



Research Article

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# Decoding Consumer Sentiments: A Regression analysis on Beliefs and Attitudes towards Advertising in General

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## ABSTRACT

Studies investigating overall consumer beliefs and attitudes towards advertising have been conducted from time to time in different parts of the world. Researchers have also investigated if and which beliefs of respondents towards advertising significantly predict consumer attitude towards advertising in general but any such exclusive study is still scant in Indian perspective. This study attempts to bridge the gap by examining the consumers' overall beliefs and attitudes towards advertising in North India. The respondents were given 32 belief statements from which eight belief factors were extracted using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which were further validated by performing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Using regression analysis, it has been found that seven of the eight extracted factors significantly predicted consumers' attitudes towards advertising in general. The obtained results reflected that consumers in Northern India have developed negative overall beliefs towards advertising compared to the beliefs explored in earlier studies conducted in other parts of the world. The findings of this study on consumer beliefs and attitudes towards advertising in North India open avenues for future research by highlighting the unique nuances in this region. Further investigations could delve into the specific cultural, socioeconomic, and demographic factors shaping these negative beliefs.

## INTRODUCTION

Advertising is an important tool of marketing and has been used successfully to inform and influence over-all community/consumers to purchase products. Advertising could be in the form of graphical, verbal or written messages. Marketers use mediums like television, newspaper, magazines, radio, internet to advertise their products and services to generate awareness in the minds of present and prospective consumers. We live in a world of mass production and advertising that serves manufacturers in marketing their products and services globally. Generally, advertising delivers information regarding the advertising firm, its product, features and availability. Advertising inhabits a key role in disseminating information and increasing the demand for the products and services being advertised.

In fact, it acts as a foundation to commercialize any idea. Consumers are exposed daily to significant amounts of advertising through different sources of media creating a general opinion in the mind of consumers called beliefs. Fishbein and Ajzen, (1975) described belief as an expressed likelihood possessed by or associated with an object (such as an advertisement).

Various researchers have given extreme importance to the role of advertising as it is believed to shape target consumers' opinions, attitudes and behavior. Ewen and Ewen (1992) find advertising responsible for selling goods and services and an indirect means to comprehend the world. Advertising is a key societal and economic institution that tries to sustain cultural domination by providing socially created ways of seeing and sensing of world. The relationship between society and advertising

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could also give rise to criticism. Some researchers have criticized the marketing system for adding evils to the society (Durand and Lambert, 1985; Anderson *et al.*, 1978; Haller, 1974; Larkin, 1977; Bauer and Greyser, 1968). They also blamed the marketing system for stimulating curiosity towards material goods, creating a materialistic society. Criticizers view this generated interest as a result of false marketing rather than a natural state of mind. These views make it important for advertisers to understand respondents' overall beliefs and attitudes towards advertising from time to time. Many studies exploring consumer beliefs and attitude have been conducted in different parts of the world (Ramaprasad, 2001; Yang, 2000; Shavitt *et al.*, 1998; Ramprasad and Thurwanger 1998; O' Donohoe 1995; Mittal, 1994; Pollay and Mittal, 1993; Andrews, 1989; Muehling, 1987; Petroschias, 1986; Dubinsky and Hensel, 1984; Reid and Soley 1982; Mitchell and Olson, 1981; Sandage and Leckenby, 1980; Larkin, 1977; Fishbein, and Ajzen, 1975; Haller, 1974; Barksdale and Darden, 1972; Bauer and Greyser, 1968).

