

Awareness on misleading advertisement of higher secondary school students in Burdwan district

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Abstract

False advertising or misleading advertising is the use of false or misleading statements in advertising, and misrepresentation of the product at hand, which may negatively affect many consumers. As advertising has the potential to persuade people into commercial dealings that they might otherwise avoid, many governments around the world use regulations to control false, unreliable or misleading advertising. Truth refers to essentially the same concept, that customers have the right to know what they are buying, and that all necessary information should be on the label.

The present study was aims to investigate the awareness on misleading advertisement of higher secondary school students of Burdwan District. Self-made questionnaire was used to assess their awareness on misleading advertisement. The data were analyzed with the help of statistical techniques like mean, Standard deviation and t-value. The result of Analysis shows that, there exists significant difference in higher secondary school student. Urban students are more aware on misleading advertisement than rural school student in Burdwan district. Commerce students have greater awareness than Arts students in this regard.

Keywords: misleading advertisement, awareness, Statistical treatment, significant difference.

Introduction

Advertising is a form of communication to draw the concentration of consumers. It has become an essential and important part of business today. Advertisements and advertising agencies have seen a boom since globalization and selling. Advertisements are very important, because the customers should know how the product would be and what is the use of it, everything can be known by the advertisements. Advertisement itself is not a problem but an important means to grow business and to reach out to larger market of consumers. But when advertisement is used to induce consumers by way of unsubstantial claim, it is against their interests.

An advertisement becomes false or misleading, when false or misleading statements are used in advertising. False advertising is any published claim that is deceptive or untruthful. Misleading advertising in any published claim that gives a consumer an incorrect understanding of the product. "Truth" refers to essentially that customers have the right to know what they are buying, and that all necessary information should be on the label as well as in the content of advertisement should be correct.

The misleading nature of these advertisements could affect the economic activities of consumers and traders, or may be harmful to a competitor. The misleading nature of advertisements depends on a set of criteria, the characteristics of the goods or services (availability, nature or composition, method of manufacture or provision, origin, etc.), the results to be expected from their use, and the results of quality checks carried; the price or the manner in which the price is calculated; the conditions governing the supply of the goods or services; the environment, qualities and rights of the advertiser (identity and assets, experience, intellectual property rights, etc.).

False Claims and Misleading Advertising

As provided under Section 36A (1) of the MRTP Act, the following statements, whether made orally or in writing or by visible representation, would amount to an unfair trade practice:

- Falsely representing that the goods are of a particular standard, quality, quantity, grade, composition, style or model.
- Falsely representing that the services are of a particular standard, quality or grade.
- Falsely representing any re-built, second hand, renovated, reconditioned or old goods as new goods.
- Representing that the goods or services have sponsorship, approval, performance characteristics, accessories, uses or benefits, which such goods or services do not have.
- Representing that the seller or supplier has a sponsorship, approval or affiliation which he does not have.
- Making a false or misleading representation about the need or usefulness of any good or service.
- Giving any warranty or guarantee about the performance, efficacy or length of life of a product that is not based on an adequate test.

Making to the community a misleading or false

- Warranty or guarantee for a product or service.
- Promise to replace, maintain or repair an article or to repeat or continue a service until it has achieved a specified result.
- Misleading the public about the price of any product or the charge of any service.
- Giving false or misleading facts disparaging the goods, services or trade of any person.
- Unfair contract terms, notably with respect to consumer compensation.

- Use customer data for purposes other than they were obtained for.
- Apply unfair fees, charges and penalties on transactions.
- Place artificial restrictions on the time period during which customers can submit claims.

Existing Laws dealing with Misleading Advertisements

- The Consumer Protection Act, 1986
- The Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950
- Trade and Merchandise Marks Act, 1958.
- Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995
- Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
- Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969
- Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940
- Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954
- Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994
- Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954/ Food Safety and Standards Act, 2005
- Prize Chits and Money Circulation Schemes (Banning) Act, 1978
- Prize Competition Act, 1955
- The Infant Milk Substitute, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1992 and Amendment Act, 2002
- Transplantation of Human Organs Act, 1994
- The Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act, 1956
- Insurance Regulatory Development Authority & Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
- Securities and Exchange Board of India, Reserve Bank of India & Medical Council of India

Remedies

The forums/commissions can order the following relief:

- Removal of defects from the goods
- Replacement of the goods
- Refund of the price paid
- Award of compensation for the loss or injury suffered.
- Removal of defects or deficiencies in the services.
- Discontinuance of UTPs/restrictive trade practices and directing not repeating them
- Withdrawal of the hazardous foods from being offered for sale
- Award for adequate costs to practice.

