

Comparative Vs Non Comparative Advertising: Examining its Impact and Purchase Intentions

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Abstract

This paper attempts to find out the difference in the impact of comparative and non-comparative advertisements. A conceptual model was developed to find the impact of various measures on purchase intention. By conducting a detailed analysis on a sample size of 109 respondents, we found that comparative advertisements are significantly different from non-comparative advertisements. We found that comparative advertisements are more involving in nature. However, the believability of such advertisements is usually lower and may lead to a negative attitude towards the advertisement. Despite the negativity associated with it, respondents had a higher purchase intention. The attitude towards the sponsored brand is also higher in such cases. The research allows managers to gain insights into the advertising scenario and the impacts it can have on the sales of the company.

Keywords: Comparative Advertisements, Advertisement Believability, Attitude towards Advertisement, Attitude towards Brand, Purchase Intentions

Introduction

Advertising and promotion are an integral part of our social and economic framework. Advertisements help in raising the awareness levels of a particular product or service. The primary motive of any business is sale of products or services, and advertisements are necessary since they help in drawing attention. It helps in the sustaining of business. It also keeps the consumers up-to-date with new developments.

Advertising has been predominant since ancient times wherein the most common medium was word of mouth. Archaeologists have discovered Babylonian clay tablet dated 3000 BC having the engraving of a shoemaker, a scribe and an ointment dealer. Wall or rock painting was a prominent type of outdoor commercial advertising which can be followed back to 4000 BC. After the innovation of movable type by Johann Gutenberg in 1438 AD, printing developed in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. This promoted a high growth of newspapers. One of the first newspapers was named Weekly News of London, which was first released in 1622. Due to the increase in the circulation of newspapers, the number of print advertisements being published became a regular feature. The economy in the 19th century grew at a rapid pace, and so did the need for advertising (Chand, 2012).

By the 20th century, advertising increased exponentially as industrialization increased number of manufactured goods being supplied in the market. This exponential increase in the number of print advertisements led to the need of attracting attention to themselves using unusual means. The very first case of comparative advertising was in 1910. It was the Saxlehner vs Wagner case. The mineral water seller used its competitors name to tell the public honestly that he was selling water with the exact same content (Mills, 1995).

The United States of America Government Federal Trade Commission allowed advertisers in 1970 to explicitly name competing brand names in advertisements. This would help to educate the consumers of the various choices available in the market place which would further aid in making an informed purchase decision. A few examples of comparative advertisements which emerged in the American and European markets are: Burger King versus McDonald's, Oracle versus IBM, Miller versus Budweiser, and Pringles versus Frito-Lays (Lawrence, 1993).

Even though comparative advertisements in the United States have a long history, it hasn't been profoundly common in Asian market. Comparative advertising is allowed in Malaysia and China but without directly naming their competitors. However, in India comparative advertising has taken off. Since liberalization of the Indian economy 1990s, there has been a huge increase in the number of brands. This prompted an aggressive use of comparative advertising. The use of comparative advertisements was sanctioned in India by the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) in the late 1990s. Even though explicit and direct comparisons in advertisements were permitted by the ASCI, advertisers favored indirect comparative advertisements (McDougall, 1976).

For many years, the standard form of references to be used were either "compared to Brand X" or "compared to the leading brand". Often, the competing brand was indicated by using the packaging silhouette of competitors' products. The perception of India of being a high-context culture, inhibited advertisers from using direct comparative advertising. Hence, they made subtle references to their competitors (S. Kozegi, 2003).

Notable indirect comparative campaigns which became prevalent in the Indian market were: Polo versus Mint-O, Captain Cook versus Tata salt, Mountain Dew versus Sprite, and Parachute versus VVD Gold. None of these brands named their competitors directly, but they made obvious indications to the brand which they were referring to. The campaign which gained wide-spread attention was when Complan by Heinz India compared itself to the health drink "Brand H". It was evident that Complan was

comparing itself to its main competitor i.e. Horlicks, from GSK. The comparisons in the Indian market have become more direct wherein the other brand is explicitly named (Arti D. Kalro, 2010).

