

# Developing a Theoretical Framework for a Study on the Impact of Advertising Credibility of Consumer Healthcare Products.

R. Indu  
Research Student,  
Bharatiyar University  
Coimbatore, India  
India  
(indumanish@yahoo.com)

V. P. Jagathy Raj  
Professor  
School of Management Studies  
Cochin University of Science and Technology  
Kochi, India  
jagathyraj@gmail.com

**Abstract-** The tough competition in the global and national markets and new trends in consumerism resulted in an increase in the volume of advertisements. Sometimes advertisers are successful in achieving their intended objectives with a particular advertisement and sometimes they are not. These factors contributed a lot towards the decision making problems of advertising agencies with regard to the selection of appropriate advertising strategies and tactics. The tough competition and large volume of advertising make the consumers confused and this even created doubts in the minds of consumers about the genuineness and reliability of manufacturers and products.

These factors caused a query regarding the active role of credibility element in advertising. The proposed study examines the effects of advertising credibility in consumer health care non durable product advertising on communication effect, purchase behavior and ad skepticism. This paper examines the need for the study of advertising credibility and reviews the advertising- consumer behaviour- credibility – healthcare theories which form a basis for the study. It identifies the different components and dimensions of advertising credibility and the importance of communication effect, purchase behavior and ad skepticism. It also studies the relevance of credibility in the consumer healthcare products advertising and suggests a Theoretical Framework for the proposed study.

**Keywords:** Advertising credibility, Communication effect, Purchase behavior, Ad skepticism, Healthcare

## INTRODUCTION

Advertisements play a major role in changing the perception and consumption pattern of the society in general. Many previous studies have already proved the link between the perception of an advertisement and the attitude and behaviour towards a product. Society needs advertisement for a variety of reasons like information sharing, consumer persuasion, decision making etc. A growing body of research has indicated that credibility is one of the most important components of a persuasive message and can often influence the outcome of persuasive messages. In fact all ads need some amount of credibility. But this study focuses on the intensity or level of credibility efforts in ads and its effects. In the advertising and consumer behavior literature, advertising credibility has been defined as the “extent to which the consumer perceives claims made about the brand in the ad to be truthful and believable” (MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989; Cotte, Coulter and Moore, 2005). There are a number of

factors that influence the consumer’s attitude towards advertising such as target characteristics, source characteristics, message characteristics, cultural aspects, economical aspects, media characteristics, creativity and cognitive routes; still the concept of credibility in advertisement continues to be an interesting topic to scholars and practitioners in marketing and advertising (Goldsmith et al., 2000; Lafferty, Barbara A. 2000; Ferle et al., 2005; Abdul Majid, 2009).

Credibility refers to a person's perception of the truth of a piece of information. It is a multi-dimensional concept that serves as a means for the receiver of the information to rate the source or transmitter of the communication in relation to the information. This rating correlates with the willingness of the receiver to attribute truth and substance to the information (Hovland et al. 1953). Advertisements that lack credibility are often ignored or avoided by consumers (Rodgers, 2005). Thus, credibility of advertising messages plays an important role in the formation of attitudes and, ultimately, purchase behavior, as dictated by the hierarchy of effects models (Thorson 1996, Rodgers 2005; Wang et al. 2002).

## *Components and Dimensions of Credibility*

Credibility of an advertisement is affected by various factors, particularly by the company’s credibility and the person who brings a message (Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell, 2000) and the credibility of the information content (Pedro Gardete 2012). Advertising credibility can be classified as advertiser credibility (corporate credibility) and advertisement credibility (ad credibility). In some Attitude-toward-the-Ad research, advertiser credibility is defined as “the perceived truthfulness or honesty of the sponsor of the ad” and Ad credibility refers to the extent to which consumers perceive the message in the ad to be believable. (MacKenzie and Lutz 1989). Ad credibility includes endorser credibility and message content credibility. Both advertiser credibility (Lafferty and Goldsmith 2004) and ad credibility have been identified as the important factors determining advertising effectiveness.

In another classification corporate credibility and endorser credibility are in one group – Source credibility. Advertiser and the endorser are considered as sources of the ad message.

An effective communication should possess certain characteristics including source credibility and message content credibility (Kotler 1972). Message content credibility involves acceptance of the statements and is related in part to the similarity between the communicators and the audience's positions. It has been assumed that the more credible the source and message content, the more likely the audience will accept the communication (McDougall and Fry 1975).

Researchers have divided credibility into multiple dimensions. For example, Thorson and Moore (1996) note the importance of analyzing credibility in terms of the source as well as the channel or medium. Kiousis (2001) noted that one could separate credibility into medium, source and message paradigms, each of which affect attitude change as it relates to credibility. (Forbes 2003). Lafferty and Goldsmith's (1999) have studied the effects of endorser and corporate credibility on attitudes. Sometimes Media credibility has been examined separate from source or content, relying instead on perceptions of the believability or trustworthiness of the medium (Kiousis 2001). Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999) argue that regardless of media type, advertising credibility is a key influence for attitude formation and resulting behaviors. (Rodgers 2005). According to Abdul Majid(2009), Source credibility (e.g. endorser and corporate credibility) that is portrayed within an advertisement is considered as one of the most important of all stimuli that marketers use to build and enhance consumer's attitude toward advertisement, and is assumed to have an effect on the other behavioural outcomes such as attitude toward brand, and purchase intention.

