	Today, advertising does not appeal to reason but to emotions and tries to sell the products and services to the consumers by exploiting them emotionally.	3.45	3.10	1.87
5.	On moral grounds advertisements are harmful. They breed vulgarity, hypothesize the imagination and the will of the people.	3.50	3.65	0.79
6.	Advertising creates negative impact on the minds of the children.	3.36	3.20	0.84
7.	Today, advertising has invaded on the judgment of children and influences them in such a way that their parents are helpless in yielding to their demands.	2.60	2.56	0.2

a = Significant at 1% Level

b = Significant at 5% Level

On all the statements one can notice that both the groups of Iranian are of the opinion that advertising do not influence them negatively. They may be neutral on statement number four which states, "advertising does not appeal to reason but to emotions" but they are quite disagreed with the statement number five which it says "on moral grounds advertisements are harmful". As far as yielding to the pressures of children is concerned, Iranian respondents have shown almost neutral attitudes. This means some of them do yield and some of them do not yield to the pressures of children.

In table (5) the researcher arranged the responses of Iranian respondents on the basis of gender. If we compare the results of this table with the results of table (5) we find some similarity as well as some dissimilarity. Similarity occurs when we find that on all the five statements no significant differences were found between the male and female Iranian respondents. Both the groups exhibited more or less same attitudes as all the five 't' values are very low. The differences in 't' values may be attributed on account of random variation or chance. The results are dissimilar when we notice that on the first four statements the aggregate attitudes of both groups were found to be neutral. This indicates that the Iranian respondents have almost negative attitudes towards these statements. However, in case of fifth statement the respondents have shown somewhat positive attitudes.

**Table 5. Attitudes of Iranian Male Versus Iranian Female Towards Advertising and Media**

S.No.	Statement	Mean Scores		
		Male	Female	"t" Value
1.	Advertising helps media ( newspapers, magazines, TV, etc.) to become self sufficient, autonomous and makes them free from undesirable political influence.	2.35	2.44	0.52
2.	On account of advertising the prices of newspapers and magazines are low and therefore, people can afford to purchase them.	2.86	2.76	0.53
3.	On account of advertising on TV, the quality of TV programmes has improved substantially.	2.90	2.79	0.64
4.	Today, advertising is too pervasive on all major media and one cannot escape from it.	2.63	2.71	0.41
5.	Big advertisers on account of their heavy spending capacity are able to control the mass media.	3.37	3.22	0.8

a = Significant at 1% Level

b = Significant at 5% Level

**Table 6. Attitudes of Iranian Male Versus Iranian Female Towards Nature and Status of Iranian Advertising**

S.No	Statement	Mean Scores		
		Male	Female	"t" Value
1.	Majority of advertisements to which people are exposed to are of poor taste.	3.57	3.53	0.18
2.	Majority of advertisements to which people are exposed to are uninteresting in nature.	2.22	2.25	0.15
3.	Majority of advertisements to which people are exposed to are irritating in nature.	2.68	2.41	1.29
4.	People, generally enjoy reading or viewing the advertisements on the mass media.	2.45	2.19	1.56
5.	The quality of advertising in major media has been improved in the recent years because it is now prepared by professionals.	2.79	2.62	0.95
6.	Advertising is like a mirror. It reflects the existing cultural and moral values of the society.	3.22	3.05	0.93
7.	Advertisements for certain types of products should be banned on the mass media.	3.36	3.46	0.53
8.	The quality of Iranian advertisements is at par with the quality of advertisements of any foreign country.	2.70	2.88	0.89

a = Significant at 1% Level

b = Significant at 5% Level

When Iranian male and female respondents are compared on the eight statements towards nature and status of Iranian advertising in table (6) we have found one interesting finding. In these statements we cannot see any statistically significant differences. On statements number 1, 6 and 7 both Iranian male and female respondents have shown positive attitudes but in other statements they have exhibited their negative approach.

