

## Television Advertising for Tyres: Has it Lost its Lustre?

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**Abstract:** Television advertising has for a long time been favoured by marketers including tyre manufacturers because of its mass-market appeal. The changing social and technological environment has raised questions over the effectiveness of television advertising, especially where consumers have access to newly introduced communication media. There is therefore uncertainty as to whether television advertising is generating a fair return. It is against this background that this study determines consumer perceptions of television advertising for tyres. Four hundred respondents across the 4 major cities in South Africa participated in the study. The results indicate that television advertisements for tyres have a major influence on tyre purchase decisions and are considered to be convincing. There was general support for the continued use of television as an advertising medium for tyres. Recommendations are made as to how tyre manufacturers can enhance their communication efforts using television advertising.

**Key words:** Television advertising, television advertising for tyres, marketing communication, tyre purchase decisions, consumers

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### INTRODUCTION

Television advertising has the capability of reaching a large audience and is suitable for large organisations such as tyre manufacturers. Tyre manufacturers are able to market their products and can inform and raise awareness among a large number of viewers instantly, showcasing a tyre's performance and technical capabilities while delivering the message in an entertaining way. However, the effectiveness of television advertising seems to be diminishing due to the changing environment. Technological advancements in alternative media have resulted in a situation where television has to compete against these media. Consumers also have a greater choice of entertainment media, meaning that they can choose to watch television if they want to. The trend is towards watching less television and skipping through television advertisements. This situation is hampering tyre manufacturers' efforts to reach consumers through television advertising. The question that arises is: Should tyre manufacturers continue to use expensive television advertisements which may not be delivering a fair value in return?

Tyre manufacturers have for a long time, used television advertising as part of their marketing campaigns. Recently factors such as alternative and emerging communication media, advancement in media technology and changes in consumer behaviour have presented a threat to television as a medium of advertising. It is not clear whether television

advertisements are as effective compared to the past, considering the high input costs involved. The aim of this study, therefore is to determine consumer perceptions of television advertising for tyres. This should guide the decision by tyre manufacturers as to whether tyre manufacturers should continue to use television advertising in a manner that has been practiced in the past.

**Literature review:** Television advertising possesses the unique capability of demonstrating a product in use helping viewers to see and hear allowing them to better imagine using the product, all whilst delivering the advertising message in an entertaining and exciting way and covering a large audience at the same time (Shimp, 2010). Although, tyre manufacturers have been using television advertising for a long time, the industry has witnessed changes. Levins (2010) believes that while television advertising continues to be appealing, spending on interactive media is growing in response to shifts in media usage patterns. Moriarty *et al.* (2009) adopt a grim view, stating that the change in media patterns could see the demise of traditional television advertising.

Shimp (2010) believes that beyond any other consideration, television has the unique capability to demonstrate a product using audio and visual senses which no medium can accomplish with a mass audience. Moriarty *et al.* (2009) concur by stating that television advertising study like the movies as it tells stories,

engages the emotions, creates fantasies and can have an effective visual appeal. This medium can bring brands to life and add personality to a brand. Shimp (2010) adds that television advertising has the combined ability to provide entertainment and generate excitement in consumers as advertised products can be presented dramatically to make products appear more impressive than they actually are.

Shimp (2010) believes that television advertising is a cost effective means of reaching mass audiences. Moriarty *et al.* (2009) advocate the use of television advertising on the grounds of being cost effective having mass appeal and its wide reach. Levins (2010) concurs, stating that television advertising is attractive to marketers because of the ability to reach a mass audience with a low cost per viewer.

The vast reach of television has been a major factor in contributing to its popularity as an advertising medium. According to Sharp *et al.* (2009) during prime hours, a third of the population watch television at any point in time in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America with the reach approaching two-thirds of the population as it gets later into the evening. The number of companies wishing to advertise on television has increased, making up nearly half the total advertising expenditure worldwide. Moriarty *et al.* (2009) believe that television advertising has become the mainstay of life.