*Advertiser Credibility/ Corporate Credibility (C/C):* Recently, advertiser or corporate credibility has received close attention which is influential in developing consumer's attitudes toward products and the advertisement (Goldberg and Hartwick 1990; Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell 2000; Lafferty and Goldsmith 1999). Corporate credibility is defined as "the extent to which consumers believe that a firm can design and deliver products and services that satisfy customer needs and wants" (Keller 1998, p. 426), and has been found to have direct, positive effects on attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intent (Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell 2000, Choi & Rifon 2002, Abdul Majid 2009).

*Endorser Credibility (EN/C):* An endorser is any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement (Byrne et al., 2003). En/C in this study refers to a term used to imply a communicator's positive characteristics and believability that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message (Ohanian 1990, Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell 2000) En/C can further be defined along the three dimensions of credibility, which are as follows:

*Expertise* - the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions, *Trustworthiness* - the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid (Ohanian 1990) and

*Attractiveness* - the attraction aspects of the communicator that he or she generates which are consistently liked more and have a positive impact on products with which they are associated (Ohanian 1990, Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell 2000, Forbes 2003, AbdulMajid 2009).

Freiden (1984) examined four types of endorsers, known as *celebrity*, *CEO*, *expert* and *typical consumer*, and found that celebrity endorsers receive a higher score on several dimensions than the other three types.

*Message Content Credibility (MC/C):* Message or argument quality is another aspect of ad credibility. Austin and Dong (1994) studied the sender along with the message to determine if either would have an effect on the overall credibility of the information. They found that the respectability of the source had little impact on the perceived credibility of the information, and that the "innocuous" message was more believable than the sensational message. These findings led them to conclude that the perceived credibility of the information had more to do with the message itself than the sender. (Forbes 2003).

A study conducted by Slater and Rouner (1996) examined source credibility by valuating the quality of the message and the impact on belief change. The results suggested when message quality was high the source appeared more credible. This finding was strong for expert sources, but not for biased sources, and message quality did not appear to influence the credibility of the biased source. The results also suggested that source credentials and attributes might not be as influential in persuasion as a high-quality message. (Forbes 2003).

Believability, Presentation of truth, Level of information, Authenticity and Creative presentation are the factors that determine Ad Message Content Credibility.

*Third-party Endorsements:* Dean (1999) examined pre-purchase attitudes through third-party endorsements, brand popularity and event sponsorship, and found third-party endorsement positively affected consumer variables. In a related study, Dean and Biswas (2001) compared third-party organization endorsement and celebrity endorsement of products and the impact on attitudes toward product quality. The third-party organization that endorsed the two products was the *Consumer Digest* magazine. The results indicated that a third-party organization endorsement significantly increased perceived product quality when compared to a celebrity endorsement. Wang (2005) examined whether customer testimonials and online news clips influenced purchase intentions. The results indicated third-party endorsements, both consumer testimonials and online news clips, increased trust and influenced purchase intentions.

In the present study, the researcher observes the combined effect of the different dimensions of advertising credibility such as corporate credibility, endorser credibility (which includes third- party endorsement also) and message content credibility on communication-effect, purchase behavior and ad

skepticism with special reference to consumer health care product advertising.

#### *Importance of Communication Effect, Purchase Behavior and Ad Skepticism in Effective Advertising*

The competent ad people should understand the consumer psychology well. They should always try to update their knowledge about certain effects that lead to certain reactions. This will help both the ad agencies and the corporates to avoid mistakes and increase results.

As per the views of Rossiter and Percy (1987), Behaviour and Communication-effects are the primary basis for advertising segmentation and target audience definition, even for new products or new brands (Paul 2002). Consumer skepticism, defined as the tendency toward disbelief of advertising claims, seems to negatively influence the ad effectiveness and the sales objectives. Therefore, the researcher selected Communication-Effect, Consumer Purchase Behaviour and ad skepticism to study the impact of Credibility in Advertising.

#### *Communication Effect*

According to Johnston and Wesley (1994), there is no single measure of advertising effectiveness. Generally two approaches used to measure ad effectiveness-Communication-effect research and sales-effect research. From the practical research point of view, Communication-Effect is preferable to sales effect. Because the effects of advertising in increasing brand awareness and favourable attitudes for the brand are easily documented, but the effects on sales are difficult to find. Advertising is only one of many factors causing sales.

Communication effect is a measure of ad effectiveness. At the same time it measures the level of fulfillment of communication objectives also (Paul 2002). Advertising cause action through the process of communication, by establishing relatively enduring mental associations connected to the brand in the prospective buyers' minds. This phenomenon is called Communication-Effect (Rossiter and Percy, 1987). Communication Objectives are framed based on the Communication-Effects.

#### *Consumer Purchase Behavior*

Consumer Behaviour, by definition, is the decision process and physical activity of making a purchase. To succeed in marketing, the advertisers need to understand what makes people behave the way they do. Advertising effectively uses the information and knowledge gained from the behavioural sciences to motivate, modify or reinforce consumer perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. To accomplish this, advertising people are to be conscious of and monitor peoples' attitude, values, likes and dislikes habits, fears, wants and desires. Advertising techniques are to be changed according to the behavioural characteristics of large groups of people (Weilbacher, 1984; Paul, 2002).

