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Complaint behaviour: a study of the differences between complainants about advertising in Australia and the population at large

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Abstract

Advertising expenditure has risen globally and in Australia there has been a 2.7-fold increase in the last ten years. It is suggested that some advertisements may be “unacceptable”, that is, unfair, misleading, deceptive, offensive, false or socially irresponsible. This research is concerned with consumer behaviour and consumer complaint behaviour specifically in the area of advertising in Australia. The findings indicate that complainants are significantly different from the population at large. This research will afford the regulatory bodies a better understanding of the complaining public as well as educating marketing communications strategists in effectively reaching their target markets.

Introduction

Growth of global advertising

Advertising has been described as “pervasive, intrusive and pernicious”, while advertisers have been labelled as “mischievous” in their attempts to reach and persuade their target markets (Harker and Wiggs, 1999). Globally, advertising spend has grown dramatically. For example, advertising in the USA is predicted to increase by 6.5 per cent to US$251 billion in 2001 or 2.42 per cent of the gross domestic product of the USA (Elliott, 2000; Hays, 2000; Kranhold, 2000). Authors have estimated strong growth in advertising expenditure in Australia where advertising expenditure has risen over 2.7-fold in the last ten years and is now an $8 billion industry (Commercial Economic Advisory Service of Australia, 2000) (Figure 1). Growth in “real” terms, taking into account the Consumer Price Index, has been in the order of over 186 per cent (Table 1).

Total print media accounts for over half of the expenditure on advertising in Australia; expenditure has more than doubled over the last ten years for this form of advertising. Television advertising is the second highest expenditure item in main media spending, accounting for over $2 billion in the last financial year. It can be seen that there is then a decline in the proportion of total advertising expenditure with radio advertising, outdoor advertising and cinema advertising accounting for just over 12 per cent of total advertising expenditure in main media for 1999. Complaints about advertising in Australia occur mainly in television and print media (Advertising Standards Bureau, 1999).

It has also been suggested that the more money spent on advertising in a country, the greater the need for protection from unacceptable advertising (Harker, 2000). Research has found
that a connection exists between annual advertising expenditure in a nation and the presence of a self-regulatory body concerned with the investigation of “unacceptable advertising” (Miracle and Nevitt, 1987). This is indicative of the importance of, and the emphasis placed on, the most visible element of the marketing mix; however, it clearly raises concerns regarding the potentially harmful effect that advertising can have on the more vulnerable members of our society.

Problems with advertising

This leads to the problems within advertising identified by Harker (1996), where it is suggested that some advertisements may be “unacceptable”, that is, unfair, misleading, deceptive, offensive, false or socially irresponsible. It is for these reasons that industry and regulatory response to consumer complaints about these problems is thus an important area to address.

This article has three objectives: first, to bring together established research in the field of consumer complaint behaviour, second, to contextualise this research into the area of complaints about advertising in Australia and, third, to empirically test the proposition posited by authors inferring that there are generalisable differences between complainants and non-complainants.

Consumer complaint behaviour

Consumer complaint behaviour has been described as the set of all behavioural and non-behavioural responses portrayed by consumers which involve the communication of negative perceptions relating to a consumption episode and triggered by dissatisfaction with that episode (Day, 1984; Rogers and Williams, 1990; Singh and Howell, 1985). It can be argued that this implies that consumer complaint behaviour is influenced by a multitude of situational, product and personal variables and unrelated to, but triggered by, the intensity of the consumer’s dissatisfaction. This assertion is supported by empirical evidence discussed by Nicosia and Mayer (1976), Day (1984), Tse et al. (1989) and Vezina and Nicosia (1990).

Three options for action

A review of the literature relating to consumer behaviour in this field of study has indicated that researchers are unified in their understanding of post-purchase consumer dissatisfaction (Rogers and Williams, 1990). Consumers, fundamentally, have three alternatives for action in the complaint situation (Andreasen and Manning, 1990; Hirschmann, 1970; Singh, 1988, 1990). These are:

1. (1) exiting;
2. (2) direct voicing; and,
3. (3) amplified voicing.

