

# Advertisements and Morality: A Critical Evaluation of Perception of College Students

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**Abstract** - The tremendous amount of exposure to advertising in day to day lives of customers, impacts everyone including college students. Businesses face a threat of severe criticism, if their advertisements make the audience annoyed with its content or products. Thinkers criticize the way young girls and women are exposed in advertisements or the violence is depicted in cartoons programs. In this regard, the present study is an attempt to identify the impact of advertising on moral values of college students and its rectification. A quantitative study on 240 collegiates was carried out from selected districts of the state of Punjab. To test the hypothesis, Mann Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis Test is applied. The results depicted that there is no significant impact of advertising on collegiates' moral values.

**Keywords:** *Advertisement, College, Moral Value, Parents, Students.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Youngsters possess a very strong relationship with media and advertising these days. A related long-term argument, often voiced by certain sociologists, consumer advocates, and government regulators, is that advertising degrades customers' value systems by promoting a self-indulgent, worldly way of life. Advertising might be effective because it reinforces already developed buying habits. For a given product, people often purchase one brand over others. Repeated exposure to advertisements of the preferred product reinforces these buying habits. [6] Advertising encourages youngsters to buy more cars, more gadgets, more clothing, and more junk food that they don't need as such. It is destroying the essence of what is right for the citizens of a democracy. Critics claim advertising manipulates them into buying things by playing on our emotions and promising greater status, social acceptance, and sex appeal. It causes people to take up harmful habits, makes poor kids buy Rs. 5000 sport shoes, and entices common people to buy futile products in the hopeless attempt to imitate celebrity endorsers. The youth of today have been ensnared by youthful lusts, pride, arrogance, disrespect, disobedience and indiscipline; these are traits that can only grow out of habits for 'thoughts bring forth acts; acts produce habits, while habits become character'. The changes in the family structure, initiation of westernization, the media upheaval, dirty policies etc. are speculated to have played a formative role in redefining the value systems in the Indian society. This has directly been bringing both moral degradation of youth and social deterioration as well. Moral orientation in Indian youth is facing a notable shift that needs to be worked upon

seriously [11]. Again, they claim advertising as so powerful that consumers become totally helpless to defend themselves against it. An individual's environment has a direct influence on their attitude and behaviors; as such, the advertisements that are part of this environment can alter and potentially damage the audience to which they are being exposed. The advertisements targeting youngsters and college going students pressurize them to compare their attractiveness with the perfect images shown in the advertisements and this leads to frustration and anxiety among them. It is also found that advertising promotes insensibility, materialism and impatience among these young students. [10]. Many theorists discovered that such adolescents are ready to borrow money to buy the advertised goods and they can go to any extent to possess the latest advertised products. Also, the mechanism of ignoring elders and teasing and ill treating women has become a fashion. Therefore, there arises a need for understanding the impact of advertising on the morality based parameters of young college students. The present study is an attempt in this regard.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ivan L. Preston (1987)<sup>1</sup> identified that if the essential challenge of advertising is to create belief within a marketplace of intense competition, then the essence of the advertiser's task is to make his product claim credible in the minds of consumers who are under constant invitation to favor a competitor. Richins and Dawson (1992)<sup>2</sup> concluded that materialism is appropriately conceptualized as a consumer value. The development of a value-oriented materialism scale with three components namely