According to experts the essential way of fixing target audience or market segmentation is by current behaviour and current communication effects. So the researcher here selected the short run purchase behavior pattern of consumers consequent on advertising exposure, in a narrow sense.

#### *Ad Skepticism*

The concept of skepticism has been developed in consumer research as an individual predisposition to doubt persuasive messages (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998). Skepticism often forms when individuals create cognitive "categories" of incoming information and treat all information according to a set of stereotypes or beliefs regarding what they feel a particular message is trying to accomplish (Friestad and Wright 1999). This set of beliefs can be general (i.e. all advertising) or context specific (i.e. Internet advertising) (Rodgers 2005).

Obermiller and Spangenberg conducted three studies to investigate the effects of 'consumer skepticism toward advertising' on 'responses to ads'. More skeptical consumers like advertising less, rely on it less, attend to it less, and respond more positively to emotional appeals than to informational appeals (Carl Obermiller, Eric Spangenberg and Douglas L. MacLachlan 2005).

In addition, it is observed that there is a negative correlation between skepticism displayed by individuals and level of ad credibility. Specifically, that if skepticism is high, credibility will be low (Rodgers 2005). So it is assumed that when credibility is high, skepticism is low.

#### RELATED THEORIES

This section reviews the related theories and models which forms the basis for developing a conceptual framework for the study. Several theories are there to explain the impact of credibility in advertising.

#### *Theories of Advertising*

According to Weilbacher (1984) generally the theories of advertising can be grouped into four, viz., pressure response theories, active learning theories, low involvement theories, and dissonance reduction theories. *Pressure response theories* of advertising assume that advertising effects are a function of the advertising dollars spent or messages received and stable relations exist between advertising pressure and advertising effect. *Active Learning Theories* of advertising suggests that attitude or behavioural change is a result of the learning of the information conveyed by the advertising. According to *Low Involvement Theories* of advertising, at least in some advertising situations the information content of advertising is not of importance to the consumer. Here advertising effects cumulatively increased brand relevance or salience, result in changed purchase behavior and lead to revised attitudes only after the brand has been purchased or used. *Dissonance Reduction Theories* advocates that behaviour may lead to

attitude change and that newly formed attitudes are reinforced and stabilised by information from advertising.

All the theories except pressure response theory have three common elements – learning, attitude change, behavioural change. The difference is only with regard to the sequence of these elements.

Learning -> Attitude Change -> Behaviour Change (Active Learning Theory/ High Involvement Hierarchy)

Learning -> Behaviour Change -> Attitude Change (Low Involvement Theory)

Behaviour Change -> Attitude Change -> Learning (Dissonance Reduction Theory) (Paul 2002, Rajeev Batra et al., 2008).

Regarding the theories of advertising it is assumed that there is no single theory which is applicable in all the situations. The applicability of the theories also varies according to the situation. One theory may be relevant in one situation whereas another may be better in another situation. The important advertising theories relevant for developing the conceptual framework are reviewed here:

#### *The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)*

Model that considers the role of involvement in determining which aspect of the ad has the biggest effect on consumer preference for the brand is the *elaboration likelihood model* or ELM. According to the ELM, developed by psychologists Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, a basic dimension of information processing and attitude change is the depth or amount of information processing. At one extreme, the consumer can consciously and diligently consider the information provided in the ad in forming attitudes towards the advertised brand. ie, the consumer is highly involved in processing the advertisement. This type of persuasion process is termed the *central route* to attitude change.

In contrast to such central processing, there also exists *peripheral route* to attitude change. In the peripheral route, attitudes are formed and changed without active thinking about the brand's attributes and its pros and cons. Rather the persuasive impact occurs by using cognitive "shortcuts" and accept the conclusion that the brand is superior because of endorser credibility, the context or music etc.

The ELM elaboration continuum contains different degrees of effortful processing concerning motivation and ability. On the high end of the spectrum are high elaboration and the central route, and on the other are low elaboration and the peripheral route. (Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann, 1983; Petty and Cacioppo, 1984). In the consumer decision making process, consumers spend a lot of time, effort and energy for more expensive and personal products which are called 'high involvement products' (e.g. computers, automobiles and medical care); they spend less time, effort, and energy for inexpensive and less exciting products which are called 'low

involvement products' (e.g. soft drinks, cereals, and washing powders) (Wells, Burnett, & Moriarty, 1995). According to the above argument medical care is a high involvement situation and consumer products decision making is a low involvement situation. Then naturally the consumer healthcare products which come in between these two groups will fall in the middle of the ELM elaboration continuum. So it is assumed that both the routes- central and peripheral are involved in the processing. The main feature of product involvement is the personal relevance of the product to the need and values of the consumers. If consumers perceive that the product is relevant, their involvement is higher (Zaichkowsky, 1985).

According to Petty and Cacioppo's ELM Model the viewer of an ad gives importance to corporate credibility and message content when they pass through the central route to persuasion (high involvement attitude). They give value to endorser credibility when they engage in peripheral route to persuasion (low involvement attitude). Experts say that it is not necessary that the customer should engage in any one of the processing routes at a time. He/she can engage in both central and peripheral processing simultaneously.