Purpose of Study

Comparative advertising can be defined as a form of advertising that compares directly or indirectly one product or service with another, implying that the advertised product is comparable or superior to the compared product of the competitor. This comparison is made to increase sales of the advertiser by suggesting that the advertiser's product is of the same or a better quality than that of the compared product. It not only promotes market transparency, but also helps in keeping prices down and improving products by stimulating competition. The aim of such advertisements is to trigger off a shift in the customer's mindset and increasing sales. The focus of the study is comparative advertising and the impact it has on consumers on various dimensions such as the attitude towards the brand and advertisement, purchase intentions, believability, and message content. Non-comparative advertisements and their impact on consumers based on similar parameters would help determine which form of advertisement is better for the companies to follow. Comparative advertisements often have a negative connotation attached with it. It could affect the brand image of the company. When a company makes a direct reference to its competitor, it may be disparaging for the competitor brand. It could also be misleading for the consumers if the comparison is made without any substantial proof. It could also lead to lawsuits by the competitor based on Intellectual Property Laws. Even though comparative advertisements have a negative connotation attached, they are generally more involving and are able to catch the attention of the consumers. The findings of the study would be useful to help understand the perspective of Indian audience about comparative advertisements. This study would help the managers take better decisions as to which form of advertising is better for the brand. This study can help to further accentuate the research already done to understand this particular tactic of advertising. The effectiveness of such an advertising tool can be better understood and utilized.

Objective of Study

1. To study the evolution of comparative advertisements
2. To differentiate between the impact of comparative and non-comparative advertisements
3. To evaluate the associations between the various parameters

4. To determine the purchase intentions of consumers based on comparative advertisements vs non comparative advertisements.

Literature Review

Comparative Advertisements

Comparative advertisements originated in the United States of America. In comparative advertisement, the advertised brand is explicitly compared with one or more competing brands and the comparison is evident to audiences. Comparative advertising are involved in informing the consumers of the characteristics of rival products. Such advertisements directly or indirectly compare their products against competitive offerings and claim superiority. Advertisers use comparative and non-comparative advertisements to communicate the unique selling propositions of their brands. Comparative advertisements can be presented directly or indirectly with or without using the name of the rival brands respectively for the purpose of showing the superiority of the advertised brand. Non-comparative advertising neither names nor refers to a competitive brand. It is a promotional technique in which an attempt is made to influence potential customers to purchase the product by highlighting the benefits of it.

History of Comparative Advertising

The use of comparative advertisements might have started as early as 18th century England. However, comparative advertisements can be found in early twentieth-century advertising, and they typically depicted competitors' products as harmful. Throughout the twentieth century, several advertisers in the U.S. fought comparative advertising wars which grew increasingly hostile over time. It raised various concerns about misleading advertising and created problems for the media. The first documented case of comparative advertising was in 1910. It was the Saxlehner vs Wagner case. The mineral water seller used its competitors name directly to tell the general population honestly that he was selling water with the exact same content (Mills, 1995). Comparative advertisements usually identified competitive brand names as "brand X" or