### Results and Findings

#### Advertising as a business tool

The researcher discussed the results obtained from the present study. The main purpose of the present study was to find out the attitudes of people from Iran on the different facets of advertising. As mentioned in the study advertising has been both praised and criticized by people belonging to different disciplines and professions, but it was not known whether consumers in general also hold the same similar attitudes compare with those who are considered to be experts in different field or the views expressed in the media about advertising. Keeping this in mind questionnaire was developed (mentioned earlier) and administered to the people of Iran. Here the researcher will discuss only the similarity or dissimilarity found in the attitudes of respondents belongs to Iran on the six facets of advertising and conclusions will be drawn.

As far as the first facet of advertising i.e. advertising as business tool is concerned the attitudes of respondents range

from positive to slightly negative on the seven dimensions given in the form of statement (See table 1). In case of Iranian male and female respondents, no significant differences were found. By and large, these respondent's attitudes range from positive to slightly negative. This means some people do not consider advertising as an important business tool. Majority of Iranian people feel that there is no need for enacting stringent laws to regulate advertising.

By perusing table (5.1) the researcher is able to come out with the following results:

➤ No statistically significant differences were found on any statement between Iranian male and female respondents.

#### Advertising and Information

Most of the discussions both by the critics and the protagonists of advertising are on its role as a provider of information (Norris, 1984). It has been argued by many that information provided in advertisements, permits greater market place efficiencies i.e. more exact matching between consumer's needs and wants and producer's offerings. Keeping this fact in mind, five statements were prepared and the attitudes of respondents were measured (Table 2). When we see the attitudes of Iranian male and female separately on advertising and information, we find that people have exhibited same attitudes mostly towards neutrality except providing the information on product characteristics. In this statement Iranian female showed

more positive attitudes on this statement as compared to Iranian male. This may be due to the fact that traditionally in Iran female do the shopping for various household products; therefore, they may pay more attention to the advertisements that frequently appear in different mass media vehicles. This surmise is based on the fact that the researcher belongs to Iran and is familiar with Iranian culture and habits.

By perusing table (5.2) the researcher is able to come out with the following results:

➤ Between Iranian male and female respondents we cannot find any statistically significant differences. We can easily conclude that in all the cases in this category one may find insignificant differences

#### **Advertising and Materialism**

By parading an endless array of material goods in an enticing way, advertising is alleged to preoccupy consumers with commercial concerns, at the expense of social, political and cultural considerations. Consumers may or may not perceive this to be true and, if it is true, whether it is a good or bad focus of attention. Therefore, to encompass this dimension the researcher prepared six statements and analyzed them in this study. One finds that the opinion on these six statements is less critical and does not match with the critics who allege that advertising promotes materialistic values. In case of Iranian male and female respondents, we can find the statistically significant differences on statement number three. Here, Iranian male have shown more positive attitudes than Iranian female, which says, "advertisements create needs but do not fulfill them perfectly".

By perusing table (5.3) the researcher is able to come out with the following results:

There is a statistically significant difference in statement number 3, which says "for too many people advertisements create needs but do not fulfill them perfectly"

#### **Advertising Influence on Adult and Children**

One of the often-repeated claims by social thinkers and others are that very few people are influenced by the advertising and advertising believability is low. Another criticism is that advertising in order to persuade people to purchase products and services and doing so sometimes it insults the intelligence of people. Many times advertising instead of appealing to the reasons tries to stir the emotions of consumers. Another criticism is that advertising spreads vulgarity and creates negative impact on children. Many times parents become helpless and have to yield to the demands of children who under the influence of advertising pressure their parents. Keeping all these criticism, the researcher wanted to measure the attitudes on this facet of advertising under the advertising influence on adults and children. The analysis was carried out and the researcher discusses and drawn some conclusions on this facet of advertising.

This indicates that there is unanimity in attitudes. Interestingly, the respondents are more critical of these aspects of advertising. Iranian male respondents feel less strongly about the emotional approach used in advertisements than Iranian females. This may be due to the fact that male normally found to be less gullible as compared to fairer sex. Interestingly, in aggregate terms Iranian respondents were found to be more influenced and believe the message given in the advertisements. This may be due to fact that the amount of advertising carried out in Iran is comparatively less.

By perusing table (5.4) the researcher is able to come out with the following results:

Between Iranian male and female respondents, we cannot find any statistically significant differences. We can easily conclude that in all the cases in this category one may find insignificant differences.