However, "central" and "peripheral" are not really two choices but the end points of a continuum. A listener can think more thoughts (and be closer to the "central" end of the continuum) or fewer thoughts (and be closer to the "peripheral" end). It isn't an either/or choice, as the metaphor two "routes" suggests. In fact, even peripheral processing requires some thoughts. (William L. Benoit, EEC).

#### *The Cognitive Response model*

In Cognitive response Model what appeared to be really important in determining attitudes was the nature of the thoughts that went through the consumer's head as the ad was shown, as the consumer evaluated the incoming information in the context of past knowledge and attitudes. These thoughts that the consumer has when viewing an ad are called cognitive responses. A *counter argument (CA)* occurs when the audience member argues against the message argument presented by the ad. A *support argument (SA)* is a cognitive response that affirms the argument made by an ad. The impact on attitude of cognitive responses will depend on the nature of the cognitive responses evoked by the ad. The basic predictive model is that the number of SAs will be positively associated with changes in beliefs, attitudes, and behavioural intentions and that the number of CAs will be negatively correlated.

Here the assumption is that careful efforts to increase the credibility perceptions of the ad will surely increase the number of SAs and reduce the number of CAs which ultimately results in changes in the attitudes and behavioural intentions.

#### *The Information Integration Theory*

Norman Anderson's Information Integration theory explores how attitudes are formed and changed through the integration (mixing, combining) of new information with

existing cognitions or thoughts. Information integration theory considers the ideas in a persuasive message to be pieces of information, and each relevant piece of information has two qualities: value and weight. The value of a bit of information is its evaluation (favorable or unfavorable) and the weight is the information's perceived importance.

This, Information Integration Theory states that when we obtain new information (often from persuasive messages), those new pieces of information will affect our attitudes. They won't replace our existing attitudes: However, when we learn new positive information, negative attitudes tend to become less negative and attitudes that are positive are likely to become somewhat more positive.

Credibility in communication is positive in nature. So any positive information in advertisement, if credible, makes the attitude more positive.

#### *Congruity Theory*

Congruity Theory is one of the Consistency Theories of attitude change. It was developed by Charles Osgood and Percy Tannenbaum to improve on the first consistency theory, Fritz Heider's Balance Theory.

All consistency theories are about the relationship of the thoughts or ideas (cognitions) in a person's mind. The basic idea is that people prefer harmony or consistency in their thoughts. Further more, consistency theories hold that when we have inconsistent thoughts, this inconsistency (also called imbalance or incongruity) motivates us to change our persuasive messages, in general, try to persuade us to change our minds or our attitudes (at times they also may try to strengthen or reinforce our existing attitudes).

One nice feature of Osgood and Tannenbaum's(1955) Congruity theory is that it is explicitly oriented to communication and persuasion. Osgood and Tannenbaum(1955) quantified two of the three relationships in Heider's Theory: the degree of liking of the audience for the source and the audience's attitude towards the concept. The main point here is that congruity theory helps to predict the amount and direction of attitude change based on the audience's attitude towards the Source and the audience's attitude towards the concept. The assumption is that when a message in an ad disagrees with us, there is discrepancy or an inconsistency, between the message's position and our attitudes. But if we find something that we like in the message such as credible source, testimonials etc., that can be translated into pressure or motivation to change our attitude, to bring it in line with the message.

#### *Cognitive Dissonance Theory*

The theory replaces previous conditioning or reinforcement theories by viewing individuals as more purposeful decision makers; they strive for balance in their beliefs. If presented with decisions or information that creates dissonance, they use dissonance-reduction strategies to regain

equilibrium, especially if the dissonance affects their self-esteem. The theory suggests that 1) dissonance is psychologically uncomfortable enough to motivate people to achieve consonance, and 2) in a state of dissonance, people will avoid information and situations that might increase the dissonance.

For example, when the consumer seek a reassuring ad of the purchased brand, the new ads of the brand with more claims of credibility can help him to reduce the dissonance and loyalty can be improved.

### ADVERTISING COMMUNICATION MODELS

#### *The Starch Model of Advertising Communication*

Daniel Starch, in the early part of this century, put forward the idea that in order to be effective, an advertisement must be *seen, read, believed, remembered and acted upon*. In other words people must climb the ladder step by step and the objective of advertising is to encourage them to do so. It should sound credible in terms of promise of satisfaction of a need or desire. In other words, effective advertising is persuasive (Jethwaney and Jain, 2006).

#### *AIDA Model of Advertising Communication*

The first model, devised by Strong, is known as **AIDA** model, the term being derived from the first letter of the four words in the process represented - Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. Strong postulated that before becoming a user of the product the recipient of a message moves from an *Awareness* of the product to an *Interest* in it. From this he develops a *Desire* for the product and this then results in *Action* in which he goes and purchases the product. This model, developed in 1920s in U.S.A.

#### *Hierarchy of Effects Model of Advertising Communication*

The third model, conceived by Robert Lavidge and Gary Steiner is the Hierarchy of Effects Model that recognises two additional steps before the recipient becomes a purchaser and gives importance to cognitive stages. (Rajeev Bhatra et.al, 2008). The individual is seen to move from an *Awareness* of the product's existence to a *Knowledge* of the product's attributes. From there, he progresses to a *Liking* for the product, which results in a *Preference* for that product above the others available. Then he gets a *Conviction* as to the value of that product to him, which leads to the eventual stage of *Purchasing* the product.

