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HOW DO TURKISH ADOLESCENTS REACT TO SEXUAL APPEALS IN ADVERTISING? A FIELD EXPERIMENT

Summary

This paper attempts to gain a deeper understanding of sexual appeals in advertisements and their impact on Turkish adolescents' attitudes towards ads. This is a quantitative research and in this study an online survey was carried out with 211 Turkish adolescents. The results show that Turkish adolescents' gender and education level do not have a significant impact on their attitudes towards the ads; however, their age does. The findings suggest that decision makers should pay additional attention to identify their customers and train their staff members accordingly. The paper also provides some suggestions to advertisers and marketing managers who target the Turkish adolescents.

Key words: sexual appeals, advertising, Turkish adolescent, attitude towards ads.

JEL codes: M37

Introduction

Adolescents constitute a big market even although they do not start earning their own money. It is because they have been very effective on their parents' purchasing behavior. They influence their parents' spending, will spend lot of money in the future, and are trendsetters (Martin, Bush, 2000). For these reasons, marketers do not ignore adolescents in determining their marketing strategies. In a complicated media environment, marketers look for ways in order to break through this disorder and attract adolescents' attention to their messages. Using sexual appeals in advertising is considered a familiar way, as well as using contrast, fear, music, or celebrity endorsers. These sexual appeals pictures may even not be related to the product or service being talked about.

In persuading customers to purchase products and services, advertisements play a crucial role. Therefore, every company uses different ways to attract customers from different segments of the market in order to become and keep being market leaders. They have, for many years, been using many ways to

advertise their products and services. It is quite clear that using sexual appeals in advertising is one option for companies, as well.

As for the research questions of this paper, what is the impact of sexual appeals in advertisements on Turkish adolescents' buying behavior? What is the Turkish adolescents' attitude towards the ads? Do their age, gender, and education have a significant impact on their attitude towards ads containing strong sexuality? This paper endeavors to answer these questions which have both theoretical and practical values.

This paper strives to determine the gap in using sexual appeals in advertising for Turkish adolescents. Due to the fact that all Muslim countries are very conservative towards sex and sexism, it has been a sufficiently unstudied area. It is because all Arab/Muslim countries object to some extent to the use of sexuality in advertisements by considering them offensive (Boddewyn 1991).

Literature review

Adolescents still are a big market even although they do not start earning their own money. It is because they are very effective on their parents' purchasing behavior. They influence their parents' spending, will spend lot of money in the future, and are trendsetters (Martin, Bush 2000). However, it does not mean that it is always good for them since they cause some damages for adolescents, as well. For instance, most ads contain young models which demonstrate that the ads have been targeting young males/females. When young female adults compare their level of attractiveness with the models in the ads, they will generally perceive negatively their own and of models' attractiveness (Richins 1991). Namely, the sexual appeals that they have seen in advertisements make them think of the way they see themselves.

Kurniawaiti (2013) investigates teenagers' attitude toward sexual appeals in advertisements in terms of both boys and girls. He conducts the survey among 224 students, 70 males (31%) and 154 females (69%), whose age range is 18-23-year-old. According to his findings, using sexual appeals in advertisements has been working for male students in reaching teenagers' attention and interest, but not for female students. Besides, the sexual appeals only make the consumer remember the products, not to buy them since there are a lot of other factors that have impact on teenagers' buying behavior.

We, as ordinary people, are exposed to all kind of advertising in our daily lives. Media and advertising sectors have become too complicated and its clutter is getting worse with new developments. Marketers thus look for ways in order to break through this clutter and attract consumers' (in this paper adolescents') attention to their messages notwithstanding the lack of interest among the products/services advertised and ads.

Analyzing this issue by giving the definition and its basic features will be a good outset. Sexual appeals in advertisements can be found in verbal elements, visual, sound, and portray which are varying degrees of nudity (Gould 1994). According to Lambiase and Reichert (2003), there are five different sorts of sexual information in advertisings; nudity, sexual behavior, psychical attractiveness, sexual referents, and sexual embeds.

Nudity. Exposure of bodies constitutes a considerable source of sexual information. However, it does not mean that models are completely unclothed, it points out wearing short skirts, bikinis, lingerie, having tight tops, and muscular arms, etc. (Lambiase and Reichert 2003).

