Television Advertising and Senior Market: Perceptions and Reality

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Abstract: *The world population is forecasted to age faster over the next half century than ever before. On the other hand, according to a media involvement study conducted by National Family Opinions' Worldgroup (2002) television is the most influential medium affecting buying behaviour of consumer segments. This study attempts to understand the perceptions of the older consumers about television advertising and how television advertisements can more effectively address the senior market's needs. Using exploratory research and multiple-case study methodology the study attempts to explore the behaviour of the senior market and provide insights on how these consumers perceive television advertising and how the message can be moulded to suit their needs.*

Keywords: Television advertising, Senior market, older consumers

1. Introduction and Background

Currently most countries in the world are undergoing a shift in their population distribution. The world's population is forecast to age faster over the next half century than ever before and this will affect mostly the high-income countries. According to a United Nations Population Division's study published in Trequer (2002), in 2000 the median age in the west was 37.3; by 2050 this is expected to increase to 45.2 and in some countries with lower fertility like Japan, Italy and Spain will be over 50. In Europe, the proportion of people over 60 will rise from 20% to 35% within the next 50 years.

Alongside their relative growth in numbers, senior market seems to wield considerable economic power. In the UK "Over 45's have nearly 80% of all financial wealth, and are responsible for about 30% of consumer spending. Much of this is concentrated in the 55-64 age group" (Long 1998: p.73). Likewise in the U.S "the mature market, especially those still working, have perhaps the most disposable income of all age groups…and most are at the peak of their earning potential'' (Theodore 2000: p.42). It is estimated that the over 50-market segment holds half of discretionary income of the country (Sawchuk 1995). The increasing focus on the aging population has generated interest in understanding the consumer behaviour of older people. The elderly are experiencing improved health and with the present wealth proposition as explained by researchers their actual profile seems quite different then the old stereotypical imagery associated with this group.

Different surveys present small differences in numbers but there seems to be a wide consensus over the interpretation of the findings. There is little doubt, if any at

all, that as years go by the societies will age and amongst these older people will be the segment with highest disposable income. Marketing professionals seem to appreciate that seniors represent an excellent marketing opportunity and as Flanagan (1994: p.17) puts it: "no company can afford to ignore or worse alienate this group".

Burnett (1991) found that people over 55 years spend nearly 45% of their leisure time watching television however; one does not have to be an expert to notice the segment bias involved in contemporary advertising practices. Especially with the television advertising campaigns there is a domination of young people and rather rare appearance of elderly population. Furthermore, as observed by Gunter (1998: p.128) quite often much advertising today stereotypes older people and often does so in a negative way. While marketers increasingly acknowledge the importance of the "senior" market and more companies are being founded to serve this segment, especially in the tourism industry, advertising remains youth orientated and age-biased; as mentioned by Christensen and Undheim (2000) in the Bengal Trend Report on Scandinavian Seniors "…neither advertisers nor TV companies are particularly interested in them (the elders)…they don't even know if they like them". Trequer (2002) mentions that nearly 95% of the media plans created by advertisers and agencies are aimed at the under 50s buyers although the over 50s are the ones that are being exposed to TV for more hours everyday than any other age group.

The market seem to be well aware about the changing demographics across the globe however it was the information about the increasing income and the changing lifestyle of the older generation that fuelled the wish to undertake a research about this promising segment of the market. After initial research it was realized that marketers have already started to consider the importance of the sector and an increasing number of services and products, designed to appeal to elders, have already entered the market. The "incredible marketing blindspot" as was dramatically described by Trequer (2002) did not seem to exist or at least not to such an alarming extent. However, the advertising business proved to be less open-minded and not willing to associate with the so-called "silver market" in fear of risking its youth image. It seems contradictory that although companies increasingly recognize the importance of the older consumer; advertising, which is one of the major vehicles that carry their communications strategy does not seem to adjust itself with this new reality. A study carried out by Hubb cited in Trequer (2002) analysed the usage of images of older people (50+) in commercials through content analysis and of almost 1000 commercials studied in only 3% of these older adults were shown.

