

ATTITUDES OF THE UNDER GRADUATE STUDENTS OF DIBRUGARH UNIVERSITY TOWARDS CONTRACEPTIVE ADVERTISING

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Abstract

Contraceptive advertising means the advertisements of various contraceptive devices for men and women. Attitude of the adolescents towards contraceptive advertising is a study conducted in Dibrugarh University involving Students from the Under Graduate courses. The study was conducted in order to analyze the perceptions of the Under Graduate students of Dibrugarh University towards contraceptive advertisements. This study employed questionnaires as a method and a tool of data collection. The tools were well constructed in order to attain all important details for an effective and informative study. 59% respondents said that these contraceptive advertisements contain excessive sex element. Therefore, 67% of the respondents feel uncomfortable to watch these advertisements in presence of family and friends. This study recommended that, contraceptive methods marketing companies' needs to refocus their advertising strategies and lessen the amount of sex element and make these advertisements more informative rather than sexually provocative. The findings of this study suggest that the Advertisements can be replaced by some other methods such as health campaigns, text book lessons, seminars etc.

Keywords:

Contraceptive advertising;
Contraceptives;
Attitudes;
Adolescents;
Under graduates.

1. Introduction

Now-a-days various types of contraceptives are used to prevent pregnancies. Some need a doctor's prescription and some don't need such prescription for the use. These contraceptives are advertised through different mass media. Advertising is an audio or visual form of marketing communication that employs an openly sponsored, non-personal message to promote or sell a product, service or idea. An advertisement strikes the mind of the viewers or listeners and persuades them to buy or use their product. Different contraceptives are also introduced to the audiences in different media like television, Internet, Newspaper etcetera. Contraceptive advertising means the advertisements of various contraceptive devices for men and women. The main purpose of these advertisements is to inform the audience or viewers about the contraceptives like condoms, I - pill, diaphragms etc.

Due to the sensitive and personal nature of this product category, all potential condom and contraceptive advertising, including ad placement, must be reviewed and approved in advance by the Ad Policy team. Determination of suitability of any given advertisement is at the sole discretion of AOL. The approval is based on the following points:

1. Condoms/contraceptive advertising should not promote casual sex and/or promiscuity.
2. Condom/contraceptive ads must be in context of the area(s) in which they are promoted.
3. Condom/contraceptive ads must solely advertise the condom or contraceptive (i.e., no sex toys, devices, or products used to enhance sexual encounters.)

The subject of this research emphasizes on three key words-**Attitudes**, **Undergraduates** (young adults) and **Contraceptive advertising**. Media creates a great impact on the viewer's mind. From children to adults all are fond of watching television, using the internet and other media. Their minds and mentality is hugely affected by the visuals of different media. Various ads are shown in various media. Among the various ads, contraceptive ads are the most sensitive and controversial ones. Since these ads are sex appealing in nature, the general perception of these ads are not so good in India and many other developing as well as developed countries. Though these ads are informative and the proper knowledge of contraceptives is very essential for the youngsters as well as adults these are considered as taboos in the society. A majority of people think that these ads are wrong directive for the adolescents or the teenagers. Therefore, the study

of the attitudes and perception of the youngsters towards these types of ads is very important in today's context.

In 1991 the Lintas advertising agency bought out every advertising space available in the October edition of the men's magazine *Debonair* to launch its new product *Kama Sutra* condoms*. The advertisements are black and white photographs featuring well-known actress Pooja Bedi with several other sultry models. The advertising campaign became a public sensation; the October edition of *Debonair* sold out in days and even became a collectors' item as readers actually bought the magazine for the advertising it contained. In terms of contraception advertising, the government of India sponsored family planning advertisements which emphasized responsibility and restriction and encouraged women “*ekya do bacche—bus*” (one or two children—enough). Previously, free and subsidized condoms distributed by the government under the brand name *Nirodh* had tainted the product category as a whole. Non-lubricated, thick, and yellow, they were less than appealing. *Nirodh's* advertising was equally unappealing; focusing on government encouraged family planning, it conjured up memories of forced sterilization under Indira Gandhi.

In the research paper “**A descriptive study of undergraduate contraceptive attitudes among students at the University of New Hampshire**” by Katrina Heisler and Danielle M. Van Eron (2012)”, the researchers try to understand undergraduate students' contraceptive attitudes and its effects on contraceptive use to further enhance the education regarding unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). This study yielded a total of 241 University of New Hampshire students, a response rate of 60.25%. Of this number, 80.2% were female and 19.8% were male. The findings from the study indicated that the most popular primary contraceptive among students surveyed was oral contraceptives with 58.4% of the students using this method. Other notable methods included male condoms (24.7%), abstinence (7%), and none (3.7%). In addition to investigating the methods of contraception; the researchers also questioned the reason behind contraceptive use. The two primary reasons for using contraceptives were one, pregnancy prevention and two, STD prevention. Eighty-one percent of

the students reported pregnancy prevention as the main reason behind using protection during intercourse. Only seven percent used contraceptive in STD prevention as their motive.

