

**ATTITUDE OF TELEVISION AUDIENCES TOWARDS COMMERCIAL BREAKS IN
PROGRAMMES**

BY

ADWOA SERWAA DANSO

(10340491)

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DECLARATION

I declare that except for the materials quoted from various sources which have been duly acknowledged, this study is entirely mine and produced from research carried under supervision.

I further declare that this work, either in whole or in part, has not been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.



.....

Dr. Sarah Akrofi-Quarcoo

Supervisor

Date:

.....

Adwoa Serwaa Danso

Student

Date

DEDICATION

To my parents, Mr and Mrs Opong Danso who have toiled to ensure I further my education, and to my siblings, Derick, Anas and Afua and my uncle, King George for their support.



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I express my deepest gratitude first of all to God Almighty for the strength given to me. My profound appreciation goes to Dr Sarah Akrofi-Quarcoo who supervised my work in spite of her numerous academic and professional commitments.

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated the attitude of television audiences towards commercial breaks in programmes through a survey of 200 respondents from University of Ghana. Multi-stage sampling was employed which involved the use of purposive sampling and systematic sampling. Findings indicated that majority of the respondents watched commercial breaks. It was revealed that most of them made a motivated choice as to whether to watch or avoid commercial breaks. Also majority of them did not like commercial breaks within television programmes but preferred them to be aired before a programme starts and when it ends. The major motivations for watching commercial breaks were information, product category, entertainment and the desire not to miss the next scene in a TV programme whilst those who avoided did so because there were too many commercials in commercial breaks. Respondents were more engaged in mechanical avoidance than cognitive and physical avoidance. Majority of the respondents switched the channel or stayed in the room but diverted attention during commercial breaks. There were some differences too in terms of age and gender. More females than males watched commercial breaks and more males than females avoided too. The major motivations to watch commercial breaks were the same for both genders but in terms of avoidance behaviour, more females than males engaged in physical and cognitive avoidance whilst males engaged mostly in mechanical avoidance. Furthermore, during commercial avoidance, more females than males stayed in the room and diverted attention and more males than females changed the channel. Regarding the age groups, there was less difference in response rate among those who watched commercial breaks but majority of the respondents who avoided commercial breaks were 30 years and above. This has implications for organisations that use TV for advertisements and for TV stations as well.

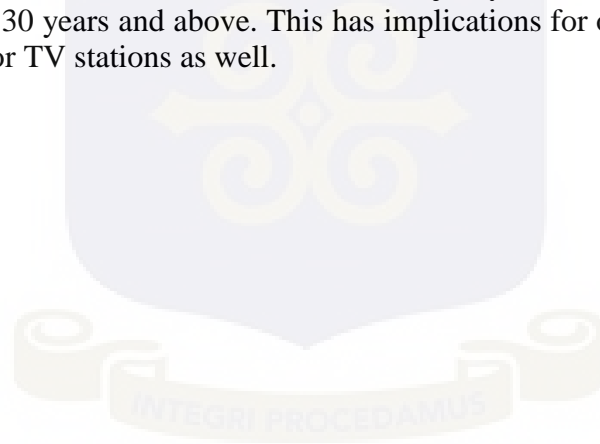


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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Commercial breaks are common features of daily television programming globally. These breaks are typically set aside slots for airing series of commercials at particular points in time when it is believed viewership is high. Commercial breaks are believed to attract large audiences. Advertising or commercial space is chosen based on programme ratings (Paech, Riebe & Sharp, 2003) and Roy (2013) suggests that the effectiveness of a television commercial depends on the program it is inserted in.

Television commercial breaks could be controlling because in theory and practice television stations tend to assume that there is a passive audience, glued to television sets who are constantly watching all programmes including commercials. However, several studies have established that this is not empirically the case because audiences are also actively selecting what to watch, how to watch and when to watch content.

Biocca (1998) has pointed out that at the centre of mass communication is a split between the opposite conceptions of the mass media and its audiences. On one hand, audiences are assumed to be active (Devin, 1980; Klapper, 1960; Van Meurs, 1999) and on the other hand, they are assumed to be passive (Gerbner, Cross, Morgan & Signoreilli, 1996; Kubey, 1986; Kubey & Sikszenmihalyi, 1990; Barnice & Ehrenberg, 1988).

The active audiences are rational and selective as to which media content to be exposed to. Active audiences as rational audiences put on their television sets to watch programmes but not commercials and so these commercial breaks may be worrisome to them (Van Meurs, 1999). They make motivated choices and expect some benefits from the media content they expose themselves

to; hence, the less motivation leads to greater chance of avoiding commercial breaks (Elpers, Leonline & Marie, 2003). Even when these rational audiences decide to watch the commercials it is based on a motivated choice. They consider the benefits they are likely to get from the decisions they take.

Some researchers who support the passive ideology also claim that, television is a way of killing time when the audiences have nothing to do and so audiences put on their television sets and watch what is available which includes commercial breaks within these programmes (Barnice & Ehrenberg, 1988). Gerbner (1979) also claims television audiences watch television by the clock and not by the programme. This supports the passive ideology and so audiences do not have specific programmes or content they want to be exposed to. The passive audiences are therefore assumed not to be bothered by commercial breaks in programmes.

Kwak, Andras and Zirkhan (2009), argue that research on the audiences has shifted from the passive idea of the audience to the active idea of the audience. Individuals have preferences for media use and in this case, commercial breaks in television programmes. These researchers suggest that audiences have more options for controlling their exposure to content (commercial breaks) and so even when they passively watch whatever program is available on television and commercials come, they actively control it (whether to watch or avoid).

Cooper and Tang (2009) for example emphasize the active audience ideology and claim that even though the decision to watch television may be passive, the choice of which content to be exposed to is active and McDonald (1980) also argues that the media audiences are not passive but choose to pay attention. So when audiences put on their television sets even as passive audiences, they choose to pay attention to commercial breaks.

The difference between these active and passive audiences is therefore not clear since passive audiences can also be active at a point in time.

1.1.1 To watch or not to watch

As they encounter commercial breaks, television audiences decide whether to watch or not. Some studies have revealed that the content of the commercials influences the choices audiences make when there is a commercial break in a programme. If the commercials provide the audiences with some form of gratifications, then they are more likely to watch them as compared to when they do not.