Sexual Behavior. It might exist in advertisings through two methods; as an individual behavior or an interpersonal interaction. In the first way, models act sexually in advertisements by using eye contact, facial expression, flirting, and moving provocatively. In the second way, two or more models engage each other in sexual contact (Lambiase and Reichert 2003).

Psychical Attractiveness. It might include facial beauty, complexion, models' hair, physique, and behavior, etc. and is of great importance for sexual desires (Lambiase and Reichert 2003).

Sexual Referents. It can be defined to be message elements, visual or verbal, which cause to out sexual thoughts. In spite of not directly existing in advertisings, it takes place in the viewers' mind somehow (Lambiase and Reichert 2003).

Sexual Embeds. It might include items shaped like genitalia and small hidden messages of body parts and naked people (Lambiase and Reichert 2003).

Marketers prefer to use sexual appeals in advertisings for many decades. It is simply because the usage of sexual appeal in advertisings may help audiences remember the ads better; this is to say, sexual appeal can enhance an audience's remembering and recognition of an ad, the advertised brand, and the main message points (Reid and Soley 1981). Shimp (2003) finds that sexual appeals in advertisings can enhance brand and message recall due to the fact that sexual content is often easy to associate.

Releasing sexual appeals in advertisings is not enough alone. The effectiveness of sexual appeal also depends on its appropriateness to the advertised product. Richmond and Hartman (1982) posits that sexual stimuli may enhance brand remembrance only if an appropriate relationship remains between the product category and the advertising. Nevertheless, companies prefer to use sexual appeals in their advertisings regardless of the context of their products and/or services. No matter for them, whether or not, it has been related to products and/or services.

Hennink-Kaminski and Reichert (2011) provide in their study how sexual appeals are used to promote cosmetic surgery. By using a content analysis of

advertisements appearing between 1986 and 2007 in large city magazines, they reveal that advertisements position surgery as a means of boosting self-esteem and enhancing one's sexual attractiveness. Liposuction and breast augmentation, as invasive procedures, are the top procedures advertised with sexual appeals and most advertisements feature nude or partially nude white female models.

Research model and hypotheses

the independent variables of the model are gender, age, and education of Turkish adolescents, while the dependent variable is attitude towards ads.

Gender

Gender is found to be another uncertainty about the usage of sexual appeals in advertisements. Numerous studies have shown that men and women react differently to diverse forms of sex appeal due to their own implicit sexual and personal motivations and desires (LaTour 1990). This may be resulting from the fact that men and women have different perceptions about what sexually attractive or what being sexy means for them (Garrett 1993). LaTour (1990) also finds that men have positive feeling associated with the nude model ads whereas women are negative.

Lin (1998) examines how sexual appeals employed by male and female models in American television commercials. Including body shape, clothing revelation, physical contact, sexiness, attractiveness, physical and verbal innuendo, it centers on the physical characteristics and behavior of models disclosing during prime-time network programs. Her study is based on 505 coding units sampled from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. on the major broadcast network taped during a composite week of programming. The results are that these commercials were not generally dominated by sex, although 12% of models show up in some kind of undressed state, and 8% were sexually-oriented. Nevertheless, according to the same study, women are younger than their male counterparts. Women are more likely than men to project an idealized physical shape, and women are more likely than men to appear in revealing clothing.

The sexual appeals in advertisements are not effective for both genders (Richmond and Harman, 1982; Garrett, 1993). For instance, ads using female models attracted the similar attention of men and women, however, in ads using male models, only female viewers show an increased interest. LaTour and Henthorne (1993) find in their study that male respondents who were exposed to nudity in advertising show the strongest attitudes toward the ad. Furthermore, in order to evaluate its impact on consumers' arousal state and advertising impression, they use a manipulation of female nudity in print