Schutte and Ciarlante, (1998) in their book considers Asia to be an important market due to the fact that it constitutes about 50 percent of world population and 25 percent of world economy. They believe that, even being such an important part of the world, there is lack of research that creates "marketing theory specific to Asia" (Schutte and Ciarlante, 1998, pp. 1). Most theories have been developed in western countries and rarely tested in other parts of the world (Lee and Green, 1991). Undoubtedly, such theories contain biases providing the insights of the "culture and time from which it emerges" (Schutte and Ciarlante, 1998, pp. 1). Consequently, there is a need of continuous assessment of beliefs and attitudes of consumers towards advertising in other countries from time to time. Consumers are in a state of continuous flux due to growing technology and unlimited access to information. Suspicion in the mind of consumers regarding various aspects of advertising is important to be investigated as it could hinder advertising trustworthiness and could also decrease the marketplace efficiencies (Calfee and Ringold, 1987; Beales *et al.*, 1981). Argumentative reactions to advertising are not limited to consumers only; scholars and experts from diverse fields of social sciences also express their criticism of the cultural effects of advertising (Pollay, 1986 (a), 1986 (b)). Some scholars consider advertising a package of lies that tricks and influences the audience (Edward, 2001; Steel, 1998). Such negative opinions towards advertising provoke interest of researchers to find its effects on the other aspects of consumer behavior. Every advertisement is not effective and successful and it is important to know the psychology of consumers' so as to make it successful. According to Aaker *et al.* (1997), it is essential for an expert marketer to comprehend the psychology of advertising. Also, we don't come across any such study where the

exclusive overall beliefs and attitudes of Indian consumers towards advertising have been explored. Therefore, this study is an attempt to explore respondents' beliefs towards advertising and to investigate if consumers' beliefs act as predictors to shape their attitudes towards advertising in general.

### Significance of the study

The identification of negative beliefs in Northern India holds significant implications for advertising effectiveness and strategies in the region. Understanding these specific cultural beliefs is essential for marketers to tailor their messages appropriately, avoiding inadvertent reinforcement of negative stereotypes or cultural misunderstandings. By acknowledging and addressing the identified negative beliefs, marketers can develop more culturally sensitive and impactful campaigns, ultimately fostering a deeper connection between brands and consumers in India.

### Review of Literature

Advertising has been a subject of social scrutiny for several decades, with waves of discontent emerging in the 1910s, 1930s, 1950s, and 1970s. The 1990s marked another significant episode in the ongoing discourse (Calfee and Ringold, 1994). Each decade of controversy has increased the scope and intensity of control over advertising content. The 1910s saw the establishment of the Federal Trade Commission and Better Business Bureau to promote truth in advertising (Calfee and Ringold, 1994; Cole, 1921a, 1921b). The 1930s witnessed the emergence of the consumer movement, expanding the regulatory scope of the Federal Trade Commission to govern advertising. In the 1950s and 1970s, influential academics and journalists strongly criticized advertising, branding it as a wasteful and harmful activity (Calfee and Ringold, 1994; Galbraith, 1958; Packard, 1957).

Pollay and Mittal (1993) provide an alternative perspective, considering advertising as an essential phenomenon responsible for stimulating consumption and economic activities. Consumers encounter numerous advertisements daily, forming diverse opinions about various aspects of this phenomenon. Extensive research on advertising has explored consumers' beliefs toward advertising, with notable studies by Ramaprasad and Thurwanger (1998), Shavitt (1998), Muehling (1997), Pollay and Mittal (1993), Andrews (1989), Dubinsky and Hensel (1984), Sandage and Leckenby (1980), Larkin (1977), and Bauer and Greyser (1968). Bauer and Greyser (1968) were pioneers in investigating consumer attitudes toward advertising, exploring social and economic dimensions. Their study laid the groundwork for subsequent research. Wilkie *et al.* (1984) distinguished between attitude and belief, defining belief as descriptive statements about object attributes and attitude as a summary assessment of objects. Muehling (1987) emphasized that beliefs must



combine with an evaluative factor to represent attitude, which is an index of liking or disliking an object. Pollay and Mittal (1993) contended that Bauer and Greyser (1968) studied and measured beliefs, not attitudes.

Dianoux et al. (2014) focus on detecting differences in attitudes toward advertising, studying people from Germany, Ukraine, and the USA. Results show that the concept of AG can be too broad. Attitudinal differences between Ukraine and other countries are found, with German respondents being more pessimistic and respondents from the USA being more optimistic. Religious beliefs play a role in shaping these attitudes.

