GOVERNMENTAL INFLUENCE ON MEDIA AND ITS EFFECT ON ADVERTISING INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The research is based on the foundation that Pakistani government has always been directly or indirectly involved in media. This direct or indirect influence has always been affecting the advertising industry in more than one ways and the only suffering party in the end is the consumer. The effects of involvement of governmental institutions and departments in planning of marketing and mainly advertising campaigns has been measured and the results indicate that consumers are getting biased and faulty messages. Also, advertising industry has turned a deaf ear to government’s activities since governmental clients are a big source of income for the advertising agencies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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DEDICATION

To my Parents, whose unconditional love has inspired me throughout my life.

Thanks for your support – words can’t describe how much it means to me.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

As the twentieth century progressed, the media slowly but surely developed into an institution as powerful as any government, corporation or individual. While politicians and governments obviously have a certain influence on the actions of the media through laws, regulations and actions, the level of influence that the media, has on public opinion, and thus public policy, is often overlooked. “The media as an institution has a great deal of power” (Karnik 611). In the past half century, the media has toppled presidents and leaders, changed the outcome of wars, and shown the public what to think on almost every single domestic and foreign affair (Fair, 2003).

People communicate even without any modern communication media, exchange ideas and alter their behavior. But the astonishing growth of the mass media first print, then radio and now television and computer communication-has raised new possibilities for rapid global communication and thus the new theories about how people may react and change as a result of mass media. The media, advertising and entertainment industries, collectively known as mass media, are powerful because they penetrate every segment of modern-day society and effectively influence how consumers

view themselves, their neighbors, communities and the world. Although the mass media denotes outlets beyond newspapers, radio and television, and the scope of media influence now extends to digital spectrum, cable and satellite technology and the internet, it remains a fact that the TV is the single major and foremost communicator of our times (www.thenews.com.pk).

Television has changed the way teachers teach, government, religious leaders preach and even the demeanor of madness and love. It has the capacity of saying the unsaid even in a selectively traditional society like Pakistan.

Nowadays, the media has emerged as the essential player in granting priority to the issue of any origin. The ruling elite of Pakistan, like elsewhere, are also aware that information is power. Their general attitude towards the media is obviously dictating and opposing. The net impact of this desire to control the right to information is that educated individuals are not instructed with development issues and contemporary debates

A quarter of the world consists of young people between the ages of 10-14 years. Of these 86 percent, live in developing countries. Pakistan currently has the largest cohort of young people in its history (25 million aged 15-24) and subsequent cohorts are projected to be even larger (Dr. Parveen et al., 2004).

Rationale

In Pakistan, advertisements have become part of the national politics. The government is dominating the publicity campaigns in the news media as it constantly

tries to dictate its own news agenda. The government is using public money to highlight its “good performance” more through words and images rather than actions (Jan, 2004).

Keeping in eye the known facts this research aims to explore the effects on advertising industry caused by governmental influence on media.

Problem Statement

“Governmental Influence on Media and its effect on advertising industry.”

Objectives

- To explore the impact that the Government and Political Parties of Pakistan have on Pakistani Media.
- To find out whether the omnipresent interference from the Government in advertising industry is beneficial for the advertising industry or not.
- To find out the current state and condition of advertising industry in Pakistan under the Governmental influence.
- To find out whether Governmental departments and institutes are a major source of income for advertising industry or not.
- To inquire whether the advertising industry would be better off without the Governmental influence.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATUR REVIEW

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (Jan, 2004).

Although Pakistan is marching into the age of commercialized media, where advertising sets the agenda in electronic and print media, the country's media is still heavily under influence of government. The official state-owned media remains captive as before, barring occasional aberrations such as brief clips of political parties' activities on Khabarnama.

Moreover it's a heated discussion whether the political parties should be allowed more freedom. A number of NGOs want to highlight such issues but are not being able to because of conflicting spheres of interest (Jan et al., 2004).

Perhaps due to the influence of mass media in communication, information is mostly defined in the context of 'news'. That is anything that people do not know and it could make news is information. Moreover, a large amount of information is being spread in the form of advertisement.

The governments seem to uphold this false perception that its only them who have information which people would be

interested; therefore the way in which information is gathered, sifted, articulated, recorded, disseminated, received, understood, employed and benefited become flawed. This type of information articulation exercise does not recognize ‘feed back’ on information provided as valid correcting and informing method (Bhatti et al., 2004).

