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How Sensitive are Indonesian Customers to Sexual Appeal Advertising? (A Study of the Axe TV Commercial, “Heaven on Earth”)

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Abstract

Previous studies have shown somewhat of a contradiction in the effect of sexual appeal advertising on purchase intention. This research aims to examine from an Indonesian perspective the consumer response to sexual appeal advertising and the subsequent purchase intention toward the products advertised. Through advertising, companies seek to be seen as the providers of creative and innovative products. Therefore company success increasingly relies on advertising appeal. One of these appeals is sexual advertising that is considered to be uniquely able to attract the attention of consumers and strengthen the brand with favorable associations. Such appeal eventually influences purchase decisions and stimulates purchase intention. This research uses quantitative methods through a consumer survey and simple regression analysis. Samples included 120 heterosexual men in the 15-24 year age group who reside in Indonesia's third largest city, Bandung. Results show that the consumer response to sexual appeal advertising of AXE is positive and consumer purchase intention of AXE products after watching the “Heaven on Earth” advertisements series is strongly positive. Sexual appeal advertising is shown to have a statistically significant positive effect on Indonesian consumers' purchase intentions.

Keywords: Advertising, Sexual Appeal Advertising, Purchase Intention

1. Introduction

Appropriate advertising plays an increasingly significant role in the marketing activities of companies facing industry competition. Advertising has been considered one of the most effective means of providing information on company products and in the attraction of new customers to the firm. To win against industry competition and capture market share, companies cannot operate in an environment of half-hearted advertising spending. Nielsen Advertising Information Services (2013) indicated that Indonesian media spending reached Rp 51. 2 trillion in the first half of 2013. This showed a 25% increase in the national media spending in the first half of 2013 compared to the same period in the previous year, and a 130% increase over the same period in 2009.

One effective advertising medium in conveying a message and affecting consumers is television. Nielsen Advertising Information Services (2013) calculated that in the first half of 2013, television media advertising contributed approximately 68 % of total ad spend. Kotler and Keller (2012: 670) state that the television advertising has a significant advantage in that it has a broad range that combines image, sound, and motion to stimulate the senses and heighten attention. Television advertising has grown from just display images and communication about the product. It now relies on a wider range of appeal to attract attention. According to Belch and Belch (2009: 283), advertising now contains a kind of fascination that includes informational/rational appeal, but also emotional appeal expressed in fear, humor, or sex.

A significant appeal often used by advertisers is sexual. 'Sex sells' is a trusted philosophy used by several marketers in the pursuit of marketing their products. Sexual appeal advertising is thus one application of the philosophy of