The striking difference between marketers understanding and wish to tap the senior market in comparison to the reality of integrated marketing communication campaigns provided the rational for the study. Szmigin and Carrigan (2001) also strongly suggest the need for further understanding in actual and desired consumption behaviour within this segment. Having the above in mind it is worthwhile to undertake a research that seeks to examine the relationship between TV advertising and the older consumer. Taking into account previous researches and the general body of knowledge that was developed mainly in the last decade, the study will not attempt to "reinvent the wheel" rather it will attempt to bring to light some of the most important and under-investigated facets of this relationship.

Before starting to analyze the phenomenon and shaping propositions, it is important to try and define the senior market and state clearly the segment which is quite interesting however, under researched. It can be observed that prior literature identifies various approaches to the segmentation of the senior market and every contemporary research tends to regard this market as a non-homogenous, highly differentiated one. This complexity provides further impetus to study this particular segment of the market. Additionally, the study will try to examine the behaviour of the senior consumer and in particular seek to identify common behavioural patterns between the over 50s. This will be of great significance since it will allow us to draw general conclusions about the "senior consumers' behaviour" and analyse it in the context of contemporary TV advertising. Furthermore, the study will closely look at the way the advertisements are presented today, how they treat elders and whether they address any of their needs. TV advertising will be critically examined and an analysis of the effectiveness of TV advertising will be presented. Having thoroughly discussed all of the above, the study aims to identify whether there is a need for the development of mature-oriented advertising messages and what would be the characteristics of "senior consumer friendly" advertisement and in what way should this message be used in order to effectively reach the senior market.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In the next section prior research carried out in the area of senior marketing and television advertising are discussed. The study aims and objectives are discussed in details then after with the methodology of the research in the third section which is followed by the results and their implications. Finally, the future directions for further research are summarized.

2. Literature Review

The Heterogeneous Mature Market – Segmentation

People tend to collectively call the elders as the third age. However, marketers acknowledge that the over 50's market is not homogeneous and it must not be treated as one. According to the centre of mature consumer studies at Georgia State University, the senior market should be segmented into four different groups and the main criterion is that of health. The four groups are "the healthy hermits", "ailing outgoers", "healthy indulgers" and "frail reclusives". Dychtwald (1999) attempted to segment them according to the stage in their lives considering the time when these consumers become empty-nesters or grandparents. The same approach is followed by Harris (2000), where he distinguishes the different segments by two decisive factors: children and work. There are also more conventional segmentations, which are purely based on age. Long (1998) cites: The "young old" (55-64), the "mature old" (65-74) and the "old old" (75+). Moreover, Sawchuk (1995) proposes a similar segmentation and refers to the "prime lifers" (50-65), the "recently retireds" (65-75) and the 75+. The same approach is also followed by Trequer (2002) where he distinguishes "the masters" (50-59), "the liberated" (60-74), "the peaceful" (75-84) and "the elderly" (85+). He cites: "Could there be a determining criterion (of segmentation) that would allow the other to be organized? Yes, is the answer, and it is the simplest and the most readily available: the criterion of age" (2002: p.31).

Segmenting this market purely on the basis of age may be an over simplified approach and other factors, like income level and state of health, should be also

taken into account. The 50-65 segment seem to be the more privileged one among this larger segment of senior market. Sawchuck (1995: p.179) cites that the 50-65's spend 5 per cent more than the national average. Long (1998) refers to a study by the Henley Center, which reveals that the 55-64 age group is responsible for about 30% of consumer spending thanks to their higher levels of home ownership and possession of private or occupational pensions. Trequer (2002) adds that on average the mortgage and other loans are paid by the age of 49 and the children leave home when the father is 54 and the mother is 52, leaving their parents with the biggest disposable income they have ever had in their lives. Generally, the mature market could be defined as the sum of consumers over the age of 50. Based on the above literature the 50-65 sub-segment in particular is the one that presents the most interesting opportunity for marketers to exploit and reap rewards.