Airwaves across Pakistan are buzzing with a number of new radio stations and cable TV channels, and its newsstands are spilling over with new magazines and newspapers: the free press appears to be flowering.

But what consumers do not see is the self-censorship practiced behind the scenes. Media analysts say it is a creeping phenomenon in parts of the region, with journalists living under threats of violence, dismissal, or loss of advertising revenue if they break reporting taboos, from military corruption to social issues like homosexuality and forced marriage.

An editor at the daily The News, Asha’r Rehman, said Pakistani journalists practice “self-censorship especially on matters related to the military”. The Musharraf regime has permitted a degree of freedom to the media, but patience with criticism of the government has slumped sharply since then.

Many stories are only written with the support of a non-governmental organization such as Aina. They are under the umbrella of a few NGOs, who can push them to go and tackle issues which are not covered otherwise. Without this umbrella this is simply not possible.

Big-time newspapers have enormous clout in politics and many have hidden loyalties and affiliations, but in small towns, reader-starved newspapers are dependent on state advertisement and hence they silently suffer bureaucratic autocracy (et al, www.dailytimes.com.pk).

Over the past months, repression of press freedoms, despite the many claims to the contrary, has grown increasingly hostile. Government advertising, a key revenue source for all newspapers, has once more been stopped to the Nawa-e-Waqt group of publications. Similar action against the group had been taken last year, with the issue resolved only after many months. There are numerous complaints of official intimidation from a number of journalists, editors and newspaper owners - including those based in Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas - and it is now obvious such harassment is part of a plan to stifle media liberties (Haider, 2005).

A free electronic media can protect the public through investigative programs that keep a check on the government's abuse of power or those that protect consumers from extortion, adulteration etc.

Unfortunately, in Pakistan, even when we had democracy, governments were not willing to free the electronic media. But cable and satellite TV enabled the public to get information from alternate sources. As a result the government controlled electronic media became totally discredited. PTV and radio news became BB Nama or Nawaz Nama, depending on who was in power. The constant flow of

propaganda from the electronic media led to widespread disillusionment and cynicism.

Poverty increased three times (in 1988 there were 17 million people below the poverty line and today there are almost 50 million) and the total debt went up three times, some of the political class became billionaires. It is these politicians who are the beneficiaries of the current media policy of this government **(**et al., www.insaf.org.pk**).**

Pakistan Tele Vision (PTV) Corporation is also being accused of governmental influence and interesting cases haves reached country's courts against the systematic sale of airtime on state run television. For example for selling airtime and prime time for PTV, PTV World, etc, the respondents at PTV did not call or invite any bid.

Moreover petitioners like “Combine Media” and “Goldwater Media”, both private production houses, applied numerous times for different time slots but they have been refused and denied airtime on one pretext or the other, except for a few irregular time slots allowed after long intervals.

The decisions for such time slots are always partial, and are continuously being granted to only a few parties who are favorites of the higher-ups of the respondents for different reasons.

PTV is not private property but is a public service company under the control and supervision of the government of Pakistan. In all instances of selling time slots for different channels of PTV they are bound to grant or sell

time slots by inviting bids in the newspapers in a transparent and open-policy manner, without any discrimination or favor to any party.

However, only particular individuals or groups of individuals are being benefited repeatedly by one or the other quarter. After purchasing time slots, they (these individuals and groups) also sell airtime to other parties at exorbitant prices (Rehmat, Iqbal & Khan, et al., 2002).

Pakistan's recent history reveals that both the corporate and government control over media has taken a new shape. Corporate greed and monopolistic trends in the media industry have thrust this industry into indirect and invisible subjugation of government control. Both seem to be protecting each other's interests -- corporate or political.

Freedom of information is equally essential for the people and the rulers, in order to ensure good governance. Only bad governments promote a culture of secrecy for their survival. Good governments make democracy functional by ensuring sovereignty of parliament, independence of judiciary and freedom of press (Munir, 2005).

According to PEMRA Ordinance 2002, the Authority has been mandated to:

- Improve the standards of information, education and entertainment,
- Enlarge the choice available to the people of Pakistan in the media,

- Facilitate the devolution of responsibility and power to the grassroots by improving the access of the people to mass media at the local and community level,
- Ensure accountability, transparency and good governance by optimizing the free flow of information.