Sadasivan (2019) investigates factors affecting young people's opinions about ads and how these opinions influence behavior. Credibility, informativeness, and hedonic factors impact attitudes toward advertisements. Alsarif et al. (2023) use the PRISMA framework to review physiological and neurophysiological studies in advertising, addressing gaps in understanding consumers' mental responses. The study emphasizes global trends and advancements in neuromarketing, providing insights into emotional processes, attention, memory, reward, motivation, and perception in advertising.

Research has delved into consumers' affective reactions to advertising (Andrews, 1989), particularly focusing on the attitude-toward-the-ad construct as a significant mediator of brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Lutz, 1985; Mitchell and Olson, 1981; Shimp, 1981). Lutz (1985) identified cognitive and affective precursors of attitude towards advertisements, highlighting the importance of attitude-toward-advertising-in-general (AG) as a key antecedent. AG has been defined as "a learned predisposition to respond consistently favorably or unfavorably to advertising in general" (Lutz, 1985, p. 53). Studies have investigated the operation of this concept and identified its underlying set of beliefs (Muehling, 1987). The attitude towards advertising in general is grounded in consumer beliefs toward advertising (Lutz, 1985), with even Bauer and Greyser (1968) indicating that consumers' beliefs toward advertising influence attitudes toward advertising in general. Respondents' beliefs offer insights into whether consumers harbor a positive or negative disposition toward advertising in general (Andrews, 1989).

## METHODOLOGY

### The sample

The data for the study has been collected from Punjab, a state located in Northern part of India. Punjab serves as an ideal location for conducting research on advertising in North India for several compelling reasons. Firstly, North India is recognized as a pivotal region for both national and global brands to launch their products, with Punjab standing out as a significant contributor to this trend. The state's residents actively engage in substantial spending, driving the country's overall retail growth (Sharmila Das,

2015). This economic activity and consumer engagement make Punjab a microcosm of the larger trends observed in North India. Moreover, consumers in North India, particularly in Punjab, are known for their discerning preferences and higher expenditures on lifestyle products compared to other regions (Indiaretailing Bureau, 2016). This distinct consumer behavior presents an opportunity to delve into the unique dynamics of advertising effectiveness in a market that places a premium on lifestyle choices. Recent reports, such as the one published by Business Standards, reveal a remarkable growth rate in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector in North India. The data indicates that the region has experienced a fivefold increase in the third quarter, outpacing growth rates in other parts of the country (Pinto. V. S., 2020). This growth not only underscores the economic significance of North India but also highlights Punjab's role as a key driver of this expansion. These findings clearly make them an important and right segment in India to study and explore their beliefs regarding advertising. Punjab is comprised of three distinct regions—Majha, Malwa, and Doaba. To ensure a representative dataset, 250 questionnaires were distributed in each of these regions. Out of the 609 received responses, 581 were deemed suitable for our research. The demographic composition of the data revealed a balanced gender distribution, with 51.4% female and 48.5% male respondents. The data was collected employing convenience sampling. The participants were all above 18 years old, with the majority falling within the 18-28 age group. Additionally, all respondents had attained at least a graduate-level education, a precautionary measure to ensure a sufficient level of education for a more coherent expression of beliefs (Singh and Chahal, 2020). Table (1) provides a detailed overview of the demographic information.

### Instruments and analysis

The scales used to explore beliefs towards advertising in this study was prepared by adopting statements from the earlier studies of Larkin, 1977; Muehling, 1987; Pollay and Mittal, 1993; Ramprasad, 2001; Shavitt *et al*, 2003. Attitude towards advertising in general (AG) scale was adopted from the earlier study of Ramprasad (2001). In addition, demographic information regarding gender, age and education of respondents was also obtained.

**Table 1:** Demographic profile (N = 581 Respondents)

<i>Demographic variable</i>		
Gender	Males	282 (48.5%)
	Females	299 (51.4%)
Age	18–28 years	267 (45.9%)
	29–39 years	219 (37.6%)
	40 years and above	95 (16.3%)
Education	Undergraduates	97 (16.6%)
	Graduates	287 (49.3%)
	Masters'	155 (26.6%)
	Higher (MPhil/PhD)	42 (7.2%)

In order to find the beliefs of respondents towards advertising, a cross-sectional study was conducted where data was collected using a survey method with the help of a structured questionnaire. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was employed to explore the beliefs of respondents towards advertising. Factor analysis resulted in the formation of factors representing consumers' beliefs towards advertising. The obtained factors were further checked for reliability by using Cronbach's Alpha. Validity of the scale was verified using confirmatory factor analysis. To find if obtained belief factors acts as predictors to shape consumer attitude towards advertising in general (AG), initially, the whole construct (obtained belief factors and AG) was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis to find model fit followed by multiple regression analysis, where obtained belief factors acted as independent variables and attitude towards advertising in general acted as a dependent variable.