One of the most important functions of advertising which includes commercials on television is to provide information (Rubin, 2002) and the commercials on traditional media especially is valued based on how informative it is (Ducoffe, 1995). Therefore commercial breaks that contain relevant information to the audiences are likely to be watched by them. Information could be on the products they are already using or information about new products which are of interest to them.

Misleading information can irritate audiences (Shrestha, 2012; Ling, Phew & Chai, 2010). Hence, the trustworthiness or credibility of the message in the commercials can determine their response or attitude to the commercial breaks. If they feel irritated, they may avoid such commercials.

O'Donohoe (1994) for example has stated that audiences like commercials which are informative, entertaining and contain role models. Chaiken and Eagly (1983) also suggest that high levels of entertainment is valued in TV commercials and this is supported by Saignesh and Parameswaran (2012) who claim that not all advertisements are noticed and not all are skipped by audiences but the ones with entertainment value are watched by audiences.

This means that audiences watch during commercial breaks when commercials are entertaining as compared to boring ones. Entertaining commercials are beautiful and funny to watch (Shrestha, 2012) and audiences can be entertained because of the humour, attractive characters, an engaging storyline and the music. Elpers et al. (2003) suggest that humour is very effective in gaining attention.

The positive “feelings” from these commercials increases the viewing time (Olney, Holbrook & Batra (1991).) and so television audiences’ response to commercial breaks may depend on the pleasure gained (Bauer & Greyser, 1968).

Some studies have revealed that there are differences in what motivates audiences to watch or avoid. For example, Elpers et al. (2003) used eye-tracking technology in the lab and realized that commercial watching increases with entertainment content and decreases with information content. However in O’Donohoe (1994), audiences watched commercials because they are informative. Individuals therefore have their personal choices.

Regarding socio-demographic variables, gender is an influential demographic variable on attitude towards television commercial breaks (Heeter & Greenberg, 1985). Some gender studies have shown audiences are likely to watch commercials that are relevant to their need which is as a result of their gender. For instance, in a study by Yarahmadi (2015), female respondents showed more interest in TV commercials that had feminine products whilst the males also showed more interest in commercials that had masculine products. It was found that females liked commercials that were informative as compared to males and a similar study by Logan, Bright and Gangadharbatla (2012) also found same for females. However females preferred entertaining commercials in Yasin, Anwar and Sajid (2013) and audiences disliked advertisements irrelevant to their need.

Levy and Windahl (1984) point out three phases in the decision to watch or avoid media content and in this case commercial breaks. These are; before the exposure, during the exposure and after the exposure. This study would however concentrate on 'before the exposure' and 'during the exposure' since 'after the exposure' is about recall of the message in the commercials which is outside the scope of this study.

When audiences are confronted with commercial breaks some make the decision even before they see the commercials and this is known as before the exposure whilst some watch and then make the decision to continue watching or avoid it. The decision is assumed to be based on a motivated choice.

1.1.2 Commercial avoidance behaviour

Television audiences have devised several techniques to reduce their exposure to commercials during commercial breaks in programmes. Researchers have categorized such avoidance behaviour into various ways; mechanical, behavioural, cognitive and physical avoidance.

El-Adly (2010) for example identified three categories of avoidance as mechanical, cognitive and physical avoidance. Mechanical avoidance involves switching off the television or muting the volume during a commercial break in a programme. This usually involves the use of the remote control. Cognitive avoidance refers to diverting one's attention during a commercial break to other activities. In this case, the audiences stay in the room but do not pay attention to the commercial breaks. They engage in activities such as reading or even using other media. Physical avoidance involves leaving the room when the commercial break starts. Audiences may leave the room to engage in other relevant activities.

Technology has led to the introduction of the remote control, mobile devices and many different television channels (Van Meurs, 1999). Kitchen and Yorke (1986) and Elpers et al. (2003) attribute commercial avoidance behavior to technology and contend that, technology has changed the passive audiences to active audiences.

1.1.3 Television in Ghana

Before the 1992 constitution, the state had monopoly over the media through the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation. Media content was therefore censored.

The first call for applicants to operate broadcasting services independent of GBC was in 1995 through the Ghana Frequency Registration and Control Board (GFRCB) which was later superseded by National Communications Authority (NCA) (Ghana Broadcasting Study, 2005).

The NCA lists 75 authorised television stations and out of this number, 21 are Analogue Terrestrial Television (free on air), 29 Satellite Television Broadcasting (Free-To-Air Direct-Home Single Channel), 7 Satellite Television Broadcasting (Pay TV Direct-To-Home Bouquet), 6 Satellite Television Broadcasting (Free-To-Air Direct-To-Home Bouquet), 5 Digital Terrestrial Pay Television (Service and Frequency), 5 Digital Terrestrial Free-To-Air Television Programme Channel, 1 Digital Terrestrial Pay Television (Service Only) and 1 Digital Cable Television as at the second quarter of 2016 (NCA, 2017).

The liberalization of the airwaves has therefore led to the establishment of many TV stations which means various programmes or content for audiences to choose from and also giving the opportunity for organisations to promote their businesses on these stations.

These organisations have their businesses promoted through the commercial breaks which can be before a programme, within a programme and after a programme. The period during which these

commercial breaks are aired differ across TV stations and so whilst one station may be on a commercial break, another may not.

1.2 Problem statement

Television stations in Ghana today have become major channels for businesses to sell their products. In the current state of television pluralism in Ghana, the likelihood of audiences' exposure to commercial breaks remains high. However, it is also true in theory and practice that television audiences are active and do indeed rationally put on their television sets to watch programmes and not solely commercials (Van Meurs, 1999). Even when these audiences appear passive, they are assumed to choose to pay attention to particular media content (McDonald, 1980) and these may not necessarily be commercial breaks. Atlas and Oztunc (2012) also argue that television audiences constantly face the dilemma of what to do when commercials appear in programmes.

Since commercial breaks are not bargained for by television audiences, they choose whether or not to pay attention. Elpers et al. (2003), suggest audiences make a motivated choice as to which media content to expose themselves to.

Rojas-Mendez et al. (2009) posit that attitude towards commercials differ by country and Gorree (2008) also argues that generally, advertising exposure differs across demographic groups. Some of the findings in relation to demographic and social variables seem conflicting.