Exiting involves the consumer establishing a personal boycott against the seller or manufacturer to avoid a repetition of the original transaction that led to the dissatisfaction. Exiting behaviour, when working well, obviates the need for public policy intervention. Voicing occurs when exiting is unlikely (for example, if the seller is a monopolistic public utility) or when exiting would not yield appropriately perceived restitution in the opinion of the individual consumer. Direct voicing represents the consumer complaining directly to the
seller. Amplified voicing occurs when the consumer enlists the support of third parties such as newspaper journalists, consumer protection agencies or industry regulatory or self-regulatory bodies to act on her/his behalf.

**Importance of non-complaining consumers**

Research examining consumer dissatisfaction and complaint behaviour has found that up to two-thirds of dissatisfied consumers take no action (Day and Ash, 1979; Technical Assistance Research Program, 1979; Richins, 1983; Andreasen, 1984, 1985). That is, the majority of consumers may simply resign themselves to “things being just the way they are” (Stephens and Gwinner, 1998). Non-complaining consumers are important both in practice and in theory. In practical terms, marketers are unwittingly ignoring a significant section of their target markets. Theoretically, without taking the views of these consumers into account any research conducted could prove to contain an inappropriate sample, both disproportionate in terms of size and erroneous in terms of the elements of which the sample is constituted.

Thus, given the importance of non-complaining consumers, much research in consumer complaint behaviour literature has sought to understand the differences between complaining and non-complaining consumers. Past studies have examined individual characteristics of complainants such as demographics (Singh, 1990), personal values (Rogers and Williams, 1990), personality factors (Fornell and Westbrook, 1979; Bolfing, 1989), attitudes towards complaining (Day, 1984; Bearden and Oliver, 1985; Singh, 1990), and attitudes regarding business and government (Jacoby and Jarrard, 1981; Moyer, 1984) that may influence complaining propensity. Other studies have sought to understand situational factors that may play a role in consumers’ decisions to voice or not to voice their dissatisfaction to the firm (Richins, 1983; Day, 1984; Moyer, 1984; Bolfing, 1989; Singh, 1990).

**Characteristics of complainants**

General findings from the reviewed literature indicate that complainants tend to be older, have attained higher levels of educational qualifications, earn a higher gross weekly income, possess greater degrees of wealth, have higher participant levels of local community involvement and, in general terms, have more resources, both intrinsic abilities (e.g. self-confidence, feelings of self-worth) and external (e.g. time, money, qualifications) to avail themselves of to allow them to take action when dissatisfied (Kolodinsky and Aleong, 1990).

**The research issue: complaints about advertising in Australia**

**Complaints about advertising in Australia**

Every year there are more than 2,000 complaints about advertising in Australia and the number of complaints is increasing (Advertising Standards Bureau, 1999). The new Australian advertising self-regulation system commenced operations in 1998 and now handles in excess of 2,000 complaints each year, upholding around 5 per cent of these complaints. However, less than 1 per cent of the Australian public complain about advertising. Examples of two advertisements that members of the Australian public have found unacceptable, have complained about and had that complaint upheld are outlined in Table II.
Day (1980) suggests that consumer dissatisfaction acts as a trigger from which the consumer finds the voice to act on their feeling of dissonance. Consumer complainant actions fall into one of two broad categories – behavioural and non-behavioural (Singh, 1988).

This research focussed on the broad research question: how do complainants about advertising in Australia differ from the general public?

The literature suggests that there appear to be generalisable differences between those consumers who complain and those who do not (Singh, 1990; Crosier et al., 2000). Thus, an avenue for relevant research would be an investigation as to whether complainants about advertising in Australia differ from non-complainants in relation to complaint behaviour in areas other than advertising, leading to the following proposition and hypotheses:

P1: There is evidence of complaint behaviour in areas other than advertising displayed by complainants about advertising in Australia.