Lifestyles

Besides their economic wealth, the consumers belonging in the 50-65 segment present rather active lifestyles that contradicts some of the most widespread misconceptions concerning this age. Trequer (2002) stated that there is an emerging 'fabulous 50s' segment of affluent people who find themselves with free time, good health and the ability to spend their money in quite a youthful way. It is the kind of living that Harris (2000), characterizes as a 'long vacation' lifestyle. With a lot of free time, the over 50s exercise activities that few years ago somebody would not expect like working out and using the Internet. Fitness companies increasingly change their attitude towards the over 50s since they prove to be the most active and loyal customers (Weaver, 1997). Even on the Internet scene, the seniors are catching up fast; a survey conducted by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) revealed that the over 50s is the fastest-growing segment. Additionally, this is the age group with the highest concentration of on-line buyers (Alter, 1999). Theodore (2000) agrees with these findings and adds that 50+ consumers spend more hours watching television and listening to radio; read more papers and magazines and are more likely to respond to direct mail. Trequer (2002) states that the baby boomers give priority to purchases that make life more comfortable such as house equipment, cars and leisure electronics. They are also frequent visitors of restaurants and designer boutiques and it is likely that they will spend a considerable amount of money in cosmetics, neutraceutics and cosmetic surgeries in order to fight against the ravages of time.

It can be assumed that there might be a hint of exaggeration in some of the above data. Not the entire over 50s segment matches the lifestyles described above and certainly not all of the 50+ consumers live rich and glamorous lives. When reviewing such data the overwhelming desire of some marketers and advertisers to capture a lucrative and under-exploited market must be considered. As Sawchuck (1995: p.177) points out: "It is within this context that marketers now berate the myths we have about aging – myths that they have helped to create because of their past media strategies".

Television Advertising and the Senior Market

Spring (1991) found that television watching was the most frequent daily activity for the elderly due to the amount of spare time available with them. The finding is further supported by several researchers who indicate that elderly population are the

mass media's most faithful customers (Real et al. 1980; Marshall 1987; Stephens 1982). However, various studies reveal that elders are not only underrepresented in TV advertisements but also quite often portrayed in a negative way. Szmigin and Carrigan (2003), present a Delphi study of ageism in UK advertising, which reveals that the portrayals of elderly are either unrealistically glamorous or very patronizing and there is generally an environment of prejudice against senior consumers. Most importantly, the advertising industry recognizes this reality but it is committed to its youth orientation. Riggs (1998) cites a characteristic example of this case and refers to the American broadcaster CBS that was forced to remove the popular series "Murder, She wrote" in favour of "Lois and Clark", which although that it presented much lower ratings, drew about sixteen thousand dollars more for each 30-second commercial spot just because it had a younger audience. In another study, Szmigin and Carrigan (2000) suggest that there are potential grounds for the introduction of regulatory guidelines to encourage age diversity within the advertising industry's activities but this debate should not be a subject of regulations. Moreover, Trequer (2002) claims that many advertisements still portray older people in order to make younger audiences laugh which is also supported by Milliman and Erffmeyer (1990). Wolfe (1987) indicated that many elderly viewed this kind of advertising with deep antipathy. Moreover, Greco (1989) found that elderly spokesperson used in advertising tended to attract older people's attention especially when the product or service was targeted to elderly consumers.

The findings from the studies described above are not accepted by every researcher in the area. For example, Gumernick and Kroll (1996) identified a trend in US advertising to use older models. At this point one could argue that the American advertising industry is much more progressive in this issue and the American Association of Retired Persons is a really powerful and influential organization with a saying even in the youth-dominated advertising industry. At any case, there are many companies that seem to get the message right and treat the senior consumers with much more respect in their advertising. Even the youth-obsessed cosmetics industry seems to change direction since mature women make up for more than half the market for certain product categories (The Economist: 2002). One of Clinique's constant themes is "Beauty isn't about looking young" (Flanagan: 1994). The Kentucky Bourbon's main advertising theme few years ago was "get older get better" and it was used to describe both the product and appeal to older consumers (Theodore: 2000). In addition, companies like Nike and McDonalds have also engaged successfully with the senior market in their advertisements.

