

Understanding: A metamorphose in media habits of Indian consumers

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Abstract

Indian consumers have gone a major transformation in the recent times. Today with close competition and rapid changes taking place in the era of information it is necessary to understand the interaction & consumption habits of Indian consumers. Today's consumers, they can escape ads, they can tune in to a million other channels, they can buy a billion other products, they can publish a blog about a brand, they can have instant word-of-mouth (good and bad) on it from the web, they can be in a store and punch in product information on their cell phone and find out who else has the product and for how much. Questionnaire was used as a research instrument to get feedback from people of different age group. Off late, a number of debates have been

going on about the social issues in advertising and the catastrophic consequences of improper advertising have been brought to the forefront. The social effects of improper advertising on various media for all FMCG & durable products generally manifest themselves in the form of an adverse effect on child psychology, human behavior, value system and perception, boost to materialism, rise of consumerism and corruption, decreased integrity and self confidence of women and degradation of relationships in families. This study is an attempt to examine the extent to which these claims are true.

Key words: media habits, consumers, advertising, cultural invasion etc.

Indian consumers have gone a major transformation in the recent times. Today with close competition and rapid changes taking place in the era of information it is necessary to understand the interaction & consumption habits of Indian consumers. Great brands are built on great conversations. To have an effective communication with the customer it is essential to understand consumers and their media consumption pattern. Today's consumers, they can escape ads, they can tune in to a million other channels, they can buy a billion other products, they can publish a blog about a brand, they can have instant word-of-mouth (good and bad) on it from the web, they can be in a store and punch in product information on their cell phone and find out who else has the product and for how much.

Given that we are dealing with a Niche Audience, tracking their Media Habits through traditional systems falls short on reality. Thus there is the need for a more focused & detailed study on today's consumers, to get an understanding of the change in their media habits.

A metamorphose has taken place in the media habits of Indian consumers because of modern media coming into usage. The role of media is visible these days everywhere in form of news channels, political viewpoint, product promotion and consumption, variation in lifestyle perspective, reflection of perceptions, deteriorating culture and values, inclination towards materialism.

Although the interference of media in common man's life was quite nascent in many developing countries until more recently (for example, in China), advertising spending in such countries has been increasing at a lightening rate. Such a phenomenon is not limited to television advertising, but spans a broad spectrum of media. A.C. Nielsen

Media International published a survey which reveals that, in 2001, China spent US\$11.2 billion on advertising, reflecting a 16% rise over the previous year. Similar development has been observed in India. Advertising agencies in India are expanding rapidly to accommodate the explosive growth in marketing activities. Total ad spending in India, based on reports of Indian Society of Advertising (World Advertising Research Center, 2004b), reached a total of 163.179 rupees. As a consequence, the Asia-Pacific region has become a fertile ground for intensive advertising competition by advertisers from all over the world.

Literature review

The direction in which TVCs are moving today, has generated enormous social tension to which we have not been able to find appropriate solutions. The situation as on date is that via these commercials, power has been transferred to business houses that have consistently ignored the social implications of their actions. (Singh & Sandhu, 2011).

Media ethics remained a concern for the better part of 2011 with a number of challenges manifesting themselves. The Hoot.org has put together a documentation on some major issues which emerged in a special report on ethics in the Indian media (The hoot, 2011).

According to (Kaustav Sen Gupta, 2011) youth in India form a major chunk and are using all types of media to access information about latest gadgets, gizmos, fashion trends, education, lifestyle etc. Internet and television rule this sector and they access information to the maximum (Kaustav Sen Gupta, 2011).

In a study by (Sujata and Bhawna, 2012) it was seen that television commercials alone are playing a very crucial role in influencing the buyers specially who are teenagers and young. Such commercials influence the purchase decision of these immature minds to such an extent that they stick to brands shown in commercials with the belief that it would provide same prestige, satisfaction and joy.

For generation Y, despite the rapid development in media, especially the internet, it is apparent that the regulations on the contents and executions in advertisement stipulated by the governing bodies, such as the Advertising Code in Malaysia are still prevailing (Deng, 1994).

Research Methodology

Types of data collection methods:

Primary data was collected by framing a questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of two parts. While secondary data was collected from books, newspapers, journals, internet and some online thesis and dissertation on related topics, magazines etc.

