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## A FAILED ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN: WHAT WENT WRONG? A CASE STUDY IN A FASHION RETAIL COMPANY

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### ABSTRACT

#### Keywords:

Advertisement Effectiveness, Questionnaire, Advertising Campaigns, Fashion Retailers, Market Response Theory

**JEL Codes:** M3, M31, M37

*This study focused on a top-tier retail fashion company which markets some of the leading brands in the ready-to-wear apparel and cosmetics industry in Turkey. Although the company had employed expensive advertising campaigns using international and local celebrities, their advertising campaign did not yield the expected consumer behavior.*

*We worked with the company in identifying factors in their advertisements that their customers prefer by building a questionnaire specifically designed for this company and by examining the results of 300 respondents' customer profiles and preferences to make recommendations for building future campaigns. Analyses revealed issues with the company's choice of music, memorability of messages, and the selection of clothing combinations, especially for women respondents.*

## BAŞARISIZ BİR REKLAM KAMPANYASI: YANLIŞ GİDEN NEDİR? MODA PERAKENDE ŞİRKETİNDE BİR VAKA ÇALIŞMASI

### ÖZ

#### Anahtar Kelimeler:

Reklam Etkinliği, Anket, Reklam Kampanyaları, Moda Perakendecileri, Pazar Tepkisi Teorisi

#### JEL Kodları:

M3, M31, M37

*Bu çalışma, hazır giyim ve kozmetik sektöründe Türkiye'nin önde gelen markalarından bazılarını pazarlayan üst düzey bir perakende moda şirketine odaklanmıştır. Şirket, uluslararası ve yerel ünlüleri kullanarak pahalı reklam kampanyaları yapmış olsa da, reklam kampanyaları beklenen tüketici davranışını sağlamamıştı.*

*Şirketle, müşterileri için özel olarak tasarlanmış bir anket oluşturularak ve 300 katılımcının müşteri profillerinin sonuçlarını ve gelecekteki kampanyalar oluşturmak için önerilerde bulunma tercihlerini inceleyerek, reklamlarında müşterilerinin tercih ettiği faktörleri belirleme konusunda çalıştık. Analizler, şirketin müzik seçimi, mesajların hatırlanabilirliği ve özellikle kadın katılımcılar için giyim kombinasyonlarının seçimi ile ilgili sorunları ortaya çıkardı.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Although the main purpose of advertising is to increase sales revenue and keep brand prestige at all times, messages and delivery in advertising must keep up with the expectations of consumers (Rossiter and Percy, 2013). Advertising has to be creative in order for people to pay attention to it. That includes messages, videos and other means of advertising messages that will put the advertisement above others (Samuelsen and Olsen, 2010). TV advertisements have maintained their popularity because TV advertising is able to create advertising campaigns to a particular target market. Although TV advertising may deliver the message to a target group, the company still needs to evaluate the effectiveness of their advertisement campaigns.

Our goal in this study was to investigate why an expensive advertising campaign over two years had not yielded the expected sales for a major fashion retail company. Any evaluation of effectiveness of a campaign would be incomplete without taking into account customer preferences for advertising. The actual impact of a company's specific commercials can best be understood in the context of their customers' preferences and expectations from commercials in general. We, therefore, constructed our survey guided by advertising theory and findings with a dual-pronged approach using items targeting commercials in general as well as items specifically targeting the company's commercials.

An effective way to attract attention in commercials has been employing celebrities, especially when marketing luxury products like those identified by Pileliene and Grigaliunaite (2017) with advertisements using a female celebrity spokesperson. In general, using celebrities is good practice in increasing advertising effectiveness (Erdogan, 1990), and the credibility of the spokesperson increases in proportion to congruence between the product and the endorser (Kamins and Gupta, 1994).

Ultimately, companies are interested in the outcome of consumer behavior. Celebrities in advertisement may attract attention (Belch and Belch, 2013), but consumers may end up remembering the celebrity and not the product. Typical consumers may identify with an ordinary spokesperson more similar to themselves and may be more likely to engage in purchasing behavior (Fleck et al., 2014). Furthermore, not all products are appropriate for celebrity endorsement (Kamins, 1989). For example, customers prefer expert endorsements to celebrity endorsements for high technology products (Biswas et al., 2006). In their detailed review of celebrity endorsements, Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) identify areas where there are

mixed results. In some cases, influential people rather than traditional celebrities may be better fits (Schouten et al., 2019).