H1: When dissatisfied with a product or a service, complainants about advertising in Australia are just as likely to decide to never use the product/service again as non-complainants in this study.

H2: When dissatisfied with a product or a service, complainants about advertising in Australia are just as likely to tell their friends or relatives never to use the product/service again as non-complainants in this study.

H3: When dissatisfied with a product or a service, complainants about advertising in Australia are just as likely to forget about the product/service and do nothing as non-complainants in this study.

H4: When dissatisfied with a product or a service, complainants about advertising in Australia are just as likely to complain to the store manager that provided the product/service as non-complainants in this study.

H5: When dissatisfied with a product or a service, complainants about advertising in Australia are just as likely to contact the manufacturer/service provider to complain about the product/service as non-complainants in this study.

H6: When dissatisfied with a product or a service, complainants about advertising in Australia are just as likely to complain to a consumer agency about the product/service as non-complainants in this study.

H7: When dissatisfied with a product or a service, complainants about advertising in Australia are just as likely to write a letter to the press about the product/service as non-complainants in this study.

A questionnaire allowed the investigation of a number of variables taken from published literature and Table III summarises these variables.

Methodology

Two populations
There were two populations investigated for this research, namely complainants and non-complainants. With regard to “successful” complainants, the Advertising Standards Board provided the database that was utilised regarding complainants from 1998 and 1999 whose written complaints went before the regulatory panel for adjudication. This allowed access to names, addresses and telephone numbers of complainants who were contacted to enable the completion of the surveys.

Population

The first population of interest was all complainants to the Advertising Standards Board who had progressed to the stage where their personal complaints were addressed by the regulatory panel. That is, their complaints had passed the vetting process discussed earlier in the paper.

The second population of interest comprised elements from the general population within Australia who have never complained “successfully” to the Advertising Standards Board or any other regulatory body concerned with advertising.

Sample size

The size of the first population, being those complainants that have survived the pre-screening process conducted by the Advertising Standards Board and listed on their database, was 1,647. The sample size selected was 300. A post-hoc analysis utilising Jarboe’s (1999) formula indicated that this sample size was sufficient for a confidence level of 95 per cent and a precision level of p < 0.05.

The size of the second sample, being those members of the Australian population over the age of 15 years who had not previously complained “successfully” to the Advertising Standards Board or any other regulatory body concerned with advertising was 200 and this size was considered appropriate for this study. The reason is that although the results could not be generalised to the entire population, they can be considered indicative of the profile of this second population, and this was an exploratory study.

Sampling design

Quota sampling

A stratified quota sampling technique was used. Sekaran (1992, p. 236) defines quota sampling as “a form of proportionate stratified sampling, in which a predetermined proportion of people are sampled from different groups, but on a convenience basis”. This method of sampling enabled commensurable representation of subgroups, while minimising budgetary and time constraints. The quotas determined for this study are presented in Table IV.

Data were obtained by telephone interviews conducted between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., seven days a week over the period of 14 days.

Response rates
Table V displays interview response rates. Following completion of the 501 telephone interviews, and together with the data entry process, the completed questionnaires were screened to gauge their usability. Of the 501 questionnaires completed, all were deemed “usable”. The final sample size was therefore 501, consisting of 201 respondents who were classified as non-complainants and 300 respondents who were classified as complainants respectively, for the purposes of this study. This sample size of 501 was obtained from 1,088 calls, indicating an overall response rate of 46 per cent.

Findings

Generalisable differences

Seven hypotheses were formulated, which dealt with consumer complaint behaviour in areas other than advertising. Authors have suggested that there appear to be generalisable differences between those consumers who complain and those who do not (Singh, 1990; Crosier et al., 2000). This study empirically investigated whether complainants about advertising in Australia differ from non-complainants in relation to complaint behaviour in areas other than advertising.