Research Instrument -

Part 1 of the questionnaire comprises of demographic profile of the respondents. The factors considered in demographics are gender, age, occupation, qualification, family income and city in which they reside.

The question related to gender has two options male and female.

The question on age group has been divided into five parts. The first part has intervals from 18- 28 yrs, second one from 29- 39yrs , 40- 50 yrs, 51- 60 – yrs and 60 and above. All the respondents were told to include the age of 28.5 yrs into the first category while one who is exceeding 28.5 may place himself in the next interval.

The respondents were taken from all age groups to understand and cross evaluate the influence of advertisements on youth as well as others. The purpose was also to understand what opinion youth have about advertisements today and how far in their eyes it affects them in respect of their lifestyle, values and behaviour.

The factor occupation was divided into students, business, service class, homemaker and self employed.

Qualification was divided into technical and non technical category.

Family income was also divided into five categories i.e upto Rs. 10,000 , from Rs. 10,001 – 25,000 next from Rs. 25,001 – 40,000 , next from Rs. 40,001- 55, 000 and lastly above 55,000 Rs.

The last demographic factor to be considered was the city in which they reside.

Part II of the questionnaire deals with questions related to media habits, frequency of watching advertisements, types of media being followed, reason for watching advertisements and the products whose advertisements are watched more frequently. Questions were dichotomous in nature and two questions were to be ranked in the options provided.

1. **Sample Size** – finally 548 questionnaires were taken for analysis. Some of them were rejected due to improper filling of responses or incomplete response by the respondents.
2. **Parameters of interest**– basically youth were considered as respondents and subject of study. The opinion of people other than youth was also taken into consideration, as every youth is a part of a family, a group, an institution or an office. Their fast changing lifestyle and attitude influences every individual linked to them.

Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic profile of respondents and media habits

In the study five demographic variables were taken into consideration gender, age, occupation, family income and qualification.

Table 1- Gender vs. Respondents

Sr. No.	Gender	Respondents	
		Absolute No.	Percentage
1	Male	290	53
2	Female	258	47
	Total	548	100

The first question in part 1 of questionnaire was related to gender of respondents. The percentage of male respondents was 53 % and female were 47 %.

Table 2 -Age Group Vs Respondents in Different Intervals

Sr. No.	Age Group	Respondents	
		Absolute No.	Percentage
1	18-28	288	53
2	29-39	132	24
3	40-50	84	15
4	51-60	28	5
5	>60	16	3
	Total	548	100

The second demographic factor which was taken is age group. The major focus of study was on youth only and 53 % respondents lie in the age bracket of 18 – 28 yrs, 24 % in 29 – 39 yrs., 15 % in 40 – 50 yrs. , 5 % in 51 – 60 yrs and 3 % are senior citizens above 61 yrs of age. In our study respondents from 18 – 39 yrs are considered as youth. A

group who thinks differently because of their experience of technology. Young people as digital natives have wide exposure to media and have more knowledge and awareness of products.

They are those who are actually in purchasing capacity and willing to try new products in all sectors who are termed as initiators or early adopters.

Table 3 - occupation vs. Respondents in Different Intervals

Sr. No.	Occupation	Respondents	
		Absolute No.	Percentage
1	Student	240	44
2	Business	50	9
3	Service	164	30
4	Home Maker	38	7
5	Self Employed	56	10
	Total	548	100

Student - student are the first cluster who comes into mind when we talk of youth in India. In present context the meaning of student broadly covers a college going youth, to a youth working in call centres to doing part time jobs and simultaneously they continue with their studies. Even a research scholar or a young executive who pursues higher studies after having work experience may lie in the category of a student. In our research 44 % respondents comprise of student.

Business – respondents in business makes upto 9 % .The second category which is taken into occupation is business, the reason being in the present scenario several youth are taking up business, as a means of employment at an early age. With a fresh wave of entrepreneurship and business coming in, India is seeing many young entrepreneurs & fresh blood taking up business as a new employment mantra.

Service – contributes to 30% in our study. A major section of our study is coming from a class who are employed in service sector. The need to define service as a sector was considered although the primary sector (agriculture mainly) is the dominant employer followed by the services sector, the share of services has been increasing over the years while that of primary sector has been decreasing. India is 13th in services output. The services sector provides employment to 23% of the work force and is growing quickly, with a growth rate of 7.5% in 1991–2000, up from 4.5% in 1951–80.(en.wikipedia.org

). With the advent of MNC's, BPO's, retail, mall culture more and more young are entering into services at an early age.