(www.pemra.com.pk)

As for offences and penalties, any broadcaster or Cable TV (CTV) operator or person who violates or abets the violation of any of the provisions of the PEMRA laws will be guilty of an offence punishable with a fine which may extend to one million rupees. Where such broadcaster or CTV operator or person repeats the violation or abetment, such person will be guilty of an offence punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.

The Pakistan government, however, has included an indemnity in the law for itself. No suit, prosecution or other legal proceeding will be allowed against the federal or any provincial government or local authority or any other person exercising any power or performing any function under this law “or for anything which is in good faith done or purporting or intended to be done under this Ordinance or any rule made there under” (et al,. www.internews.net.pk)

All these rules show that operating a radio or television station in the private sector in Pakistan will not be an easy task and some of the main problems will be huge operational funds, an absence of formal professional

training for technical and production staff and the omnipresent government interference, influence and control.

Educating the news media on greater impact their actions have on the world will help them move beyond thinking solely of ratings and advertising revenue. Moreover the Governments should also soften its grip over media and should understand the importance of fair and just communication channels (Munir, 2005).

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Data

In order to carry out this research in a clear and concise manner, it is important that the data being collected is not biased and does not reflect the opinions of only a particular class of people.

The data that has been collected is mainly in subjective form. Since the nature of the topic is such that the most important data is only found in subjective form.
Moreover, qualitative data has also been collected via interviews in order to evaluate the general perception about the topic at hand.

Sources of Data

The major part of data is collected from secondary sources. These sources include books and periodicals, statistical abstracts, case studies, online journals and other archival records. All the above mentioned sources are qualitative in nature. There was more than one reason for selecting secondary data sources, one being that latest and up to date information was available. Various interviews have been conducted supported by a questionnaire which can be found in the appendix. The purpose of the interview was to get the first hand information on the topic at hand and to

get the opinion from those who are actually in the advertising business.

The questionnaire consists of eight items in all. Each question has been designed in order to gain maximum information relating to the main element of this research paper which is the affects of governmental influence on advertising industry.

Procedure

This research is descriptive in nature. After carefully collecting the relevant data and information about the governmental influence on media, the data and the collected information have been studied in detail. From that data the current conditions of governmental influence and its affect on advertising industry are highlighted.

Structured interviews were conducted from six major advertising agencies doing business in Islamabad and through out the country.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis on the Government's Activities

In Pakistan, advertisements have become part of the national politics. The government dominates the publicity campaigns in the news media as it tries to dictate its own news agenda. The government uses public money to highlight its "good performance" more through words and images rather than actions. Some newspapers too readily agree to barter their editorial independence for expensive government ads. The deal may take different forms like the newspaper dropping critical stories about the government or including pro – government editorials, news reports and articles. In the end, the one who is suffering is the consumer who is getting biased information about the products and services. These ads at times have large pictures of the president, prime ministers or other "VVIPs" with no public service message other than congratulations or welcome slogans.

A new method of using public money to please newspaper groups has now been introduced. Special supplements are published through public money at home and abroad with entirely one sided, favourable, and useless messages and comments from political personalities with their college day's pictures.

All this money could be spent for some better purpose rather than self projection and misleading the masses. The worst thing that could happen to Pakistani media has happened. The newspaper paper groups have started their own advertising business and the news paper owners have started assuming editorial control of their publications too. Call it cross media ownership or conflict of interest; the newspapers are secretly pursuing their different businesses through misuse of their editorial space. Big advertising companies owned by newspaper groups are eating away the public space of newspapers.

One of today's leading newspaper "Jang Group of News" uses public information space to publicize its private TV channel (Geo Television Network) programmes. This newspaper is reluctant to give advertising space to its rival media companies who are not in the newspaper business. Another newspaper promotes its FM channel business. Full page advertisements appear in some newspapers as the news reports are relegated to inner pages (Jan et al., 2004).

Code of Ethics

There is a list of do's and don'ts for the advertisers and the publishers. The objective is to protect the interest of the consumers. While the print media with far less audience than the broadcast media gets away with all kinds of advertisements, the broadcasters have to follow the code more vigilantly. The newspapers have no self regulatory body that should ensure truthful advertising. But even the broadcasters, with elaborated TV Code of Advertising

Standards, prepared by Pakistan Television, are openly flouting the rules.