the "leading brand" before the onset of 1970s. Towards the end of 1960s, comparative advertisements begun to identify competitors name explicitly (Barry, 1999). In 1971, FTC began supporting the use of comparative advertisements (Farris, 1975). Such comparisons made between brands and products would help in enhancing the quality and quantity of information represented in messages of the advertisements. Comparative advertising can provide price and performance information to consumers. It helps consumers in evaluating the various competitive alternatives, and would also motivate the competitor to improve their products and services (Soo-Young, 1995). The FTC made its position clear in 1979: "Comparative advertising, when truthful and non-deceptive, is a source of important information to consumers and assists them in making rational purchase decisions" (I. Soscia, 2010). By the 1990s, comparative advertisements grew in various industries such as telecommunications, beverages, and automobiles. During the twentieth century, the main problems with comparative advertising were simple defamation, leading to advertisers' charges of injustice and unfairness, and the legitimacy of comparative claims being made (F Beard, 2011). The evolution of comparative advertisements is elaborated in a chronological manner in Table 1. In the United States, comparative advertising is controlled through regulation by the federal government and by private law suits brought by named competitors under the Lanham Act. The use of comparative advertisements was sanctioned by ASCI in India in the late 1990s. Advertisers preferred using indirect comparative advertisements initially, wherein they made references and superiority claims over competitors without naming them explicitly. In 1984, Government of India took an important step of introducing a new chapter on unfair trade practices in the act of "The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices." In the original act of 1969, there was no specific provision for restricting many categories of unfair trade practices, like misleading and unscrupulous advertising. The 1984 amendment clearly mentioned that any representation which 'gives false or misleading facts disparaging the goods, services or trade of another person' to be an unfair trade practice.

Table 1: Evolution of Comparative Advertisements

S.No.	Author(Year):Source	Milestone Achieved	Year of Occurrence
1.	Mills, B (1995)	One of the first comparative advertisements – Saxlehner vs Wagner – came into existence in US	1910
2.	Barry, T (1993)	Comparative ads started to identify competitors by name and comparisons to "Brand X" almost disappeared.	1960s
3.	Farris, W. W. (1975)	The FTC began advocating and legitimizing the use of comparative advertising in national print and broadcast media	1971

4.	I. Soscia, S. G. (2010)	The FTC's position is clear: "Comparative advertising, when truthful and non -deceptive, is a source of important information to consumers and assists them in making rational purchase decisions"	1979
5.	F Beard, C. N. (2011)	Comparative ads grew in telecommunications, beverages, and automobiles. The main problems with comparative advertising were: ? Simple disparagement, leading to advertisers' charges of unfairness. ? Validity of comparative claims.	1990s

A consumer always goes through a process of comparison before buying a product. The only change that comparative advertising seeks to bring about is to shift this comparing the decision making process from the market to home. Comparative advertising provides an important source of information to consumers which help them in making decisions. The process of decision making and comparing products occurs for the consumer in the market place. The motive of comparative advertisements is to move this decision making process to their homes. The advertisers try to prove it to the customer that their product is better than their competitors by comparing on the basis of price and features. Hence, when the customer is at the market place, he doesn't need to compare the products to make the decision. One of the grey areas of comparative advertising remains the data on which the claims are based. If comparative advertising is used truthfully and fairly, the consumer will be provided with needed and useful information. However, extreme caution is needed as comparative advertising can distort facts and misrepresent the truth.

Impact of Comparative Advertisements

In comparative advertisements, the perceived similarity between the advertised brand and a particular competitor is enhanced. This occurs regardless of whether the advertisement emphasizes the brands similarities or differences. However, comparative advertisements tend to be more viable for new, less-established brands. The cognitive impact of comparative advertisements differs from that of non-comparative advertisements. Research has found that comparative ads are more likely to cause mental impressions about the advertised brand relative to competitors than non-comparative ads. These impressions may be associative or dissociative. A consistent finding in the literature is that comparative ads, even those emphasizing inter-brand differences, enhance the perceived similarity of the advertised and comparison brands. That is, the general effect of comparative advertising is associative (PW Miniard, 1993). The comparative nature of the advertisements also impacts various other factors which affects the purchase intentions.