acquisition centrality, acquisition as the pursuit of happiness, and possession-defined success is described. Fay and Price (1994)<sup>3</sup> discussed that it is widely believed and it has been suggested that the use of thin models in advertisements is causally linked to the increased incidence of anorexia nervosa. They confirmed that advertising models became thinner and less curvaceous over the period studied. Carlo, Fabes et al. (1999)<sup>4</sup> indicated that the social context plays an important role in pro-social and moral development of young adolescents. Further research required integrated analysis of individual and social contextual processes to fully understand pro-social and moral development. Moreover, more sophisticated design and assessment procedures and research with racially or ethnically diverse samples were given consideration. Lavine et al. (1999)<sup>5</sup> revealed that women exposed to sexist ads judged their current body size as larger and revealed. On the other hand, Men exposed to the sexist ads judged their current body size as thinner, revealed a larger discrepancy between their actual and ideal body size. Bushman and Bonacci (2002)<sup>6</sup> conducted a study in which the results suggested that sponsoring violent and sexually explicit TV programs might not be a profitable venture for advertisers. Hultin and Lundh (2004)<sup>7</sup> indicated that young men tend to be more focused on physical attractiveness while young women focus more on other factors such as movement. Furthermore, the conclusion suggested that young men are not affected as young women concerning buying behaviour and self-confidence by the sexual appeals in advertisements. Strasburger (2006)<sup>8</sup> opined that the exposure to TV may contribute significantly to childhood and adolescent obesity, poor nutrition, and cigarette and alcohol use. Devi et al. (2010)<sup>9</sup> articulated that unethical advertising promotes harmful products, targets in appropriate audiences, makes tall claims attempts to alter lifestyles, and derides competition. The findings of this study stated that ethics should be followed in advertisements, use of sex and sentiments in ads to be avoided. Crockett (2012)<sup>10</sup> explored the effects advertisements play on the college student in particular. The study recommended marketers to be morally responsible for the advertisements they portray; so that the audience is not affected in a way that can lead to unwanted consequences. Anita (2015)<sup>11</sup> explored that youth is adversely diverted through different immoral activities which not only influence the present Indian society but also stimulates the future generation of our civilization. Therefore, it is imperative and a moral duty of everyone to

## V. DATA ANALYSIS

### 5.1 RESULT OF KRUSKAL-WALLIS TEST ON AGE FACTOR

Table 5.1 shows that significance level is greater than 0.05 in all the variables such as you rely on advertisements in making certain purchases, you feel that your growing age makes you wise in shopping decisions based on advertisements, advertising impacts your materialistic attitude and makes you buy expensive things, you pressurize your parents to buy things you don't need, food advertisements affect your health in a negative manner, advertisements make you an impatient person when buying

find out the solution of this crucial problem to establish India in the world of peace and harmony.

## III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To study the impact of advertising on collegiates.
- To examine the role of advertisements in inculcating moral values among collegiates.
- To draw imperative for resolving the inappropriate moral value development in college students through advertising.

## IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is exploratory in nature. It primarily focuses on the impact of advertising on moral values and perceptions of collegiates. Present research deals with the impact of advertising in shaping the behaviour of the college going students, their likes and dislikes, their influence and choices as consumers. Different businesses face a lacuna in promoting socially responsible marketing and managing advertising policy that forbids detrimental advertising related to youngsters leading to poor value formation in them. It is a very sensitive and critical issue in itself. Authors state that the desires, thoughts and expectations are largely being set by pre-conditioning (when we assume something on the basis of prevailing notion about it) or sensations (when we get pleased through our sensory organs i.e. eyes, ears, skin, nose and mouth) [12]. For the present study, primary data has been collected with the help of structured questionnaires and secondary data has been collected from internet, journals, newspapers and magazines. A pilot survey was conducted on 20 students of 18-24 years of age from different colleges, to determine the reliability and validity of the different variables in the questionnaire. The Cronbach alpha score for the sample was .805. Therefore, it was assumed that the questionnaires are reliable for further study. The area of study includes certain selected districts of Punjab state. The sample size for the study is 240 college students (respondents). In total, 20 'A' rated colleges (both public and private) from selected districts of Punjab state have been selected for the study. The sample consists of demographic variables namely age, gender and residence area of respondents. For analyzing the data, statistical techniques (with the help of SPSS) such as Kruskal Wallis Test and Mann Whitney U Test, are used as per the requirements of the data.

or sharing the things with friends or parents, you never accept the denial of your parents in purchasing products of your choice, modern advertisements influence you to give less concern to the feelings of others such as teachers or parents and you feel no hesitation in disrespecting them and advertisements enable you to stay isolated from your classmates and not helping your siblings at the time of need. Whereas p-value if less than 0.05 in the variable i.e. junk food ads lure them to consume more food and make them more fat/obese. Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted at 5 per cent level of significance and there is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents of different age groups. It can be concluded that among all the age groups of 18 to 24 years of age, there is a strong impact of advertising on the minds on college going students. They think alike regarding the ill effects of advertising in terms of declining morality, pestering parents, purchase of unnecessary and unhealthy products etc.