In addition to employing celebrity spokespeople, 94% of advertisements use background music (Allan, 2008) with the intention of making the ads more memorable. However, the results from studies of the effect of music on memory are mixed, with some researchers (e.g., Allan, 2016; Hecker, 1986; Hoyer, Srivastava, and Jacoby, 1984) finding that music is a help while others (e.g., Fraser and Bradford, 2013) questioning the use of background music or advocating the selective use of silence (Olsen, 1995).

In the case of this Turkish fashion retail company, even though they had run an expensive campaign with high profile celebrities with background music, they had not investigated the preferences of their customers prior to designing their advertisements. It is possible that the company failed to deliver the kind of advertisements their target customers prefer. Advertisements that do not meet consumer expectations adequately cause consumers to turn to competitors. Inadequate advertising on television, the street and the internet affects sales and reduces profitability. For this reason, companies are doing various studies to find the most effective advertisement for consumers. Articles about effectiveness of advertisements in the literature are varied and complex because of the variety of customer characteristics and preferences. Most theories about advertisement effectiveness are prepared by surveying the customers and interpreting results with the goal of making the advertisements fit customer needs and expectations (Bogart, 1986).

Within the framework of market response theory, the present study focused on identifying the characteristics of advertisements that customers prefer by examining the statistical results of a questionnaire designed for this purpose.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ADVERTISING**

Advertising as a marketing tool is based on various theories and models. Most theories of advertising have focused on the connection between persuasion and attitude to identify consumers' responses to advertising campaigns (Bogdan, 2014). The assessment of advertising effectiveness began with the pioneering advertising AIDA model (attention, interest, desire and action), developed by E. St. Elmo Lewis in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Market response theory, cognitive response theory, and affective response theory in more recent years have emphasized the importance of advertising on consumer behavior (Vakratsas & Amble, 1999; Kotler et al., 2000). After a review of more than 250 journal

articles on the impact of advertising on the consumer, Vakratsas and Amble (1999) proposed a framework of how advertising works. They proposed that advertising should be evaluated within a system that takes into account the three dimensions of consumer affect, cognition, and experience in the context of advertising's goal, product category, competition and target market among others. Their framework stipulates four key conclusions: (1) advertising input refers to message content, media scheduling, and repetition; (2) key filters are motivation and ability or involvement; (3) consumer's cognition, affect and experience are key factors; and (4) consumer behavior refers to consumer choice, consumption, loyalty, habit, and other similar behaviors (Vakratsas & Amble, 1999).

## **2.1. Problem Definition**

All theories about advertisement effectiveness are prepared by surveying the customers and interpreting the results with the goal of making the advertisements fit customer needs and expectations (Bogart, 1986). Designing a questionnaire to uncover client preferences for advertising was our first step to help the company build a successful advertising campaign. This study investigated aspects of advertising elements that would attract customers positively in any advertisement as well as evaluating these elements in the advertising campaign of this company.

While advertisements' effectiveness generally could be observed after some exposures to such media as the internet, radio, television, direct mail or outdoor billboards over time, some ads can have a sudden impact (Kumar, 2018). In the case of this Turkish retail company, the advertising campaign over two years did not yield the expected sales. Advertising success refers to leading the company to achieve what is intended (Bogart, 1986), and in this case the company considered the campaign not effective. The purpose of the present study was to identify the aspects of advertisements that their customers prefer in general and in relation to the company's advertisements in order to make recommendations.

### **2.1.1. Research Questions**

**Q1.** What do customers think or feel about advertisements in general in terms of their influence, message, music, spokespeople, clothing combinations, memorability, convincingness?

**Q2.** What do customers think about **this** company's specific advertisements in terms of their influence, message, music, spokespeople, clothing combinations, memorability, convincingness?

### **3. METHOD**

Three hundred customers exiting the company stores, 117 men and 183 women, responded to our survey. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 25 (78%), and from Istanbul (86%). All 300 respondents had viewed at least one of the company's two commercials and responded to all items on the survey.

#### **3.1. Procedure**

Three trained undergraduate student researchers at an urban university in Istanbul approached customers at the exit of two of the largest stores and asked them if they would be willing to participate in a survey evaluating the company's TV commercials. They handed out the survey to volunteers, moving from one volunteer to another in succession, and waited while multiple customers filled out the survey. They thanked every participant who handed back the questionnaire. Data collection lasted for 3 weeks.