Recalling a specific situation

All respondents were asked to recall a situation where they had been dissatisfied with a product or service that they had purchased. They were then asked to respond to a bank of seven statements relating to action that they may have taken in that situation. A five-point Likert-type scale was used where 1 = very likely, 2 = likely, 3 = neither likely nor unlikely, 4 = unlikely, and 5 = very unlikely. The bank of seven response statements contained three passive and four active responses in regard to consumer complaint behaviour.

1. (1) Passive responses:
   - I would decide to never use the product/service again.
   - I would tell my friends or relatives never to use the product/service again.
   - I would forget about the product/service and do nothing.

1. (2) Active responses:
   - I would complain to the store manager that provided the product/service.
   - I would contact the manufacturer/service provider to complain about the product/service.
   - I would complain to a consumer agency.
   - I would write a letter to the press about the product/service.

Less likely to forget

H1 was found to be false. The results (Table VI) indicate that there is a significant difference in complaint behaviour between complainants about advertising in Australia and non-complainants in this study with regard to the statement “I would decide to never use the product/service again”. Further examination of the means of these two groups indicates that complainants are less likely to never use a product or service that they have purchased and are dissatisfied with than the non-complainants in this study (2.1164 > 1.9500).
H2 was found to be false. The results (Table VI) indicate that there is no significant difference in complaint behaviour between complainants about advertising in Australia and non-complainants in this study with regard to the statement “I would tell my friends and relatives never to use the product or service again”.

H3 was found to be false. The results (Table VI) indicate that there is a significant difference in complaint behaviour between complainants about advertising in Australia and non-complainants in this study with regard to the statement “I would forget about the product/service and do nothing”. Further examination of the means of these two groups indicates that complainants are less likely to forget about a product or service that they have purchased and are dissatisfied with than the non-complainants in this study (4.1100 > 3.2650).

H4 was found to be false. The results (Table VI) indicate that there is a significant difference in complaint behaviour between complainants about advertising in Australia and non-complainants in this study with regard to the statement “I would complaint to a store manager that provided the product or service”. Further examination of the means of these two groups indicates that complainants are more likely to complain to a store manager about a product or service that they have purchased and are dissatisfied with than the non-complainants in this study (1.6582 < 2.0350).

**Complaining to store manager**

H5 was found to be false. The results (Table VI) indicate that there is a significant difference in complaint behaviour between complainants about advertising in Australia and non-complainants in this study with regard to statement “I would contact the manufacturer or service provider to complain about the product/service”. Further examination of the means of these two groups indicates that complainants are more likely to complain to a manufacturer or service provider about a product or service that they have purchased and are dissatisfied with than the non-complainants in this study (1.9745 < 2.6850).

H6 was found to be false. The results (Table VI) indicate that there is a significant difference in complaint behaviour between complainants about advertising in Australia and non-complainants in this study with regard to the statement “I would complain to a consumer agency”. Further examination of the means of these two groups indicates that complainants are more likely to complain to a consumer agency about a product or service that they have purchased and are dissatisfied with than the non-complainants in this study (2.8945 < 3.5100).

H7 was found to be false. The results (Table VI) indicate that there is a significant difference in complaint behaviour between complainants about advertising in Australia and non-complainants in this study with regard to the statement “I would write a letter to the press about the product/service”. Further examination of the means of these two groups indicates that complainants are more likely to write a letter to the press about a product or service that they have purchased and are dissatisfied with than the non-complainants in this study (3.8727 < 4.2060).

**Discussion**

**Higher propensity to voice complaints**
From the results detailed above it can be inferred that there is a difference between complainants and non-complainants. Advertising complainants do have a higher propensity to openly voice their complaints when dissatisfied with a purchase compared with those people in the study who do not complain about advertising. While complainants are less likely to forget about a product or service that they have purchased and are dissatisfied with and do nothing as well as being less likely to decide never to use the said product or service again, they are more likely to complain to a store manager, manufacturer or service provider, a consumer agency or write a letter to the press about it. Table VII offers a summary of the differences between complainants about advertising in Australia and non-complainants in this study that were found to be significant when investigating the hypotheses formulated with regard to the proposition posited.