**5.2 RESULTS OF MANN-WHITNEY U TEST ON GENDER FACTOR**

Table 5.2 shows that significance level is greater than 0.05 in all the variables namely you rely on advertisements in making certain purchases, you feel that your growing age makes you wise in shopping decisions based on advertisements, advertising impacts your materialistic attitude and makes you buy expensive things, you pressurize your parents to buy things you don't need, food advertisements affect your health in a negative manner, junk food ads lure them to consume more food and make them more fat/obese, advertisements make you an impatient person when buying or sharing the things with friends or parents, you never accept the denial of your parents in purchasing products of your choice, modern advertisements influence you to give less concern to the feelings of others such as teachers or parents and you feel no hesitation in disrespecting them and advertisements enable you to stay isolated from your classmates and not helping your siblings at the time of need. Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted at 5 per cent level of significance and there is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents of boys' and girls' category. It shows that both the genders have this notion in common that advertising impacts the psychology of all of them as customers or consumers. It shows that out of both boys' and girls' group, the perceptions do not differ much and they possess a common opinion towards the impact of advertising on moral values of collegiates.

**Table 5.1: Result of Kruskal-Wallis Test on Age Factor**

Perception of Respondents	Ranks			K-Wallis Test	df	p-value
	Age (in yrs)	N	Mean Rank			
You rely on advertisements in making certain purchases.	18-20	169	118.99	1.118	2	.572
	20-22	43	118.49			
	22-24	28	132.73			
You feel that your growing age makes you wise in shopping decisions based on advertisements.	18-20	169	121.18	3.761	2	.153
	20-22	43	106.87			
	22-24	28	137.34			
Advertising impacts your materialistic attitude and makes you buy expensive things.	18-20	169	120.86	.129	2	.937
	20-22	43	121.79			
	22-24	28	116.32			
You pressurize your parents to buy things you don't need.	18-20	169	119.16	.655	2	.721
	20-22	43	127.93			
	22-24	28	117.18			
Food advertisements affect your health in a negative manner.	18-20	169	123.77	5.489	2	.064
	20-22	43	99.62			
	22-24	28	132.84			
Junk food ads lure you to consume more food and make you more fat/obese.	18-20	169	121.08	7.385	2	.025*
	20-22	43	102.05			
	22-24	28	145.34			
Advertisements make you an impatient person when buying or sharing the things with friends or parents.	18-20	169	121.86	.965	2	.617
	20-22	43	111.74			
	22-24	28	125.77			
You never accept the denial of your parents in purchasing products of your choice.	18-20	169	120.88	.205	2	.903
	20-22	43	122.38			
	22-24	28	115.30			
	18-20	169	122.01			

Modern advertisements influence you to give less concern to the feelings of others such as teachers or parents and you feel no hesitation in disrespecting them.	20-22	43	121.34	.763	2	.683
	22-24	28	110.07			
Advertisements enable you to stay isolated from your classmates and not helping your siblings at the time of need.	18-20	169	123.81	3.995	2	.136
	20-22	43	122.90			
	22-24	28	96.86			

Source: Field Survey

Table 5.2: Results of Mann-Whitney U Test on Gender Factor

Perception of Respondents	Ranks					
	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U (z)	p-value
You rely on advertisements in making certain purchases.	Boy	119	122.32	14555.50	.428	.669
	Girl	121	118.71	14364.50		
You feel that your growing age makes you wise in shopping decisions based on advertisements.	Boy	119	122.79	14612.00	.539	.590
	Girl	121	118.25	14308.00		
Advertising impacts your materialistic attitude and makes you buy expensive things.	Boy	119	119.82	14258.00	.157	.875
	Girl	121	121.17	14662.00		
You pressurize your parents to buy things you don't need.	Boy	119	126.00	14993.50	1.251	.211
	Girl	121	115.10	13926.50		
Food advertisements affect your health in a negative manner.	Boy	119	119.83	14260.00	.153	.879
	Girl	121	121.16	14660.00		
Junk food ads lure you to consume more food and make you more fat/obese.	Boy	119	117.53	13985.50	.695	.487
	Girl	121	123.43	14934.50		
Advertisements make you an impatient person when buying or sharing the things with friends or parents.	Boy	119	118.89	14148.50	.366	.714
	Girl	121	122.08	14771.50		
You never accept the denial of your parents in purchasing products of your choice.	Boy	119	120.03	14283.50	.107	.915
	Girl	121	120.96	14636.50		
Modern advertisements influence you to give less concern to the feelings of others such as teachers or parents and you feel no hesitation in disrespecting them.	Boy	119	121.39	14445.00	.202	.840
	Girl	121	119.63	14475.00		
Advertisements enable you to stay isolated from your classmates and not helping your siblings at the time of need.	Boy	119	124.47	14811.50	.914	.361
	Girl	121	116.60	14108.50		