Homemakers – in our study 7 % homemakers are taken into consideration. Homemaker is a mainly a term for a housewife or also a stay-at-home dad.

SAHM is an abbreviation that refers to a "stay at home mom". Homemakers are the purchasing agents for the family's biggest institution- The Home. They are the main decision-makers in the process of buying of the household goods with the objective of satisfaction of family's needs and wants. For this purpose a large number of household goods, both durable and non-durable, are required. In addition, a modern homemaker demands more information about the products she intends to purchase. It is in this context that the role of advertisements assumes significance.

Self employed -10% of our respondents belong to self employed category. Self-employment is working for one's self rather than for another person or company. To be self-employed, an individual is normally highly skilled in a trade or has a niche product or service for his or her local community. With the creation of the Internet, the ability for an individual to become self-employed has increased dramatically. The number of people self-employed is higher in rural areas at about 54.2%, against 41.4% in urban areas by economic times, June issue of 2011. (By NSSO)

Table 4- Gender vs. watch Ads

Sr. No.	Gender	Watch Ad		Total
		Yes	No	
1	Male	278	12	290
		95.90%	4.10%	100.00%
2	Female	250	8	258
		96.90%	3.10%	100.00%
Total		528	20	548
		96.40%	3.60%	100.00%

It can be seen from the above table that 278 males which make 95.9 % watch ads while 12 males with 4.1 % do not watch ads. It can be seen from the table that majority of males watch ads. If we talk about females 250 of them out of 548 with 96.9 % watch ads and 8 of them, 3.1 % do not watch ads. Hence it can be interpreted that exposure to

advertisements is on higher side in both the genders. Females are little ahead of males in watching advertisements.

Table 5 -Gender Vs Media

Media							
Sr. No.	Gender	TV	newspaper	Magazine	Internet	Any other	Total
1	Male	146	76	18	50	0	290
		50.30 %	26.20%	6.20%	17.20%	0.00%	100.00 %
2	Female	186	26	8	34	4	258
		72.10 %	10.10%	3.10%	13.20%	1.60%	100.00 %
Total		332	102	26	84	4	548
		60.60 %	18.60%	4.70%	15.30%	0.70%	100.00 %

In the above table a comparative study is being done between males and females regarding their exposure to advertisement on different media.

Male media watching habits -

50 % of male respondents watch advertisement on idiot box which is a leader among all. 26.2 % continues to rely on the oldest media of ads newspaper. Among different conveyors of message in print media newspaper leads over magazines. 17.2 % respondents watch ads on internet which is known as the media of new millennium. 6.2 % people follow magazines to see ads; hence there is a decline in the reading habits of respondents.

Female media watching habits -

Though television rules in case of females also with 72.1 % respondents.

But the second leading media is internet in place of newspaper as seen in the case of males. 13.2 % females watch ads on internet which is closely followed by newspaper by 4.7 %. Magazines are behind in case of females counting to only 3.1 %. The significant difference in watching ads on internet in case of female is perhaps because of the fact that even females are becoming computer savvy these days. The trend of reading newspaper has gone down due to easy access and availability of internet these days. Internet has also given a severe blow to the circulation and sale of newspaper these days. The mobile revolution has also made news and information accessible easily on cell phones in car, bus and canteen etc.

Table 6 Gender vs. Frequency of watching ads

Sr. No	Gender	Daily	Occasionally	Never	Total
1	Male	182	106	2	290
		62.80%	36.60%	0.70%	100.00%
2	Female	160	94	4	258
		62.00%	36.40%	1.60%	100.00%
Total		342	200	6	548
		62.40%	36.50%	1.10%	100.00%

Frequency of watching ads daily is almost same in case of male and female by 62.8 % in case of males and 62% by females. Ads are watched occasionally by male and female 36.6 % and 36.4 % respectively. 1.65% females never watch ads. The figure shows that television has emerged as the most entertaining media for both the genders these days. Popularity of Imam Siddiqui in Big Boss, eagerness to watch KBC, Salman Khan's Das KA dam, Coffee with Karan , Amir's Satyamev Jayate are big time reality hits on idiot box. These reality shows have taken over the brain and heart of viewers. Nuclear families, hectic schedule in routine, lengthy working hours , less time for socialising has given space to programme on T.V. to attract keep public tied up.