The advertisements that seem to work well with the senior market are those that deliver factual information about the product because senior consumers often express unease or incomprehension at commercials that work only at emotional level (Long 1998). As observed by Trequer (2002: p.162) the 50+ are very serious about advertising and they want to know all the details about a company, and the brand, products and services it tries to sell them. Furthermore, they do not like being called old, although they sneer at imagery that tries too hard (Weaver 1997). They know perfectly well what they are capable of physically. Portraying them as supermen is not going to make them consider the product (Trequer 2002: p.114). As Ostroff (1989) notes, seniors are sceptical about overly-exuberant messages because of their past experiences with advertising promising the world and delivering very little. The

same author believes that advertising that uses older celebrities as spokespersons can work very effectively under circumstances but it can also be extremely risky since elders may not want to be segregated as a market in advertising. Greco (1989) agrees with Ostroff (1989) partially but does not identify any serious risks in segregating the senior market. On the contemporary note, Trequer (2002) mentions that older celebrities in advertisements can offer tremendous advantages and he, like Greco (1989), does not consider any significant disadvantages.

Television Advertising Effectiveness

It was also found by Trequer (2002) that the over 50s belong to the age group that is being exposed to television more than any other. Findings from Korzenny and Neuendorf (1980) support this where they found 4.5 hours worth of television viewing among the over 50s. Moreover, 5 percent of these respondents were found to be watching television for more than 8.5 hours a day. The elderly were found to be heavy users of television for entertainment and new product information by Mason and Bearden (1978) influencing their purchase decision (Lumpkin and Fstervand 1987). According to a media involvement study conducted by NFO World in 2002 television is the most widely used medium with 97% of people stating that they watch TV everyday. Television influences consumers buying behaviour to a great extent with 62% of viewers stating that picked up ideas by watching TV, 33% trying something for the first time and 27% actually buying something. Only magazine advertising appears to be more effective than television in some categories and there is also an increasing importance of the Internet. However TV advertising has some serious drawbacks since 51% find it annoying and 36% too intrusive. Further, only 29% of the viewers pay attention to advertising (NFO World, 2002). This percentage is much lower that the ones stated by Franzen (1994), which were 61%, 50% and 38% for 1986, 1990 and 1992 respectively. These findings contradict with Jefkins (2000: p.99) who states that being received in the home in an entertaining atmosphere, commercials are well received. Generally, the fact that advertising in television can be ignored by viewers is believed to be one of its most important disadvantages by most researchers. Myers (1999) regards this to be television's main disadvantage with the facts that it is expensive and increasingly fragmented, while Mackay and Wilmshurst (1999: p.114), concentrate on the cost by stating that taking a 25-year perspective, the cost of TV advertising has been rising to such an extent that there is now tremendous pressure on both advertiser and agency alike. Jones (2002: p.113) concludes that for relative ROI, the most productive individual medium is radio, followed by magazines and then television.

Despite the criticism, television advertising can deliver significant advantages that are closely linked to the expectations of the senior market. As discussed above, senior consumers expect to see information in advertising and the factual benefits of the products being communicated. Wright (2000) regards the ability to describe and demonstrate products as one of the most important advantages of what is regarded as essentially a passive medium. Generally, most researchers regard television, with its ability to combine sound, vision and motion, as the perfect vehicle to showcase the factual benefits of products and services as long as that is the intention of the advertiser, which is not always the case. Kay (1997) states "advertising is about managing the gap in information, if you look at early 20th century advertisements,

you see that they were full of positive statements about the products they promoted". However, today's advertisements have been criticized for lack of content and clarity in many circumstances (Klein 2001).

On the basis of the explored literature following propositions are proposed.

P1: Television is the best medium to reach the 'senior market'.

P2: Senior consumers are generally dissatisfied from television advertising.

P3: Senior consumers expect more information from advertisements and clearer (to the point, rational) messages.

P4: There are some common behavioural patterns in the senior market in watching and reacting to TV advertising.

P5: There is no need for television advertising to treat seniors separately but it is essential to acknowledge their importance.

3. Research Methodology

As the aim of the study is about exploring a phenomenon (Chisnall 2001) therefore, exploratory research methodology was employed. Where quantitative research seeks to give measurable results and statistical validation, qualitative techniques try to present a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Malhotra 2004). Chisnall (2001: 195) also confirms the use of qualitative research in exploration of a phenomenon by stating that it is able to provide unique insights to inspire and guide the development of marketing strategy and tactics. Multiple-case study methodology was employed, since one of the main objectives was to identify common behavioural patterns among older consumers. As Yin (1994) argues, if 6-10 cases confirm initial propositions then there is strong support that the data conforms to an emerging theory. Additionally, although a multiple-case approach adds complexity to the study, its benefits are of great significance since the study is regarded to be more robust and widely acceptable. To meet the research aims and to investigate the propositions described above both grounded theory and the multiple case study method were adopted. The particular strength of this approach is the collection of rich data, *in vivo*. A case study reveals theoretical relations in situ and can be used to uncover causal processes that link inputs and outputs within a system (Lacey, 1970; 1976). This implies that the researcher may "literally see them (causal processes) occur" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:40). The multiple-case methodology allows for replication and development of "a rich theoretical framework" (Yin, 1994:46).