##### **3.1.1. Building the Customer Survey**

In keeping with the main goal of understanding the customers' point of view and expectations as suggested by Bradburn, Sudman, and Wansink (2004), we viewed and analyzed the company's latest two advertisements to include relevant detail in constructing the questionnaire. To achieve content validity, we included items suggested by previous research and appropriate for their commercials, targeting influence, use of spokespeople, choice of words, combination of clothes, music selection, catchiness, and convincingness. The use of a theoretical framework to guide item development and scoring supports the analytic generalizations grounding these interpretations and conclusions (Yin, 2018). This theoretical grounding of these items supports their use for this particular case study of a company. Our methodology could be replicated with other companies so that generalizability studies and studies yielding additional validity evidence can be undertaken in the future (cf. Salkind, N. J., 2010).

The items fall into two categories assessing customer preferences and attitudes about (1) advertisements in general, and (2) the retail company's specific advertisements. A third of the 24 items are negatively worded.

The first part of the questionnaire collected demographic information about gender, age group (0-17, 18-25, 26+), education level (elementary or middle school, high school degree, Bachelor's degree, graduate degree), income (0-349, 350-699, 700-999, 1000+ per

month), city of residence, and most importantly whether or not they watched the company's two commercials. (Table 1).

#### 4. RESULTS

Table 1 summarizes the demographic information. Most of the respondents were female (61%), aged between 18-25 (78%), from Istanbul (86%), with university degrees (81%), with income levels under \$1606 per month (56%).

**Table 1.** Demographic Profile of Respondents

		Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>	Male (1)	117	39.00
	Female (2)	183	61.00
	<b>Total</b>	300	
<b>Age</b>	0-17 Years (1)	7	2.33
	18-25 Years (2)	234	78.00
	26+ Years (3)	59	19.67
	<b>Total</b>	300	
<b>City</b>	Istanbul (1)	259	86.33
	Ankara (2)	13	4.33
	Izmir (3)	1	0.33
	Other (4)	27	9.00
	<b>Total</b>	300	
<b>Education</b>	Elementary or Middle (1)	7	2.33
	High School Degree (2)	26	8.67
	Bachelor's Degree (3)	244	81.33
	Graduate Degree (4)	23	7.67
	<b>Total</b>	300	
<b>Income</b>	0-1605 (1)	167	55.67
	1606-3499 (2)	63	21.00
	3500-5999 (3)	42	14.00
	6000+ (4)	28	9.33
	<b>Total</b>	300	
<b>Commercial 1</b>	Yes (1)	180	60.00
	No (0)	120	40.00
	<b>Total</b>	300	
<b>Commercial 2</b>	Yes (1)	218	72.67
	No (0)	82	27.33
	<b>Total</b>	300	

#### **4.1. Survey Item Characteristics**

**Reliability.** In order to be sure that the statements in our questionnaire elicited the same kind of information every time they are asked (Creswell, 2002), we checked for internal consistency. Cronbach's Alpha value was a respectable  $r = .831$ .