Sharp *et al.* (2009) maintain that television remains a broad reach medium and despite reduced viewership, television's reach is strong and impressive. Hu *et al.* (2009) believe that television advertising's effectiveness has improved in recent years. Robinson (2009) argues that television advertising is more effective than online and print media in terms of generating awareness and holding the customer's attention. Sharp *et al.* (2009) argue that although, television advertising keeps changing and viewers have more alternatives than ever, television viewing behavior continues to follow the same pattern over the past 40 years, signifying that this medium will remain an effective medium for many years to come. Heath (2009) believes that despite the doubts over the effectiveness of television advertising there is no evidence to suggest that it has weakened in its ability to build big brands. Swart (2008) concludes that there will always be a place for television advertisements.

Etzel *et al.* (2007) believe that changes in the marketing environment have led to television advertising losing its once large audience. Shimp (2010) argues that television advertising is not always the most effective way to spread advertising messages. Etzel *et al.* (2007) point out that the share of television audience held by networks during prime time has declined from 90% in 1980 to around 35% in 2007.

Reach is a measurement of the number of people who could potentially receive an advertisement through a particular media vehicle (Levins, 2010). Sharp *et al.* (2009) argue that although television's reach is still vast, the digital revolution has presented itself as a threat to television as an advertising medium. National television as an advertising medium has been threatened by pay television. Moriarty *et al.* (2009) believe that television audiences have become highly fragmented due to the number of channels available to consumers. In this regard, Etzel *et al.* (2007) believe that pay television, due to causing the fragmentation of markets by offering specialized programming, makes it difficult to reach a mass market. This is not favourable for marketers including tyre manufacturers who intend to reach a mass market.

Heath (2009) believes that the proliferation of communication media has resulted in consumers paying less attention to television advertising. Robinson (2009) concurs by stating that the shift in media usage patterns has resulted in consumers paying less attention to television as they are multi-tasking, e.g., browsing the internet, reading the newspaper or making phone calls while watching television. Romaniuk (2009) highlights the role of the internet in diverting the attention of consumers away from television.

Clutter which according to Levins (2010) is when too many advertisements are shown in a series is another factor that plays a role in people paying less attention to television advertisements. According to Shimp (2010) of all the media, television is the most cluttered. This makes it difficult for marketers' advertisements to stand out in the midst of so many television advertisements. Moriarty *et al.* (2009) add that commercial breaks can be difficult time slots for advertisers because of clutter, station breaks and public service announcements. Robinson (2009) concurs by stating that the reduced effects of television advertising can be attributed to consumer frustration at the length and number of advertisements they are exposed to. The average length of television advertisements broadcast in an hour has increased from 11-18 min over the last 50 years. According to Bronnenberg *et al.* (2010), television advertising is losing its lustre as consumers tend to skip through commercials.

Dicey (2006) argues that television has long been the preferred choice of media planners due to perceived big brand appeal but doubts whether television advertising really pays. Shimp (2010) states that in addition to buying airtime, it is costly to produce television commercials. Etzel *et al.* (2007) believe that television advertising is an expensive medium, a view supported by Shimp (2010) who states that the cost of television advertising has more

than trebled in the past two decades. An advertisement by a tyre manufacturer, shot in Cape Town, South Africa, involved over 100 crew members, professional stunt drivers, helicopters, several road closures and a range of specialized equipment. These high costs do not include the cost that television broadcasters charge to air the advertisement. Sharp *et al.* (2009) believes that the cost of television advertising is set to rise even further as more companies are looking to use television advertising as people from many industries who have never considered television advertising in the past are now bidding against each other for network time, thereby driving prices higher.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research constituted a quantitative, cross-sectional and descriptive study. The key variables were demographics (gender, age, classification in terms of commercial or private use of vehicle and usage rate in terms of average distance travelled in a year) and perceptions regarding the use of television advertising for tyres. Perceptions were ascertained using a five point Likert scale (strongly disagree-strongly agree) where strongly disagree = 1 and strongly agree = 5. Questionnaires were administered at tyre fitment centres. Respondents comprised a sample of 400 motorists located across South Africa. About 100 respondents were chosen in each of the four largest cities in South Africa viz. Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban and Pretoria (largest cities in South Africa) using convenience (non-probability) sampling. The sample size was guided by Sekaran (2003) who suggests that for a population in excess of 1 million, a sample of 384 respondents was adequate to draw inferences. A pilot test was conducted prior to the administration of the final questionnaire. Necessary alterations were done to the questionnaires before conducting the research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Biographical variables:** Details of the biographical variables are presented in Table 1. The majority of respondents were male (68%). It emerged that the majority age group was 31-40 followed by the 41-50 age category indicating that 51.5% of respondents were between 31 and 50 years of age. The majority of respondents (41%) used their motor vehicles for both private and commercial purpose. The majority of respondents (52%) were heavy users covering >30000 km a years.