*The New Adopter Hierarchy Model* conceived by rural sociologists, postulated five stages: *awareness, interest, evaluation, trial* and *adoption* (Rajeev Bhatra et.al, 2008).

#### *Innovation-Adoption Model of Advertising Communication*

Diffusion of an innovation occurs through a five-step process. Rogers categorizes the five stages (steps) as: *awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption*. In fact, this model builds in the experience of usage and gives importance to word-of-mouth communication. In later editions

of the Diffusion of Innovations Rogers changes the terminology of the five stages to: *knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation*. However the descriptions of the categories have remained similar throughout the editions.

#### *The DAGMAR Approach*

In 1961, Russel H. Colley introduced the *DAGMAR approach* to advertisement planning and included a precise method for selecting and quantifying goals and for using those goals to measure performance. An advertising goal is a specific communication task, to be accomplished among a defined audience, in a given period of time.

In the *DAGMAR approach*, the *communication task* is based on a specific model of communication process. The model suggests that there is a series of mental steps through which a brand or objects must climb to gain acceptance. These steps are Unawareness, Awareness, Comprehension and Image, Attitude, Action (Rajeev Bhatra et.al, 2008).

The second important concept of the DAGMAR approach is that the advertising goal be specific. It should be a written measurable task involving a starting point, a defined audience, and a fixed time period. The concept, theory and models of Communication clearly indicate that the task of advertising should be to achieve a Communication Objective or goal. The advocates of DAGMAR approach suggest that the task of advertising is best stated in terms of Communication-Effects.

#### CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR THEORIES

Jethwaney and Jain mentions two models of consumer behavior (4.3.1 and 4.3.2) in their book *Advertising Management*.

*Basic Model for Understanding Human Behavior:* According to this model, antecedents are the inputs or stimuli that trigger action, and behaviour is the output or result. The individual's mental process stands between inputs and outputs that are always inconspicuous. These are described as located within the impenetrable black box. An exploration of what transpired within the black box as a result of the input can only be an inference made by an analyst. There are a number of variables that intervened between the stimulus and the response. As these variables cannot be observed directly, their meanings are provided by explicit definitions and by their functional relations within the context of general theories of behavior (Brown, 1961).

*The Nicosia Model :* Francisco Nicosia(1966) published a comprehensive model called The Nicosia Model which used the technique of a flow chart to designate elements and relationships. It is assumed that *field one* includes the output of an advertising message from a business firm. As the message (*sub-field one*) reaches the consumer, it serves as an input into *sub-field two*, referred to as the consumer's pace, which is composed of her/his psychological attributes. As this message is received and acted upon, the output expectedly is

the formation of an attitude towards the product, which then serves as the input for field two. Field two represents a search and an evaluation of the advertised product and competitive alternatives. The output may or may not be a motivation to buy the advertised brand. If the motivation emerges, it serves as the input for field three, the transformation of motivation into purchasing action. Finally, field four is the storage memory or use of the purchased item, and the output is feedback of sales results to the business firm and retention of the consequences of the purchase in the buyer's memory.

Paul (2002) in his study says that Lucas & Brit (1950) deals with four theories of Consumer Behaviour in connection with Advertising. They are discussed in 4.3.3, 4.3.4 and 4.3.5.

*Anatomy of Purchase Decision. :* When making even the simplest purchase, a consumer goes through this complicated mental process. Anatomy of Purchase Decision model shows how external stimuli such as the company's marketing efforts and various noncommercial sources of information (Family, Friend, Teachers etc.) join to activate the decision making process. At the same time, this process is also filtered by many personal influences on Consumer Behaviour such as Motivation, Personality, learned Attitudes and Perception. At anytime the decision process may be terminated if the consumer loses interest or, after evaluating the product, decides not to buy. Therefore, in order to fully understand the complexity of the consumers' buying decision, one has to be aware of variety of these personal influences and environmental influences on Consumer Behaviour.

*Cognitive-Response Theory of Learning:* This model views the learning as mental process of memory, thinking, and the rational application of knowledge to practical problem solving.

*Stimulus-Response Theory of Learning:* This theory treats learning as a trial and error process. Some cue or stimulus triggers the consumer's need or want, which in turn, creates the drive to respond. If the response reduces the drive, then satisfaction occurs, and the response is rewarded or reinforced. This produces repeat behaviour next time when drive is aroused and learning will have taken place. An ad is a stimulus, or cue, and a purchase is a positive response. If the product gives the consumer satisfaction, then there is reinforcement. Additional reinforcement may be given through superior product performance, good service or credible reminder advertising. Through repetition of the cues (ads), the learning process, including memory, may be reinforced and repeat behaviour encouraged.

#### THEORIES OF CREDIBILITY

##### *Source Credibility Theory*

The Source Credibility theory states that people are more likely to be persuaded when the source presents itself as credible. The theory is broken into three models for the apt application of the theory. Those models are: the factor model, the functional model, and the constructivist model. Hovland,

Janis, and Kelley are the people who proposed the theory in 1953. The factor model (a covering laws approach) helps to determine to what extent the receiver judges the source as credible. The functional model (a covering laws approach) views credibility as the degree to which a source satisfies a receiver's individual needs. The constructivist model (a human action approach) analyzes what the receiver does with the source's proposal (Spring 2001 Theory work book).