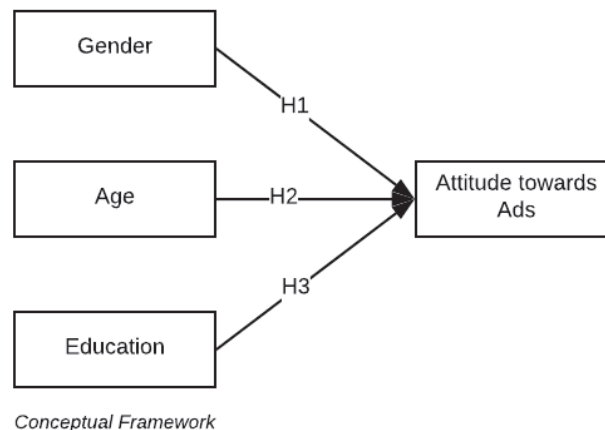
advertising. Their study shows that there is a positive impact of nudity on advertising effectiveness.

Sexual appeals in advertisings appear in different form for both men and women. For instance, Taflinger (1996) argues that many advertisements targeted towards men use partial or complete female nudity, whereas many ads targeted towards women often use elements of courtship, love and romance, rather than nudity. Jones and Reid (2011) reveals in their study that females express more negative attitudes toward ads that use demeaning sexual appeals.

Dianoux and Linhart (2009) find in their study conducted in three European countries (Czech Republic, Spain, and France) that gender influences attitudes towards the ads, and women adopt more negative ads when they see nudity compared with when they do not, in contrast with men, regardless of their country. Accordingly, the author hypothesizes in this paper that:

H₁: The respondents' gender will have a significant impact on their attitude towards the ads.

Illustration 1



Source: own elaboration.

Age

Age has a significant impact on consumers' attitude towards advertisings. Numerous researchers find that younger individuals value advertising more positively than older consumers (De Gregorio and Sung 2010; Muehling and McCann 1993). One should take into consideration that viral advertisings usually include provocative and controversial content along with humorous or sexual appeals (Cruz and Fill 2008; Porter and Golan 2006). It contains these

kinds of context in order to target younger consumers. Accordingly, the author hypothesizes in this paper that:

H₂: The respondents' age will have a significant impact on their attitude towards the ads.

Education

As for education and advertisements, Muehling and McCann (1993) argue that there is an opposite relationship between individuals' education level and attitude towards the ads. Better-educated consumers usually like these kinds of advertisements less. Research on product placement also finds that education level is conversely related to attitudes toward the placement of ads (De Gregorio and Sung 2010). Accordingly, the author hypothesizes in this paper that:

H₃: The respondents' education level will have a significant impact on their attitude towards the ads.

Methodology

Samples were collected as a convenience sampling method. At the outset, the researcher wanted to distribute surveys to the middle school and high school students in Bursa, one of the biggest provinces in Turkey in order for them to fill out the questionnaires. However, the author was not allowed to conduct the survey in those schools due to the context of survey. Due to the fact that the school managers were of the opinion that it had been unethical to ask questions related to sexual appeals in advertisements to "poor little children".

After that, the researcher created an online survey, in which a questionnaire was made to record the responses of participants, and with the help of adolescent relatives, posted the survey on social media accounts. Besides, it was requested from the adolescents to send the link of the survey to their friends and relatives between the age group 10-19 through social media and some applications such as WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook, etc. Therefore, the author could reach out to the targeted groups of this study. Between February 1, 2017 – March 20, 2017, we could collect 211 samples. Among them, 130 (61,6%) were males and 81 (38,4%) were females. A Likert Scale was used for each item ranging from 1 to 5 where 1 had been coded as "strongly disagree" and 5 had been coded as "strongly agree".

Table 1 shows demographic background of Turkish adolescents. From the table above, one can see more male (61,6%) than female (38,4%). The highest respondents are from the age group of 16-19 years old (50,2%). The respondents' education level is mostly high school (65,5%).

Table 1. Demographic Background of the Respondents

Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	10-12	23	10,9%
	13-15	82	38,9%
	16-19	106	50,2%
Gender	Male	130	61,6%
	Female	81	38,4%
Education	No Formal Education	1	0,4%
	Primary School	22	10,4%
	Secondary School	46	21,8%
	High School	138	65,5%
	Bachelor's Degree	4	1,9%

Source: own elaboration.