Managerial implications

Displays of complaint behavior

The research proposition drawn from a review of the published literature concerned itself with investigating whether there is evidence of complaint behaviour in areas other than advertising and whether these displays of complaint behaviours are different in people who complain about advertising in Australia and those members of the wider population investigated in this study who do not complain about advertising. Based on the analysis of the data collected in this study there is a significant difference in the voicing of complaints when dissatisfied with a purchase between advertising complainants in Australia and members of the wider population who were investigated and do not complain about advertising in Australia. Complainants are more likely than non-complainants to complain to a store manager, manufacturer/service provider, consumer agency, and to the press when dissatisfied with a product or service that they have purchased. Further, they are less likely in the same situation to forget about the product or service and do nothing and they are less likely to decide never to use the product or service again.

Speedy gratification

It can therefore be inferred that advertising complainants in Australia and those non-complainants in this study do, in fact, have different complaint behaviours in areas other than advertising and that complainants are more prone to voicing their complaints than those non-complainants in this study. Further, it can also be deduced that complainants tend to voice their complaints towards entities that are able to give them speedy gratification. That is, store managers, manufacturers, service providers, consumer agencies and the press are likely to hear the complaints being levelled at them or relayed to them and offer a speedy response to the complainant, be it one that is positive (e.g. offer a replacement product) or negative (e.g. caveat emptor).

Limitations

The main limitation encountered was due to the very nature of exploratory studies. That is, these findings need to be tested on a larger sample. This issue in no way limits the relevance of the findings of this research, but merely opens an avenue for further research in this area for those with greater resources than the writer.
Areas for further research

Investigation of self-regulatory bodies which handle complaints about advertising is a growing area of research. The implications and significance of such studies in marketing have been recognised both theoretically and practically by academics and industry alike. Also, research into self-regulatory advertising complaint handling bodies has merely been the “tip of the iceberg” in terms of knowledge divulged in this field.

Further in-depth research with complainants is necessary to ascertain how they really differ from the general population. Depth research is required to fully understand differences in attitudes, opinions, behaviours and lifestyles.

Conclusion

This research has provided new information regarding people who complain about advertising in Australia. The implications and significance arising from this study have been presented, together with the limitations experienced in this research and areas for further research in this field. As the levels of advertising increase and as consumers are involuntarily exposed to advertising that they may wish to complain about, the identification of their characteristics, their profile as consumers and their differences from the general population become salient. Consumer complaint behaviour about advertising is an exciting and interesting field of research and it is hoped that this study has enriched the field, expanded the area of knowledge as a whole and will provide inspiration to fellow researchers to delve into the area in question.

Executive summary and implications for managers and executives

Complaints tell us much about our customers and our business

We should always be wary about assuming that the sorts of people who complain are no different from the rest of the population. Anecdotally we all know that some folk will complain while others do not bother or do not feel confident enough. Volkov, Harker and Harker look at one kind of complaint in order to provide some detail about the people who do bother to complain about advertising especially in the context of dissatisfaction with a product or service.

Complaining behaviour is very varied and we should note that reference to people who complain and people who do not is not really an accurate representation of what occurs. We all complain but not all of us take that complaint beyond friends and family. It is what might be called formal complaint behaviour that concerns us here.

Before discussing Volkov et al.’s findings about the difference between complainants and non-complainants, we should remember that formal complaints are just the tip of the iceberg. Low level dissatisfaction and dissonance should be of equal concern to the high level of formal complaint. If somebody has a poor meal in my restaurant or dislikes the service, they are unlikely to tell me. But they will tell their friends and family who will receive a negative impression of my business. Providing the means to raise concerns or complaints – and the proper handling of those complaints – represents good management and makes a contribution to our marketing efforts.
Who is it making the formal complaint?