Consumer and Consumer Awareness

A consumer is the buyer of goods and services. The user of goods and services with the permission of the buyer is also treated as a consumer. But a person is not a consumer if he/she purchases goods and services for resale purpose. Consumer awareness refers to the combination of the following:

1. The knowledge of the product purchased by the consumers in terms of its quality. For example the consumer should know whether the product is good for health or not, whether the product is free of creating any environmental hazard or not etc.

2. The education about the various types of hazards and problems associated with marketing of a product - For example, one way of marketing a product is advertisement through newspapers, television etc. Consumers should have proper education about the bad effects of advertisement. They must also verify the contents of the advertisement.
3. The knowledge about 'Consumer Rights' - This means that, first, the consumer must know that he/she has the right to get the right kind of product. Secondly, if the product is found out to be faulty in some manner, the consumer should have knowledge of claiming compensation as per the law of the land.
4. The understanding about consumer's own responsibilities- This implies that consumers should not indulge in wasteful and unnecessary consumption.

Consumer Redress System

There is legal and administrative machinery working in the field of consumer education in our country. It is important for you to understand it. Consumer redressed system is a system under which the consumers can file a complaint in a consumer court and demand justice when they are cheated by the sellers or manufacturers of the commodity or service they buy. It comprises of the Laws to protect the interest of the consumers and the Institutions to enforce the laws to uphold consumers' rights. The government arranges consumer laws made through legislations in our country with a special focus on consumer education. The purpose is to help the people understand their rights and responsibilities as consumers and to redress their grievance. There is also existence of Institutions in the form of government departments and consumer courts to deal with the grievances of the affected consumers.

The Grounds for Filing a Complaint

The deficiency in a service is one of the grounds for filing a complaint under the Act. The terms deficiency has been defined as any fault, imperfection, short coming or inadequacy in the quality, nature and manner of performance which is required to be maintained by or has been under taken to be performed by a person in pursuance of a contract or otherwise in relation to any service. Compensation has to be paid by the wrong doer for their faulty or defective goods and services. Consumer redressed system comprises of the Laws to protect the interest of the consumers and the Institutions to enforce the laws to uphold consumers' rights. Consumer Protection Act 1986(CPA) is the most important legislation to protect interest of the consumers.

A complaint can be filed by the affected consumer concerned or through a representative or through a letter in a prescribed form giving the nature of complaint and the bill within 2 years of purchase. A nominal fee must also be paid in the court. Consumers Rights in India include- Right to Information, Right to Safety, Right to Choose, Right to be Heard, Right to Redressed and Right to Consumer Education. Consumers' Responsibilities include- not to be misled by advertisement, seek complete information for empowerment, checking the expiry date, quality assurance seal, demanding bill, avoiding wasteful and mindless consumption, protecting the environment etc.

Study Area

Burdwan district extends from 22 56' to 23 53' North latitude and from 86 48' to 88 25' East longitudes. Lying within Burdwan Division, the district is bounded on the north by Dumka (of Jharkhand), Birbhum and Murshidabad, on the east by Nadia, on the south by Hooghly, Bankura and Purulia and on the west by Dhanbad (of Jharkhand) districts.

Bardhaman District has an area of 7,024 km², and a population of 6,895,514 (2001 census). It is bounded on the north by Birbhum and Murshidabad districts, on the east by Nadia District, on the southeast by Hooghly District, on the southwest by Bankura and Purulia districts, and on the northwest by Dhanbad district of Jharkhand. The district has six sub-divisions, Asansol, Sadar (North), Sadar (South), Durgapur, Kalna, and Katwa. It was amongst the first districts to have a 100% literacy rate.

Five H.S schools form urban area and five H.S schools from rural area were selected for survey and data collection.

Objectives

1. To measure the awareness on misleading advertisement level among higher secondary school students.
2. To know the level of knowledge and compare awareness in misleading advertisement among arts and commerce higher secondary students in Burdwan district.
3. To compare the awareness in misleading advertisement among girls and boys higher secondary students in Burdwan district.
4. To compare the awareness in misleading advertisement among urban and rural higher secondary students in Burdwan district.