## Findings

### *Beliefs of Respondents Regarding Advertising*

In this part, the beliefs of respondents towards advertising were explored and compared to earlier studies. Based on the obtained mean scores, it has been found that respondents have developed extremely negative beliefs towards various aspects of advertising, which is different from the previous studies. They don't find advertising a reliable source of information regarding the quality and performance of products (mean = 2.84, SD = 1.15). Neither they find it helpful in brand selection (mean = 2.91, SD = 1.06) nor find it truthfully presenting the picture of the advertised product (mean = 2.91, SD = 1.05). Consistent with the previous findings, respondents believe that advertising makes people buy more than their means (Beard, 2003; Yang, 2000), thereby making society more materialistic (Pollay and Mittal, 1993). Also, they find advertisements insulting the intelligence of an average consumer (mean 3.65, SD .83), by deceiving and misleading (mean 3.55, SD .91) by presenting exaggerated images of the advertised products (mean 3.61, SD .88). They feel that there is too much sexual activity in advertisements (mean 3.65, SD .99) which makes people live in the world of fantasies (mean 3.54, SD .97) and at the same time feel strongly that law has failed to prohibit such sexually suggestive advertisements (mean 4.02, SD .94). They believe that there is need of more strict government regulations for advertising (mean 3.55, SD .88) which could curb such misleading and manipulative advertising practices (mean 4.03, SD .97). An important belief that respondents revealed here is that they feel advertising harmful to the society (mean 3.62, SD .89). They may have developed such belief because they may find advertising distorting the values in youth (mean 3.71, SD .85) and creating violent behavior in children (mean 3.66, SD .85). Respondents' believe that advertising increases competition in market (mean 3.22, SD 1.04)

thereby, decreasing the prices of advertised goods and services (mean 3.08, SD 1.04) are similar to the study of Pollay and Mittal, (1993). Despite exhibiting such negative beliefs towards advertising, respondents still believe that advertising is amusing/entertaining (mean 3.77, SD .78), better than the adjoining media contents some of the times (mean 3.80, SD .72) and pleasurable to recall (mean 3.89, SD .76). These hedonic beliefs have been consistently found positive in earlier studies too (Ramprasad, 2001; Yang, 2000; Pollay and Mittal, 1993). Table (2) presents the detail of beliefs and obtained mean scores with standard deviations.

To identify factors stemming from respondents' beliefs, we conducted principal component analysis (PCA). Respondents indicated their level of agreement on 32 statements measured on 5-point Likert scales, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The factor analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation resulted in the formation of eight factors. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was found to be 0.853, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, indicating the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Additionally, communalities for each statement exceeded 0.5. The total variance extracted was 68.86%, and all factors had eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (see Table 3).

Following factor exploration, we assessed the reliability of the obtained factors by checking Cronbach's alpha values. All the factors obtained demonstrated Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.7, meeting the condition for reliability (Hair *et al.*, 2010). It is noteworthy that the reliability of obtained factors was not assessed in previous studies by Ramprasad (1994), Ramprasad and Thurwanger (1998), Ramprasad (2001), and Pollay and Mittal (1993). However, in the study by Yang (2000), reliability values were examined, most of which were below 0.6. This indicates a notable distinction in the methodological approach, as our study ensures a higher standard of reliability, enhancing the robustness of our findings.