- **Advertisement Believability:** Maloney(1963) suggested that advertising believability can be summed as representing the net effect of the advertisement on the reader. It leaves the consumer with a particular attitude or intention towards product or brand. If the claims being made in the advertisement are substantial, it would lead to higher advertisement believability.
- **Attitude towards Advertisement:** When a consumer is exposed to an advertisement, the respondent might respond in a favorable manner or unfavorable manner to a particular stimulus of the advertisement. The respondent develops a perception towards the advertisement which could be either positive or negative. Advertisements which are visually appealing and pleasant are perceived as positive(Richard J. Lutz, 1983).
- **Attitude towards Brand:** When a consumer is exposed to an advertisement, the respondent may or may not develop affective reactions towards the brand being advertised. The consumer may or may not have a desirable attitude towards the brand. The information being portrayed in the advertisement can be processed as either positively or negatively based on the method of projection(Andrew A. Mitchell, 1981).
- **Attention:** Consumers are more attentive to messages they perceive as more informative or pertinent. Advertisements which are comparative in nature are perceived as more relevant due to the references made to the competitive brand and the advertisement claims, hence, more concentrated attention is likely. If the competitor is well-known and claims deal with salient benefits, consumers may try to derive meaning from the advertisement further increasing their attention span(Robert E. Burnkrant, 1983).
- **Message Recall:** Mita Sujana (1987) suggested that greater depth of processing and receptiveness contributes to greater recall which is consistent with psychological and consumer research. Comparative advertisements are known to generate thoughts

originating under the conditions of deep processing. Mapping process is based on multiple retrieval cues which leads to a stronger memory trace. Higher message recall is beneficial for the sponsors.

- **Purchase Intention:** Purchase Intention is a decision which a consumer takes based on several factors as to why he/she wants to purchase a particular brand. This decision can be influenced by several factors. Focusing on purchase intentions based on exposure to advertisements, the several factors which can influence this decision are how believable the advertisement is, attitude towards advertisement, attitude towards brand and the message content of advertisement. Intentions are however, distinct from attitudes (Alice H. Eagly, 1993).
- **Brand Image:** Every advertisement contributes to the complex symbol which is the brand image. Brand image is the customer's perception of a brand. Earlier studies on comparative advertisements have presented both positive and negative perceptions of comparative advertisements.

Consumers process the information given through comparative advertisements both positively and negatively, predominantly positive on an imagery mode and negatively on an analytical mode. While certain studies in the context of comparative advertising directly or indirectly draw inferences in favor of positive brand image, other studies show that direct comparisons rather negate the same and lead to negative evaluations of the advertisement.

Methodology

Study Design and Procedure

To explore the differences between the impact of comparative and non-comparative advertisements, the first step was to select relevant advertisements. The advertisements were selected based on a pretest. For ease of study, the focus was only on print advertisements. The selection of comparative advertisements was based on famous brand wars.

A study was conducted wherein consumers were first subjected to a famous print comparative advertisement and were asked to respond to various questions. They were further exposed to individual print advertisements of the

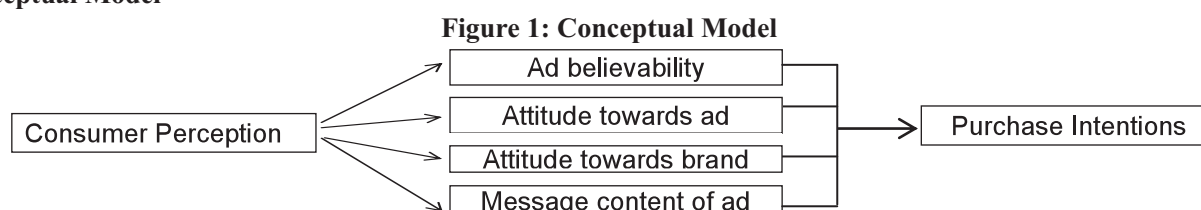
same set of brands for which a comparative advertisement was shown. The study was conducted with the help of two sets of comparative advertisements. Half of the respondents were first exposed to a comparative advertisement between Pepsodent and Colgate and were asked to fill a questionnaire. They were further shown individual print advertisements of Pepsodent and Colgate and were asked to respond to various questions for both brands individually based on the non-comparative advertisement. The other half respondents were similarly studied for Lifebuoy and Dettol. The questionnaire designed dealt with a number of topics such as ad believability, attitude towards the brand being advertised, attitude towards the advertisement, and purchase intentions of the customer after viewing the advertisement. A similar set of questions were used for non-comparative advertisements as well.

