

Consumer Behavior vs. Graphic Art Effects: A Sociological Appraisal

Mohammad Taghi Sheykhi*

Professor, Emeritus of Sociology, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran

**Corresponding Author: Mohammad Taghi Sheykhi, Professor, Emeritus of Sociology, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran*

ABSTRACT

The paper analyzes how the consumer's behavior is ever changing under the power of advertisements and through the graphic arts in modern times. Graphic, motion graphic and such activities seriously impact the taste and consumption behavior of the clients with special reference to the people in more developed world. As consumption helps more products appear in the market, the owners of the products concerned, try their best to have more graphic art advertisements to sell more goods, and in this way the consumer behavior is always exposed to various graphic advertisements. Such a behavior is widely being adopted by the markets in developing countries too. Similarly, producers promote purchase and newly-designed and produced goods and services through the means of graphics in general. Scholars of consumption behavior mainly study economic institutions such as department stores, taste formation, household budget, food consumption etc. Consumption studies are used to examine the patterns of inequality and cultural change. In discussing consumption behavior, Mc Donaldization as an example is discussed to demonstrate the spread of standardized fast food which leads to uniform practices on consumption behavior and culture. Such a standardized consumption patterns initially started through the widespread advertisements and graphics in the West, and gradually diffused all over the world. In many of the graphic art works, social class plays an important role. Psychographic profiles or make-up of a person is constructed and used in advertising, and as a means to encourage consumption behavior. However, graphic advertisements motivate people to buy things, and in this process the company makes profit.

Keywords: Graphics, Consumption, Products, Consumption behavior, Standardized consumption.

INTRODUCTION

Consumer demand and preferences are highly influenced by artistic graphics and designs. In other words, the rate of consumption falls as the graphic art falls and vice versa. Therefore, art advertisements highly affect the consumer behavior and decision. Graphic art as the use of text and graphics creates a visually appealing message that entices consumer behavior to learn about the product/ services being offered, and move to the next step in the purchasing process. It encourages consumption culture and impacts consumer behavior.

There is a close connection between consumer behavior and consumption. Similarly, a full survey of consumption shows a close relationship between production, distribution and consumption behavior. Producers promote purchase and use of newly-designed and produced goods and services through the means of graphic art and -. So, supply and demand in economic terms are highly influenced by the means of graphic art advertisements. The paper attempts to demonstrate

the inter- link between graphic art and consumption behavior. It must be noted that behavior itself is highly influenced and motivated by graphic illustrations, and through the means of advertising industry. Keeping in mind that consumption is somehow a rational maximizing behavior, a sort of expressive behavior, is affected by graphic art, graphic language and advertisement.

Scholars of consumption behavior study economic institutions such as department stores, taste formation, food consumption, media advertising, household budget and so on (Miller: 1981); (Rosenzweig: 1983); (Tiersten:2001); (Mintz: 1996); (Lears:1994), and (Horowitz: 1985).

In an appraisal of consumption behavior, (Miller: 1998) provides evidence that sociability, culture and purchasing of goods support each other, while isolation promotes withdrawal from consumption. However, arts scholars clearly have much to learn about consumption patterns from outside their disciplines in particular from sociologists to uncover the social implications and involvement of consumption behavior.

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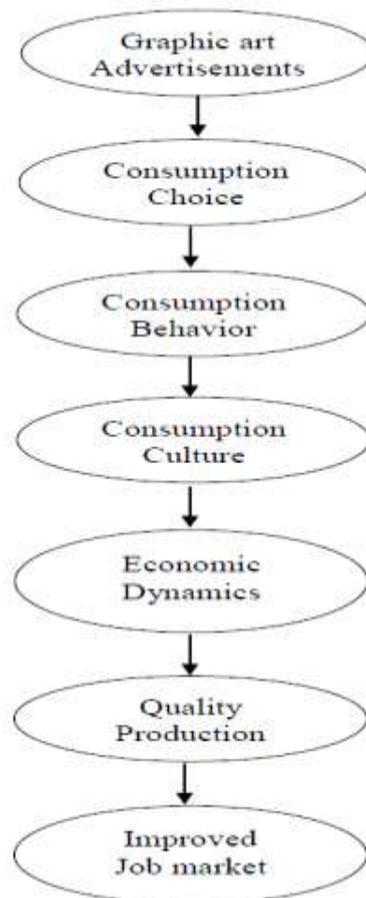
Various thinkers such as (T.Veblen:1953); (George Simmel: 1957); (Lynd; 1929); (Lazarsfeld: 1957), and (Riesman: 1964) have worked on consumption differently. In recent decades, perhaps the most influential synthesis came from sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984). Bourdieu combined an ambitious theoretical program with a remarkable range of concrete studies of consumption practices including photography and housing markets (2000). Bourdieu introduced the ideas of cultural and social capital into analysis of consumption and consumption behavior. Bourdieu was of the opinion that class culture determines consumption.