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant mean difference in awareness on misleading advertisement among boys and girls students in higher secondary level.
2. There is no significant mean difference in awareness on misleading advertisement among urban and rural students in higher secondary level.
3. There is no significant mean difference in awareness on misleading advertisement among urban boys and urban girl's students in higher secondary level.
4. There is no significant mean difference in awareness on misleading advertisement among rural boys and rural girl's students in higher secondary level.
5. There is no significant mean difference in awareness on misleading advertisement among arts and commerce students in higher secondary level.
6. There is no significant mean difference in awareness on misleading advertisement among arts boys and arts girls students in higher secondary level.
7. There is no significant mean difference in awareness on misleading advertisement among commerce boys and commerce girls students in higher secondary level.

Methodology

The following steps and procedure adopted in conducting the study.

Research Design

The volunteer sample in the study (N=800) consisted of 400 male and 400 female higher secondary school students. The

mean age of participants was 17-18 years. Each participants completed a test and retest questionnaire.

Instrument

A questionnaire adapted by self was used to collect data. The 25 items questionnaire focuses on the awareness in misleading advertisement concerns. Each participant completed this questionnaire. The questionnaire addresses four dimensions: misleading advertisement, price, consumer awareness and consumer redress system. Each item contains 2 marks. The validity of the questionnaire was established by a review of three experts in Commerce. Selected items were revised based upon their comments and recommendations.

Procedure

Data were collected from students score.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire was used to assess higher secondary school student's awareness in misleading advertisement. A paired t-test was used to compare means score of male and female students. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare means among grades. The test was used to identify the source of significant differences at 0.05 level of confidence. We use origin 6.1 software for data analysis.

Selection of sample

For this study 800 higher secondary students from eight different higher secondary schools of Burdwan district are selected. Sample distribution is given below.

Sample

Type	Urban Area	Rural Area	Total
Arts-Boys	100	100	200
Arts-Girls	100	100	200
Commerce-Boys	100	100	200
Commerce-Girls	100	100	200
Total	400	400	800

Tool:

In this study we used the descriptive method. Data were collected with a quantitative data collection technique. Misleading advertisement awareness questionnaire was constructed by the investigator and was used in this study. The tool consists of 25 items in the form of objective type questions. The correct answered questions will get two marks each. Therefore 50 marks are the maximum score and zero is the minimum score. There was no option of part marking. Students answered the test paper questions. The student needed an average 40 minutes to finish it.

Reliability and validity of the Tool:

For reliability of the tool, we used Test-retest method. Retest was taken after 20 days and the correlation is 0.892 (r=0.892). At the initial stage we choose 35 items for the questionnaire. After content validation 25 items are drafted.

Result

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation, standard error and t-value for awareness on misleading advertisement of Arts and Science student (boys and girls) in higher secondary level coming from rural area on full marks 50.

Group	n	Sum	Mean	SD	SE	t	p	Remark
Arts-Girls	100	3019	30.19	9.96	0.996	0.438	0.661	At the 0.05 level two means are not significantly different
Arts-Boys	100	3079	30.79	9.36	0.936			
Commerce-Girls	100	3095	30.95	8.83	0.883	0.995	0.320	At the 0.05 level two means are not significantly different
Commerce-Boys	100	3225	32.25	9.62	0.962			

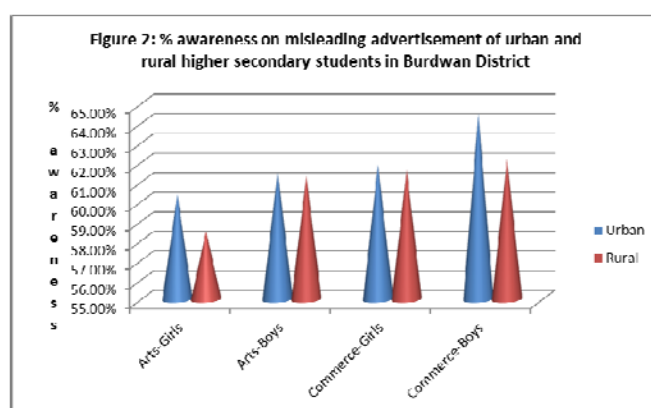
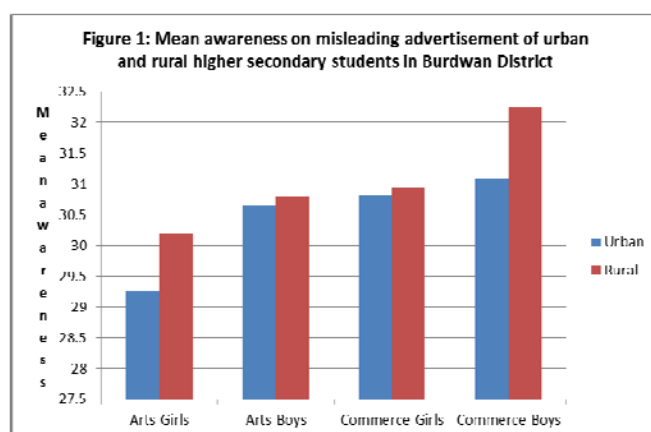
Table 2: Mean standard deviation, standard error and t-value for awareness on misleading advertisement of Arts and Science student (boys and girls) in higher secondary level coming from urban area on full marks 50.