Selection of Brands

Comparative advertisements have been prevalent in Indian print media for a long time. It began with indirect references to their competitors. Without explicitly naming their competitors, indication was made to the obvious brand they were referring to. For example, Heinz India's Complan compared itself to another health drink "Brand H". It was evident that the reference was being to Horlicks, a main competitor of Complan. Several studies have evaluated the brand wars which took place in Indian media. Based on a study by Kaushik (2012), he evaluates the various battles which took between famous brands. The comparative advertising wars between India were studied along with the legal issues which followed. Another article by Economic Times researched on the most notable advertisement wars which took place in India. With the help of these two studies, the print advertisements of these brands were identified. Print advertising archives such as www.coloribus.com and www.magindia.com were used to access and retrieve the print advertisements.

The shortlisted advertisements were chosen based on the survey results of an awareness study. A focus group of 36 college students were chosen. The respondents were exposed to the shortlisted advertisements and were asked whether they are aware of the advertisements or not. Based on the responses by the respondents, maximum awareness was measured for the print comparative advertisement of Pepsodent vs Colgate and Lifebuoy vs Dettol.

Conceptual Model



The framework of this study is depicted with the help of Figure 1. Consumer perception refers to the process by which a customer selects, organizes and interprets information/stimuli to create a meaningful picture of the product or the brand. It is the interpretation of the raw stimuli provided in any advertisement. The three stages of perception are exposure, attention and interpretation. It is how a customer portrays a particular brand or product as. Consumer perception about an advertisement can be based on several attributes. The model proposes that ad believability, attitude towards brand attitude towards advertisement and message content of advertisement form the basis of consumer perception. The consumer before making any purchase goes through a decision making process. The decision to purchase a particular based on an advertisement can be influenced by these attributes. These factors can be analyzed and can help determine whether

they form a driving factor for purchasing or not. These factors help in making an overall image of the brand or the product which further determines the purchase intentions. The model thereby also proposes that ad believability, attitude towards brand, attitude towards brand and message content of advertisement would influence consumers purchase intention.

Sample Description

The survey was designed with 600 respondents. The respondents were divided into two equal groups of 300 each. The first group was addressed with questions related to Toothpaste and the second group dealt with Soaps. The respondents comprised participants of postgraduate programs run by Business Schools. The details of the respondents can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Description of Respondents

S.No.	Advertisement	Total Sample Size	Completely Filled Questionnaire Received	Males	Females
1.	Pepsodent vs Colgate	300	273	146	127
2.	Lifbuoy vs Dettol	300	284	131	153

Data Analysis

Method of Analysis

The various factors such as ad believability, attitude towards advertisements, attitude towards brand, message content and purchase intentions were measured by asking several questions from the respondents. The responses were recorded on a Likert scale with the format "Agree/Disagree." The responses were coded wherein 5 represented "Agree", 4 represented "Somewhat Agree", 3 represented "Neutral", 2 represented "Somewhat Disagree", and 1 represented "Disagree". Once the responses were coded, the average response for each factor was determined for each respondent. These values based on the individual five factors helped in the final analysis.

The objective was to discover whether comparative advertisements are more effective than non-comparative, and to determine the various differences between the two based on various factors. Using a 95% confidence level, ANOVA was used for both toothpaste and soap advertisements. The responses were categorized based on three groups: Comparative (Brand 1 Vs Brand 2), Brand 1 and Brand 2. Having a significant difference implies that the statistical discrepancy between means is not a coincidence, and there lies a factor which leads to this difference. The various descriptive statistical measures of

the samples were calculated using ANOVA to gain a better understanding.

Further Correlation was used to explore the relationships between the advertisement believability and purchase intention.