The population identified for this research were consumers between the ages of 50-65. According to the secondary data presented earlier, 50-65 is rather challenging and interesting sub-segment of the 50+ market due to their generally higher incomes and more active life-styles. Furthermore, people in their 50s have usually strong bonds with the younger generations since most of them are still working and thus interact with people from all age groups and most importantly many of them have children usually in their 20s. Therefore, it would have been really interesting to get in touch with people that not only constitute an interesting segment of the market, but also have a good knowledge of, and an active presence in the formation of contemporary living.

Since qualitative approach was employed for the research, the sample could only be selected according to the principles of theoretical sampling as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967). It meant that the selected sample did not pursue to achieve statistical validity; rather it was selected with the scope to provide "rich" data to the research. The sample constituted of six 'senior' consumers, 3 men and 3 women, aged between 52 and 64. Their educational background was not one of the selection criteria however, 5 out of the 6 participants were university graduates. It is difficult to say to what extent this parameter had affected the data gathered but the chances are that highly educated people tend to perceive advertising under a much more critical perspective than the average consumers. The number of interviews was decided during the process and it was highly dependent on the findings of the research. The initial intention had been to conduct at least 7 or 8 interviews and to stop when the phenomenon described as "saturation" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was observed. According to this, after a certain number of cases a theory starts to emerge as the findings tend to move towards a specific direction. This started to be apparent after the conclusion of the fourth interview but further two interviews were conducted in order to enrich the data.

The collection of the data was based on a series of semi-structured in depth interviews. This kind of interview was ideal for the research, since it allowed the flexibility in the approach and engage the interviewees in a relaxed and open discussion. The questioning of the interviews attempted to create an in-depth discussion that would uncover the interviewees' beliefs about the researched topics and provided with insights on the senior consumers' attitudes and expectations towards television advertising. The participants were given general explanation on the purpose of the research just prior to interview to avoid any bias. As stated by (Hall and Hall 1996: p.165) it is vital that the interview is as 'natural' as possible and that informants feel free to express their views without constraint. The initial introduction is highly important in terms of getting off to a good start. All of the interviews took place in the participants' environment, which helped them to be more relaxed. Before the start of each interview the participants were engaged in a more general conversation and gradually subject was changed in order to bring it closer to the topic of interest.

Hall and Hall (1996: p.164) suggest that jotting down key phrases can help the interviewer maintain control of the interview by reminding the informant that there is an agenda being followed. The interviews were recorded with the use of an audiotape recorder combined with some note taking.

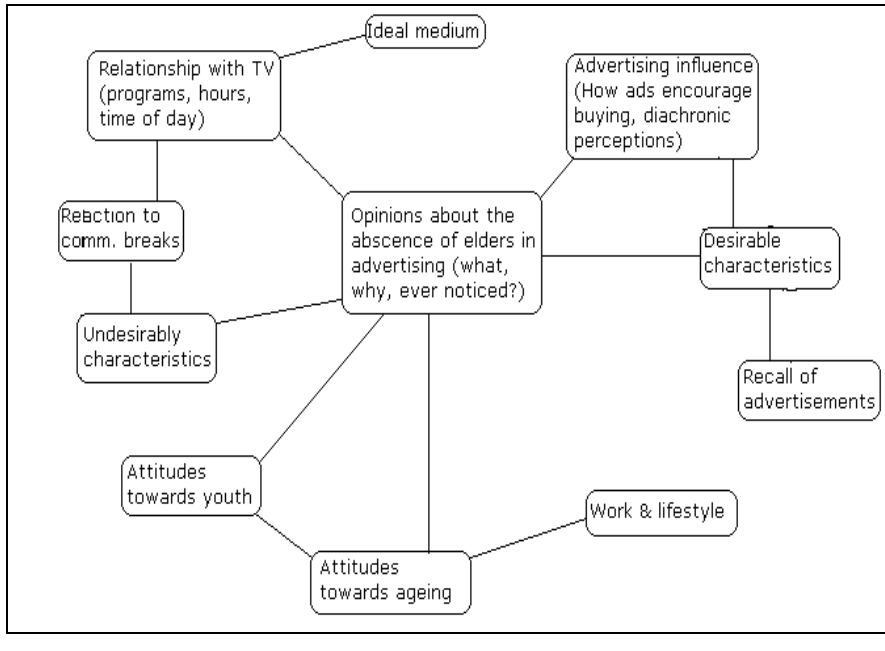
After interviews each case was dealt separately and analysed according to the themes defined on the basis of the hypothesis. Following themes were identified.