Table 2 below summarizes item statistics on the survey,

**Table 2.** Means, Standard Deviations and Coefficients of Variation for Items

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	CV (Coefficient of Variation)
1. Advertisements influence me during shopping.	2.89	1.231	300	0.4656
2. I think that a company's advertisement strategy directly affects sales.	3.45	1.215	300	0.3659
3. It's really important to me that an advertisement has catchiness.	3.27	1.443	300	0.5107
4. If a retail fashion company's advertisement attracts me I usually shop there.	2.42	1.119	300	0.4406
5. If I like an advertisement, I would make people around me watch it and I would recommend watching it.	2.70	1.351	300	0.5538
6. The words used in an advertisement are important to me.	3.03	1.475	300	0.5703
7. I pay attention to the combinations of clothes that are shown in advertisements and I try to apply the same combinations in the store.	3.00	1.507	300	0.5971
8. The music accompanying the advertisement makes me focus on it more.	3.52	1.301	300	0.3829
9. As a customer I appreciate this retail fashion company's approach to advertising	2.99	1.081	300	0.3319
10. When I see this retail fashion company's advertisements on television, billboards or brochures, my desire to shop there increases.	2.41	1.195	300	0.4632
11. I think that the better advertisements this retail fashion company makes the more sales they would make.	3.14	1.212	300	0.3853
12. This retail fashion company's advertisements are usually catchy.	2.68	1.238	300	0.4767
13. I find this retail fashion company's advertisements convincing.	2.63	1.167	300	0.4274
14. I think this retail fashion company's advertisements make a difference.	2.58	1.175	300	0.4542
15. I think this retail fashion company's advertisements are clear.	3.26	1.160	300	0.3405
16. I think this retail fashion company's choices of music for their advertisements are successful.	3.01	1.157	300	0.3601
17. I don't remember the retail fashion company's advertisements most of the time. I don't find them catchy.	2.76	1.306	300	0.4765
18. There was no case when I shopped from this retail fashion company after being influenced by its advertisements.	2.71	1.448	300	0.4965
19. I think that this retail fashion company's advertisements are not influential because of the characters.	3.11	1.385	300	0.4587
20. I think that this retail fashion company's advertisements are not influential because of the combinations of clothes.	2.89	1.284	300	0.4358
21. I think that this retail fashion company's advertisements are not influential because they don't use interesting stories or impressive ambiance.	2.88	1.315	300	0.4534
22. The music in this company's commercials is not effective in making me focus.	3.01	1.339	300	0.4288
23. I don't find the retail fashion company's advertisements convincing.	3.01	1.320	300	0.4324
24. I would expect the combinations of clothes to be better put together for this retail fashion company's advertisements.	2.85	1.296	300	0.4548

**Coefficient of Variation.** As seen in Table 2 we calculated Coefficient of Variation for each item to see how variant the data set was without considering the effect of the measurement unit (Creswell, 2002). Smaller coefficient variation means the data set is more precise (Abdi, 2010). Coefficients of variation fall between .3319 and .5971. This result can be interpreted as items having commonly low variance related to their mean.

The item with the lowest coefficient of variation is Item 9 with .3319, meaning that the data is less spread out and respondents agree more on this question. Customers tend to appreciate the retail fashion company's advertisement approach. The question with the highest coefficient of variation is Question 7 with .5971 indicating that the data are more spread out and respondents do not agree on this question as much as they agree on other questions. However, the dispersion of answers can still be trusted as .5971 is still a lower value than one.

**Inter-Item Correlation Matrix.** The inter-item correlation matrix can be seen in Table 3. For example, item 1 is related to items 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11 positively with  $r > .3$ . Customers who thought that advertisements influence customers during shopping also tended to think that a company's advertisement strategy affects sales, and that catchiness, words used, combination of clothes, music, and quality of commercials are also important. The items in the table with a correlation greater than .3 are highlighted.