Table (3) presents the details of the extracted eight belief factors. It was found that two of the pre-assumed factors loaded with other factors. These factors exhibited properties of more than one factor, so they were named accordingly. Similar kind of factors were also formed in the study of Pollay and Mittal (1993). The factors obtained were good for the personal and national economy: materialism and consumer manipulation, regulatory issues, falsification, social cost, hedonic/pleasure, product information, and sexual content. It was found that factors personal economy, national economy and, materialism and consumer manipulation fused together to form a single factor; therefore, they were named according to their exhibited properties. Earlier, consumer's belief about "advertising makes people live in the world of fantasy" was found factored in materialism (Pollay and Mittal, 1993, p. 112) but in our study, it combined in factor sexual



**Table 2:** Consumer beliefs regarding advertising

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
B1) Advertising is reliable source of information about quality and performance of products	2.84	1.15
B2) Advertising help us in making right brand selection	2.91	1.06
B3) Advertising provides the true picture of the product advertised	2.91	1.05
B4) Advertising results in better quality products	2.99	1.01
B5) Advertising encourages consumers' to buy things they don't need	3.55	.88
B6) Advertising creates violent behavior in children	3.66	.85
B7) Advertising results in development of economy	2.96	1.03
B8) Advertising helps in increasing the quality of life style	2.99	1.03
B9) Advertising is harmful to the society	3.62	.89
B10) Advertising increases competitiveness in the market	3.22	1.04
B11) Advertising results in decrease in prices	3.08	1.04
B12) Advertising helps in providing better products to the consumers'	3.02	1.05
B13) Advertisements makes people live in the world of fantasy	3.54	.97
B14) Advertisements exploits sexual instincts	3.62	.94
B15) There is too much of sexual activity in advertising at present	3.65	.99
B16) Regulation of claims in advertising is non-existent	3.90	.93
B17) Children are indoctrinated to live with advertised products	3.73	.78
B18) Advertisements exaggerates usefulness level	3.61	.88
B19) Advertising develops and exploits inferiority complex	3.97	.93
B20) Advertisements are not effectively regulated by the law	3.74	.86
B21) Advertisers indulges in the manipulation of consumer minds	4.03	.97
B22) Law has failed in prohibiting sexually suggestive advertisements	4.02	.94
B23) There should be more government regulations on advertisements	3.55	.88
B24) Advertisements forces us to react irrationally	3.58	.88
B25) Advertisements are deceitful and misleading	3.55	.91
B26) Advertisements make false claims on the uses	3.51	.94
B27) Advertisements are too much repetitive and annoying	3.75	.87
B28) Advertisements distorts the values in youth	3.71	.85
B29) Advertisements insults the intelligence of an average consumer	3.65	.83
B30) Quite often advertising is amusing and entertaining	3.77	.78
B31) Sometimes advertisements are even more enjoyable than other media contents	3.80	.72
B32) Sometimes I take pleasure in thinking about what I saw or heard in advertisements	3.89	.76

content. The reason could be that respondents may have understood this belief as advertising making people to live in a world of sexual fantasies, as they find increased sexual activity in advertising.

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To find the suitability of our model to measure the beliefs of respondents, obtained belief factors were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 21 software. All the obtained "Model Fit" indicators indicated it a good measurement model, as shown in Table (4). Obtained CMIN/DF was found 2.54, SRMR = .041, RMSEA = .052, CFI = .924, IFI = .925 and TLI = .914, respectively which fulfils

the criteria given by Hair *et al.*, (2010). Further, convergent and discriminant validity checks checked the measurement model for construct validity. Convergent reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were obtained for convergent validity. CR values for all the factors were greater than .70 and AVE values greater .50 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Further, standardized loadings were also checked and all were found greater than .5 for all the statements. Discriminant validity was also checked and was found satisfactory, indicating our measurement model's suitability.