- Theme 1: Exploring the interviewees' relationship with the television.
- Theme 2: Discovering the characteristics of advertisements that appeal to elders.
- Theme 3: Pointing out the characteristics that they do not like.
- Theme 4: Understanding the way that advertising influences their buying decisions

- Theme 5: Examining their perceptions about the appearance (or in that case small appearance) of people from their generation in advertising.
- Theme 6: Understanding their attitudes towards younger generations.
- Theme 7: Examining the way that they perceive aging.

In order to arrange the data from interviews data matrices was employed as proposed by Hall & Hall (1996), which include all the informants and their attitudes and opinions towards each discussed theme. Of course, these matrices were used only as a reference and in order to summarize the interviewees' views and all the original data were kept intact for further discussion. After developing the metrics, to discover recurring patterns among the collected data and develop linkages between the opinions of the different interviewees' analysis was undertaken. The coding took place in two stages; the first stage used focused-coding approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to group the data from each interview according to the main themes that were mentioned by the interviewees. During the second stage of the coding procedure and in order make the coding more detailed; it was decided to break down the main categories into smaller ones. The result of this more detailed coding was the appearance of new categories of data that combined information that initially belonged into two different themes.

Figure 1: *Coding Categories*



4. Results

Through this research it was found that television plays an important role in the lives of senior consumers which finds common-ground to the existing literature. The senior consumers seem to spend a considerable amount of time everyday (the least

being 2 hours) in order to watch television. The common pattern among the respondents was that they prefer to watch TV during the evening and higher preference was given towards watching of news and news related programmes. When asked regarding the preferred medium for advertisement, all participants agreed on the suitability of television as the best medium.

> "It 's got to be television…every family has one…at least and everybody is watching more or less." (Respondent 4)
>
> "Television has always been important anyway." (Respondent 5)

Little tolerance was found towards commercial breaks. Three of the participants even suggested that they found commercial breaks boring and a waste of time.

> "I watch them sometimes, especially if I see a new one that attracts may attention. However, most of the time I tend to switch to a different channel" (Respondent 1)
>
> "I find most of them irritating… advertisements that I see lately and I really do not like, the kind that is really bizarre and confusing and you do not quite get what they are trying to say. I find them meaningless and even if I remember the product later I tend to lose respect for it." (Respondent 3)
>
> "I am not interested, not interested at all. I see it as a total waste of time and I think that they try to make me buy things that I don't really need." (Respondent 4)
>
> "Sometimes I don't bother switching to a different channel or I might leave the room and do something else…there are also times when I watch them without really paying any attention." (Respondent 6)

This provides clear support to the proposition P1 and P2 that television is the best medium to reach the senior consumer however; senior consumers are generally dissatisfied with the television advertising.