#### **Advertising and Media**

With the use of advertising as major marketing tool the mass media also flourished. Advertising in order to be effective or persuasive has to be used in some type of medium to make the message reach to the target population. Initially print media was used for carrying out advertising and later electronic media also increasingly being used to carry advertising messages to the target audience. Today, advertisers are using a plethora of media. One positive impact of advertising is that due to the revenues generated by placing advertising in different media, all the major types of media witnessed growth both in quantity and quality. The growth in mass media has been mainly due to the revenue they get from advertising. One manifestation is that the readers/viewers of media have to pay considerably less as media keep their prices within affordable limits. In a way, one can say that advertising has made media self-sufficient, autonomous and comparatively free from undesirable political influence. In the last statement where the role of big advertisers in controlling on media is concerned both male and female respondents have shown negative attitudes. As far as Iranian male and female respondents are concerned both have exhibited negative attitudes. This is because, they may not have the knowledge of advertising which plays in the growth of media or the governments in Iran-earlier by the monarchy and last by the clergy-may have more control on media which under democratic rule for more than half century.

By perusing table (5.5) the researcher is able to come out with the following results:

No statistically significant differences were found on any statement between Iranian male and female respondents.

#### **Nature and Status of Iranian Advertising**

The last facet of advertising, studied in the present study, relates with the present status and nature of advertising. Under this facet eight statements were prepared as discussed in earlier. This facet takes into account the poor taste displayed by advertisements, uninteresting/ interesting nature of advertisements, amount of irritation generated, enjoying advertisements, quality of Iranian advertising, advertising and moral values of society, banning of advertising of certain products and the quality of Iranian advertisements at par with the advertising of other countries. However, to considerable extent, people from Iran irrespective of gender donot agree on the poor taste, irritation, and uninteresting nature of advertising. On the last three categories, statistically significant differences were found on different statements between Iranian male and female respondents. This may be due to the fact that there are vast differences in the nature of male and female respondents. Advertisers should be more concerned about this facet of advertising as negative attitudes may not be desirable in the long run. Ultimately the aim of any advertising is to bring positive attitudinal change and thus induce male and female to purchase the advertised brand. If people think in terms of irritation, bad taste, uninteresting, and of poor quality so that they may not get influence by them.

By perusing table (5.6) the researcher is able to come out with the following results:

No statistically significant differences were found on any statements between Iranian male and female respondents.



### Directions for Future Research

Present study is a modest attempt to measure attitudes of people belonging to Iran on various facets of advertising. In this study the sample was drawn from two cities in Iran. In future this type of study may be carried out in more depth. There is a further scope in carrying out this type of study in the following manner.

1. Attitudes towards various facets of advertising may be measured taking into account the geographic differences.
2. Attitudes towards various facets of advertising may be measured among different professional groups.
3. Attitudes towards various facets of advertising may be measured among different income groups.

### Concluding Remarks

The criticisms of advertising by the intellectuals (economists, social thinkers, historians, and policy makers) published in scholarly journals and as well as in the mass media may be responsible to certain extent the prevailing attitudes of general consumers towards its various facets in the present situation. The present study might have reflected these for the Iranian respondents. As the researcher found that there is a statistically significant difference between the Iranian male and female in advertisements which create needs but do not fulfill them perfectly, this type of study would help the industry to realize the need of measuring the pulse of the general consumers from time to time and fulfill their needs. Knowledge of these in different segments of society will help the industry and advertising agencies in the development of creative strategy and media planning for targeting specific groups. At the same time, the practice of advertising should be improved and its credibility has to be enhanced among its recipients.

Finally, this research has tried to demonstrate that there are some people who always think the positive consequence of advertising and at the same time there may be others who think negatively the consequences of advertising whatever the industry and agencies do to improve its credibility. Therefore, the long-term goal of the industry should be to improve its performance over time.

One of the oldest marketing dictums is that "the customer is always right". Efforts are required to make changes in not only practice but to change public perception to the extent that the customers are right about advertising's role in encouraging materialism, erosion of values, promoting false and misleading advertisements, depicting women as sex objects and in stereotypical roles and finally influencing the tender minds of children.

Future studies may take this into their research objectives and should measure the perception and attitudes of various groups of consumers on these aspects of advertising.

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