British sociologists also used consumption studies to examine patterns of inequality and cultural

change in Britain. They focused on economic studies from production to consumption (Campbell: 1995; Slater: 1997). Similarly, there is a link between consumption behavior, production and distribution (du Gay: 1996).

Similarly, in discussing consumption behavior and culture, George Ritzer (1996) has initiated a somewhat separate analysis of what he calls "Mc Donaldization", or the spread of standardized fast food which leads to uniform practices on consumption behavior and culture. So, the practice of such standardized consumption patterns initially started through extensive advertisements. However, consumption contributes to the reproduction of culture, social structure, consumer culture and modernity (Ritzer and Slater 2001).

MODEL OF RESEARCH: MOTIVATIONS OF GRAPHIC ART EFFECTS



RESEARCH PROBLEM

To select a research problem is of prime importance, and needs careful consideration at the beginning of research. The most important being that the problem should be researchable as well as manageable. Research problem can be on account of factual evaluation of a program, to collect information, to respond the curiosity of the researcher, or to find information for policy-makers. The problem of research may be the

concern of some industry; in public or private sector, to find out the reaction of certain masses towards their product, the potential market for a type of proposed new brands, to promote consumption of certain goods and services and so on.

The researcher expects that the topic and problem of research are likely to bring him/her some prestige. Since the research is good-directed, a goal researcher will always see that his/her problem and topic of research bring desired report

within specific time, that it is possible to collect data which can be organized by him/her efficiently. Similarly, the researcher will have to see that the problem has been defined properly.

A research problem includes such components: what one wants to know? , why one wants to know?, and possible answers to questions. That is to say, first a question arises, then why of the question arises, followed by possible answers (Merton: 2010).

However, the purpose of the present research is to introduce the reader to that importance of the topic being studied. For that, we place the problem, i.e. the reciprocal variables of advertisements and consumption into the context of investigation. Eventually, the findings provide us with the necessary expected information about: graphic art effects on consumer behavior in Iran with special reference to the students /youths.

METHODOLOGY

The technique used in the present research is a quality- quantity method to generate a comprehensive and detailed description of the relationship between graphic art effects on consumer behavior of students/ youth. To conduct the present research, 470 students of various disciplines in different universities in Tehran City were approached and interviewed through the tool of questionnaires. The present research is based on the main hypothesis that: "graphic art values motivate and affect consumer behavior within the youth in the society". To conduct the research, theoretical arguments as well as empirical considerations were used. As it was not possible to reflect the full 21 extracted tables, they were presented in *abridged form*. The questionnaire was also initially pretested on 25 students.

Consumer Behavior

The term indicates that modern societies are distinctive in that they are increasingly organized around consumption. There is a growing debate about the characteristics of consumer societies which include:

- Rising affluence leading to spending more on consumer goods, holidays, leisure etc.
- In a consumer society, working hours usually fall, and that permits more time for leisure pursuits.
- People usually acquire a new identity in the form of a consumer culture following the industrial development in their society.

- Due to aestheticization of everyday life, there is more interest in the presentation of an image and construction of a lifestyle; both of which involve the purchase of commodities and services of various kinds.
- Consumption-based behavior, and development of such a lifestyle are used as markers of social position.

In consumer societies, consumers gain power and authority through consumption of goods and services, and through offer in services by professionals such as doctors, teachers, lawyers etc. However, increasing numbers of goods and services have contributed to such a transition. Under such conditions and through increasing graphic art effects, shopping becomes a leisure activity, and a new culture (Lury: 1996). Despite the increasing power of graphic art advertisements, many contributors debate about the consumer society in which more attention is paid to production rather than consumption. It is worth mentioning that graphic art advertisements affect all regardless of class, race and gender differentiations. It must also be noted that consumer society results in empowering of consumers. However, in such circumstances, the market extends into all areas of activity. Similarly, many thinkers doubt that the consumer society results in the empowering of consumers and argue that it simply represents the extension of capitalist values, and further divides the rich from the poor (Bourdieu:1993).

Consumption Divisions

In much graphic art works, social class has been taken to be the source of important social divisions. Recently, however, a number of graphic art thinkers have argued that, for a variety of reasons, class divisions are not nearly as important as they were. Social divisions are increasingly based on differing patterns of consumption which is highly influenced by graphic art advertisements.