#### THEORIES OF HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATION

*Activation Theory of Information Exposure* The Activation Theory of Information Exposure states that an individual will seek to satisfy their need for stimulation and information when attending to a message, before they seek to fulfill their need for information alone. The theory was proposed by Lewis Donohew, Phillip Palmgreen, & J. Duncan in 1980. Activation Theory of Information Exposure explains how individuals seek messages that fulfill their cognitive need for information as well as their need to be entertained. An individual may choose to attend to message that are both stimulating and informative rather than those that are just informative (Spring 2001 Theory work book).

*Health Belief Model* "The Health Belief Model is a value expectancy theory, which states that an individual's behavior can be predicted based upon certain issues that an individual may consider (i.e. perceived susceptibility, perceived severity) when making a decision about a particular behavior concerning their health" (Glanz, Lewis, & Rimer, 1990). Hochbaum proposed the theory in 1958. The model suggests that the likelihood that an individual will take action concerning a health condition is determined by the person's desire to take action and by the perceived benefits of the action weighed against the perceived costs of barriers (Spring 2001 Theory work book).

#### CREDIBILITY AND CONSUMER HEALTHCARE PRODUCT SEGMENT

Global economic and demographic changes are creating a new market for consumer-focused products with significant health benefits. This new segment is called "consumer healthcare products" segment and is emerging midway between mass retail-based consumer goods and pharmacy-based pharmaceuticals. The big players of both these industries are competing each other to exploit the opportunities in the new potential market segment. Big changes are expected in consumer markets. Most of the personal-care, food and Ayurvedic firms are emphasizing that their products have proven health benefits and have scientific basis. A number of health foods and nutritional supplements for children and adults are flooding in to the market. Medicated tooth pastes, soaps, health drinks, Ayurveda healthcare products etc., are trying to prove their credibility through mass advertising.

Though longevity, reduced risk of death from infectious diseases etc., are the benefits caused by the increased wealth

and improved lifestyles, richer diet, fast food, and less exercise lead people to obesity. When people live longer, there is a risk of suffering from chronic diseases such as osteoporosis, diabetes, cancer, vascularitis and dementia. The rate at which people are suffering from chronic diseases is rising at an alarming pace. The health risk factors due to obesity, smoking, longevity and alcohol consumption are expected to accelerate in the coming years. As populations with risk factors grow (again, by 2020 it's likely to be about 60 percent of the population of a country like the United Kingdom and about 40 percent of India), healthcare products will move to the heart of the mass market (Hembert et. al, 2011).

As the healthcare environment is highly sensitive, litigious and unique, companies who operate here have to substantiate their health claims. The U.K.'s Advertising Standards Authority, for example, has banned some Actimel TV spots, calling them misleading. Danone settled a U.S. lawsuit about similar claims for \$35 million, and the European Food Safety Authority forced Danone to withdraw all health claims about Actimel (Hembert et. al, 2011). FTC charged Nestle (Carnation Coffee-Mate Liquid) and Kraft company (Kraft Singles Cheese) for the false representation of facts and exaggerated health claims (Rajeev Batra et al., 2008). Similarly in late 1990s P&G complained against HLL to the MRTPC against the advertisement of HLL's 'Ceramides Sunsilk' brand for exaggerated and misleading advertisement communication (Jethwaney and Jain, 2006). Governments and consumers, both increasingly seek evidence and proof for the health claims. Government restrictions and responses may vary based on each country's legal structure and political stand. Even in developing countries, where governments are often less vocal, consumers seek reassurance through brand credibility and through recommendations of doctors, pharmacists and experts.

The major challenge is the development and implementation of a right marketing mix – product development, packaging, pricing, promotion, and distribution. To excel in all these areas the firms have to conduct scientific research and formulate effective strategies to operate. They should convince the consumers and regulators about the health claims and produce the evidence to prove credibility. If consumers and regulators do not believe them nothing else matters.

#### *Importance and Foundations of Credibility*

Over the last five years there has been a sharp increase in brands claiming health benefits. A presentation of clinical data and scientific messages exists, it can be difficult for consumers to decide what is real and what is 'marketing speak' making credibility an elusive goal (Hunt 2010). Communicating credibility through advertising can simultaneously foster trust in the provider and loyalty from the consumer. A careful consideration and presentation of facts that enhance credibility of a brand is needed. Skillful

presentation and communication of capabilities such as corporate image, scientific data, credible endorsers etc., through advertisement will help the companies to survive in the highly aggressive healthcare market. There are a number of key considerations for advertising agencies and corporate:

- Collect data about health related issues and consumer behavior through well organized studies
- Plan suitable advertising strategies
- Careful selection of endorsers
- Translation of data/claims into understandable statements
- Very keen and careful monitoring of the market.

Companies who recognize and act upon these factors will be best placed to add credibility for their ads and brands. The markets in which we operate demand their health information sources be credible. Building credibility in healthcare communication is crucial for the future success of the consumer health businesses (to drive sales) especially as the number of companies involved in this sector increases and interest in health continues to grow.