With regard to gender for instance, Tirean and Roman (2015) found that females were more engaged in cognitive and physical avoidance and men engaged in mechanical avoidance. Rojas Mendez et al also studied three countries and found that whilst in some countries there were significant differences between males and females, other countries did not reveal same. UK had

significant differences in only behavioural avoidance (cognitive and physical) which meant both males and females were engaged in mechanical avoidance.

The present study seeks to interrogate some of these findings in the context of Ghana. Underpinned by the Uses and Gratifications, Selective Exposure and Social Role theories, the research is guided by the following objectives and research questions.

1.3 Objectives

The main objective of this study is to identify the attitude of Ghanaian television audiences, specifically University of Ghana students, towards commercial breaks in programmes. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Find out the specific behaviours exhibited towards commercials breaks in television programmes.
2. Find out what motivates television audiences to watch or avoid commercial breaks in programmes.
3. Find out when television audiences watch or avoid commercial breaks in programmes.
4. Find out if socio-demographic variables such as gender and age influence audiences' attitude towards commercials breaks.

1.4 Research questions

1. What specific behaviours do television audiences exhibit towards commercial breaks in programmes?
2. What motivates television audiences to watch or avoid commercial breaks in programmes?
3. When do television audiences watch or avoid commercial breaks in programmes?

4. Do socio-demographic variables such as gender and age influence television audiences' attitude towards commercial breaks within programmes?

1.5 Significance

The findings of this research will contribute greatly to literature on audience studies specifically viewing behaviour towards commercial breaks in television programmes. This will help provide a better understanding of audiences' engagement with commercial breaks. By extension, television stations and organisations will know how best to handle commercial breaks in programmes.

1.6 Operationalization of terms

Audiences: Audiences refer to people who watch television. The audiences in this study are University of Ghana students.

Commercials: In this study, commercials are advertisements aired during television programmes. These can be paid advertising slots or that of sponsors of the programme.

Commercial breaks: Commercial breaks in this study refer to breaks in or within television programmes to air commercials (advertisements). A series of commercials are aired during these periods of breaks in television programmes.

Attitude: Attitude refers to how the television audiences respond to or react during the commercial breaks in programmes. For instance, some audiences watch whilst others choose to engage in mechanical, cognitive or physical avoidance.

Avoidance Behaviour: Avoidance behaviour refers to audiences' means of avoiding the commercial breaks. This study will use mechanical, physical and cognitive avoidance proposed in El-Adly (2010).

Mechanical Avoidance: This occurs when television audiences switch off the television, mute the volume or switch channel during commercial breaks. Switching or changing channels is also known as zapping. This is sometimes done with the help of the television remote control.

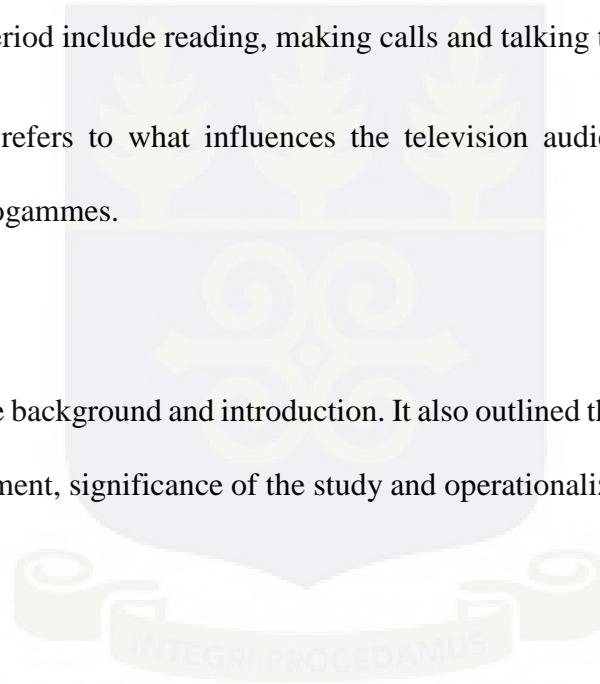
Physical Avoidance: This kind of avoidance involves leaving the room to perform other duties during commercial breaks in television programmes.

Cognitive Avoidance: This occurs when television audiences stay in the room during the commercial breaks in television programmes but divert their attention to other things. Activities engaged in during this period include reading, making calls and talking to others.

Motivation: Motivation refers to what influences the television audiences to watch or avoid commercial breaks in programmes.

1.7 Summary

This chapter looked at the background and introduction. It also outlined the objectives and research questions, problem statement, significance of the study and operationalization of terms.



CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RELATED STUDIES

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theories underpinning this study, specifically the Uses and Gratifications, Social Role and Selective Exposure theories.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory perceives audiences to be very active and concentrates on what they do with the media. Hence it goes contrary to the passive audience ideology. Selective exposure is also a theory that supports the active audience ideology. It posits that audiences are selective as to which media content to be exposed to. Social Role Theory however seeks to explain the gender differences and evaluates how societal notions of gender roles leads to differences in behaviour between males and females. This chapter also looks at related studies on television audiences' attitude towards commercial breaks in programmes.

2.1.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory was first outlined by Elihu Katz (1959) when he reacted to a claim by Berelson (1959) that the field of communication appears to be dead. According to him, it was the field of persuasion that was dead and he urged researchers to concentrate on what people do with the media rather than what the media do to audiences. This theory contests other communication theories such as Hypodermic Needle Theory and Cultivation Theory which predict universal effects of mass communication messages on all audiences who are exposed to them. According to Severin and Tankard (2001), research on the effects of mass media did not provide much support for the hypodermic needle theory but what was used to support the limited effects model.

This theory began in the 1940s when researchers became interested in why audiences were involved in various forms of media behaviour (Wimmer & Domminick, 1994). The Uses and Gratifications Theory portrays audiences as very active and make decisions to attend to a particular media based on some gratifications they could obtain from them. It seeks to explain the uses of media and the satisfactions derived from them (McQuail, 2005).

The main assumptions of the Uses and Gratifications Theory are that, the audiences are active, hence media use is goal directed, the initiative in linking need gratification and media choices lies with the audiences and the media competes with other sources of need satisfaction. It has provided various ways of understanding the motivations and gratifications of audiences, for engaging with media. For instance, McQuail, Blumler and Brown (1972) suggest that the media are used for diversion, personal relationships, personal identity and surveillance. Also, individuals were assumed to use media because of the information, personal identity, integration and social interaction and entertainment (McQuail, 1984 & 1987).