**The perceived effectiveness of advertising media for tyres:** Respondents were asked to rank the four traditional advertising media used by tyre manufacturers in terms of

Table 1: The biographical variables

Variables	N	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	272	68.0
Female	128	32.0
Total	400	100.0
<b>Age</b>		
<21	32	8.0
21-30	76	19.0
31-40	112	28.0
41-50	94	23.5
51-60	62	15.5
Over 60	24	6.0
Total	400	100.0
<b>Classification</b>		
Private	104	26.0
Commercial	132	33.0
Combination of private and commercial	164	41.0
Total	400	100.0
<b>Usage category</b>		
Heavy (>30,000 km p.a.)	208	52.0
Medium (Between 10,000 and 30,000 km p.a.)	138	34.5
Light (<10 000 km p.a.)	54	13.5
Total	400	100.0

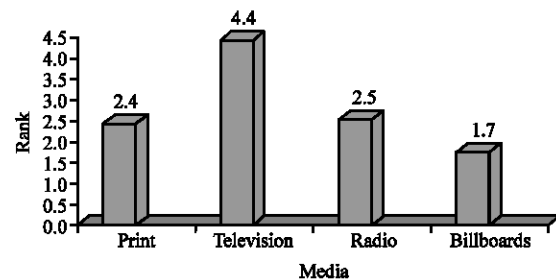


Fig. 1: The perceived effectiveness of advertising media for tyres

their influence on consumers when purchasing tyres. On a ranking from 1 (least effective) 5 (most effective), television was ranked the most effective advertising medium with a mean score of 4.4, considerably higher than and followed by radio, print media and billboards. The results are reflected in Fig. 1.

**Media influence on the purchase of tyres:** As reflected in Fig. 2, it emerged that 34% of respondents believed that television advertisements were the most effective with regard to influencing consumers to purchase tyres. This is significantly higher than the scores for the other three media with billboard advertisements for tyres being considered the least influential.

**Television advertisements showing viewers what they are looking for when purchasing tyres:** The results as reflected in Fig. 3 indicate that 47% of respondents agree that television advertisements show viewers what they are looking for when purchasing tyres with 40% agreeing and 7% strongly agreeing in this regard. A large

proportion (23%) was neutral and 30% of respondents disagreed that television advertisements show viewers what they are looking for when purchasing tyres. The mean value was 3.24.

**The ability of television advertising for tyres to convince consumers:** It emerged that 50% of respondents were in agreement that television advertising for tyres has the ability to convince consumers to purchase tyres with 41% agreeing and 9% strongly agreeing in this regard. This is reflected in Fig. 4. The results indicate a mean value of 3.2. The 21% of respondents were neutral and 29% were in disagreement that television advertising for tyres has the ability to convince consumers to purchase tyres.

**Tyre manufacturers' advertisements directly influencing the decision to purchase a tyre brand:** The results as reflected in Fig. 5 indicate that the vast majority (60%) of respondents agree that television advertisements by tyre manufacturers directly influence the purchase of a

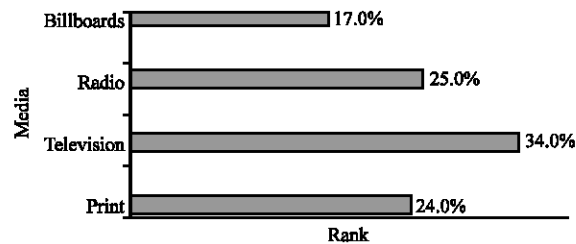


Fig. 2: Media influence on the purchase of tyres

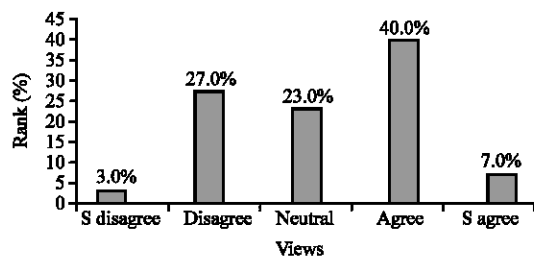


Fig. 3: Television advertisements showing viewers what they are looking for when purchasing tyres