According to the study conducted in California, USA, on the title “**Attitudes of adolescents and parents of adolescents concerning contraceptive advertisements on television**” by Buchta (1998), the data obtained through quantitative research method suggested that a majority of adults and adolescents approve of contraceptives’ advertisements on television. The use of the media to take advantage of the present opportunity to educate and promote birth control and disease prevention to sexual active population may be beneficial.

2. Research Method

This research adopted the quantitative explanatory design as the main methodology. This study was conducted at Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh because it has a diversity of students coming from different regions from Assam as well as from the other states of North East India. The study targeted population of male and female undergraduate students of Dibrugarh University between 18-21 years old. This age group is explained to be the most sexually active. Since this age group is very much exposed to various media viz. Television, internet etc. They have gone through different contraceptive ads which certainly attract them the researcher take them as his study population. The sample of this study was selected from the larger population of the study, which included men and women ages 18-21 years. The sample was obtained through simple random sampling.

Simple random sampling method was employed so that the study could reach any of the undergraduate students and aged between 18 and 21 who were available during the research period. The researcher tried to take 6 students randomly from each year from 7 undergraduate courses in Dibrugarh University to whom he provided a questionnaire for research.

Sample size for this study is 100 participants, with 55% female and 45% male representation. In the research proposal, the target was to reach 150 respondents with an equal (50%- 50%) male and female representation, but it was difficult to reach that target as most of the respondents were provided with the questionnaire but were too busy to answer or complete it.

3. Results and Analysis

3.1: Demographic and social characteristics of respondents

3.1.1: Respondent's Distribution by Sex

100 respondents participated in this study, with 45 female (45%) and 55 (55%) male respondents.

Table 3.1.1: Respondent's distribution by sex (N=100)

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
MALE	55	55%
FEMALE	45	45%
TOTAL	100	100%

SOURCE: RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.2 Consumer's Exposure to Contraceptive Advertisements

The respondents were asked if they have ever encountered or been exposed to any contraceptive method advertisement through either listening (hearing) from radio, watching on television and the internet, reading on newspapers and magazines or seeing the adverts on billboards and posters.

The respondents were asked if they can specify the contraceptive methods which advert's they have been exposed to and the frequency of the exposure. The condoms and pills were the methods which advertisements were reported as the highest in reaching the population sample, with 100% and 94% coverage respectively.

3.3: Consumer's Attitude towards Contraceptives Advertisements

This question was addressing the main objective of the study, which was to examine the consumer's attitude toward various contraceptives' advertisements. The question intended to find out the way various people receive and perceive different contraceptive methods adverts, and how do they feel about those advertisements. When respondents were asked about what they

think about these ads, the response was that 74% think that the ads are informative compared to 26% who think that they are not. In asking Can these ads mislead the youths, 46% of the respondents said 'No' and remaining 54% said 'YES'. When the researcher asked how those ads mislead the young generation, the answers were that some said those might be sexually provocative to the young minds. In a few ads, focus is given on the quality and effects of pleasure; somehow the main purpose has not brought to light. The partial nude pictures of the women, those are cast in the ads create bad impact in the curious young immature brains. Some said that they do not provide good information; only focuses on presenting ads in a sexual way. When respondents were asked that if they think the information carried by these ads helps the viewers in having secure sex relationship, 58% think that they helps and 7% think that 35% do not have mixed feelings. When the respondents were asked on the sexually provocative nature of these ads, 29% think that these ads are sexually provocative comparing to 31% who think that they are not; While 40% of the respondents had mixed feeling.

When asked on if the ads were disturbing for the children and the adolescents, 71% responded that 'yes' they might be disturbed by these ads; while remaining 29% said that 'no' they are not disturbing. On asking about the relevance and necessity of these ads in the society; 90% said that they are relevant and necessary for the society while 10% said that they are unnecessary. When asked if they carry excessive sex element; 41% said that they do not contain excessive sex element. 59% said yes they contain. When the respondents were asked that if the message of promoting safe sex conveyed to the audiences properly, 79% said yes the message is delivered to the audiences while remaining 21% think that it is not delivered properly.

The respondent's attitude, perception and feelings are as elaborated by the Table 3.3.2.