*Communication Effect, Consumer Purchase Behaviour and Ad Skepticism in Consumer Health Care Market*

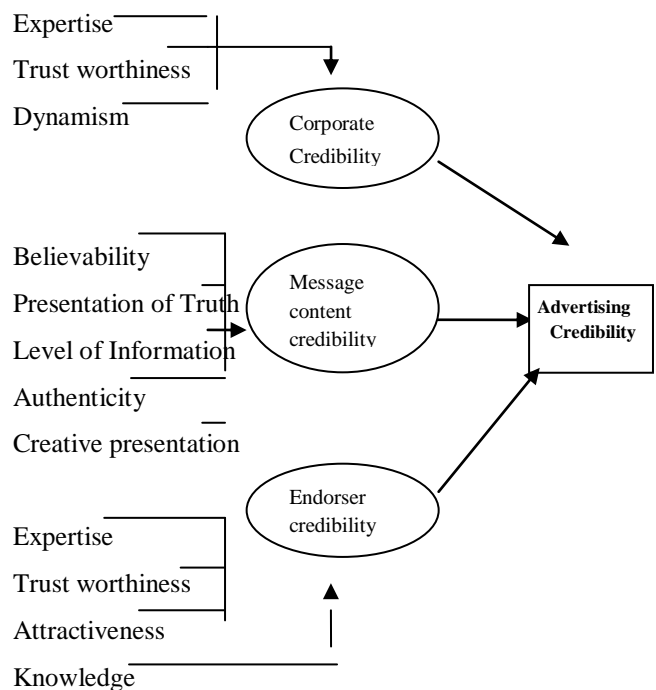
The consumer decision making process for purchasing Consumer healthcare products is more complex than that of FMCG products since health is a very sensitive issue. People are more concerned about health and fitness nowadays. Consumer's attitudes towards healthcare products are mainly influenced by media and TV commercials. Consumer Skepticism, pre-purchase information search and evaluation etc., are more in the case of consumer healthcare products. Misleading advertisements and exaggerated health claims increases Ad Skepticism and reduces consumer confidence in ads as well as in brands. Credible information and authentic source increases the Communication Effect of healthcare advertising. Another important attribute of any product-market is Consumer Purchase Behavior. This is important as it is a strong determinant of product usage, satisfaction, word-of-mouth and repeat purchase behavior. This becomes an even more important issue in the health care industry now. So the effectiveness of the healthcare advertising communication can be studied by measuring the levels of Advertising Communication effect, Ad skepticism and Consumer Purchase Behaviour.

Health enjoys about 9.4% share of the wallet of Indian consumer and is on the rise for the last three years. This spent includes health supplements, health drinks, doctors and consultant fees, medicines, medical insurance, regular check-ups etc. About 91% of this was out-of pocket expense and only 9% came from employers and insurance (Mittal 2010). Today's consumers are more educated on healthcare options and they demand improved quality, safety, and clarity of information. Hence the Consumer healthcare companies must

truly understand the needs and emotional motivations of their target market.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As per Fig.1, the Credibility in Advertising is determined mainly by three factors: Corporate Credibility, Message Content Credibility and Endorser Credibility. Corporate Credibility includes three sub concepts viz, Expertise, Trustworthiness and Dynamism. Endorser Credibility includes expertise, Trustworthiness, attractiveness and relevant knowledge. Believability, Presentation of truth, Level of information, Authenticity and Creative presentation are the factors that determine Ad Message Content Credibility.



Determinants of Credibility

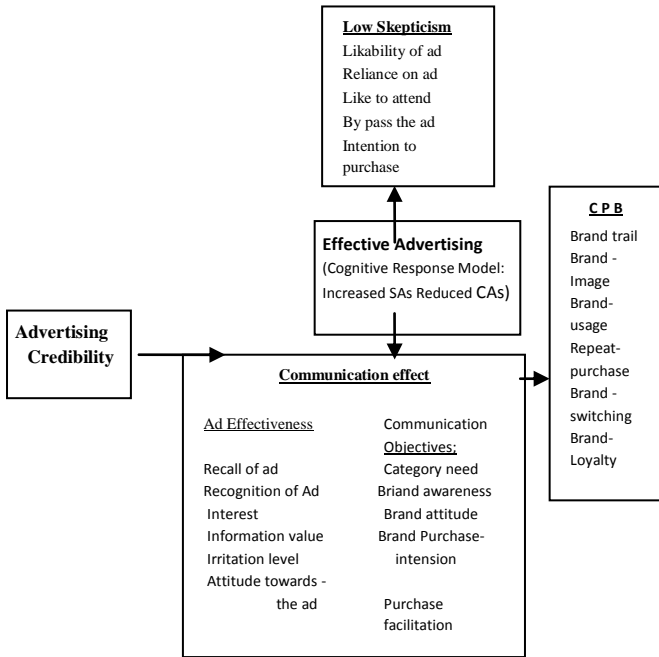
Fig. 1

As shown in Fig. 2 the degree or level of Advertising credibility is definitely related to the Advertising Effectiveness. Advertising Effectiveness models that describe the process of communication indicate that the task of advertising should be to achieve a Communication Objective in terms of Communication Effects (Paul 2002). Different types and steps in Communication Effect are Category Need, Brand Awareness, Brand Attitude, Brand Purchase Intention and Purchase Facilitation (Murthy and Bhojanna 2007). Communication Effect is a measure of ad effectiveness also. The measures are Recall of the ad, Recognition of ad, Interest, Information value, Irritation level and Attitude towards the ad.