It therefore challenges the powerful effects of the media and suggests that the audiences have control over what they consume. It has been criticized for overemphasizing the importance of the mass media. For instance, Elliot (1974) argues that the audiences were much less active than how the Uses and Gratifications Theory suggested.

In relation to this current study, it is assumed that the rational television audiences will put on television sets to watch programmes and not commercial breaks. They are motivated by different reasons to watch these programmes and so commercial breaks within these programmes can be irritating to them. In the case of the audiences that choose to watch the commercial breaks, it is

assumed that they may do so because of the benefits expected from them. They are also motivated by various reasons to avoid the commercial breaks.

Many researchers have argued that research should concentrate on what audiences do with advertising rather than what advertising does to audiences (Singh, 2013).

2.1.3 Selective Exposure

Selective Processes is a theory adopted from the field of Psychology and used in Communication research. The Selective Processes are Selective Exposure, Retention and Perception and they are believed to help media audiences select the information they want to consume, remember and interpret in personally important and idiosyncratic way (Baran, 2011). Selective Exposure is the process by which people expose themselves to only messages consistent with their beliefs. Selective Retention also looks at the process by which individuals remember messages consistent with their beliefs whilst Selective Perception assumes that people will interpret messages in a manner consistent with their beliefs.

This study considers Selective Exposure Theory useful since it will investigate the actions audiences take during a commercial break which is assumed to be a selective exposure activity.

Selective Exposure theory is an extension of the Uses and Gratifications and explains how audiences' agency to use media is selective.

It goes contrary to other direct effects theories or models such as the Hypodermic Needle Theory, Cultivation Theory and Agenda Setting Theory. These direct effect models or theories assume the audiences to be passive; hence, the media have very powerful effects on the audiences. For instance the Hypodermic Needle assumes that once the message from the media "hits" the audiences, it will have a powerful influence on whoever receives it.

However, according to Klapper (1960), people will only expose themselves to media that are in accord with their opinions and interests. Hence, the effects of the media are minimal. Audiences are therefore perceived to be very active and decide which media information, content or message to listen to or watch. Personal opinions and preferences neutralize the effects that the media could have had on audiences which make the effects of the media weak.

Selective exposure is also believed to occur when people's beliefs guide their media selections (Stroud, 2007) but this research will investigate selection of media content. A person's belief may be related to a person's interest (Stroud, 2007) and this influences exposure decision (Donsbach, 1991).

Most studies on Selective Exposure have concentrated on political messages (Feldman, L., Stroud, N. J., Bimber, B. & Wojcieszak, M., 2013) and studies have found a relationship between people's beliefs and their information exposure decision (Stroud, 2007). Studies that have used selective exposure include Stroud (2007), Hart W., Eagly A. H., Lindberg J. M., Albarracin D., Brechan I. and Merrill L.(2009) and Feldman et al. (2013).

In relation to television audiences, they may be selective as to what they watch. They may have their opinions and interests about these commercials and these can determine whether they will watch or avoid the commercials during commercial breaks. For instance, audiences may be interested in commercials that are more entertaining, hence might watch entertaining commercials during commercial breaks in television programmes as compared to informative commercials.

Jonas et al (2005) found that when people are searching for new information, they are often biased in favour of expectations. People therefore have expectations and these guide their decisions to watch or avoid commercial breaks. .

2.1.4 Social Role Theory

The Social Role Theory explains gender differences by evaluating how the behaviour of males and females are shaped by societal notions of gender roles. According to Eagly (1987), the different roles men and women occupy leads to the acquisition of different skills and beliefs and then to gender differences in actual behaviour. So it is assumed that as a result of the roles assigned to men and women in the society, it brings about differences in the way they behave.

There are expectations from both males and females and these form the roles which lead to them behaving differently. Typically men behave and are expected to be more agentic, while women typically behave and are expected to be more communal (Eagly, 1987). Agentic behaviour is characterized by self-assertion, self-expansion and the urge to master whilst communal is characterized by selflessness and concern for others.

According to this theory, females generally are expected to be in the submissive role whilst men take the dominant role (Meyers-Levy & Sternthal, 1991). The dominant position is in accordance with the male agentic behaviour which is characterized by self-assertiveness. Females generally are expected to adopt a more submissive role as opposed to the dominant role (Meyers-Levy & Sternthal, 1991).

Hence, it can be assumed that as a result of the different roles played by both genders, their behaviour towards commercial breaks in programmes will be different. For instance because of the dominant role played by the males, it is expected that males will be in charge of television viewing (Heeter, 1988) and that females are more likely to report that someone else changed channel. Also because of females' role in domestic activity, Moley (1986) reports that they are engaged in it even whilst watching television hence, these commercial breaks may be a period to attend to the domestic activities.

2.1.5 Related studies

Saignaesh and Parameswaran (2012) investigated the avoidance behaviour of television audiences towards commercials in Tamil Nadu, a city in India. They used samples from Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri which are districts in Tamil Nadu. Convenience sampling method was used with a sample size of 370. Two hundred and seventy-eight respondents said they watched the commercials, 79 said they switched most of the time and 13 never watched television commercials. It must be noted that out of the 278 respondents who watched, 26 said they always watched television commercials. The rest of the respondents were engaged in different avoidance behaviour; 68 of the respondents left the room (physical avoidance), 93 diverted attention (cognitive avoidance), 225 said they muted the volume (mechanical), 305 changed channels (mechanical avoidance) and 52 switched off the television. Hence mechanical avoidance had the highest occurrence with most of them zapping (changing channels).

The study also sought to find the reasons for zapping (switching channels) during commercials and so respondents ranked a list of reasons for zapping. Most of them (151) indicated that they wanted to watch other channels, the ads are repetitive rated second (111) and not attractive (47) rated third. Respondents also ranked a list of attributes (nature) of the television commercials that bothered them in watching television commercials. Some of the attributes ranked were sexy postures, vulgarity, meaningless ads, disgusting and impoliteness. Sexy postures and vulgarity ranked first and second respectively. However this study did not investigate the reasons for other avoidance behaviour such as physical and cognitive avoidance. Only the reason for an aspect of the mechanical avoidance which is zapping was investigated.