**Table 3. Inter-Item Correlations**

Questions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
1	1,000	0,596	0,566	0,291	0,380	0,447	0,473	0,323	0,054	0,107	0,304	0,263	0,166	0,108	0,168	0,138	0,017	-0,099	0,061	0,045	0,094	-0,115	-0,025	-0,021
2	0,596	1,000	0,585	0,109	0,279	0,503	0,378	0,292	0,003	-0,032	0,422	0,228	0,115	0,063	0,168	0,137	0,061	-0,125	0,127	0,045	0,142	-0,061	-0,023	-0,020
3	0,566	0,585	1,000	0,213	0,344	0,588	0,494	0,388	0,031	-0,021	0,372	0,215	0,083	0,082	0,182	0,190	0,122	-0,065	0,114	0,094	0,068	-0,088	0,000	0,075
4	0,291	0,109	0,213	1,000	0,351	0,065	0,219	0,114	0,200	0,320	0,077	0,177	0,197	0,231	0,036	0,063	-0,025	0,034	-0,018	-0,015	-0,095	0,016	0,057	-0,043
5	0,380	0,279	0,344	0,351	1,000	0,370	0,328	0,209	0,129	0,227	0,195	0,192	0,143	0,113	0,107	0,147	0,086	0,113	0,045	0,062	0,019	-0,028	0,015	0,044
6	0,447	0,503	0,588	0,065	0,370	1,000	0,444	0,424	-0,026	-0,049	0,277	0,174	0,071	0,007	0,089	0,079	0,043	-0,123	0,164	0,041	0,022	-0,011	0,011	-0,036
7	0,473	0,378	0,494	0,219	0,328	0,444	1,000	0,259	0,018	0,048	0,308	0,200	0,079	0,068	0,127	0,168	0,158	-0,084	0,141	0,130	0,102	-0,054	-0,053	-0,006
8	0,323	0,292	0,388	0,114	0,209	0,424	0,259	1,000	0,165	0,047	0,300	0,235	0,181	0,125	0,210	0,212	0,079	0,034	0,031	0,079	0,051	-0,009	-0,040	-0,030
9	0,054	0,003	0,031	0,200	0,129	-0,026	0,018	0,165	1,000	0,539	0,339	0,383	0,426	0,418	0,485	0,389	0,076	0,178	0,144	0,087	0,100	0,214	0,110	-0,030
10	0,107	-0,032	-0,021	0,320	0,227	-0,049	0,048	0,047	0,539	1,000	0,303	0,439	0,501	0,445	0,307	0,360	0,046	0,154	0,092	0,079	0,099	0,064	0,076	-0,071
11	0,304	0,422	0,372	0,077	0,195	0,277	0,308	0,300	0,339	0,303	1,000	0,514	0,425	0,451	0,457	0,423	0,115	-0,029	0,148	0,097	0,177	0,009	-0,030	-0,082
12	0,263	0,228	0,215	0,177	0,192	0,174	0,200	0,235	0,383	0,439	0,514	1,000	0,547	0,543	0,359	0,546	0,239	0,082	0,161	0,176	0,189	0,085	0,034	-0,080
13	0,166	0,115	0,083	0,197	0,143	0,071	0,079	0,181	0,426	0,501	0,425	0,547	1,000	0,601	0,452	0,496	0,110	0,084	0,082	0,051	0,122	0,058	0,055	-0,078
14	0,108	0,063	0,082	0,231	0,113	0,007	0,068	0,125	0,418	0,445	0,451	0,543	0,601	1,000	0,426	0,491	0,039	0,096	0,063	0,090	0,051	0,037	0,066	0,025
15	0,168	0,168	0,182	0,036	0,107	0,089	0,127	0,210	0,485	0,307	0,457	0,359	0,452	0,426	1,000	0,486	0,130	0,010	0,132	0,055	0,160	0,118	-0,023	-0,044
16	0,138	0,137	0,190	0,063	0,147	0,079	0,168	0,212	0,389	0,360	0,423	0,546	0,496	0,491	0,486	1,000	0,156	-0,019	0,185	0,172	0,113	0,117	0,001	0,001
17	0,017	0,061	0,122	-0,025	0,086	0,043	0,158	0,079	0,076	0,046	0,115	0,239	0,110	0,039	0,130	0,156	1,000	0,206	0,384	0,321	0,363	0,324	0,253	0,184
18	-0,099	-0,125	-0,065	0,034	0,113	-0,123	-0,084	0,034	0,178	0,154	-0,029	0,082	0,084	0,096	0,010	-0,019	0,206	1,000	0,079	0,055	0,198	0,192	0,293	0,239
19	0,061	0,127	0,114	-0,018	0,045	0,164	0,141	0,031	0,144	0,092	0,148	0,161	0,082	0,063	0,132	0,185	0,384	0,079	1,000	0,542	0,451	0,435	0,407	0,128
20	0,045	0,045	0,094	-0,015	0,062	0,041	0,130	0,079	0,087	0,079	0,097	0,176	0,051	0,090	0,055	0,172	0,321	0,055	0,542	1,000	0,528	0,402	0,414	0,226
21	0,094	0,142	0,068	-0,095	0,019	0,022	0,102	0,051	0,100	0,099	0,177	0,189	0,122	0,051	0,160	0,113	0,363	0,198	0,451	0,528	1,000	0,474	0,437	0,276
22	-0,115	-0,061	-0,088	0,016	-0,028	-0,011	-0,054	-0,009	0,214	0,064	0,009	0,085	0,058	0,037	0,118	0,117	0,324	0,192	0,435	0,402	0,474	1,000	0,486	0,184
23	-0,025	-0,023	0,000	0,057	0,015	0,011	-0,053	-0,040	0,110	0,076	-0,030	0,034	0,055	0,066	-0,023	0,001	0,253	0,293	0,407	0,414	0,437	0,486	1,000	0,337
24	-0,021	-0,020	0,075	-0,043	0,044	-0,036	-0,006	-0,030	-0,030	-0,071	-0,082	-0,080	-0,078	0,025	-0,044	0,001	0,184	0,239	0,128	0,226	0,276	0,184	0,337	1,000