Table 7 Gender Vs Impact of Ads

Impact of Ad							
Sr. No.	Gender	Less than one day	One Day	One week	one month	> one month	Total
1	Male	78	105	65	12	30	290
		26.90%	36.20%	22.40%	4.10%	10.30%	100.00%
2	Female	64	107	51	16	20	258
		24.80%	41.50%	19.80%	6.20%	7.80%	100.00%
Total		142	212	116	28	50	548
		25.90%	38.70%	21.20%	5.10%	9.10%	100.00%

26.9 % males say the influence of ads remains for less than a day.

The lasting effect of ads is closely followed by less than one day which is 36.2 % . While 22.4 % males feel the influence lasts for a week. 24.8 % females say influence of watching ads persists for less than a day. While 41.5% females say influence lasts for a day only. 19.8 % say the influence continues for a week. It can be seen from the above table that respondents from all age groups watch ads.

Table 8- Age group vs. Watch Ads

Watch Ad				
Sr. No.	Age group	Yes	No	Total
1	18 - 28 yrs	282	6	288
		97.90%	2.10%	100.00%
2	29 -39 yrs	122	10	132
		92.40%	7.60%	100.00%
3	40-50yrs	82	2	84
		97.60%	2.40%	100.00%
4	51-60 yrs	26	2	28
		92.90%	7.10%	100.00%
5	>60 yrs	16	0	16
		100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Total		528	20	548
		96.40%	3.60%	100.00%

The trend in the table shows that majority of the respondents from all the age groups are a regular viewer of ads. The age factor has no count in watching ads, the reasons for watching ads may be different but all of them watch ads for their own need gratification.

Table 9 Age vs. Watch advertisements

S. No.	Age Group	Watch Ad		Total
		Yes	No	
1	18-28 Year	282 97.9%	6 2.1%	288 100.0%
2	29-39 Year	122 92.4%	10 7.6%	132 100.0%
3	40-50 Year	82 97.6%	2 2.4%	84 100.0%
4	51-60 Year	26 92.9%	2 7.1%	28 100.0%
5	60 Year	16 100.0%	0 0%	16 100.0%
6	Total	528 96.4%	20 3.6%	548 100.0%

In the age group of 18 – 28 yrs T.V leads all other media which is followed by internet. A decline is seen in the newspaper reading habits and magazines are the least preferred for exposure to ads. In the age group of 29 – 39 yrs more people cling to the habit of watching T.V ads and newspaper is the next closely followed media. People lying in the category of 29 -39 yrs are neither too westernized nor too outdated they have taken T.V as a source of information in respect of ads but they are also watching ads on internet along with some contribution of newspaper. Television is the leading media which carries ads to the respondents in the study belonging to different age groups. After TV newspaper is closely followed by people lying in the category of age group 40 – 50 yrs and 51 – 60 yrs. ads are seen on internet by the youngest age group 18 – 28 yrs which is followed by 29 – 39 yrs. both the groups are considered as youth in our study. People lying in the age bracket of above 60 yrs are exposed to ads only via T.V or newspaper. The emergence and popularity of new media has not influenced their media habits.

Table 10 Age Group vs. Media Cross tabulation

S. No.	Age group	TV	News paper	Magazine	Internet	Any other	Total
1	18 - 28 yrs	156	50	18	64	0	288
		54.20 %	17.40 %	6.30%	22.20 %	0.00%	100.00 %
2	29 -39 yrs	92	16	8	12	4	132
		69.70 %	12.10 %	6.10%	9.10%	3.00%	100.00 %
3	40-50 yrs	52	26	0	6	0	84
		61.90 %	31.00 %	0.00%	7.10%	0.00%	100.00 %
4	51-60 yrs	18	8	0	2	0	28
		64.30 %	28.60 %	0.00%	7.10%	0.00%	100.00 %
5	>60yrs	14	2	0	0	0	16
		87.50 %	12.50 %	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00 %
Total		332	102	26	84	4	548
		60.60 %	18.60 %	4.70%	15.30 %	0.70%	100.00 %

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Television is the leading media which carries ads to the respondents in the study belonging to different age groups. After TV newspaper is closely followed by people lying in the category of age group 40 – 50 yrs and 51 – 60 yrs. ads are seen on internet by the youngest age group 18 – 28 yrs which is followed by 29 – 39 yrs. both the groups are considered as youth in our study. People lying in the age bracket of above 60 yrs are exposed to ads only via T.V or newspaper. The emergence and popularity of new media has not influenced their media habits.