The obtained factors here are somewhat similar to the factors explored in the earlier studies of Ramprasad

**Table 3:** Rotated component matrix with obtained eigen values and percentage of variance

<i>Statement label</i>	<i>Factor 1 Good for personal benefits and national economy</i>	<i>Factor 2 Materialism and consumer manipulation</i>	<i>Factor 3 Regulatory issues</i>	<i>Factor 4 Falsification</i>	<i>Factor 5 Social cost</i>	<i>Factor 6 Hedonic/ Pleasure</i>	<i>Factor 7 Product information</i>	<i>Factor 8 Sexual content</i>
Cronbach's alpha	.861	.845	.878	.849	.832	.826	.818	.759
B11	.803							
B10	.785							
B12	.760							
B4	.734							
B8	.725							
B7	.723							
B19		.834						
B29		.808						
B18		.798						
B21		.731						
B5		.698						
B22			.828					
B20			.823					
B23			.786					
B16			.756					
B25				.834				
B26				.813				
B24				.791				
B27				.676				
B6					.818			
B17					.775			
B9					.767			
B28					.697			
B30						.846		
B31						.843		
B32						.831		
B2							.848	
B3							.808	
B1							.788	
B13								.825
B14								.775
B15								.748
Eigen value	6.95	4.40	2.36	2.04	1.79	1.71	1.44	1.31
%variance Extracted	11.44%	10.89%	8.84%	8.71%	8.56%	7.09%	6.95%	6.34%
Cumulative Variance	11.44%	22.34%	31.18%	39.90%	48.47%	55.56%	62.52%	68.86%

(2001) who explored eight factors in her study but none of the obtained factors in her study fused to produce a factor exhibiting information of more than one factor. Pollay and mittal (1993) obtained a factor solution in one of their sample where three factors (materialism,

manipulation and value corruption) fused together to form a bigger factor. We too obtained a similar kind of solution. Still, in our case two such factors were formed that exhibited properties of more than one factor i.e., personal benefits and national economy fused and formed a bigger

**Table 4:** Model fit indices

<i>Fit Indices</i>	<i>Measurement Model</i>
CMIN	1105.095
DF (Degree of Freedom)	436
CMIN/DF	2.54
SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Residuals)	.041
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	.052
AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index)	.871
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	.924
IFI (Incremental Fit Index)	.925
TLI (Tucker Lewis Index)	.914

factor named personal benefits. National economy and materialism and consumer manipulation fused together to form a factor materialism and consumer manipulation.

Yang (2000, p. 176) in his study also obtained similar factors where “good for the personal economy” and “consumer benefits” fused together to form “good for the personal economy and consumer benefits” and “social consequences fused with materialism” to form “social consequences and materialism”. Pollay and Mittal (1993) in their study found seven factor solution out of which they grouped three factors related to personal utility (hedonic/amusement, product information and social image information) and four as socioeconomic factors (good for economy, falsity/no sense, materialism, corrupting values). Later on, Ramprasad and Thurwanger (1998) in their study provided dimensions different from Pollay and Mittal (1993) by categorizing product information, hedonic/pleasure, consumer information and benefits and good for personal economy as personal utility factors and social consequences, materialism and consumer manipulation as social affecting factors. This categorization is similar to Bauer and Greyser (1968) where they found personal and social effects of advertising on consumers. Though the factors in our study were not the same as were found in earlier studies of Pollay and Mittal, (1993), Yang (2000) and Ramprasad (2001) and that may be due to the inclusion of belief statements from different scales, but there were many similarities between the formed factor structures. It may also be because all these studies have been conducted in different parts of the world and consumers may not have similar beliefs everywhere. That was also evident from the agreement respondents marked in the present study. Clearly, the beliefs in present study have been found more negative towards majority of advertising dimensions.

### Predictors of Attitude Towards Advertising in General (AG)

Table (5) presents respondents' attitude towards advertising in general. It was found that they had mixed overall beliefs towards advertising. On one hand, they

**Table (5):** Attitudes towards advertising in general (AG)

<i>Label</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean value</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
AG_1	Overall, I consider advertising a good thing	3.32	.931
AG_2	Overall, I like advertising	3.53	.828
AG_3	My general opinion of advertising is unfavorable	3.71	.796

**Table 6:** Confirmatory factor analysis of beliefs and attitude towards advertising in general

<i>Model fit indices</i>	<i>Measurement model</i>
CMIN	1234.025
DF	524
CMIN/DF	2.35
SRMR (standardized root mean residuals)	.040
RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation)	.048
GFI (goodness of fit index)	.893
AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit index)	.871
CFI (comparative fit index)	.929
TLI (Tucker Lewis fit index)	.920
IFI (incremental fit index)	.930

liked advertising (mean 3.53, SD .82) and found it good thing (mean 3.32, SD .93) but on the other hand they had an unfavorable overall general opinion about it (mean 3.71, SD .79). It is important to have a reliable scale to have more accurate results, therefore reliability of AG scale was measure and was found .77 which satisfies the condition set by Hair *et al.*, (2010).