**Responses to the Survey.** Table 4 below summarizes the percentage breakdown of the responses of 300 customers to the 24 item survey. The first eight items deal with the effect of advertising in general. Items 9 through 16 are targeting the company’s advertisements. The last group of items, 17 through 24 are negatively worded. For simplicity in reporting the results, we are grouping “agree” and “strongly agree” responses as agreement; the “disagree” and “strongly disagree” as disagreement.

**Table 4.** Percentage Breakdown of Responses Survey Items (N=300)

Item	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly Agree
1. Advertisements influence me during shopping.	17.67	15.00	38.33	18.67	10.33
2. I think that a company's advertisement strategy directly affects sales.	9.67	10.00	27.00	32.67	20.67
3. It's really important to me that an advertisement has catchiness.	11.33	14.33	30.00	25.00	19.33
4. If a retail fashion company's advertisement attracts me I usually shop there.	27.67	30.00	23.67	10.00	8.67
5. If I like an advertisement, I would make people around me watch it and I would recommend watching it.	26.67	17.67	27.00	16.33	12.33
6. The words used in an advertisement are important to me.	16.33	16.00	30.33	23.00	14.33
7. I pay attention to the combinations of clothes that are shown in advertisements and I try to apply the same combinations in the store.	20.67	18.00	23.00	17.67	20.67
8. The music accompanying the advertisement makes me focus on it more.	10.67	13.67	18.00	28.67	29.00
9. As a customer I appreciate this retail fashion company's approach to advertising	14.00	14.00	39.00	25.33	7.67
10. When I see this retail fashion company's advertisements on television, billboards or brochures, my desire to shop there increases.	25.33	29.67	28.67	11.33	5.00
11. I think that the better advertisements this retail fashion company makes the more sales they would make.	10.33	18.33	32.67	24.67	14.00
12. This retail fashion company's advertisements are usually catchy.	17.67	31.33	25.67	16.00	9.33
13. I find this retail fashion company's advertisements convincing.	18.00	28.00	34.33	12.67	7.00
14. I think this retail fashion company's advertisements make a difference.	19.67	29.00	30.67	15.33	5.33
15. I think this retail fashion company's advertisements are clear.	8.00	18.33	28.00	30.67	15.00
16. I think this retail fashion company's choices of music for their advertisements are successful.	15.67	17.67	30.00	23.00	13.67
17. I don't remember the retail fashion company's advertisements most of the time. I don't find them catchy.	14.67	14.33	24.67	25.00	21.33
18. There was no case when I shopped from this retail fashion company after being influenced by its advertisements.	18.00	13.67	21.00	15.67	31.67
19. I think that this retail fashion company's advertisements are not influential because of the characters.	23.00	18.67	21.67	20.00	16.67
20. I think that this retail fashion company's advertisements are not influential because of the combinations of clothes.	16.00	17.33	26.33	20.33	20.00
21. I think that this retail fashion company's advertisements are not influential because they don't use interesting stories or impressive ambiance.	17.00	15.33	24.67	25.00	18.00
22. The music in this company's commercials is not effective in making me focus.	18.00	18.00	28.33	18.67	17.00
23. I don't find the retail fashion company's advertisements convincing.	17.67	20.00	26.67	16.67	19.00
24. I would expect the combinations of clothes to be better put together for this retail fashion company's advertisements.	18.33	16.33	21.00	21.00	23.33

#### **4.2. Responses to Items About Advertising in General**

Twenty-nine percent of respondents agreed that advertisements are influential during shopping. However, most of the respondents were neutral (38%). Fifty-three per cent agreed that an advertisement directly affects sales for a company. Only 19% disagreed. About 45% of respondents agreed that an advertisement's catchiness is important. However, 30% of them were neutral. Almost 26% disagreed.

Surprisingly, only 19% of respondents agreed that an attractive advertisement would lead them to shop at that retail company. Contrary to what one would expect, most of the respondents (almost 58 %) disagreed. Again, contrary to what the companies hope for, only 19% of respondents agreed that when they like an advertisement they will tell the people around them about the attractiveness of the advertisement and will recommend watching it. Almost 43% disagreed, indicating respondents do not talk to each other about advertisements as much as hoped for.