The code's author, the PTV, itself leads others in such violations. The ads relating to soaps and washing sodas openly use images and sounds of medical practitioners describing every other soap as "No. 1" and "Doctor's No. 1 Choice" (Jan, 2004).

Violation of Code of Advertising

There is a long list of violation which could be found out once the PTV places its code of advertising on its website. However, I have been able to dig out the following set of violations the proof of which can be easily seen on the broadcast media.

Example 1

There are many instances of PTV and other channels flouting their own code through advertising products with unverified claims, advertising government's lottery schemes - violating section of code relating to morals of society and section 18 on gifts and prizes (Rehmat, Iqbal & Khan, 2004).

Example 2

The worst violation takes place when PTV's boom operators suddenly increase the volume of commercial sounds. People who have worked in the broadcast organizations know that the boom operators are being paid by a particular advertising company for creating a storm into the calm

atmosphere of homes. This violates section 16 of the TV code which states:

"Audible matter in advertisements must not be excessively noisy or strident" (Rehmat, Iqbal & Khan, 2004)

Example 3

Showing heaps of currency notes in ads is another controversial method adopted by the companies and the government. The private companies are urging public to participate in lotteries, promising million of rupees. The emphasis is no on the product but on the cash that might make them rich overnight.

Slogans like *Kon Baney Ga Badsha*, and *Ratoon Raat Karoor Pati Baniyeah* invite people to betting rather than shopping. The Punjab Government Lottery Scheme is no different.
Section 18 of the code states:

> *"Commercials of products and services containing offers of premium or gifts would be unacceptable if there is any element of lottery or indirect gambling. This restriction would not apply where such gifts or premiums constitute a price reduction or are of a promotional character."*

PTV continues to promote 0900 advertising campaigns which are in clear violation of the above provision (Rehmat, Iqbal & Khan, 2004).

Government Owned TV Network (PTV) and Advertising

Apart from being a unique public service broadcaster that makes compelled recovery of its license fee through utility bills, the PTV uses its terrestrial market to dominate the advertising market.

The recently allowed private satellite TV channels have limited influence of advertising market owing to their limited access to the masses.

Unlike the internationally known public service broadcasters like the BBC, which is not allowed to take advertising but only the license fee, the PTV, is allowed on the one hand to pick its viewer's pockets (through forced license fee payment), and on the other, give them a blinkered view of the national and international issues (Jan, 2004).

Formal Interviews

This section shows the results obtained from the conducted interviews. The objectives behind conducting the interviews were:

- To get the insight from the people involved in advertising industry about the role of government in shaping the media and its affects on advertising industry.
- To investigate whether advertising industry is concerned about the ways the government it self is manipulating and violating the laws of broadcast media.

The Respondents

The interviews were conducting from the personnel of the following advertising agencies.

- Channel 7 - Islamabad
- Manhattan Private Limited – Islamabad
- Orient McCann Erickson
- Midas Advertising
- Evernew Concepts – Islamabad
- Red Communication Art - Islamabad

The questionnaire can be found in the appendices (Appendix A).

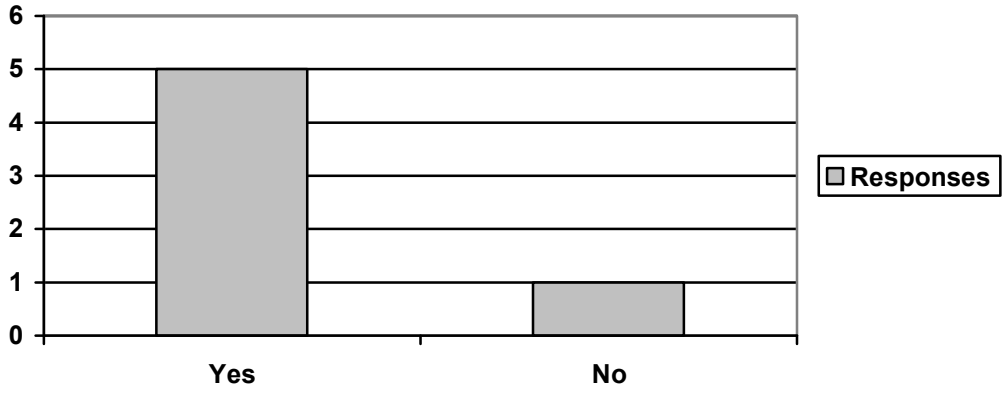
Table 4 – 1: Sample Size (N): 6

Overall response of the respondents on governmental influence on media and its affect on advertising industry.