Before subjecting the model to multiple regression to check the predicting role of consumer beliefs in shaping consumers' attitudes towards advertising in general, it was important to check the goodness of fit for whole model where obtained belief factors acted as independent variables and attitude towards advertising in general (AG) acted as dependent variable. Therefore, confirmatory factor analysis was employed that yielded results that indicated the suitability of our measurement model to perform further analysis. The results obtained for confirmatory factor analysis are summarized in Table 6.

Obtained CMIN/DF was found 2.35, SRMR = .040, RMSEA = .048, GFI = .892, CFI = .929, TLI = .920 and IFI = .930. All the obtained indices indicate that our data is a good match for the measurement model. Further, construct validity has been evaluated by evaluating convergent and discriminant validities. Both convergent and discriminant validities were all found to satisfy the required cutoff values.

Therefore, multiple regression analysis was employed to find the belief factors that significantly predict attitudes towards advertising in general. Regression analysis

revealed that seven of the eight obtained belief factors were found to significantly predict AG as summarised in Table (7). The total variance explained by these factors was 35.2%. The variance explained in earlier studies were 31% in Ramprasad (2001); 28% in yang (2000); 62 % in Pollay and Mittal (1993). The factors that significantly predicted AG were product information, good for personal and national economy, materialism and consumer manipulation, hedonic/pleasure, sexual content and falsification. Only regulatory issues factor was not found to significantly predict attitude towards advertising in general.

The belief factors positively predicting AG were product information, good for personal benefits and national economy and hedonic/pleasure. Negatively predicting factors included materialism, consumer manipulation, falsification, social cost, and sexual content. Materialism and consumer manipulation were found highly contributing to AG ( $\beta = -21.3$ ) followed by product information ( $\beta = 19.1$ ), social cost ( $\beta = -17.7$ ) and falsification ( $\beta = -15.2$ ), respectively.

In their study in USA, Pollay and Mittal (1993, p. 102) found that “product information, hedonic/pleasure, good for economy, materialism and falsity/no sense” significantly predicted AG. Similarly, the study of Yang (2000, p. 179) in Taiwan showed “good for personal economy and consumer benefits, good for economy, product information, hedonic/pleasure” significant predictors. Ramprasad (2001) study conducted in five Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal) revealed that belief concrete economic role was found significant in all included Asian countries. Consumer manipulation was not found significantly predicting any of the five Asian countries. Value corruption and good for economy were

found predicting all countries except Nepal. Hedonic/pleasure was found significantly predicting in India and Nepal only and product information predicted significantly in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal. If we have a closer look on the Asian studies, we can find that similar results have been obtained in our study too. The items included in earlier Asian studies included the similar statements in value corruption that has been grouped in social cost in our study. In addition, sexual content and regulatory issues were not included in previous studies but it becomes the necessity at present to enquire consumer beliefs regarding this aspect and has been found a significant predictor of attitude towards advertising in general.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Respondents' attitudes toward advertising primarily hinge on its informational role. Occasionally, advertising tends to present an exaggerated image of brands, which can be deceptive and impede sensible product selection and purchase. In this survey, respondents expressed negative views on various societal effects of advertising. They perceived advertisements as insulting consumers' intellect and contributing to society's materialistic nature by fostering a manipulated sense of inferiority. Respondents believed that advertising has influenced the behavior of youth, distorting their social values and indoctrinating them toward advertised brands. They expressed a need for increased advertising regulations, pointing out the failure of existing laws to restrict false claims and sexually suggestive content—a perspective not prominently found in earlier studies, suggesting growing consumer awareness of deception in advertisements.