Another version of the argument may be found in those writers who suggest that *identity* in modern societies is increasingly founded on differences in consumption. People therefore do not derive their identity from their class position, or from their work lives, but rather from the tastes, habits and consumption patterns that they share with others (Saunders:1990).

Influencing Patterns

The way of living or lifestyle of the students/ youth is widely influenced by the physical, psychological, social, cultural and graphic art icons; values which are reflected in advertisements. In other words,

lifestyle is a composite of motivations, needs and wants influenced by factors such as culture, family and social class. However, quality of consumption itself highly impacts lifestyle. Similarly, graphic art through advertisements determine how consumers make their purchase decisions (Retrieved from Business Dictionary.com).

Psychographics, or the study of personality, values, attitudes, interests, and lifestyles affect the students/youth and their way of living. Therefore, psychographic studies of individuals can be valuable in their consumption behavior. Psychographic profile or make-up of a person is constructed and used in advertising, and as a means to encourage consumption behavior.

Graphic Art, Consumption and Economy

Diffusion of graphic art through advertisements and consumption highly impact the citizens to purchase goods and services. Even, when they do not have cash, they use credit to buy things that they cannot afford. The action sometimes causes a situation in which they cannot pay their debts, and therefore, they have no money to purchase more goods, resulting in less money for everyone. In such conditions, manufacturers have to lay off workers as more goods are not needed.

Therefore, graphic art advertisements motivate people to buy things, and in this process the company makes profit. This leads the company to hire more workers — those workers buy more things, and as a result, the government collects taxes on.

On the other hand, in case of shortage of graphic art advertisements and shortage of consumption, the economy would collapse, and the government would not receive taxes enough. However, people who see motivating advertisements based on graphic art, have more chance of buying the advertised products, and in this way the economy functions as well. So, in this way, jobs are created, and that helps the entrepreneurship and economy boost forward.

Positive Effects of Consumerism

There are positive effects of consumerism on economy and society. That results in more industrial production, higher growth rate of the economy, more goods and services available, and more employment opportunities. Similarly, there will be more goods and services to choose from, and eventually more comforts for a better living style (Retrieved from Shukla). However,

the circulation of cash in its essence is necessary in a vibrant consumer society, and the appropriate cultural behavior for the people of which is necessary.

DISCUSSION

The two variables of graphic art effects and consumption behavior reciprocally affect each other. While graphic art advertisements impact consumption behavior, increasing consumption is dependent on graphic art advertisements of various forms. In modern industrial world, graphic art advertising highly changes the consumer behavior and culture. It also leads to economic change. However, progressive consumer behavior is inevitably concerned with the quality of graphic art reflections in terms of advertisements. Similarly, graphic art advertising persuades consumption in one way or another. In other words, graphic-based advertisements create a new modern civilization style using large and fashionable imagery.

Graphic art advertising being a form of communication intended to persuade an audience to purchase products, ideas or services, is largely practiced in the form of, and with the help of graphic arts. Advertising is found to be necessary for economic growth in today's world with special reference to the younger generations.

It is becoming harder to escape from advertising and the media. Graphic art advertisements are everywhere such as schools, airport lounges, doctors offices, hospitals, gas stations etc. — all affecting different groups of people (Mc Chesney: 2008). However, graphic art advertising leads to an overall increase in consumption in society.

It serves to promote consumption as a way of life (Lasch: 1994). Graphic art advertising persuades people to buy goods that they do not need, and generally contributes to the formation and maintenance of consumer society.

In most contemporary societies including Iran, graphic art advertising is omnipresent, being transmitted in a wide variety of media, and more recently through a variety of graphic billboards. Thus, it may indeed contribute to the formation of a consumer culture/behavior (Dyer:1982).

CONCLUSION

Although cultural variation plays a significant part in consumption behavior, yet it is a common mistake to suppose that consumption forms a cultural island. However, the capacity of graphic art advertisements undermine the cultural

variations. A much clearer understanding of advertising practices comes from recognizing how meaningful effects pervade production, acquisition, and use of goods and services. Consumption, like production needs to be encouraged and promoted through graphic art advertising in order to have a sustainable economic cycle. Yet, the challenge is there: consumers in general are sometimes increasingly leading impoverished lives as a consequence of growth in consumption.

In today's world, consumer behavior is largely affected by, in the form of, and with the help of graphic art works. It persuades people, and in particular the youth to buy goods that they do not need, and it generally contributes to the formation of a consumer society. On the other hand, lack or declining economies, consequently lead to decline in collecting taxes.

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