

## 17-25 Year Old Turkish College Students' Attitude Towards TV Advertisements

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### Abstract

*In the research, we tried to examine the influence of ads on individuals between the ages 17 and 25. This is important because they represent an important segment of consumers. For this purpose, three hundred college students are chosen and they are shown 20 tv ads about different kinds of products. Then the students are directed to answer some questions about tv ads. The survey consists of two parts: The first part aims to gather information about the profile of the students and the second part is prepared to observe students' attitudes towards tv ads and their understanding advertisements. Results of this study are based on the survey conducted in October 2010. In conclusion, the impact of television ads on young people is discussed and college students' reactions to commercials broadcasted in Turkish televisions are displayed.*

**Keywords:** Tv Ads, Effects of Advertising, Student Attitudes, College Students, Popular Culture.

### Literature Review about Advertising

Advertisers play a major role in shaping society's values, habits and direction. (Dyer,1996:183) They are also partly responsible for influencing the character and development of the media system. The studies show that the effects of television on young people must be analysed seriously and those studies were pointed on the fact that tv has cognitive, emotional and physical effects on viewers.(Hefzallah,1987:63) Researchers are divided in three groups about the effects: The first group believes that tv can be detrimental to young people's growing needs. On the contrary, other group declares that television entertains and informs people and the third group feels that television is a fact of life. Researchers attempted to demonstrate that media have measurable affects on physiology in the 1960's and 1970's.(Bryant and Oliver,2008:185) Physiological measures were being used primarily to demonstrate that media had effects on bodily functions. With the advent of message processing research came an intense interest in the concept of attention. There are two broad areas of research on attention: Selection and effort. (Bryant and Oliver,2008:189) Selective attention involves the choice of what aspects of the environment to focus on. As selective attention is related to short-term actions, effort is a longer-term one. It is related to how hard one is working at processing the stimulus that has been selected for attention.

Young people lack the experience to differentiate between tv commercials' world and real life. (Hefzallah,1987:114) Tv commercials advocate a style of life in which one's worth is measured in terms of his/her possessions and how one looks or smells, reality is mixed with fantasy, people's happiness is associated with material things, needs are created, sex is exploited to attract viewers, alcohol is presented a way to relax. Richard Adler stated that it is clear from available evidence that tv advertising influences children in a research for the National Science Foundation. (Hefzallah,1987:115) Tv effects on viewers as an arousal. Increases in message pacing, emotional content, message sensation value, screen size, presence of narrative and many other variables form the arousal side of television. (Bryant and Oliver,2008:195) Those factors can be adopted to tv ads while we are talking about the impacts on viewers. The samples that resemble today's ads are seen about 300 hundred years ago. The newspaper's of 18 th century had published text based, full page ads. (Yeshin,2006:2) In England, the first advertising agency was founded in 1786, James White's agency was more common founded in 1800's.(Petley,2003:6) The first independent agency in America was Volney Palmer's agency in the year 1847. In this period, agency's incoming profit was the commission fee from the newspaper ads.

In general the success of advertising depends not on its logical propositions but on the kinds of fantasies it offers. (Dyer,1996:184) The world of ads is a dream world where people and objects are taken out of their material context and given new, symbolic meanings, placed on hoardings or on the screen where they become signs. There are some rules on preparing effective ads. An effective ad must be creative, stoper, easily-remembered, apparent, intelligible, informative and separate clearly from others. (Dahl,2007:15) Many classification systems were developed for large national and international advertisers who needed to plan advertising across diverse cultures. (Dyer,1996:28) They needed regulated and measurable markets to organise their campaigns. Advertisers needed to find an essence – a single measurable reason for consumers motivation, what makes the consumer tick.

Demographics measures the population in terms of occupational class, age, sex and region. Advertisers build up a demographic profile of their target market to indicate consumer behaviour. (Brierley,1995:29) One way of classifying ads, both in the press (static) and on TV (dynamic), is to look at their functions and techniques ranging along an axis from the purely informational to those that exhort or command. (Dyer,1996:88-90) We can also categorize ads according to their communication side; entertaining ads, instructive ads, attitude changing ads and attitude strengthen ads. Cook, categorizes ads to media ads such as newspaper, radio, television, internet and etc., to product or service such as sophisticated products, daily needs, non-products (political parties...) and to selling technics (hard-sell and sof-sell) (Cook,2001:14) For instance, an advertisement message that declares product's washing the clothes whiter, not damaging the environment, being economic and lasting is a factual message (hard-sell), an advertisement message that addresses having a happy family, making friends, having good social relationships by using the product is a sentimental message (soft-sell).