Rojas Mendez et al. (2008) used multi-stage sampling method to find the universal differences in television commercials avoidance behaviour through a cross-cultural study. Cognitive and

physical avoidance behaviour were classified as behavioural avoidance. Hence the study was on two main avoidance behaviour; mechanical and behavioural avoidance. The researchers used hypothesis and predicted that avoidance behaviour may be based on demographic factors. The relationship between gender and commercial avoidance was investigated. Samples from United Kingdom, Chile and Turkey were used in the study to know universal differences.

They argued that females are polychrones and hence are usually multitasking and so are more likely to engage in other activities when commercials are airing. Also males in most cultures are in the decision making roles and hence, more likely to be in charge of what is to be watched on television. Since men are in charge of what is to be watched, then they control the television especially with the remote control. It was therefore hypothesized that men will engage more in mechanical avoidance whilst women will engage more in behavioural avoidance in United Kingdom, Chile and Turkey.

From the findings, United Kingdom reported significant difference by gender in only behavioural avoidance (physical and cognitive). Females avoided television commercials more than males. Turkey and Chile however reported significant differences for both mechanical and behavioural avoidance (physical and cognitive). Males engaged more in mechanical avoidance whilst females engaged more in behavioural avoidance (physical and cognitive). This study did not investigate the reasons for the commercial avoidance and the audiences that watch.

A gender study by Moley (1986) also supports the claim by Rojas Mendez et al. (2008) that women multi-task and are likely to engage in other activities during commercial breaks. The women in this study engaged in at least one domestic activity whilst watching television. Hence it can be assumed that these commercial breaks gave them the opportunity to attend to these activities and

men are more likely to stay in the room. Also, men watched television which included commercials breaks more than the women probably because they did not have to attend to any domestic activity. Whilst the women preferred television stations that were entertaining, the men preferred educational ones. Women who were educated liked factual and educational programmes instead.

Morley's study revealed that there were differences in the viewing behaviours between males and females. He interviewed eighteen families and found that families with automatic control devices had none of the women use the device. Husbands were always in charge and when these husbands were not present, their sons took over that position. However this study was generally on television viewing and did not clearly state whether audiences watch or avoid commercial breaks.

El-Adly (2010) in his study found that three respondents never avoided television commercials out of the 364 questionnaires that were to be used for data analysis. However his study investigated only avoiders of television commercials. He grouped avoiders into light and heavy avoiders. Light avoiders refer to those who usually, sometimes or often watch Television commercials whilst heavy avoiders refer to those who seldom, rarely, or never watched television commercials. In both groups, cognitive avoidance was most frequent whilst switching off the television was less frequent. Changing channels and muting/reducing volume were moderately engaged in. Heavy avoiders did not watch the commercials because they believed they were boring as compared to light avoiders who believed the commercials were entertaining. Also the light avoiders believed the commercials to be informative whilst the heavy avoiders did not see them as such. The heavy avoiders also complained of the offensiveness of the commercials which makes them embarrassing to watch. They indicated that, gender related products such as female sanitary pad and underwear were embarrassing to watch.

This study emphasizes the relationship between response to commercials and the nature of the commercials. It must be noted that even though, this study was about commercial avoiders, the light avoiders in this study watched the commercials but not always and they were 167. The heavy avoiders on the other hand were 197 who seldom, rarely or never watch. This means that even some of the heavy avoiders watched the commercials. These respondents were avoiding the commercials because of the nature or the characteristics of the commercials.

Product type was also found to influence the attitude of television audiences in Wilbur (2016). He used viewing data and advertising data. The dataset consisted of 25,065 commercials breaks on 84 television networks. Five product categories were found to reduce commercial avoidance. These were quick service restaurants, domestic hybrid automobiles, family clothing stores, pizza products and movies. Commercials on these products were usually watched by the audiences. Product type might not be the only reason to watch or reduce Commercial avoidance and so this study seeks to fill that gap by finding out other motivations to watch commercials

Altas and Oztunc (2012) conducted a study on the audiences' behaviour during prime time commercials on Turkish channels. Commercials used in this study were those aired just after programmes. A one year data set was used for this study. Sample size was 7,198 and consisted of both males and females. Also 80.7% of the females watched the commercials in the first minute whilst 64% of the males watched the first minute of the commercials. However since audiences are likely to avoid the commercial after this first minute, one cannot really say if the findings in this study truly represent those who watch commercials.

Chitra and Kothai (2014) studied attitude towards television commercials using 200 consumers from Pollachi Taluk which is a sub-district in Coimbatore district in India. Convenience sampling

method was employed in this study. Data was analysed using the Friedman Rank Test. It was found that consumers perceived television commercials to be informative. They believed that it provided them with information on products they needed and updated them on market products. Also television commercials with celebrities were ranked as more persuasive. However some consumers complained about excessive and repetitive commercials which irritated them when they were watching television. Irritation can cause the audience to respond unfavourably towards commercials by avoiding them.

Anwar (2012) conducted a study on young consumers' attitude toward television commercials in the internet age. College students between the ages of 18-24 were used in the study and a total of 50 completed questionnaires were used for data analysis. He found that they would pay full attention to television commercials that they like. This means if they liked the commercials then they will not avoid it. Most of them saw television commercials to help in brand awareness and brand recall. Brand awareness and recall is through the information the commercials provide. So it can be deduced that they believed television commercials to be informative. However a significant percentage said television commercials are a nuisance and misleading. The belief that commercials are a nuisance and misleading could cause them to respond unfavourably towards them by avoiding the commercials.

Also, Ansu-Mensah, Asuamah and Amankwah J. (2013) sought to find the attitude towards advertising elements by students in a polytechnic. Sample size was 190 and they were selected through convenience sampling. He found that most of the students like music/jingles (142) in advertisements, followed by celebrities/actors (133), animals/cartoons (102), Storyline (102) and humour with 93 respondents. The students preferred and liked advertisements that were of this nature.

Ewing (2013) in a longitudinal study assessed the attitudes of the Australian community towards television commercials across four time points (2002, 2005, 2008, 2010). The study revealed attitudes are not favourable. Ratings on the entertainment and informative value of television commercials were very low.