Table 4 - 1

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	5	83.3	83.3	83.3
No	1	16.7	16.7	100

Figure 4 - 1



When asked if the respondents feel that government is using its authority and power to shape the advertisement campaigns run through media, majority responded positively and believed that Government in spite of so called "Media Independence" is using its contacts, financial support and authority which in turn is limiting the right of consumer for independent advertisement. Many believe that government is using its financial resources to pursue its mission of spreading false goodwill across the country, to which an ordinary lower middle income or lower income level consumer easily falls pray to – Consumer which is member of the biggest income level group in Pakistan.

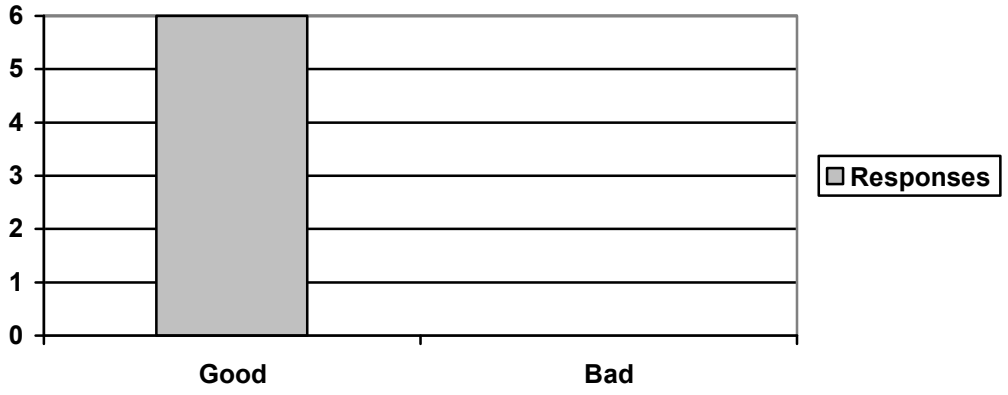
Table 4 – 2: Sample Size (N): 6

Government's Involvement in the Advertising Industry good or bad

Table 4 - 2

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Good	6	100	100	100
Bad	0	0	0	100

Figure 4 - 2



The entire group of respondents believed that Government's involvement in the advertising industry is not a bad thing after all. This response indicates that although many believe that Government is adopting false measures to get its message through, at the same time, Government's involvement is not considered bad since it is a source of huge income for the advertising agencies.

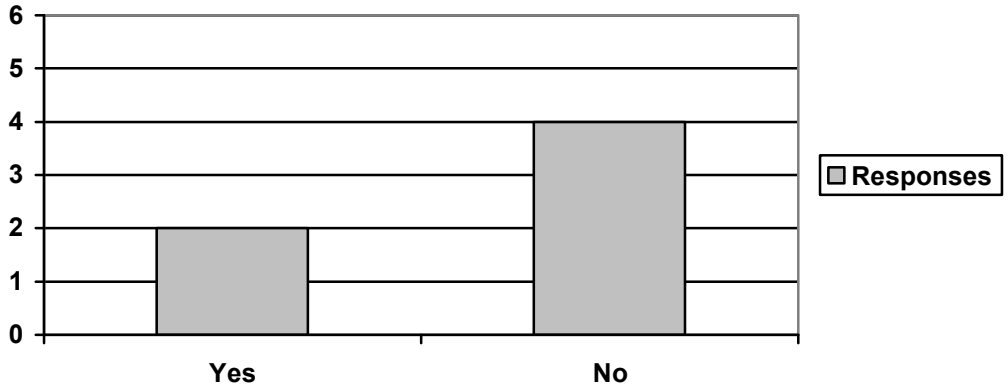
Table 4 - 3: Sample Size (N): 6

If in the Future advertising industry will be more independent and free from government's involvement

Table 4 - 3

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	2	33.3	33.3	33.3
No	4	66.7	66.7	100

Figure 4 - 3



Most of the respondents were optimistic about the future of the advertising industry. Although media independence in real sense seems far fetched due to the authoritative Government of Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf at the moment, the possibility of an independent advertising industry where the rights of the consumer are given the top most priority is still a possibility.