Source: Field survey

### 5.3 RESULTS OF KRUSKAL-WALLIS TEST ON RESIDENCE AREA FACTOR

Table 5.3 shows that significance level is less than 0.05 in all the variables namely you rely on advertisements in making certain purchases, you feel that your growing age makes you wise in shopping decisions based on advertisements, advertising impacts your materialistic attitude and makes you buy expensive things, you pressurize your parents to buy things you don't need, food advertisements affect your health in a negative manner and junk food ads lure you to consume more food and make you more fat/obese, advertisements make you an impatient person when buying or sharing the things with friends or parents and modern advertisements influence you to give less concern to the feelings of others such as teachers or parents and you feel no hesitation in disrespecting them and advertisements enable you to stay isolated from your classmates and not helping your

siblings at the time of need. Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected at 5 per cent level of significance and there is a significant difference in the perceptions of respondents of rural, semi-urban and urban area.

**Table 5.3: Results of Kruskal-Wallis Test on Residence Area Factor**

Perception of Respondents	Ranks					
	Residence Area	N	Mean Rank	Kruskal Wallis Test	df	p-value
You rely on advertisements in making certain purchases.	Rural	105	123.66	2.191	2	.334
	Semi-Urban	51	108.51			
	Urban	84	123.83			
You feel that your growing age makes you wise in shopping decisions based on advertisements.	Rural	105	126.20	1.548	2	.461
	Semi-Urban	51	118.62			
	Urban	84	114.52			
Advertising impacts your materialistic attitude and makes you buy expensive things.	Rural	105	126.90	2.286	2	.319
	Semi-Urban	51	109.83			
	Urban	84	118.98			
You pressurize your parents to buy things you don't need.	Rural	105	124.39	6.234	2	.044*
	Semi-Urban	51	99.80			
	Urban	84	128.20			
Food advertisements affect your health in a negative manner.	Rural	105	119.79	1.566	2	.457
	Semi-Urban	51	111.82			
	Urban	84	126.66			
Junk food ads lure you to consume more food and make you more fat/obese.	Rural	105	126.75	2.492	2	.288
	Semi-Urban	51	109.11			
	Urban	84	119.60			
Advertisements make you an impatient person when buying or sharing the things with friends or parents.	Rural	105	125.19	.905	2	.636
	Semi-Urban	51	116.46			
	Urban	84	117.10			
You never accept the denial of your parents in purchasing products of your choice.	Rural	105	130.08	4.095	2	.129
	Semi-Urban	51	108.71			
	Urban	84	115.69			
Modern advertisements influence you to give less concern to the feelings of others such as teachers or parents and you feel no hesitation in disrespecting them.	Rural	105	121.43	1.252	2	.535
	Semi-Urban	51	111.57			
	Urban	84	124.76			
Advertisements enable you to stay isolated from your classmates and not helping your siblings at the time of need.	Rural	105	129.16	3.285	2	.194
	Semi-Urban	51	116.44			
	Urban	84	112.14			

Source: Field survey

**Table 5.4: Results of Kruskal Wallis Test on Occupation Factor**

Perception of Respondents	Ranks					
	Occupation	N	Mean Rank	Kruskal Wallis Test	df	p-value
You rely on advertisements in making certain purchases.	Businessman	57	142.26	8.953	3	.030**
	Professional	43	118.93			
	Self employed	66	115.11			
	Serviceman	74	109.46			
You feel that your growing age makes you wise in shopping decisions based on advertisements.	Businessman	57	114.26	7.416	3	.060
	Professional	43	131.57			
	Self employed	66	133.49			
	Serviceman	74	107.28			