Volkov et al. describe the type of person who is likely to complain formally about an advertisement in Australia. This person is older, better educated, from a higher income bracket, wealthier and involved in the “community”. My guess – supported by observation and experience – is that this “classification” will apply equally elsewhere.

Although this classification seems at first to contain no surprises and nothing that we can do much about as marketers, there is an important factor that deserves greater attention. People who lodge formal complaints – who take action when dissatisfied – are “participatory”. Just being rich and clever does not indicate a greater propensity to complain – it is being rich, clever and involved that matters.

For marketers this finding links with an important aspect of public relations theory and practice – the idea of the opinion former. Since our complainer is likely to be “involved” they will be easier to target than the average individual. Our complainer is the person organizing the petition against a new housing development, not simply someone who signs the petition. Our complainer will be on the organizing committee for the church gala, not just working on a stall. And our complainer will be known and seen elsewhere – after all it will not just be businesses or products they are complaining about.

Businesses should recognize that complainers require careful treatment as these individuals are more influential than the average. Moreover, we can “catch” most of these complaints before they become what Volkov et al. refer to as “amplified”.

People complain to you first

Before people complain to the “authorities” they seek to resolve the situation directly. The dissatisfied customer will start their action by addressing the business – starting at the bottom and working the way up. We should be able to deal with the complaint (most of the time) before the individual is motivated to raise the matter with a higher authority.

Businesses without a robust and responsive complaint handling process are missing an important opportunity and are increasing the chances of negative publicity – either through word-of-mouth or as a result of formal complaints. The management of customer dissatisfaction and complaint is not simply an operational concern but is a crucial aspect of marketing and communications.

Since Volkov et al.’s work is concerned with complaints about advertising that result from consumer dissatisfaction or dissonance, we should also pay attention to the elements of our communication that have raised complaints – even when the complaint is not upheld. Complaints about advertising are not widespread and most concern perceived or actual misrepresentation or misleading information. Just 2,000 complaints from a large advertising market like Australia’s is an indication that, most of the time, advertising is “legal, decent, honest and truthful”.
We may get it right most of the time but that is no reason for complacency

What are we getting so excited about? A miniscule proportion of advertisements get complained about. It is just not a serious issue or a major concern. Wrong for two important reasons.

First, any dissatisfied customer or prospective customer represents a threat to our business. They will not (we hope) close us down but they will give us bad publicity and cost us money. We should not be content to have some customers who are not happy with what we are selling.

Second, governments can and do legislate on the basis of one high profile incident. It may result in bad law but bad law is still the law. There exists an opinion – a well-connected opinion – that is opposed to advertising and would want draconian restrictions on what we do. Failing to exercise self-control and self-regulation effectively provides these people with further ammunition and increases the prospects for unwarranted and unnecessary legislation to control advertising.

Complaints tell us something about what we do and give us a useful opportunity to improve our service or product quality. Complaints also tell us something about our customers and that information can be used to improve our communications with those customers with the aim of reducing the circumstances where an individual feels motivated to complain to a third party – to “amplify their voice”.

A précis of the article “Complaint behaviour: a study of the differences between complainants about advertising in Australia and the population at large”. Supplied by Marketing Consultants for Emerald.)