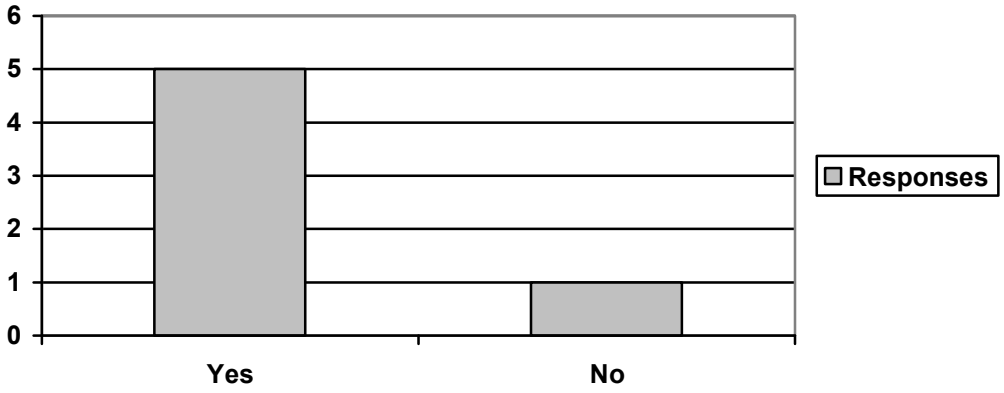
Table 4 - 4: Sample Size (N): 6

If the respondent's advertising agency has any Government clients

Table 4 - 4

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	5	83.3	83.3	83.3
No	1	16.7	16.7	100

Figure 4 - 4



Most of the major ad agencies these days have governmental clients, but they refuse to share specific information about their clients.

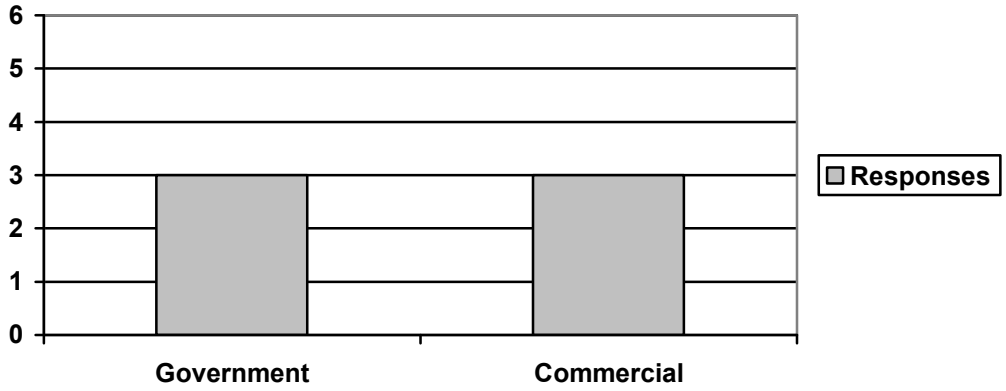
Table 4 - 5: Sample Size (N): 6

Who does the respondent prefer, Government or Commercial Client?

Table 4 - 5

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Government	3	50.0	50.0	50
Commercial	3	50.0	50.0	100

Figure 4 - 5



This is where it was easy to figure out that why the advertising agencies don't have much of a problem from Government's interference in the advertising industry. Most the major advertising agencies in Pakistan, including the ones which were part of this interview have Government Clients and prefer Government clients over the commercial clients. The reason is the huge amounts of fees that these agencies charge and Government doesn't seem to have any problem with paying big amounts.

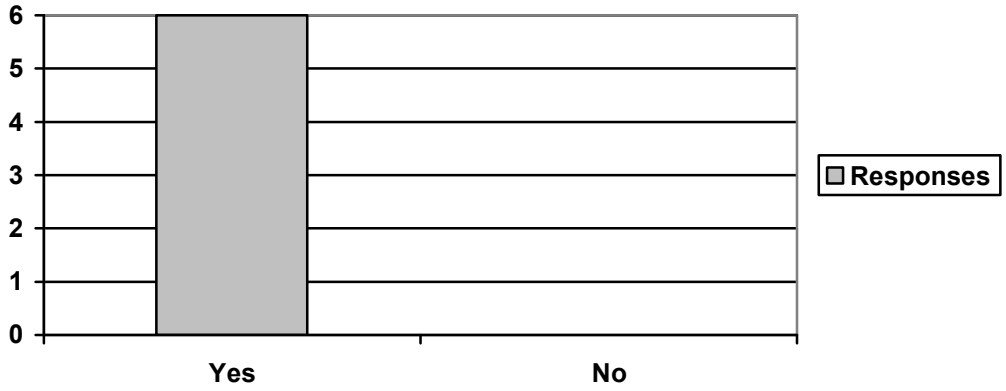
Table 4 - 6: Sample Size (N): 6

If the respondent believes that having a Government Client adds to the value of his/her advertising agency.