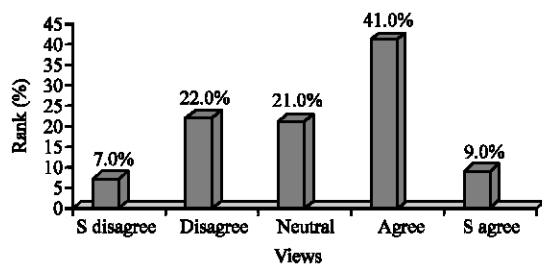


Fig. 4: The ability of television advertising for tyres to convince consumers

particular brand with 47% agreeing and 13% strongly agreeing in this regard. A large proportion (24%) was neutral and 16% of respondents disagreed that television advertisements influenced the purchase of a particular tyre brand. The mean value was 3.6.

**The attention grasping ability of television advertising for tyres:** It emerged that 65% of respondents were in agreement that television advertising for tyres has the ability to grasp the attention of viewers with 42.5% agreeing and 22.5% strongly agreeing in this regard. This is reflected in Fig. 6. The 21% of respondents were neutral and 14% disagree that television advertising for tyres has the ability to convince consumers to purchase tyres (11% disagreeing and 3% strongly disagreeing). The results indicate a mean value of 3.43.

**The understandability of television advertising for tyres:** The results as reflected in Fig. 7 indicate that the vast majority (72%) of respondents agree that television advertisements by tyre manufacturers are understandable with 63% agreeing and 9% strongly agreeing in this regard. About 10% of respondents were neutral in this regard and 18% of respondents disagreed that television advertisements by tyre manufacturers are understandable. The mean value was 3.63.

**The demonstrative abilities of television advertisements for tyres:** It emerged that 65% of respondents were in

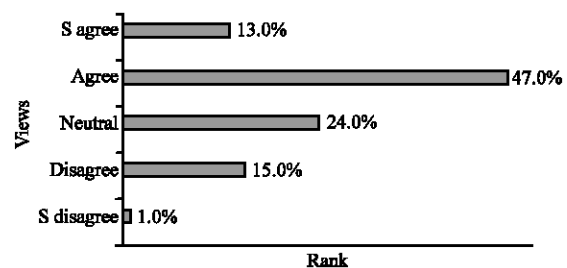


Fig. 5: Tyre manufacturers' advertisements directly influencing the decision to purchase a tyre brand