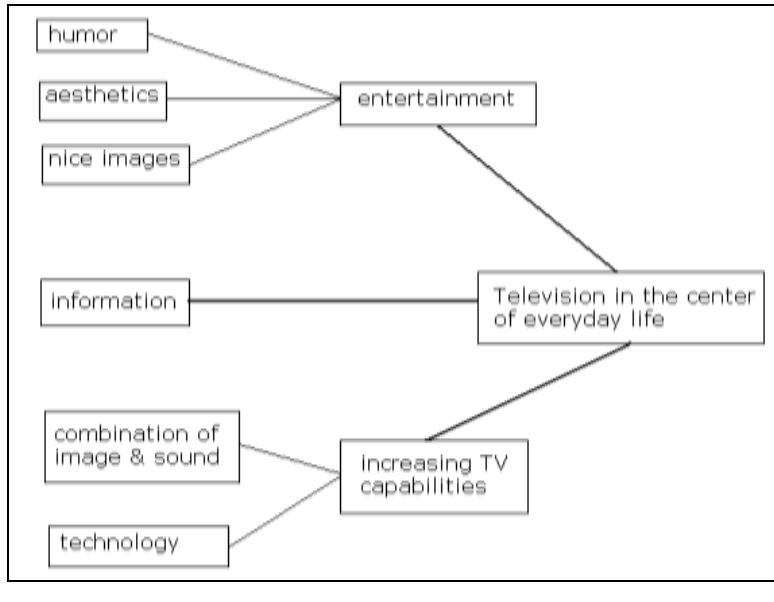
Some of the most interesting and less predictable findings of the research are related to the information requirements of senior consumers from advertising and they have to do mostly with the expectations of the respondents from the commercial messages. Tendency towards the aesthetic part of the commercials was observed with 5 out of 6 respondents stating that they expect to see nice visuals in advertising.

> "I also expect it to be aesthetically nice… TV is based on images right? I would expect to see something that looks good. Aesthetics is important and the content too." (Respondent 1)
>
> "…when it is done in an intelligent way…not just any kind of humour. Some advertisements can be really amusing I must say…and this is a way to remember them, to remember the product." (Respondent 3)
>
> "…except maybe for the chance that you have to see some nice images. a beautiful girl perhaps…" (Respondent 4)
>
> "I guess this is where advertising comes in. I mean that no advertising can make a bad car better but a good car, with the right advertising, can look even better." (Respondent 5)
>
> "Well, I like the ads that are shot in nice places…when they have a story to tell… a beautiful girl, a famous actor perhaps." (Respondent 6)

Two respondents even correlated good advertisements with the presence of young and good-looking people in them. Additionally 4 out of 6 respondents regard humour and entertainment as being important parts of a commercial. Equally interesting yet less surprising were the dislikes of the interviewees. All most all respondents made a strong criticism of the exaggerations and the exuberant promises that many advertising messages tend to make. The respondents also expressed their opposition to the continuous repetition of the same commercials considering it as being boring and tiring.

> "They are full of big promises aren't they? Anything goes in order to sell the product." (Respondent 6)
>
> "I really don't like it when they correlate ice creams with sex, for example…it doesn't make any sense to me." (Respondent 2)
>
> "You get to see so many exaggerations at times that you start to wonder whether they think we are stupid or something. It is insulting to our intelligence, so to say…" (Respondent 4)
>
> "…sometimes they go too far. …what I mean is that they often treat commodity products as if they are going to change your life if you use them. It is silly to imply that some…toilette paper, lets say, will make your living better" (Respondent 3)

Figure 2: *Impact of and Association with Television Advertising*



From the above figure it can be clearly seen how the senior consumers attach themselves with the television advertisements. The right mixture of emotional and rational mix with visual effects could interest the senior consumers to watch and have positive reaction towards an advertisement. The above results provide moderate support to the proposition P3. The senior consumers surely wish to see rational message however they do want it to be represented through visual means. Moreover,

emotional appeals like humour and entertainment were found to be of importance which describes that there are several common patterns in senior markets watching and reacting to a television advertisement. This provides support to the proposition P4.

"…advertising is something that motivates me…a good advertisement that will draw my attention to the product." (Respondent 1)

"…but when this is done cleverly, I might give a chance to the product and try it in the end." (Respondent 3)

"Definitely…it is motivating isn't?" (Respondent 5)

It is really interesting that only two respondents referred to the issue of ageism as well as woman being used as a sexual role model in advertising as being problematic. Other respondents when probed regarding the issue of ageism and under-representation of their segment in television advertisement reacted with a concern but also stated that they never thought it as an issue.