Analysis for Toothpastes

The F value for Ad Believability was 47.168 which was greater than the F critical value (3.051). The ANOVA test indicates that there is a significant difference between the means of the samples. The mean for the comparative advertisement is 4.084 whereas the mean for non-comparative advertisement of Pepsodent is 3.903 and for Colgate was 3.636. This difference in means shows that the believability of comparative advertisements is greater than that of non-comparative advertisements. Similarly, the F value for Attitude towards Advertisement was 45.439 which was greater than the F critical value (3.051). There is a significant difference in means of comparative and individual advertisements. The mean scores clearly indicate that comparative advertisements are more effective than the non-comparative advertisements.

Similar results are observed for attitude towards brand, message content and purchase intention where the mean scores of comparative advertisements outweigh the mean scores of non-comparative advertisements.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics and Analysis of Variance for Pepsodent vs Colgate

S.No	Variable	Advertisement	Mean	Standard Deviation	F	F critical	Inference
1	Ad Believability	Pepsodent vs Colgate	4.084	0.835	47.168	3.051	Significant difference between means
		Pepsodent	3.903	0.736			
		Colgate	3.636	0.745			
2	Attitude towards Advertisement	Pepsodent vs Colgate	4.127	1.091	45.439	3.051	Significant difference between means
		Pepsodent	3.981	0.742			
		Colgate	3.656	0.731			
3	Attitude towards Brand	Pepsodent vs Colgate	3.445	1.774	33.506	3.051	Significant difference between means
		Pepsodent	3.077	0.713			
		Colgate	2.868	0.602			
4	Message Content	Pepsodent vs Colgate	3.989	0.827	36.773	3.051	Significant difference between means
		Pepsodent	2.745	1.080			
		Colgate	2.861	1.027			
5	Purchase Intention	Pepsodent vs Colgate	4.409	0.876	33.516	3.051	Significant difference between means
		Pepsodent	3.059	0.771			
		Colgate	3.068	0.711			

Analysis for Soaps

In order to increase the generalizability of the study and to make the results robust, the above stated parameters that were tested on toothpaste brands were also tested on soap brands. The results indicate that all the five parameters, viz, ad believability, attitude towards advertisement, attitude

towards brand, message content and purchase intention differ significantly across the three given groups (Lifebuoy Vs Dettol, Lifebuoy, Dettol). The mean scores of comparative advertisements are higher than that of non-comparative advertisements (Refer Table 4). This indicates that the likability of the comparative advertisements is higher than non-comparative advertisements.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics and Analysis of Variance for Lifebuoy vs Dettol

S.No	Variable	Advertisement	Mean	Standard Deviation	F	F critical	Inference
1	Ad Believability	Lifebuoy vs Dettol	4.398	1.002	44.077	3.052	Significant difference between means
		Lifebuoy	3.062	0.706			
		Dettol	3.459	0.658			
2	Attitude towards Advertisement	Lifebuoy vs Dettol	4.606	1.114	44.422	3.052	Significant difference between means
		Lifebuoy	3.112	0.617			
		Dettol	3.231	0.662			
3	Attitude towards Brand	Lifebuoy vs Dettol	4.296	0.991	34.622	3.052	Significant difference between means
		Lifebuoy	2.939	0.466			
		Dettol	2.921	0.502			
4	Message Content	Lifebuoy vs Dettol	4.134	0.726	25.053	3.052	Significant difference between means
		Lifebuoy	3.029	1.012			
		Dettol	2.956	1.123			

5	Purchase Intention	Lifebuoy vs Dettol	4.347	0.842	33.760	3.052	Significant difference between means
		Lifebuoy	3.032	0.497			
		Dettol	2.976	0.452			

Relationship between advertisement believability and purchase intention

Pearson Correlation was applied to explore the relationship between advertisement believability and purchase intention across the three groups (Colgate Vs Pepsodent, Colgate, Pepsodent). The paper assumes a linear relationship between ad believability and purchase intention. So it can be concluded that the information conveyed in the advertisement is credible and believable there is a higher possibility that the consumer will go in for

buying a product. Comparative advertisements facilitate the buying process by enumerating a contrast on different criteria. With the help of these advertisements the consumer is highly convinced on the narrowed down choice of brand.