![Figure 1](Australian advertising expenditure in main media, 1990-1999.png)
### Table I. Adjusted advertising expenditure in main media, 1990-1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Actual advertising spend ($ billion)</th>
<th>Annual percentage change in advertising spend</th>
<th>CPI</th>
<th>Annual percentage change in CPI</th>
<th>Real change in advertising expenditure $</th>
<th>&quot;Adjusted&quot; for CPI advertising spend ($ billion)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>102.5</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>−6.33</td>
<td>106.0</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>−9.74</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>107.3</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>4.52</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>14.30</td>
<td>109.3</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>12.44</td>
<td>5.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>8.74</td>
<td>111.2</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>7.01</td>
<td>5.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>6.69</td>
<td>8.54</td>
<td>116.2</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>6.36</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>119.8</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>−1.20</td>
<td>6.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>8.63</td>
<td>120.2</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>7.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>6.65</td>
<td>121.0</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>5.99</td>
<td>7.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>122.3</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>8.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** The annual percentage change given in column three is calculated in the actual spend (column two). Similarly, the CPI weighted average figures are given in column four and the annual percentage change in CPI is then calculated from them (column five). By subtracting the annual percentage change in CPI (column five) from the annual percentage change in real advertising spend (column three) an adjusted (for CPI) change in advertising spend is calculated in column six. The new percentage figure is then applied to advertising spend in order to produce an “adjusted” advertising spend figure in column seven.

**Source:** Advertising expenditure figures were obtained from Commercial Economic Advisory Service of Australia (2000) and combined with CPI figures (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000) in order to produce an “adjusted advertising spend” figure.

### Table II. Recent “unacceptable” advertisements in Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breach</th>
<th>Guilty party/case</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
<th>Case No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offensive</td>
<td>Smith Foods</td>
<td>Animated advertisements depicting “camera-clicking” Asians touring a suburban street in a bus</td>
<td>Advertising Standards Board (Complaint No. 69/98)</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially irresponsible</td>
<td>People’s Truth/Heartbalm</td>
<td>A billboard advertisement promoting an adults-only Web site failed to treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to its relevant audience, particularly given its prominent outdoor location, which effectively placed it on general exhibition to the general public</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Advertising Standards Bureau (1998)
Table III. Proposition and its sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition and its sources</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table IV. Stratified quota samples utilised in this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Complainants</th>
<th>Non-complainants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table V. Overall response rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of calls made</th>
<th>Refused</th>
<th>Not at home</th>
<th>Disconnected</th>
<th>Usable responses</th>
<th>Response rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,088</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table VI. Results of t-tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Comparison of means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>2.006</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>2.1164 &gt; 1.9500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>0.987</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>0.325</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>6.505</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001</td>
<td>4.1100 &gt; 3.2650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td>-3.883</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001</td>
<td>1.6582 &lt; 2.0350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5</td>
<td>-5.871</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001</td>
<td>1.9745 &lt; 2.6850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6</td>
<td>-4.377</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001</td>
<td>2.8945 &lt; 3.5100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7</td>
<td>-3.231</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>3.8727 &lt; 4.2060</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table VII. Significant findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complaint behaviour</th>
<th>Complainants</th>
<th>Non-complainants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would decide to never use the product or service again</td>
<td>Less likely to decide to never use the product or service again</td>
<td>More likely to decide to never use the product or service again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would tell my friends or relatives never to use the product or service again</td>
<td>No significant difference</td>
<td>No significant difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would forget about the product/service and do nothing</td>
<td>Less likely to decide to forget about the product/service and do nothing</td>
<td>More likely to decide to forget about the product/service and do nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would complain to a store manager that provided the product or service</td>
<td>More likely to complain to a store manager about the product/service</td>
<td>Less likely to complain to a store manager about the product/service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would contact the manufacturer or service provider to complain about the product/service</td>
<td>More likely to complain to the manufacturer or service provider about the product/service</td>
<td>Less likely to complain to the manufacturer or service provider about the product/service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would complain to a consumer agency</td>
<td>More likely to complain to a consumer agency about the product/service</td>
<td>Less likely to complain to a consumer agency about the product/service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would write a letter to the press about the product/service</td>
<td>More likely to write a letter to the press about the product/service</td>
<td>Less likely to write a letter to the press about the product/service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table VII. Significant findings

References


Hirschman, A.O (1970), Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organisations and States, Association for Consumer Research, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.