Advertising impacts your materialistic attitude and makes you buy expensive things.	Businessman	57	120.46	2.849	3	.415
	Professional	43	108.70			
	Self employed	66	130.46			
	Serviceman	74	118.50			
You pressurize your parents to buy things you don't need.	Businessman	57	134.90	7.592	3	.055
	Professional	43	120.81			
	Self employed	66	102.60			
	Serviceman	74	125.19			
Food advertisements affect your health in a negative manner.	Businessman	57	126.61	8.724	3	.033*
	Professional	43	144.03			
	Self employed	66	109.27			
	Serviceman	74	112.13			
Junk food ads lure you to consume more food and make you more fat/obese.	Businessman	57	130.43	7.977	3	.046*
	Professional	43	128.51			
	Self employed	66	101.27			
	Serviceman	74	125.35			
Advertisements make you an impatient person when buying or sharing the things with friends or parents.	Businessman	57	118.18	.348	3	.951
	Professional	43	120.55			
	Self employed	66	124.47			
	Serviceman	74	118.72			
You never accept the denial of your parents in purchasing products of your choice.	Businessman	57	133.54	6.095	3	.107
	Professional	43	111.74			
	Self employed	66	107.36			
	Serviceman	74	127.26			
Modern advertisements influence you to give less concern to the feelings of others such as teachers or parents and you feel no hesitation in disrespecting them.	Businessman	57	140.29	14.495	3	.002**
	Professional	43	102.08			
	Self employed	66	103.10			
	Serviceman	74	131.48			
Advertisements enable you to stay isolated from your classmates and not helping your siblings at the time of need.	Businessman	57	125.08	7.257	3	.064
	Professional	43	97.37			
	Self employed	66	119.94			
	Serviceman	74	130.91			

Source: Field Survey

#### 5.4 RESULTS OF KRUSKAL WALLIS TEST ON OCCUPATION FACTOR

Table 5.4 shows that significance level is greater than 0.05 in all the variables namely you feel that your growing age makes you wise in shopping decisions based on advertisements, advertising impacts your materialistic attitude and makes you buy expensive things, you pressurize your parents to buy things you don't need, advertisements make you an impatient person when buying or sharing the things with friends or parents, you never accept the denial of your parents in purchasing products of your choice and advertisements enable you to stay isolated from your classmates and not helping your siblings at the time of need. Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted at 5 per cent level of significance and there is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents. On the other hand, p-value is less than 0.05 in the variables such as relying on advertisements in making certain purchases, food advertisements affect your health in a negative manner and junk food ads lure you to consume more food and make you more fat/obese and modern advertisements influence you to give less concern to the feelings of others such as teachers or parents and you feel no hesitation in

disrespecting them'. Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected in these cases at 5 per cent level of significance and there is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents' parents having different occupations.

#### VI. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The present study opines that various demographic groups related to collegiates show a significant difference in their opinions regarding the impact of advertising on their moral values. This study opines that supplementary augmentation in instructive and revealing factors such as perceived quality and recommended utilization of products can enhance the value of an advertisement for students, particularly where the product is of potential relevance to them. It is also found in the study that collegiates as youngsters try to portray themselves as a perfect person when compared with others. It is all due to deception in advertising that they prefer watching ads of teenagers or their related group. Advertising should be inimitable in nature and it should generate better and strong moral values like honesty, truthfulness, integrity, respectfulness and helpfulness; among college students for their social status and wellbeing. Also, there should be a strict legislation in opposition to the advertisers who prepare and broadcast

filthy advertisements for young minds. Advertisements must supplement the civic decency and lifestyle of the common people. Advertisers are suggested that only the advertising which depicts human values and truthfulness should be promoted. It can also be suggested that college going students must be involved in the process of conducting research related to the preparation of advertisements so that these budding students can have a say in the solutions related to promotional aspects.

Hence, it can be concluded that the present research has redefined advertising and marketing in line with the human goals. It is unlikely that moral appeals from parents and other concerned citizens will influence the TV industry to reduce the amount of violence and sex on television [6]. These days, the mechanisms have changed than they used to be in terms of discipline, respectfulness, modesty, hard work, honesty and affectionate concern for others. Morality is the most discouraging factor among students when it comes to crime, different categories of antisocial behavior, terrorism, corruption etc. It is essential to comprehend the probable menace of degradation of morality in the society. Moral direction of collegiates needs to be reinforced to build up a better and harmonious culture in the society. It is very much required to make and implement some constructive approaches for these youngsters otherwise it will be too complicated to make a constructive and atmosphere of humanity. The present study will help teachers, researchers and parents to include the concept of socializing, morality and human values in educating their children/students to do their effective pre-conditioning and make them responsible and healthy citizens as well as consumers. It will also contribute to advertisers in making healthy and better advertisements by triggering college students' value system and behaviour as consumers.

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