Yosaf and Shehzad (2013) studied the attitude of literates in Gujarat, a city in Pakistan through a survey. Elaboration Likelihood Model and Social Learning Theory were used in this study. 76% of the respondents believed that television commercials were informative. Also, 80% indicated their like for television commercials. In spite of the 80% that like commercials, during commercial breaks, 92% of the respondents switch channels. These respondents were described as surfing channels during commercial breaks and this means only 8% do not switch channels. But the study did not indicate whether those who do not switch channels, engage in other forms of avoidance behaviour or even watch the commercials. This study indicates that even though audiences may like commercials, they might not actually be watching them. This study therefore seeks to find out what will motivate them to watch the commercials during commercial breaks in television programmes.

Pechu (2014) in his research, "Attitudes of TV Audience toward Commercial Interruptions in Programmes" found that 32 out of the total number of respondents (108) watched commercials during commercial breaks in programmes. Most of the respondents indicated that they switched channels (mechanical avoidance) during these commercial breaks, followed by 27 who stayed in the room but diverted attention (cognitive avoidance) and 11 engaged in physical avoidance by leaving the room. Two respondents gave no response. Also in this survey of 108 university students' attitudes, he found that the respondents usually watched news and documentaries. The research investigated the various periods the audiences preferred a commercial break and 45

indicated they prefer the commercial before a programme starts, 20 prefer the middle of a programme, 16 prefer the beginning of a programme, 15 prefer the end of a programme and 6 prefer it in the programme. The study used the Agenda Setting Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory and Cultivation Theory. However this study did not investigate the motivations and reasons for their viewing behaviour.

Findings by Rojas-Mendez et al. (2008) on gender were similar to the one found in a research by Tieren and Roman (2015) which sought to find out whether product placement or commercial breaks work best for young consumers. This study also revealed that females engaged more in behavioural avoidance (cognitive and physical) whilst males engaged in mechanical avoidance. Questionnaires were distributed over the internet for 5 weeks from December 2014 to January 2015 using a snowball sampling method. The database was adjusted in such a way that gender distribution was close to the actual population. The study investigated consumers' behaviour during commercial breaks in reality shows. It was revealed that 4.3% of the respondents watched commercials during commercial breaks. These respondents who watch were all females. Most of the respondents (59.8%) changed channels during the commercial breaks and 52% of those who changed channel were males whilst 48% were females. This means that more males engaged in mechanical avoidance than females. The rest which represent 35.8% left the commercials running on the television but diverted their attention. Females were 56% whilst males were 44%. This also shows that females engaged more in cognitive avoidance. This study did not investigate the motivations for watching the commercials and the reasons why they were avoided by most of the respondents.

Phau and Dix (2003) also investigated the effect of planned versus impulse viewing on television commercial avoidance. They used observation and survey. Sample size was 120 households. These

households were observed without their knowledge. After the observation, the researcher told them they were being observed and asked them to fill a questionnaire. This study was on commercial breaks within programmes. More than half of the respondents (58.3%) switched channels or tolerated channel switching during commercial breaks. This study investigated only an aspect of mechanical avoidance and also did not investigate the reasons for their avoidance behaviour.

Jardine, Riebe and Dawes (2009) researched on the portion of an audience that is lost and gained in commercial breaks through zapping. They used minute by minute aggregate to estimate the size of the audience each minute. The data included 56 programs across eight genres and 6,256 commercial breaks within these programmes on three major stations. It was found that zapping is not common during commercial breaks. Even though the commercial breaks increased the rate of audience loss, it did not necessarily result in gains on other stations. This means that during commercial breaks in programmes, audiences do not necessarily zap but might be engaged in either watching or other avoidance behaviour. However this study was on only zapping.

2.2 Summary

This chapter explored the theories underpinning this study and related work. The Uses and Gratifications Theory was employed because it looks at uses of media and in this case, commercial breaks within programmes. The selective exposure theory also explains the selectivity of audiences who would expose themselves to only content that is of interest to them. Social Role Theory explains the differences between males and females as a result of the roles they perform in the society. Related work pointed out that most of the studies have been outside Ghana and so this study seeks to question some of the findings in the Ghanaian context.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the methodology underpinning this study and explains the steps taken to get answers to the research questions. It explains the research design, sampling procedure, data collection method and process of analysis used in this study.

3.1.1 The research setting

This study was carried out at the University of Ghana which is the premiere University in Ghana. The university currently has a student population of about thirty-seven thousand, nine hundred and forty (37,940) (University of Ghana, 2016). This number includes both undergraduate and postgraduate students. It was chosen for this study because of its accessibility to the researcher and heterogeneity of the population.

3.1.2 Research Design

This research was quantitative in nature and survey also used to investigate attitude towards commercial breaks. In a survey, respondents are taken from a population and studied to make inferences about the population (Collins & Hussey, 2013). It is preferable when measuring attitudes of a large population (Babbie, 1992) and allows to collect a large amount of data (Wimmer & Domminick, 2011).

3.1.3 Research Population and sampling method

The population for this study was all students within the University of Ghana, Legon campus who are resident on campus. Because of the large population, a subset of the population was chosen for the study. This subset represents the sample of this study. The sample size was two hundred (200) with equal number of males and females. According to Cooper and Schindler (2001), the sample

is assumed to reflect the features of the population and so may be used in making generalizations about the entire population. The entire population could not be studied because of time and financial constraints.

This study used multistage sampling which involved both purposive and systematic sampling. Sampling involves selecting some elements of the population (Wimmer & Domminick, 2011). All the halls on University of Ghana campus comprise of both genders with the exception of Volta Hall and Commonwealth Hall which have only females and only males respectively. Purposive sampling was used to select Volta Hall and Commonwealth Hall since it will make it easier to compare in terms of gender and systematic sampling was used to select the rooms in the two halls. The unit of analysis was therefore individual students in these two halls who took part in this research.

As Wimmer and Dominick (2011) noted, systematic sampling gives every element an equal chance of being selected, enables easy and accurate selection of elements and, is generally inexpensive. Systematic sampling was used to select rooms with respondents who will answer questions in the questionnaire. This involved selecting every 2nd room and 2 respondents from each room filled the questionnaire. If there was no one in the room selected, the next room was used. In cases where more than two people were found in a room, the first two available people filled the questionnaire. Equal number of respondents was sampled from the two halls with 100 students each.