Furthermore, respondents believed that advertisers manipulate consumer minds and promote a philosophy of

**Table (7):** Regression model summary

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Beta Coefficients</i>	<i>T Value</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Tolerance</i>	<i>VIF</i>
Constant	4.17	11.98	.000		
X1 Product information	.191	6.30	.000	.792	1.263
X2 Good for personal benefits and national economy	.074	2.26	.017	.811	1.232
X3 Materialism and consumer manipulation	-.213	-4.39	.000	.681	1.468
X4 Regulatory issues	-.049	-1.27	Ns	.796	1.256
X5 Falsification	-.152	-3.38	.000	.710	1.408
X6 Social cost	-.177	-3.84	.000	.693	1.443
X7 Hedonic/pleasure	.065	1.61	.043	.867	1.153
X8 Sexual content	-.073	-2.12	.044	.801	1.248
Model Summary (n=581)					
Adjusted R square	.352				
Durban-Watson	1.651				
F value	40.55***				

\*\*\* Significant at <.01



excessive consumption by presenting exaggerated or false information about advertised products/services. They also contended that advertisements fantasize and exploit people, especially through the inclusion of excessive sexual content, thereby manipulating their sexual instincts. Respondents felt that advertisements at times coerce them into making irrational decisions. The only positive belief about advertising held by respondents in Northern India was its amusing and entertaining aspect, occasionally finding it more enjoyable than adjacent media content.

Respondents held neutral beliefs regarding economic effects, including the impact on personal benefits, the national economy, provision of better-quality products, and lifestyle enhancement. However, positive economic beliefs included the notion that advertising results in decreased prices by fostering market competition.

Our findings suggest that people in Northern India predominantly harbor negative beliefs toward advertising's various social and economic aspects. The adverse effects of advertising outweigh the perceived benefits for society, indicating that advertising may not be fulfilling its primary goal. The information provided in advertisements is viewed as misleading and deceptive, with products often presented through exaggerated images that lead to misguided decisions. The use of controversial content, such as nudity and sexual activity, in attempts to attract consumer attention was found to result in negative perceptions, contributing to the formation of unfavorable beliefs toward advertised products or brands.

Comparing our results with other studies, our findings align with the growing global concern about deceptive advertising practices and the negative societal impacts, emphasizing the need for more stringent regulations and ethical advertising standards. Our study adds to the body of literature by providing insights into consumers' specific concerns and beliefs in Northern India, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and perceptions surrounding advertising in diverse cultural contexts.

### Implications, Limitations and Future research

We live in the era of mass production, and organizations need certain activities to help them sell their products. Advertising is one such activity undertaken by organizations to sell their products by creating awareness in potential consumers. Companies advertise their products on large scale using lot of monetary resources via various channels of communication, which makes it important for advertisers to understand the overall beliefs and attitudes that consumers inhibit towards advertising from time to time. Explored beliefs towards advertising may help advertisers understand consumers' overall attitudes and such information could be used to improve various aspects that are found to be degrading the image of advertising in the minds of consumers. This study may help advertisers to identify the positive and negative beliefs

of consumers and may also help them to understand and the beliefs that contribute to the formation of consumer attitude towards advertising in general. The current study clearly advocates advertisers to use appropriate content and provide sufficient information regarding products to be advertised, as content and level of information has a significant role in developing overall consumer beliefs and attitudes towards advertising. The limitations of this study are that the data has been collected from only four states of Northern India, so may not present the overall beliefs and attitudes of the country. A study with larger sample size is required to thoroughly understand the beliefs of consumers in India. Although the scale used to measure the beliefs of consumers has been validated using confirmatory factor analysis and has been found useful to understand the unexplored beliefs, if a standardized scale could be used, it may help in comparing the beliefs of consumers and how they differ in India. Though, the study included respondents above the age of 18 years and with at least at graduate level of studies as a precaution but it is important to understand the overall beliefs and attitude of respondents who are less educated because such consumers form a major portion of Indian population.

Future studies could concentrate on comparative studies across different states in India or explore the impact of regional media preferences on advertising attitudes, which could provide deeper insights. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of these attitudes over time and research focusing on innovative advertising strategies tailored to Northern India's context could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of consumer perceptions in the Indian advertising landscape.

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