Table 11 Age Group vs. Frequency of ad

Sr. No.	Age Group	Frequency of ad			
		Daily	Occasionally	Never	Total
1	18 - 28 yr	174	110	4	288
		60.40%	38.20%	1.40%	100.00%
2	29 -39 yrs	86	44	2	132
		65.20%	33.30%	1.50%	100.00%
3	40-50yr s	52	32	0	84
		61.90%	38.10%	0.00%	100.00%
4	51-60yr s	20	8	0	28
		71.40%	28.60%	0.00%	100.00%
5	>60yrs	10	6	0	16
		62.50%	37.50%	0.00%	100.00%
Total		342	200	6	548
		62.40%	36.50%	1.10%	100.00%

A major segment of all age group agrees with the fact that they watch ads on regular basis. There is a contrasting result in the people lying in the age group of 40 – 60 yrs who say that they never watch ads. The result shows that on an average 60% people agree with the fact that they watch ads on daily basis while 36.5 % say that they watch ads occasionally.

Table 12 Age Group vs. Impact of Ad

Sr. No.	Age Group	Impact of Ad					Total
		Less than one day	One Day	One week	one month	> one month	
1	18 - 28 yrs	94	87	61	14	32	288
		32.60 %	30.20 %	21.20 %	4.90%	11.10 %	100.00%
2	29 - 39 yrs	28	68	18	8	10	132
		21.20 %	51.50 %	13.60 %	6.10%	7.60%	100.00%
3	40 - 50 yrs	10	41	25	4	4	84
		11.90 %	48.80 %	29.80 %	4.80%	4.80%	100.00%
4	51 - 60 yrs	6	8	10	2	2	28
		21.40 %	28.60 %	35.70 %	7.10%	7.10%	100.00%
5	> 60 yrs	4	8	2	0	2	16
		25.00 %	50.00 %	12.50 %	0.00%	12.50 %	100.00%
Total		142	212	116	28	50	548
		25.90 %	38.70 %	21.20 %	5.10%	9.10%	100.00%

Some interesting results were seen in the influence of age with impact of ad lasting on respondents. It was seen that in the age group of 18 – 28 yrs majority said that they perceive the influence less than one day. While in the age group of 29 – 39 yrs 51.5 % feel the impact lasts for a day. People in the bracket of 40 – 50 yrs which amount to 48.8 % feel the same that impact is only for a day. 35.7 % feel that it lasts for a week. Again a figure of 50 % is seen in the age bracket above 60 yrs where the impact is lasting for a day. The influence of ads is found more than a day on people in the class interval of 51 yrs and above. This shows that as an individual settles in life personally and professionally his perception of retaining ads message lasts for a comparative larger time period.

Table 13 Which of the following category of products advertisements are being followed most by youth?

Sr. No.	Alternatives	1st Rank		IInd Rank		IIIrd Rank		IVth Rank		Vth Rank		VIth Rank		VIIth Rank		VIIIth Rank		IX th Rank		Total	
		Ab. No.	%	Ab. No.	%	Ab. No.	%	Ab. No.	%	Ab. No.	%	Ab. No.	%	Ab. No.	%	Ab. No.	%	Ab. No.	%	Ab. No.	%
1	Toiletries	56	10	42	8	22	4	30	5	38	7	86	16	116	21	116	21	42	8	548	13
2	Soft Drink	62	11	52	9	76	14	70	13	146	27	86	16	30	5	18	3	8	1	548	13
3	Mouth Freshener	12	2	26	5	48	9	54	10	54	10	100	18	124	23	104	19	26	5	548	13
4	Cell Phones	186	34	162	30	62	11	74	14	36	7	8	1	14	3	4	1	2	0	548	13
5	Fast Foods	26	5	50	9	86	16	104	19	92	17	78	14	56	10	44	8	12	2	548	13
6	Garments	62	11	106	19	98	18	88	16	72	13	60	11	34	6	24	4	4	1	548	13
7	Cosmetics	50	9	42	8	78	14	82	15	54	10	72	13	78	14	74	14	18	3	548	13
8	Two Wheelers/Four Wheelers	82	15	64	12	78	14	40	7	48	9	38	7	68	12	108	20	22	4	548	13
9	Any other, Specify	12	2	4	1	0	0	6	1	8	1	20	4	28	5	56	10	414	76	548	13
Total		548	100	548	100	548	100	548	100	548	100	548	100	548	100	548	100	548	100	4932	113