3.1.4 Data Collection and instrument

It employed the use of primary data and so questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. Questionnaire was developed based on findings from literature review and there was a screener question to ensure only students who watched TV filled the questionnaire. Questions were

based on their general TV viewing behaviour irrespective of where they watched TV. Considering the fact that students had limited access to TV, it was assumed that their experiences would reflect general viewing behaviour at home.

It was also pretested with subjects who had similar characteristics with the population intended for this study, which according to Babbie (1992) helps to check errors such as ambiguity in the questions. Questionnaire was self-administered and researcher waited for respondents to fill it in order to ensure a 100% response rate. They were distributed to students in their various rooms and the duration was one month. Two research assistants were recruited to help in the distribution in the two halls selected for this study. These were postgraduate students who understood what research was about.

There were 16 questions in all which sought to identify audiences' response to commercial breaks within programmes, their motivations and the age and gender differences. Respondents were asked to tick the responses that were applicable to them and to state where necessary.

3.1.5 Data Analysis

Responses to open-ended questions were grouped into themes and assigned values and labels. Also the responses to the closed ended questions were assigned values and labels and together with the responses from open ended questions, entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). This software was used to generate the frequency tables and cross tab tables. Microsoft Excel 2007 was also used to generate charts.

3.2 Summary

This chapter covered the procedures that were used in data collection. It focused on the research setting, research design, research population and sampling method and data collection instrument and data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses findings of the data collected from University of Ghana to find out their attitude towards commercial breaks in programmes. It also discusses the demographic information. Findings are presented as tables and charts.

4.2 Demographic information / TV viewing habits

Most of the respondents (83) representing 41.5% were within the ages of 22-25, 30% (60) were 18-21 years, 21.5% (43) were 26-29 years and 7% (14) were 30 years and above. Out of 200 respondents, 66.5% (133) were undergraduates whilst 33.5% (67) were postgraduates. Gender was represented with equal number of males and females to help point gender differences.

Ninety-four of the respondents representing, 47% said they watched television occasionally, 40.5% (81) watched daily, 7.5% (15) watched every other day whilst 5% (10) watched TV weekly. Also 42% (84) of the respondents watched television 4 hours or more in a week, 26% (52) watched one hour or less, 16.5% (33) watched for two hours and 15.5% (31) watched television three hours per week.

Regarding the program the respondents mostly watched, 30.5% (61) of the respondents said any programme available on TV, followed by 26% (52) who watched movies/telenovelas, 20.5% (41) watched news morning shows/documentaries, 12% (24) of them mostly watched sports and 8%(16) watched reality shows. A few of the respondents also gave their own responses (other) apart from the options given and these comprise of religious programmes and music videos.

The 'other' category represents responses that are not included in the options in the questionnaire but indicated by respondents.

4.3 Behaviour towards commercial breaks

A total of 72% (144) of the respondents indicated that they watched commercial breaks within TV programmes and 28% (56) said they avoided. Less than half of the respondents, 43 representing 21.5% said they preferred commercial breaks within programs whilst 31% (62) preferred them airing before a programme starts and 47.5% (95) want to see them after a programme has ended. Hence 78.5% preferred commercial breaks either before or after a programme.

4.4 Motivation for watching commercial breaks

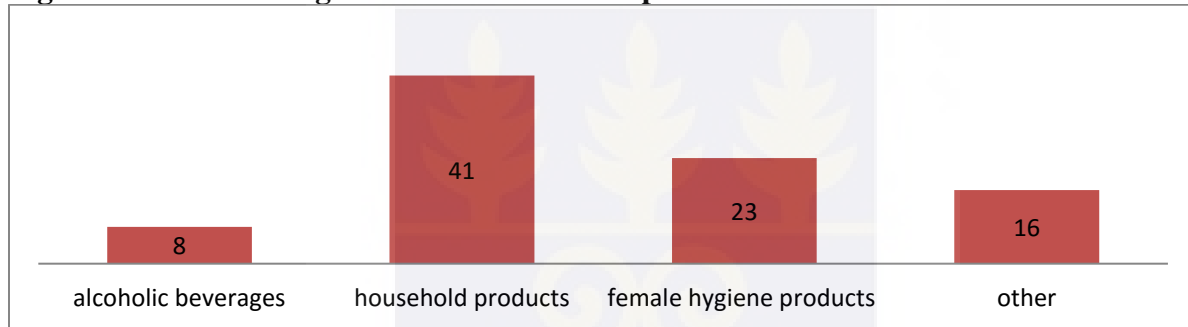
From Table 1, most of the respondents indicated they watch commercial breaks because of the information (27.2%) and the desire not to miss the next scene in a TV programme (22%). Other response categories are also indicated in the table below. Apart from the options given for respondents to select, others indicated that they watched because commercials in commercial breaks are short and few and 2 respondents stated that they had no motivation to watch but still watched ('other' category). Since it was a multiple response question, majority of the respondents selected as many options applicable to them.

Table 1: Motivation for watching commercial breaks

Motivations	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
They are entertaining	57	19.9%	39.9%
I do not want to miss the next scene in a TV programme	63	22.0%	44.1%
I watch because of the product category	62	21.6%	43.4%
I am not interested in programmes on other stations	12	4.2%	8.4%
They provide me with information	78	27.2%	54.5%
Other	15	5.2%	10.5%
Total	287	100.0%	200.7%

For respondents who said they watched because of the product category that is being advertised, 46.6% (41) said they watched commercials on household products, 26.1% (23) said female hygiene products and 9.1% (8) said alcoholic beverages. For the ‘other’ category, some respondents stated financial institutions, fashion products, commercials on other TV programmes, technology, religious activities, mobile communication networks, health, real estates and food items as shown in Figure 1. Respondents selected multiple options in addition to the ‘other’ category.