In all the three cases, it was observed that that ad believability is highly correlated with purchase intention but the correlation for comparative advertisements (0.886) is stronger than non comparative advertisements (0.672, 0.716).

Table 5: Correlation Coefficients
For Comparative Toothpaste Advertisements

	Ad Believability	Purchase Intention
Ad Believability	1	0.886*
Purchase Intention	0.886*	1

*Significant at 95% level of significance

Table 6: Correlation Coefficients
For Non Comparative: Pepsodent Advertisements

	Ad Believability	Purchase Intention
Ad Believability	1	0.672*
Purchase Intention	0.672*	1

*Significant at 95% level of significance

Table 7: Correlation Coefficients
For Non Comparative: Colgate Advertisements

	Ad Believability	Purchase Intention
Ad Believability	1	0.716*
Purchase Intention	0.716*	1

*Significant at 95% level of significance

Similar conclusions were derived for soap category as well. The correlations in the soap category were also strong and significant for all the three groups (Lifebuoy Vs Dettol, Lifebuoy, Dettol)

Discussions

Comparative advertisements make a direct comparison with a competitor and portray themselves as better. The believability of such advertisements is low as compared to a non-comparative advertisement wherein the brand just focuses on its positive attributes and showcases that. One reason was low advertisement believability in case of comparative advertisements is that the claims being made by the sponsored brand may not be substantial.

Comparative advertisements have a less positive attitude as compared to non-comparative advertisements. The reason behind this may be that there is an air of negativity associated with comparative advertisements. Comparative advertisements are not as visually appealing or pleasant as non-comparative ones.

The general attitude towards the sponsored brand is more positive in case of comparative advertisements as compared to non-comparative. The reason behind this may be due to the fact that comparison made between the two, made the consumer feel that the sponsored brand is better as compared to the competitor brand.

Comparative advertisements are more engaging when it comes to message content as compared to non-comparative advertisements. The possible reason for this might be the negative air associated with comparative advertisements. It is human tendency to be able to have better recall about negativity as compared to positivity. Also, they are able to hold the interest of the consumers for longer as compared to non-comparative advertisements.

The purchase intentions of consumers are higher when the advertisement is comparative as compared to non-comparative advertisements. The reason behind may be that the consumer finds the sponsored advertisement to be better. Another possibility could be that the decision making process is being done at home via the

advertisement, and when the consumer goes to the market, he/she does not require to go through the decision making process.

The results show that even though comparative advertisements have lower advertisement believability and a lower attitude towards advertisement, the attitude towards brand and purchase intentions are higher. The reason for this may be attributed to the fact that comparative advertisements have more information and are more engaging as compared to non-comparative advertisements.

Managerial Implications

The research has many possible practical implications. With the increase in comparative advertising since its legitimization in 1971, it is important to continue research on this topic in order to better understand how it is beneficial and what makes it effective. This study has added to the research on comparative advertising effectiveness by looking at different variables such as advertisement believability, attitude toward the advertisement, attitude toward the brand, message content, and purchase intention to study the effectiveness of comparative versus non-comparative advertising. This study would help the managers take better decisions as to which form of advertising is better for the brand and whether it will help in improving the sales of the particular product or not. The effectiveness of such an advertising tool can be better understood and utilized by the decision making authorities. This study would help in the decision making process of the top management as to whether comparative advertisements should be used or not.

Comparative advertisements have more information and are more engaging as compared to non-comparative advertisements. Advertisement practitioners should make use of this information. Even though comparative advertisements have lower advertisement believability and a lower attitude towards advertisement, the attitude towards brand and purchase intentions are higher. They can increase the sales of the sponsored brand by comparing it with another well-known competitor. It is especially a good strategy for those brands which have just entered the market. It helps them establish themselves. Comparative advertisements shouldn't be used excessively though. It could lead to a negative brand image as well. Hence, the advertisers need to be very careful when opting for comparative advertisements. Non-comparative advertisements are a good way to showcase the positive aspects of the product.

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