Table 4 - 6

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	6	100.0	100.0	100
No	0	0.0	0.0	100

Figure 4 - 6



All the respondents believed that government clients add to the value of the agency. Although they failed to elaborate why but educated guess is that government clients bring in huger amount of investment and long term contracts. Also having a big governmental project, unit or organization as your client surely adds to the goodwill of the agency, and air of competition with the other players of the country.

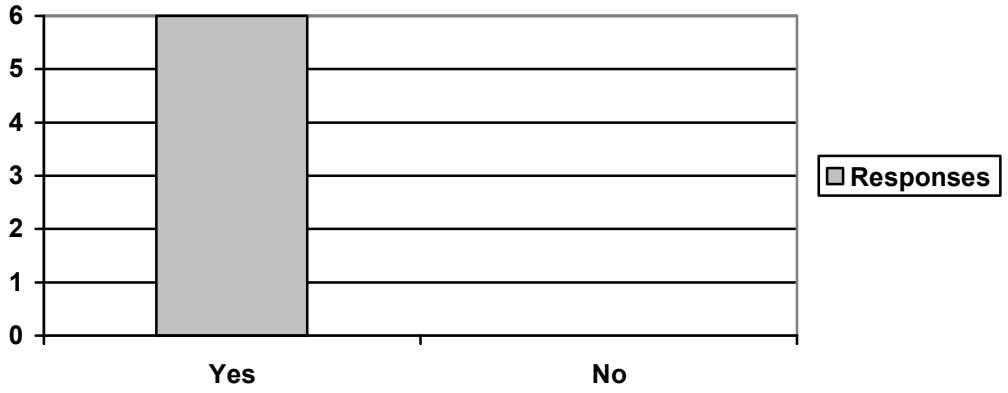
Table 4 - 7: Sample Size (N): 6

If the respondent believes, that government's influence on media monetarily affects the industry.

Table 4 - 7

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	6	100.0	100.0	100.0
No	0	0.0	0.0	100.0

Figure 4 - 7



Here again, response of all the respondents was same. Although not very transparent but its obvious the government is capable of bringing in a lot of amount of money into the advertising industry along with the players in Telecom and Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) market.

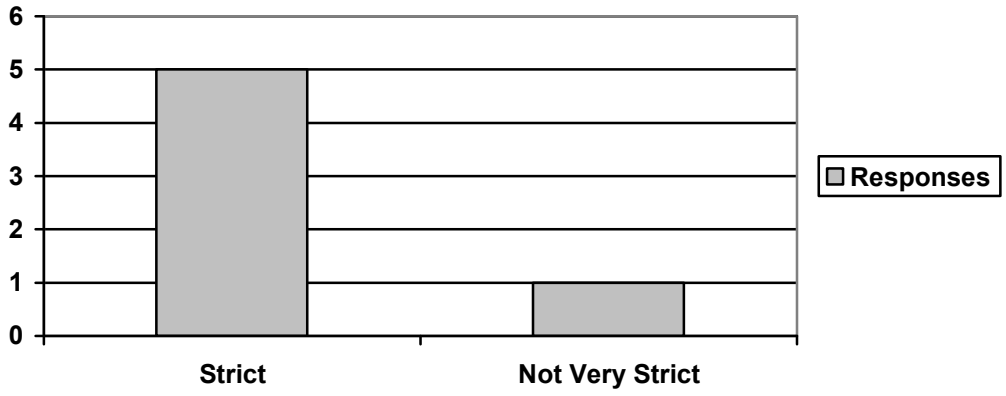
Table 4 - 8: Sample Size (N): 6

How strict does the respondent find the Governmental rules and regulations on the advertising industry.