It is clear from the theories of advertising that consumer response is a process that starts from Learning to Attitude



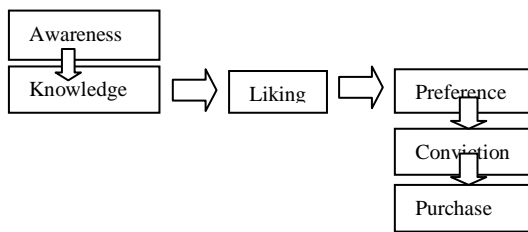
Change and then to Behavioural Change. Therefore, the credibility element in Advertising is related to the subsequent Consumer Purchase Behaviour also. Different purchase related behaviours are Brand Trial, Brand Usage and Repeat Purchasing or Brand Switching. The overall effect of purchase related behaviour is Brand Loyalty.



Relationship of Ad Credibility with CE, CPB and Ad Skepticism

Fig. 2

As per Hierarchy of Effects model of communication different steps towards Purchase - Awareness, Knowledge, Liking, Preference, Conviction and Purchase-are the processes which start in the Learning stage; then passes through Attitude Change stage and finally end in Behaviour Change stage (Fig. 3).



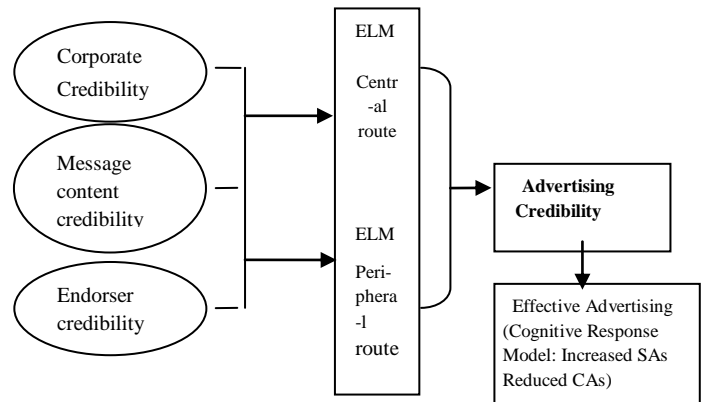
Hierarchy of Effects Model

Fig. 3

According to Petty and Cacioppo's ELM Model the viewer of an ad gives importance to corporate credibility and message content when they pass through the central route to persuasion (high involvement attitude). They give value to endorser credibility when they engage in peripheral route to persuasion (low involvement attitude). Experts say that it is

not necessary that the customer should engage in any one of the processing routes at a time. He/she can engage in both central and peripheral processing simultaneously. As discussed in the ELM model in the beginning the consumer healthcare products fall in the middle of the ELM elaboration continuum and it is assumed that both the routes- central and peripheral are involved in the processing.

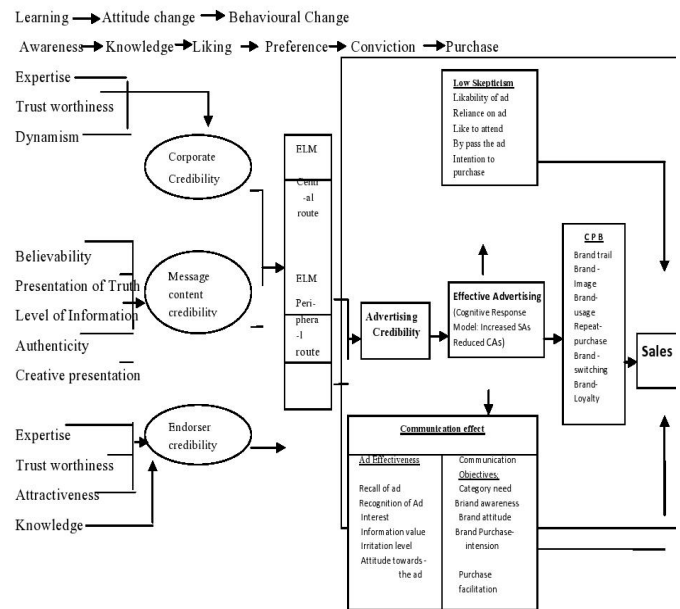
According to the Cognitive response Model, the thoughts that the consumer has when viewing an ad are called cognitive responses. A counter argument (CA) occurs when the audience member argues against the message argument presented by the ad. A support argument (SA) is a cognitive response that affirms the argument made by an ad. The viewer's attitude is influenced by the nature of cognitive responses evoked by the ad. The basic predictive model is that the number of SAs will be positively associated with changes in beliefs, attitudes, and behavioural intentions and that the number of CAs will be negatively correlated. Here it is assumed that Credibility increases the number of SAs and reduces the number of CAs. This increases the Effectiveness of advertising. Fig. 4 shows how the ELM Model and Cognitive Response Model justifies the relationship between the variables.



Application of ELM and CR Model

Fig. 4

An integrated model of all the relationships mentioned above is shown below as Fig. 5.



INTEGRATED MODEL OF CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

Fig. 5

## CONCLUSION

Though many studies support the role of credible communication in influencing consumer behavior, some studies disagree with it. There are differences in consumer behavior dimensions and specifications in different parts of the world. Many factors such as culture, economic conditions, living standards, education level, social factors etc., influence the marketing and consumer behavior aspects of different countries. The study focuses on an analysis of credibility and related factors in the Indian context. A credible communication through mass media is essential for building consumer trust and loyalty in the highly sensitive, competitive consumer healthcare market segment.

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