Soft drinks, cell phones, two wheelers & toiletries have gained more than 50% in four out of nine ranks. Mouth freshener & fast foods have gained more than 50% in five places out of 9 ranks. Garments and cosmetics have scored more than 50% at six and seven places out of nine ranks.

The table shows that garments and cosmetics have a high follow up of advertisements which is followed by Mouth freshner & fast foods and the last group is of advertisements of products in the category of Soft drinks, cell phones, two wheelers, toiletries & soft drink .

Conclusions

As far as media habits are concerned majority of them watch advertisement. Television has emerged as the most popular and successful media for watching advertisements. It is followed by newspaper and internet. Though the gap is too wide between different media the graph indicates growing popularity of internet among young people.

As far as frequency of watching advertisements is concerned majority of the respondents watch ads on daily basis.

Most of them feel that the impact of ads lasts for a day or less over them.

Advertising is accused of encouraging materialism and consumption, of stereotyping, of influencing us to purchase products for which we have no need, of taking advantage of children, and even of manipulating our behavior. The purpose of this study was to determine the media habits of people in the present scenario and understand their exposure level to different media.

Every day, one comes across innumerable images and commercials for various products. This excessive amount of media in our day to day lives cannot be side lined and it influences all those surrounded by it. It is an expression of the society of which we are a part, its mirror-image for all practical purposes and has a far reaching influence on the social, cultural and moral values of its inmates (Ciochetto,2004). The world is changing rapidly today and in its footsteps our core values are changing too. The last two decades on account of globalization have seen an unparalleled change, which has expressed itself in the form of

diminishing community values. Social values are getting eroded, moral values have become fragmented and the society is facing an unprecedented cultural evasion. Our society today is taking on new values which are at loggerheads with the time tested and religiously accepted principles of our society, a large part of the responsibility for which must be borne by the television commercials (henceforth TVCs) and also the unethical practices of the business and corporate houses which sponsor them. Today, the reach of television is widespread. Commercial television channels have penetrated even the remotest of areas and most adults are exposed to thousands of advertisements annually. It is thus natural for the ramifications of the violations of ethics by TVCs to be seen in our personal lives and also on the society as a whole. Advertising, now a days is big business and many industries like magazines, the cable TV industry, newspapers and many other media, non media and communication industries survive only on the inflow of money due to advertising. It is because of this that corporate houses use all possible tactics to get our attention first and money ultimately. Sometimes these attempts involve illegal, dirty or underhand tricks, making untrue claims and reliance on false information (Drumwright and Murphy, 2009). Off late, a number of debates have been going on about the social issues in advertising and the catastrophic consequences of improper advertising have been brought to the forefront. The social effects of improper advertising on various media for all FMCG & durable products generally manifest themselves in the form of an adverse effect on child psychology, human behavior, value system and perception, boost to materialism, rise of consumerism and corruption, decreased integrity and self confidence of women and degradation of relationships in families. This study is an attempt to examine the extent to which these claims are true.

There is evidence that consumer media habit is shaped by a variety of factors such as culture and economics (De Mooij 2003). In spite of globalization, one can argue that the message may be global, but the delivery has to be local. This is because one must tailor their advertising messages to the local media infrastructure, and strive to find the best way to reach the target audience.

When it comes to the type of media used by consumers in India, the most common choice was a computer. then TV screen ranked second and mobile phone followed. And while the majority of respondents identify their own home as a preferred location in media consumption habits while some like to watch it while travelling or while commuting. Media follows consumers from television to ATM outlets, mobile phones to emails. There is no privacy of consumers and media people leave no space in following their target audience.

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