Table 4 - 8

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strict	5	83.3	83.3	83.3
Not Very Strict	1	16.7	16.7	100

Figure 4 - 8



The response to this question results in interesting interpretation. Although the respondents find the government's rules and regulations strict, there is hardly any compliance of these laws as it has already been mentioned in the report.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The Pakistan advertising scene is bursting at the seams. Few people would suggest that the advertising industry in Pakistan today is not enjoying the best of health. This after a protracted slumber of almost a decade, during which economic activity was at a virtual standstill and investment remained shy, and all that agencies could hope for was the occasional windfall.

Today the business outlook is more promising, with larger advertising budgets and greater economic activity. However, not everyone is benefiting from the upswing in business activity in advertising industry; the consumer is suffering since there is a flow of biased and manipulated information and advertising campaigns in the media (Wasay et al., 2005).

The surge in business of the last two years has been largely brought about by the big – budget campaigns linked to telecom, consumer banking and government sector. People in advertising are earning like they never did before. The last 24 months have seen salaries escalate four and five fold. Part of the reason is the training gap and the most importantly muttering about ‘blackmail’ can be heard,

executives name their price for putting up just the kind of show some big government clients want (Baig, 2005).

Telecom in particular may have easily brought in a quarter of a million rupees as incremental expenditure into the market last year but it was the government that has always been coming up with big budget campaigns (Wasay et al., 2005).

It is heart – warming to see the tremendous rise in professionalism taking place in the government sector in Islamabad, but at the same time violation of laws and biased messages from the government end is not helping the things get better in Pakistan's advertising industry.

Cases in point are Pakistan Telecommunications, Motorway Police, National Institute of Health, National Reconstruction Bureau. The manner in which the above have selected their advertising agencies was very transparent; but the area of concern is the fact that almost all these government accounts bought their electronic media airtime directly from the channels, leading to disparities in the rates – a situation that was to the detriment of the advertising agencies. The media in Pakistan should unite and work together in the cause of professionalism. If you have the best office, the best team and the best creative department, you will attract the best client and you won't have to wait for that lucky day when you get a contract from government sector since this is what most the small and new companies are mostly waiting and wishing for.

Now that the talks of Islamabad overtaking Lahore as an advertising center are underway, Governmental influence to convey biased messages could hinder the path to progress and growth (Mirza et al., 2005).

The consumers today should know that while “seeing is believing”, it may not be true in this age of digital gimmickry of the advertisers (Jan, 2004).

People in Pakistan have all the talent, enterprise, intelligence and drive that successful people anywhere in the world possess. With such a creative and hardworking workforce, no advertising agency should try to make a fortune by signing contracts with unethical and biased advertising campaigns.

Recommendations

- The advertisers and media organizations can be made responsible to the people through judicial activism.

- Our courts should be vigilant in granting damages if caused by false claims in the advertisements so that the advertising campaigns are not allowed to mislead people.

- The consumer right groups should actively pursue cases in which consumers had to face major losses or damages due to lawfully violated advertisement.

- Finally, the consumers themselves should be more vigilant.

Now with hopes high for hosting AdAsia Congress 2009, the Government of Pakistan should make sure that they put up a real nice picture of media independence and freedom. Not just to impress the visitors but to practically implement and follow the rules it has itself made (Baig, 2005).

The time has come for the local agencies to realize their situation and carve out a future for themselves with their own hands. Should a situation arise where governmental advertisers find themselves at a disadvantage in maintaining the status quo with their current ad agencies, and they get the same response from other agencies as well, they will not be left with much of the options but to change the way they are doing business in Pakistan since 1964 when the first TV channel started in Pakistan.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Questionnaire

1. Do you think that Government's invisible hand is playing a vital role in affecting the Pakistani media?

Yes: 5 No: 1 (If your answer is No, Skip to Question 4)

2. If yes, do you think that Government's involvement in the advertising industry is a good thing?

Yes No

3. Do you think that Government's invisible hand is playing a vital role in shaping the advertising industry today?

Yes No

4. Do you have any governmental Clients?

Yes No

5. Who do you prefer as your Client, Governmental Client or Commercial Client?

Governmental Commercial

6. Are you of the viewpoint that having government institutes/departments as your clients add to the value of your company?

Yes No

7. Do you think that Governmental Influence on Media monetarily affects the advertising industry?

Yes No

8. How strict do you find the governmental laws and regulations on advertising industry?

Strict Not very Strict