The words of an advertisement were important for 37% of respondents. About 30% were neutral, and 33% disagreed. About 38% agreed that they pay attention to the combinations of clothes shown in advertisements and they try to apply the same combinations in the store. About 23% were neutral and almost 38% of respondents disagreed.

About 59% of respondents agreed that advertisements with music makes them focus on the advertisements more. About 18% were neutral and almost 23% disagreed. It is noteworthy that approximately 60% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that music helps them focus on the advertisement.

#### **4.3. Responses to Items About the Company's Advertisements.**

When asked about the company's approach to advertising, about 33% of respondents agreed that they appreciate this retail fashion company's approach to advertng. About 39% were neutral and almost 28% disagreed with the approach. However, only 16% of respondents agreed that when they see the retail fashion company's advertisements, their desire to shop at their stores increases. About 29% were neutral and almost 45% disagreed.

About 38% of respondents agreed that the better advertisements this retail fashion company makes, the more sales they would make. About 33% were neutral and almost 28% disagreed. About 25% of respondents agreed that the retail fashion company's advertisements are usually catchy. About 26% were neutral and almost 49% disagreed that the company's advertisements are catchy.

About 25% of respondents agreed that the retail fashion company's advertisements are convincing. About 35% were neutral but close to half (46%) disagreed that the company's advertisements are convincing. Moreover, only 20% of respondents agreed that the retail fashion company's advertisements make a difference. About 31% were neutral while almost 49% disagreed that their advertisements make a difference.

In terms of clarity and ease of understanding, about 46% of respondents agreed that the retail fashion company's advertisements are clear. About 28% respondents were neutral and almost 26% disagreed. However, there is not a clear pattern in terms of company's choices of music. About 27% of respondents agreed that the retail fashion company's song choices in advertisements are successful. About 30% remained neutral while 33% respondents disagreed with the statement.

Consistent with their earlier responses about catchiness, 46% of respondents agreed that they do not remember the retail fashion company's advertisements most of the time. About 25% were neutral and almost 29% disagreed. Most of the customers did not remember the company's advertisements. In terms of shopping behavior, about 49% of respondents agreed with the statement "there was no case when I shopped from the retail fashion company after being influenced by its advertisements." About 21% respondents were neutral and almost 30% respondents disagreed with the statement,

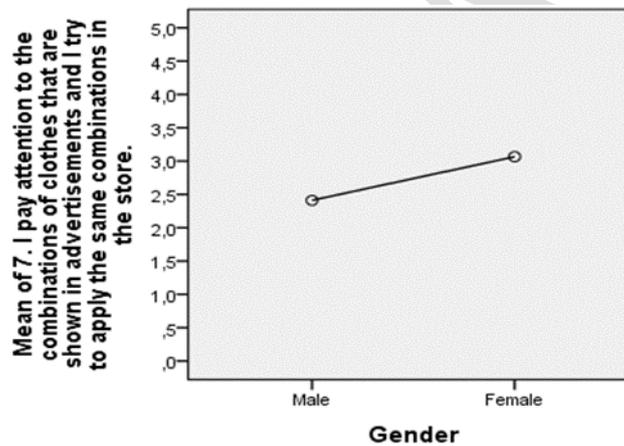
Statements about the characters (spokespersons) in the commercials indicated that about 37% of respondents agreed with the statements that the retail fashion company's advertisements are not influential because of the characters. About 22% were neutral and almost 41% disagreed. In terms of the combination of clothes used in the commercials, 41% of respondents agreed that the company's advertisements are not influential because of the combinations of clothes. About 26% were neutral and almost 33% disagreed.

About 43% of respondents agreed that that the retail fashion company's advertisements are not influential because they do not use interesting stories or an impressive ambiance. About 25% were neutral and almost 32% disagreed, indicating that most of the customers did not think these advertisements are influential because of the ambiance and stories used. The results about the effectiveness of music revealed that about 36% of respondents agreed that advertisements' music does not make them focus on the advertisements more. About 28% were neutral and almost 36% disagreed.