"I talked about advertising looking good before but that doesn't have to do only with young people. OK, a beautiful young face can be attractive but older people are also…consumers. They expect to be portrayed with dignity and that is only normal…and true. It represents reality. Young people do not annoy me though, they are fresh and beautiful and that is something that appeals to me. However, older people should be portrayed equally I think" (Respondent 1)

"I think that people of my generation seek the company of younger people. It is so…refreshing." (Respondent 2)

"It is probably with the younger people that we feel closer with. But I don't think that age is all that important anyway. I mean few years less, few more what difference does it make?" (Respondent 6)

Furthermore, when probed into their attitude towards youth as segment continuously represented in advertisement all respondents actually welcomed it on the positive note stating that it felt 'fresh' and 'beautiful' to see younger consumers shown in the advertisement. However, they all also raised concern that senior consumers were shown with a negative attitude in some advertisement and they did not like it. This discussion provides support for the proposition P5. When asked about their perception regarding television advertising diachronically the respondents provided a common view that advertisements as well as their perceptions of advertisements also have changed across time. They stated that the contemporary advertising is interesting however, the amount of repetition makes it boring and disengaging.

"They play the same advertisements all the time and it gets really boring." (Respondent 2).

5. Conclusion

The relevant literature suggests that as people grow older they tend to dedicate more time in watching television and the consequences of this activity extends beyond the limits of an everyday habit. Television is gradually becoming an everyday companion and a form of a lifestyle choice. The responses of the interviewees for

this study tend to confirm that senior consumers do watch a lot of TV but they also give us reasons to believe that this is not a real 'love affair' but rather some kind of a love-hate relationship.

People in their 50s or early 60s might not feel being 30 but they definitely do not feel old either. When dealing with consumers that are, for example 55 years old, it would be disastrous to address them as senior citizens or even imply that you see them as elders. On the other hand, people of this age have the experience and a certain type of wisdom and they usually see things rather realistically. The interviewees made it absolutely clear, in every given opportunity that they can understand when advertisers exaggerate. Therefore, marketers cannot approach them with overly exuberant messages if they want to avoid being sneered at. One of the ways to solve this phenomenon is to treat the 50-somethings as if they were in their early 40s. This will not only address their needs but also compliment them. It is definitely a difficult, if not impossible, task to suggest an ideal way to reach this segment of the market.

As discussed before, the interviewees expressed their love and admiration towards the younger generations. They also said that not only they don't mind the presence of younger people in advertising; instead actually they quite enjoy it. However, they do take pride of their age and do not like to see their age being negatively portrayed in various advertisements. Additionally, they expressed their desire to see things in television that provide them with information mixed with rational and emotional appeals. It surely would be difficult for an advertiser to find the right balance between realism, information and entertainment.

This study does not seek to have a cultural- anthropological approach to the subject, saying that it is meant that it is not within the intentions of this research to present a study about the phenomenon of ageing. Therefore, it should not be expected from this study to present the various existing theories about ageing and their insights about the way that the process of getting older affects someone's behaviour. Rather, the research seeks to understand the senior consumer behaviour and identify common behavioural patterns towards advertising. The analysis of consumer behaviour is a difficult multi-disciplinary task and the research does not attempt to enter the depths of sociology, psychology etc. Furthermore, the study does not attempt to rationalize the importance of advertising as a communications medium and its significance is accepted from the start. However, the study represents an analysis of how television advertising works in convincing the senior consumers.

Need for a large-scale cross-sectional conclusive study focusing on several age groups to understand the phenomenon further is recommended through the findings of this study. Such an attempt would produce a body of knowledge that not only would incorporate information about people from every age group but most importantly it would allow us to understand better the way that the passing of time alters the perceptions of consumers towards advertising. Furthermore, it would be interesting to employ research about the applications that the studies on cognitive age can have in advertising. The belief that consumers must be treated according to their self-perceived instead of their chronological age is really interesting and progressive. However, in order to reach to the point where it would produce the desired results, this research has still a long way to go. Another study that could bring to light interesting data would be about the perceptions that younger people

have about the presence of elders in advertising. Would younger people mind if older people appeared more in commercials and would they reject the advertised products as being suitable only for elders? Would a negative answer to this question lead advertisers to reconsider their obsession with youth? Further, it would be very interesting to discover to what extend is the advertising industry responsible for the negative perception of older age. Is advertising to be held into account or is it just responding to a wide cultural misconception?

6. References

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