Reliability

By computing the Cronbach's alpha, the internal reliability of the items was verified (Nunnally, 1978). Nunnally proposes that a minimum alpha of 0.6 is sufficient for the early stages of research. The Cronbach's alpha estimated for age was 0.92, gender was 0.89, and education was 0.93. As the Cronbach's alpha in this study are all much higher than 0.6, the variables are therefore accepted to have an adequate reliability.

Empirical findings

in order to calculate if the demographic variables have an impact on Turkish adolescents' attitude towards ads, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. As the independent variables, the demographic variables such as age, gender, and education are included. The results are reported in Table 2 and Table 3, respectively.

Table 2. Regression Results for Turkish Adolescents

Variables	Beta	t-value	p-value
Gender	-0.017	-0,258	0.797
Age	0.180	2.669	0.008***
Education	0.20	0.302	0.763

Notes: Significance at: *** => $p < 0.001$, n.s. => not significant, $R^2: 0.034$, Adjusted $R^2: 0.020$

Source: as in Table 1.

In terms of the demographic variable age, the hypothesis (H1) that the respondents' gender will have a significant impact on their attitudes towards the ads is rejected (Beta-value: -0.017; t-value: -0,258; $p > 0.01$). For the

demographic variable age, the hypothesis (H_2) that the respondents' gender will have a significant impact on their attitudes towards the ads is supported (Beta-value: 0.180; t-value: 2.669; $p > 0.01$). As far as education is concerned, the hypothesis (H_3) respondents' gender will have a significant impact on their attitudes towards the ads is rejected (Beta-value: 0.20; t-value: 0.302; $p > 0.01$).

It should also be mentioned that the R^2 value of 0.034 suggests that only 3.4 percent of variance in the score of sexual appeals is explained by three independent variables of age, gender, and education, for the sample of respondents.

Table 3. Summary of Empirical Results

H_1	The respondents' gender will have a significant impact on their attitude towards the ads.	Rejected
H_2	The respondents' age will have a significant impact on their attitude towards the ads.	Supported
H_3	The respondents' education level will have a significant impact on their attitude towards the ads.	Rejected

Source: as in Table 1.

Discussion and implication of the findings

The Turkish people are considered to be a Muslim society and its people are confined and surrounded by many forms of cultural and religious barriers. While new companies enter into Turkish market and begin to conduct their advertisings, they should pay close attention to the effects of culture and religion on consumers' attitudes towards advertisings, products/services, and advertisings. If marketers think that their advertisings must include sexuality and want to utilize sexuality in their ads, they should at least adapt a safer method by using some introspective procedures. As a result, they can better customize their advertisings in a manner that avoids the backlash and annoyance of some.

Limitations of this study

It is quite obvious that talking about sex or sexism is tremendously related to culture and religion. The respondents highly put value on their privacy. Although the researcher did not ask them about their names or any private information, many of them hesitated to participate in it. For these reasons, it was not that easy to get the respondents' response. Another limitation was that the survey had not shown any kind of sexual appeals in advertisings, the

products being advertised, etc. Thus, it remained a bit intangible for those who participated in the survey.

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Jak tureccy nastolatkwie reaguj na odwoania do seksualnoci w reklamie? Dowiadczenie polowe

Streszczenie

Artyku stanowi prbę gbszego zrozumienia odwoa do seksualnoci w reklamach i ich wpywu na postawy tureckich nastolatkw wobec reklam. Jest to badanie ilociowe, w ktrym przeprowadzono wywiady *on-line* z 211 tureckimi nastolatkami. Wyniki pokazuj, e pe i poziom wyksztacenia tureckich nastolatkw nie maj istotnego wpywu na ich postawy wzgldem reklam, natomiast wiek – owszem. Wyniki sugeruj, e decydenci powinni zwrci wiksz uwag w celu identyfikowania swych klientw oraz odpowiednio szkoli swj personel. Opracowanie zawiera rwnie pewne sugestie dla reklamodawcw i menaderw od marketingu, ktrzy kieruj sw ofert do tureckich nastolatkw.

Sowa kluczowe: odwoania do seksualnoci, reklama, turecki nastolatek, postawa wobec reklam.

Kody JEL: M37

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