Beyond the hard-sell and soft-sell sexuality and fears are used to attract the audience. Thesis "sexuality always sells." is not always effective although there is a commonly-held belief. For instance, they always use beautiful and sexy woman cast in Kellogs Special K ads but the researchs state that men are more attracted from these beautiful woman than women.(Lee and Johnson,2005:175) Another effective method is using fears in ads: to be marginalized in the society, loneliness, financial problems, motherhood instinct, addiction to drugs, health problems and etc. are used to give the consumer the message that the cure is to buy the product in the ad. Using rational and emotional speech in common is other method that using dialogues as narrow as possible, designing a witty atmosphere and underlining a universal truth is called as combined verbalism in advertising. Another category is justification and entertainment: Justification technique presents consumer a rational cause to do buying action while entertainment highlights emotions rather than rationality such as cigarette ads that it is hard to find a reasonable message to buy those kind of products. Tony Yeshin, reduces advertisements to classes as ads to the target audience, purpose, media and geographical position.(Yeshin,2006:5) We can also examine advertisement in detail about the strategy of message; product information ( only information about the product is used), product image ( the brand takes of some meaning), customization (the product reflects a groups characteristics') and life style (a strategy that involves the sum of the third code). (Richards, Macrury and Botterill,2000:36)

Beard cited to a differentiated replication of an earlier study of college students in the late 1970s – indicate the salience of various beliefs that help determine attitudes toward advertising and provide a useful benchmark for future studies. Beard also mentioned that early studies of students' attitudes toward advertising suggested they were quite negative. Indeed, from 60% to 80% of Haller's sample agreed that more than half of all advertising presents misleading claims, insults people's intelligence, is irritating and highly annoying, and persuades people to buy things they don't want nor need. Similarly, subjects in three of the five clusters resulting from Larkin's (1977) Q-factor analysis of college students were found to be highly critical, exhibiting substantially "anti-advertising" attitudes.(Beard,2003:217-220)Buijzen and Valkenburg investigated the relations between advertising exposure, materialism, parent-child conflict, disappointment, and life dissatisfaction in their study.( Buijzen and Valkenburg,2003:497-498) Their second aim was to explore whether—and if so, how—these relations were moderated by child and family variables and their results demonstrated that advertising is related to parent-child conflict. They also found a stronger advertising–purchase request relation for younger children than for older children, which is in line with earlier evidence showing younger children's greater susceptibility to advertising effects. Therefore, their results disconfirm the hypothesis that advertising makes children unhappy because it creates unrealistic expectations about themselves and their environment.

### **Tha Anlysis of Survey Results**

In the survey, the impressions below are given and the students are requested to choose the alternatives "yes" or "no". The students' impressions about the ads they watched are on the table below:

| <b>IMPRESSION ABOUT THE ADS</b> | <b>THE RATIO OF THE STUDENTS</b> |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| EXCITING                        | % 80                             |
| BORING                          | % 30                             |
| FUNNY                           | % 72                             |
| CLEVER                          | % 75                             |
| OLD STYLED                      | % 25                             |
| ANNOYING                        | % 45                             |
| INSPIRING                       | % 60                             |
| DIDACTIC                        | % 20                             |
| UNREADABLE                      | % 55                             |

280 of the students chose "yes" for the sentence "the ad showed the life that I'd like to live"  
The answer for the sentence "the ad gave me a new idea" was "yes" for 50 students in 300.  
105 students accepted that "the ads were true to life."  
92 students accepted that "the ads told them products they think they'd like to try."  
27 students explained that they had to try hard to understand the ads.  
219 students explained that what they were saying in the ads were not really true.  
120 of the students told that they know the products in the ads are good.  
223 students cited that they have seen the ads so many times before and they are tired of them.  
220 of the students implied that the ads did not really make them want to try the products they were showing.  
12 of the students said that they were so busy watching the screen, they did not listen to what they were saying.  
97 of the students said that they'd tell their friends about the products in the ads.  
246 students expressed that the ads were not just selling something, they were entertaining them.  
40 of the students stated that it was the kind of ad that keeps going through their mind after they have seen it.

### **Conclusion**

The students between the ages of 17 and 25 find television ads amusing and exciting. They don't find advertisements boring but what they find annoying and dreadful is the tv channels' showing them over and over. The answer for the sentence "the ad showed the life that I'd like to live" was noteworthy. Most of the students (93%) cited that the life styles shown in the ads are ideal and charming. It seems that the ads did not really make the students want to try the products they were showing. But the individuals at those ages are inclined to notice funny and clever ads. So it can be a good strategy to use entertaining messages to make the brands easily-remembered for this segment. To the results the ads are easily understood but not inspiring. Another noteworthy result is that 223 students said they have seen the ads so many times before and they are tired of them. We see that tv channels broadcasting ads over dosage is not an efficient method. Popular culture is founded on consumption and advertisements are the basic weapons of pop-culture producers. The ads not only sell a product but they also sell life styles and status in the community. Young people can be easily attracted by ads and the world surrounded with brands presents them promises in consideration of consumption. Young people are interested in ads provided that they are funny, clever and young-styled.

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