Table 3.3.2: Consumer's Perception, Feeling and Attitude towards Contraceptives

Advertisements

QUESTIONS	FREQUENCY(f)	YES	NO	NOT SURE	TOTAL
	PERCENTAGE (%)				
1. Have you heard the name contraceptive before?	f	98	2		100
	%	98	2		100
2. Do you know the meaning of contraceptive?	f	98	2		100
	%	98	2		100
3. Do you know about the ads on contraceptives?	f	94	6		100
	%	94	6		100
4. Have you ever watched any contraceptive ads in any media?	f	90	10		100
	%	90	10		100
5. Do you think these ads are informative?	f	74	26		100
	%	74	26		100
6. Can these ads mislead the youth?	F	54	46		100
	%	54	46		100
7. Do you think the information carried by these ads helps us having secure sex relationship?	f	58	7	35	100
	%	58	7	35	100
8. Do you feel uncomfortable to watch such	f	67	33		100

ads in the presence of family or friends?	%	67	33		100
9. Do you think the contents of these ads are sexually provocative?	f	29	31	40	100
	%	29	31	40	100
10. Do you think that viewing of these ads can be disturbing for children and adolescent?	f	71	29		100
	%	71	29		100
11. Do you think ads on contraceptives are relevant and necessary in the society?	f	90	10		100
	%	90	10		100
12. Do you think these ads carry excessive sex element?	f	59	41		100
	%	59	41		100
13. Do you feel the message of promoting safe sex that conveyed to the viewers or listeners?	f	79	21		100
	%	79	21		100
14. Do you think instead of ad, there can be other means of promotion for family planning and promoting safe sex?	f	33	12	55	100
	%	33	12	55	100

Source: Research Findings

Findings:

The students are asked various questions related to their perceptions towards contraceptive advertisements. From the survey, the researcher came to the conclusion that almost all the students are aware of the word 'contraceptive'. Among the contraceptives; condoms and pills are reported as the most common method. Copper tube and IUD's have the second highest percentage. Television is the most common media where the ads of contraceptive products are seen. Then comes Internet which is a very popular medium for almost all advertisements. Newspaper and Radio have the lowest percentage in this case.

The first question was that Have they heard the term 'contraceptive', 98% said 'yes' and the rest 2% said 'no'. It was good thing for the reseacher that almost all the respondents are informed about the contraceptive products. Against the second question, the researcher find that 98% know the meaning of the term 'contraceptive' and the rest 2% donot know the meaning. In response to the 3rd question, 94% know that there are advertisements of the contraceptive products and the rest 6% donot know it. In the 5th question, they were asked if they have ever watched any contraceptive ad in any media, 90% said yes and 10% said no. In response to the 10th question, 74% think that these ads are informative while 26% think negatively. 11th question, 54% think that thses ads can mislead the youth while 46% think these ads can not. 12th question, 58% think that the informations carried by these ads help the viewers in having safe sex. 7% said the ads donot help while the rest 35% are seemd confused on this issue. 13th question, among the respondents, 67% feel uncomfortable to watch such advertisements in front of family members. Though they let the researcher know that they do not feel uncomfortable about all the contraceptive ads, they feel uncomfortable, which ads are sexually provocative e.g. various condom ads. 14th question, 21% think that contraceptive ads are sexually provocative. 31% think that these are not while the rest 40% are not sure on this issue. In response to the 15th question, 71% think that these ads are disturbing to the children and the adolescents while 29% think these are not. When the respondents are asked about any sort of replacements for the advertisements of contraceptives, they talked about proper sex education from the early age. Some spoke about conducting health camps for youths which includes contraceptive uses as a part of it. Compulsory sex education is also required according to some respondents. Some respondents have a very interesting answer, they want a toll free phone line where they can ask

all their queries regarding this. Seminars, discussions and text book lessons are some other means for the knowledge of contraceptive use, they respondents have said. They also think that advertisements with less sexual contents and more information can be more profitable for the society. 17th question, 90% think that these are necessary and relevant for the society. 18th question, 59% think that these Ads carry excessive sex element while 41% are against this. In response to the 19th question, 33% feel that the message of promoting safe sex conveyed to the audience. 12% feel that it is not conveyed while the rest 55% are confused on this regard. The researcher gave freedom to the respondents in commenting freely in the 20th question. Various comments and advices came from the undergraduate students; some students said that the contraceptive ads should be meaningful rather than branding of such products. Some commented that “it should focus on providing the information of side effects of not using such products rather than showing the provocative pictures and the vulgerness. According to some students these ads can be more informative.

These are the various responses the researcher got from a sample of 100 undergraduate students of Dibrugarh University. The whole research is based upon these findings.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings from this study, it can be concluded that the contraceptive advertisements create a great impact in the young minds. Contraceptives advertisements are necessary for the society and they are informative too. But advertisers should lessen the sex element shown in these ads; so that these ads cannot harm the young minds. The ads should try to focus on letting people know the real purpose of using contraceptives instead of motivating viewers to have pleasurable sex experience with the use of those contraceptive products. Awareness Campaigns, sex education, various seminars can replace such ads which contain excessive sex element. 67% of the respondents feel uncomfortable while watching these ads in front of their family, this is an area of concern because the contraceptive knowledge is very important for the adolescents as well as adults and they should not feel shy to watch these ads openly. So, the advertisements should be made in such a manner that viewers do not feel uncomfortable to watch these ads.

The main purpose of the contraceptive use is to prevent unintended pregnancies and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD). Therefore, those ads should focus on providing the information of side effects of not using such contraceptives rather than showing those provocative pictures and pleasures of such things.

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