Group	n	Sum	Mean	SD	SE	t	p	Remark
Arts-Girls	100	2925	29.25	9.67	0.967	1.1026	0.271	At the 0.05 level two means are significantly different
Arts-Boys	100	3065	30.65	8.22	0.822			
Commerce-Girls	100	3081	30.81	10.63	1.063	0.1891	0.850	At the 0.05 level two means are not significantly different
Commerce-Boys	100	3109	31.09	10.30	1.03			

Table 3: Percentage of awareness on misleading advertisement of Arts and Commerce student (boys and girls) in higher secondary level coming from urban and rural area

Group	Mean score for (urban area)	Percentage of awareness for urban student	Variance	Mean score for (rural area)	Percentage of awareness for rural student	Variance
Arts-girls	30.19	60.38 %	99.286	29.25	58.50%	93.62
Arts-boys	30.79	61.58 %	87.622	30.65	61.30%	67.58
Commerce-girls	30.95	61.90 %	78.128	30.81	61.62%	113.00
Commerce-boys	32.25	64.50 %	92.553	31.09	62.18%	106.24

Graphical Representation



Findings from tables and diagrams

1. Urban students have greatest awareness on misleading advertisement in higher secondary level in Burdwan District.

2. Boy's students have greater awareness on misleading advertisement than girls students in higher secondary level in Burdwan District.
3. Urban boys have greater awareness than urban girls in misleading advertisement in higher secondary level in Burdwan District.
4. Rural boys have greater awareness than rural girls in misleading advertisement in higher secondary level in Burdwan District.
5. Commerce boys have greater awareness than commerce girls in misleading advertisement in higher secondary level in Burdwan District.
6. Arts boys have greater awareness than arts girls in misleading advertisement in higher secondary level in Burdwan District.
7. Commerce students have greater awareness than arts students in higher secondary level in Burdwan District.
8. Arts boys and Commerce girls have almost same awareness in misleading advertisement.
9. Mean Awareness in misleading advertisement Varies from 29.25 to 32.25.
10. Percentage Awareness in climate change Varies from 58.5% to 64.5%.

Conclusion

False advertising is illegal in most countries. However, advertisers still find ways to mislead consumers in ways that are legal, or technically illegal. Marketers have just one aim in mind – sell as much as possible to as many as possible. They do not mind using unethical practices. For them, reaching the end is more important than the means. Misleading advertisements makes tall claims do not make an impact on the buying behavior of the consumers. There are certain wise consumers who go by the fact, but there is a huge group of consumers that falls for the claims presented in the advertisement. So the governing agencies to enforce stronger

laws to reprimand anyone involved in a proven misleading advertisement.

The study also reveals that there exist significant differences between awareness in misleading advertisement among higher secondary student belonging to Arts and commerce group. Commerce student are more aware than arts student in misleading advertisement awareness. Lastly awareness on misleading advertisement should be increases among pupil and people through education. Our study shows that higher secondary students of Burdwan district have average percentage awareness in this regard.

Limitation of the study

1. The study was limited to a few schools and the sample of the study was restricted to 800 students only.
2. The research was limited only to Burdwan District of West Bengal due to shortage of the time.
3. The reliability of the awareness in misleading advertisement scale was determined only by test-retest method due to shortage of time
4. Only the content validity of the scale was determined.
5. The difference in the mean score of in misleading advertisement awareness was found out only by t-test.

Suggestions for future study

1. The scale of awareness in misleading advertisement can be standardized on the basis of large samples.
2. A similar study can be conducted by including larger samples from various schools of other state of India.
3. This work will be applicable on different college and university students.
4. Other independent variable like age, cast and religion etc. will be considered for future study.
5. The study can be conducted upon common people not only the pupils.

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