In terms of convincingness, about 36% agreed that the retail fashion company's advertisements are not convincing. About 27% of respondents were neutral and almost 38% disagreed. About 45% of respondents agreed that they would expect the combinations of clothes to be better put together in the retail fashion company's advertisements. About 21% were neutral and almost 34% disagreed. Most of the respondents thought combinations of clothes could be better.

#### **4.4. Gender, Age, City and Income Level Analyses**

To keep the experiment wise error at .05,  $p$  values were adjusted and alpha set at .002 for each of the 24 items. There was a significant effect for only the gender variable on only one item. Attention to combination of clothes, Item 7, was higher for females than males,  $F(1,298) = 10.81, p = .001$  (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Mean Agreement on Attention to Combination of Clothes Across Gender

#### **5. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS**

The major reason for our evaluation of this company's advertising campaign was that their earlier effort had not yielded expected sales. The empirical analysis in this study is mostly descriptive, showing frequencies and distributions for each item. Items on the survey were grouped into two categories to measure attitudes or preferences related to 1. advertising in general and 2. specific to the selected retail company. Certain patterns emerged in this sample of respondents.

Most respondents agreed that an important factor in advertisement is music and that it helps customers focus on advertisements. The correlation matrix demonstrated that this statement is strongly related to questions 1, 3, 6 and 11 which are "Advertisements influence me during shopping", "It's really important to me that an advertisement has catchiness", "The

words used in an advertisement are important to me” and “I think that the better advertisements the retail fashion company makes, the more sales they would make.

Although most of the respondents agreed that accompanying music helps them focus on commercials (Item 8), they were divided regarding this company’s musical choice in helping them focus (Item 22). Moreover, the majority did not remember the company’s advertisements (Item 17). This is a significant issue given the controversy about music in the literature as discussed in the introduction. The company would be best served to investigate with focus groups memory for messages and products with different samples of music. Some studies demonstrated that the presence of background music interferes with processing the message and can distract attention from the product. In their experimental study Fraser and Bradford (2013) concluded that attention getting music or concert music may not be the best choices for a commercial. Music with fewer changes and fewer instruments with tempos with product congruence will be better choices. In addition, Guido and his colleagues (2015) found that background music that ends abruptly distracts attention and leads to declines in memory for the message and the product. Given the complexity of mediator variables, it is best to test samples of music with target customers before launching a campaign.

The combination of clothes is especially important for a fashion company. In this case, 41% of the respondents thought that the company’s advertisements are not influential because of the combination of clothes presented in the ads, and about 45% said that they expect the combinations to be better put together.

In summary, our recommendation for the company is to organize separate focus groups from target populations to test music selections, possible spokespersons, clothes combinations, memorability, and preference for story lines or messages before making any selections for future advertising campaigns. As the results suggest, it is especially important to get feedback from female customers on their preferences for clothing combinations and the fit with the spokespersons. For example, as Kamins and Gupta (1994) found, the believability of the spokesperson increases in proportion to congruence between the product and the endorser. It is crucial to get feedback before launching a campaign and for evaluating it afterwards.

Lastly, in this sample there was a trend to resist the influence of advertisements. Disagreeing or staying neutral to the statement “advertisements influence me during shopping,” may be an artifact of social desirability, more so for males than females.

Consistent with the pattern in item 1, the majority of respondents agreed with item 8 “There was no case when I shopped from this retail fashion company after being influenced by its advertisements.” Item 8 would have been difficult to interpret if it were not for other items targeting catchiness, choice of music, spokespersons, convincingness, clarity, story-line, and clothes combinations. When we look at the profile of responses on these specific items it becomes clear that the advertising fell short of expectations.

We recommend that every company follow up with their customers by evaluating their advertising campaigns rather than relying on sales figures alone. A priority for most companies should be choosing advertising agencies who are familiar with current research driven procedures (e.g., Erdogan & Drollinger, 2008), and incorporate focus group testing before launching an expensive advertising campaign.

Finally, it is important to note that the demographics of our sample and the focus on one company are major limitations of this study. Our conclusions and recommendations are limited to the sample of customers we surveyed randomly as they exited the company’s two largest stores. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 18-25 and held university degrees. More than half of them were in the low income bracket. Although this sample is representative of the demographics of the company’s target consumers, the results cannot be generalized to other demographics and other companies. Studies with older and more affluent samples or in other parts of the city may reveal different results and need to be investigated in the future.

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