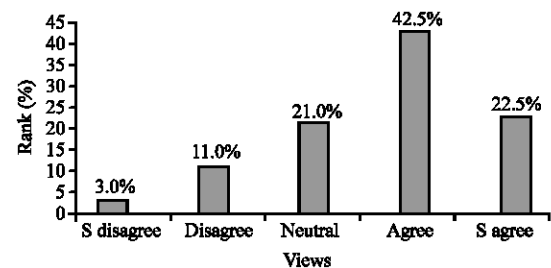


Fig. 6: The attention grasping ability of television advertising for tyres

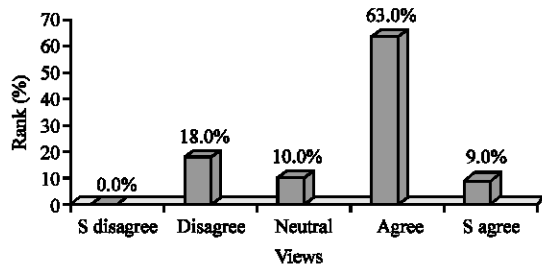


Fig. 7: The understandability of television advertising for tyres

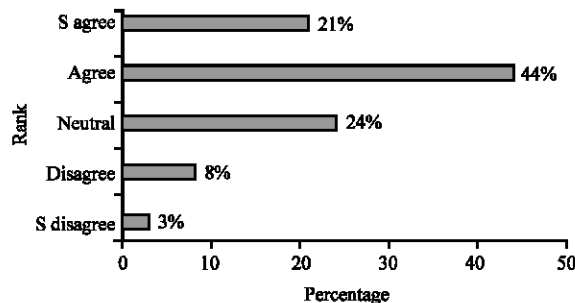


Fig. 8: The demonstrative abilities of television advertisements for tyres

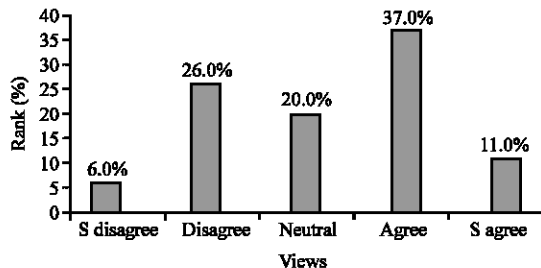


Fig. 9: Preference for television as an advertising medium over other media

agreement that television advertising for tyres have demonstrative abilities to viewers with 44% agreeing and 21% strongly agreeing in this regard. This is reflected in Fig. 8. The 24% of respondents were neutral and 11% were in disagreement that television advertising for tyres has demonstrative abilities (8% disagreeing and 3% strongly disagreeing). The results indicate a mean value of 3.13.

**Preference for television as an advertising medium over other media:** As indicated in Fig. 9, the largest proportion of respondents (48%) agreed that they preferred television as an advertising medium over other media with 44% agreeing and 21% strongly agreeing in this regard. 24% of respondents were neutral. A small proportion

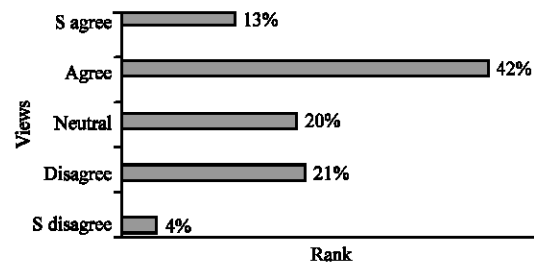


Fig. 10: Television should continue to be used as an advertising medium for tyres

(11%) of respondents (8% disagreeing and 3% strongly disagreeing) disagreed that they preferred television as an advertising medium over other media. The mean value was 3.21.

**Television should continue to be used as an advertising medium for tyres:** The results suggest that respondents favoured the continued use of television as an advertising medium for tyres with a total of 55% respondents agreeing (42% agreeing and 13% strongly agreeing). A total of 25% of respondents disagreed that television should continue to be used as an advertising medium for tyres. The results are presented in Fig. 10. Overall, the indication is that there still appears to be support for the use of television as an advertising medium for tyres.

## CONCLUSION

Changes in the advertising industry have forced tyre manufacturers to revisit their advertising tactics. The industry has up until recently, relied very heavily on television as a medium to promote its products. It is against this background that this study attempted to ascertain consumer perceptions of television advertising for tyres. It emerged that consumers were of the opinion that television advertisements for tyres influenced tyre purchase decisions and that television was considered to be the most effective medium. Television advertisements did show viewers what they were looking for when purchasing tyres. The results indicate that television advertising for tyres generally were convincing, understandable and were able to grasp the attention of consumers. Respondents were of the view that television should continue to be used as an advertising medium for tyres. Recommendations are made as to how tyre manufacturers can enhance their communication efforts using television advertising.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the empirical study, it is recommended that television advertisements show

consumers more of what they are looking for in a product. Content should be informative, demonstrating the product's capabilities while at the same time, not being too technical or complex resulting in confusion. The persuasive element of the advertisement plays an important role. Considering that a large number of consumers believed that television advertisements for tyres were not convincing enough, the content must strive to strengthen the affective and action component in terms of consumer behaviour pertaining to tyre purchases. Not only should advertisements create a favourable attitude towards a brand, the advertisement should also lead to the consumer ultimately making a purchase due to exposure to the advertisement. Satellite television has become a major competitor to national network television, leading to a fragmentation of consumers. Tyre manufacturers need to conduct appropriate research in identifying the appropriate target audiences vis a vis the various television channels. In doing so, the correct medium can be used to convey the message to the appropriate target group of consumers. Television advertisements should not be too long. A 30-45 sec tyre advertisement screened over a long period of time may become boring. Short, attention grabbing television advertisements, lasting say 10 sec can be more effective. The findings show that there is still support for television advertising for tyres. This should continue but with the use of complimentary media in conjunction with television advertisements with a view to achieving synergy in communication. Emerging media such as social networks and electronic media can be used to good effect. Consumer interaction can prove valuable in promoting the products of tyre manufacturers.

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