Figure 1: Product categories that influence respondents to watch commercial breaks



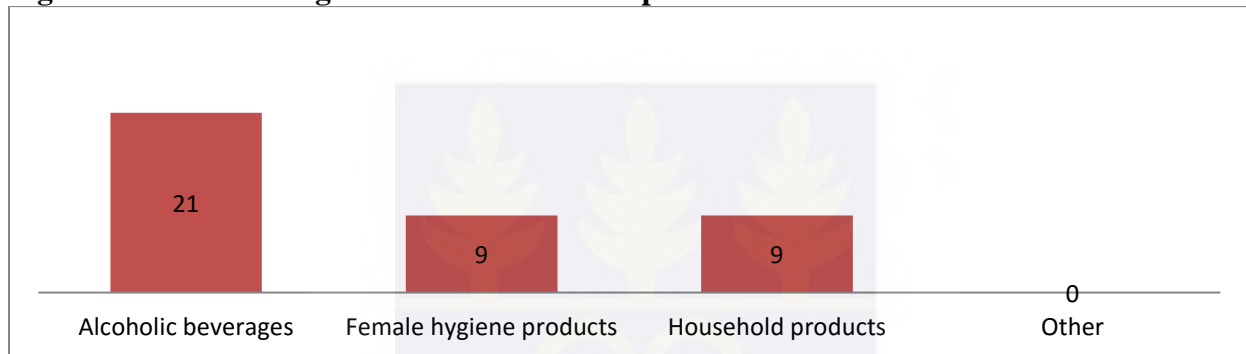
4.5.1 Why television audiences avoid commercial breaks

Table 2: Reasons for commercial break avoidance

Reasons	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
They are not informative	11	7.1%	19.6%
They are boring	27	17.5%	48.2%
There are programmes on other stations I love to watch	21	13.6%	37.5%
Commercials in commercial breaks are long	23	14.9%	41.1%
I avoid because of the product category	25	16.2%	44.6%
Too many commercials in a commercial break	36	23.4%	64.3%
Other	11	7.1%	19.6%
Total	154	100.0%	275.0%

From Table 2, most respondents selected more than one option and too many commercials in a commercial break had the highest number of responses as a reason for commercial break avoidance with 23.4% whilst the least number of responses were from those who indicated they avoided because commercials are not informative. Other response categories are also presented in the above table. In the ‘other’ category, two respondents each indicated they have no reason and there were repetitive commercials in commercial breaks.

Figure 2: Product categories that influence respondents to avoid commercial breaks



Those who said they were influenced by product categories to avoid commercial breaks proceeded to answer a question indicating the product categories they avoided commercial breaks on. It was a multiple response question which asked respondents to select as many options as applicable to them and also state. As shown in Figure 2 above, majority of the respondents (53.8%) said they avoided because the commercial breaks advertised alcoholic beverages whilst 23.1% each indicated that they avoided commercial breaks because of female hygiene products and household products that were advertised.

4.5.2 Avoidance behaviour

Table 3: Respondents' avoidance behaviour

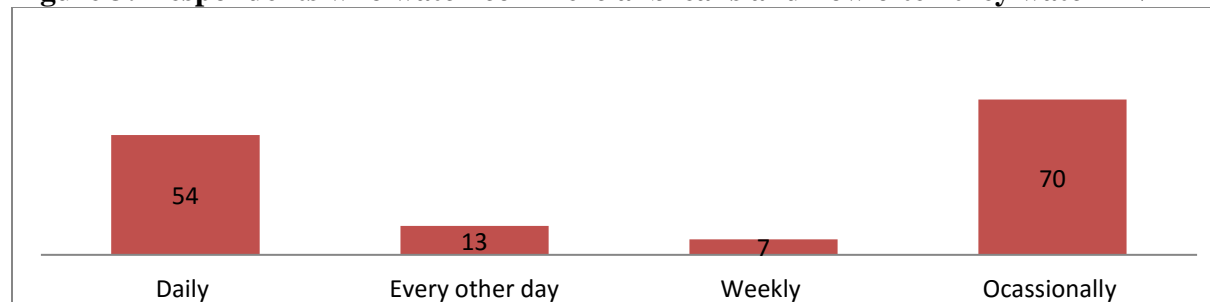
Behaviour	Responses	
	N	Percent
Leave the room to engage in other activities -Physical avoidance	15	14.0%
Mute/reduce the volume of the TV-Mechanical avoidance	5	4.7%
Stay in the room but divert attention- cognitive avoidance	41	38.3%
Change the channel - mechanical avoidance	44	41.1%
Switch off the TV- mechanical avoidance	2	1.9%
Other	0	.0%
Total	107	100.0%

With regards to what respondents who avoided commercial breaks did, 41.1% (44) said they changed the channel and this is followed by 38.3% (41) who said they stayed in the room but diverted attention as indicated in Table 3. Hence more respondents engaged in mechanical, followed by cognitive and then physical avoidance. Respondents were allowed to select more than one option.

4.6.1 When do TV audiences watch commercial breaks?

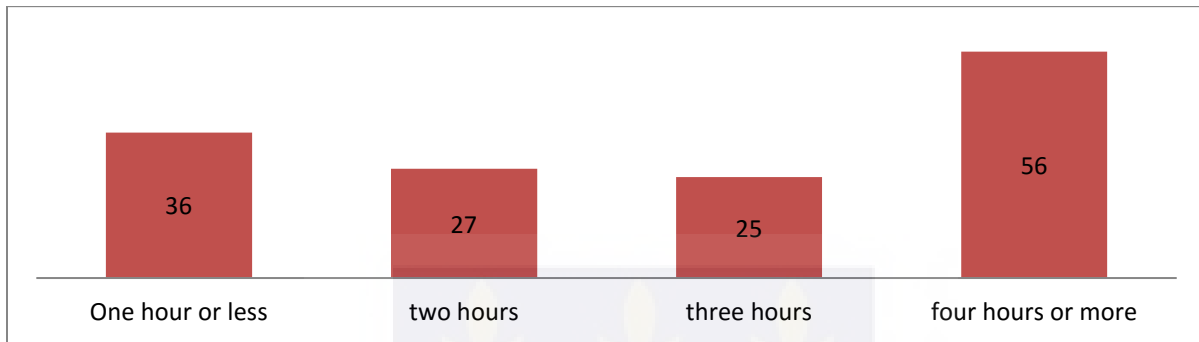
From Figure 3, among those who watched commercial breaks, 48.6% (70) watched TV occasionally, followed by 37.5% (54) who watched daily and the rest representing 20% watched every other day or weekly.

Figure 3: Respondents who watch commercial breaks and how often they watch TV



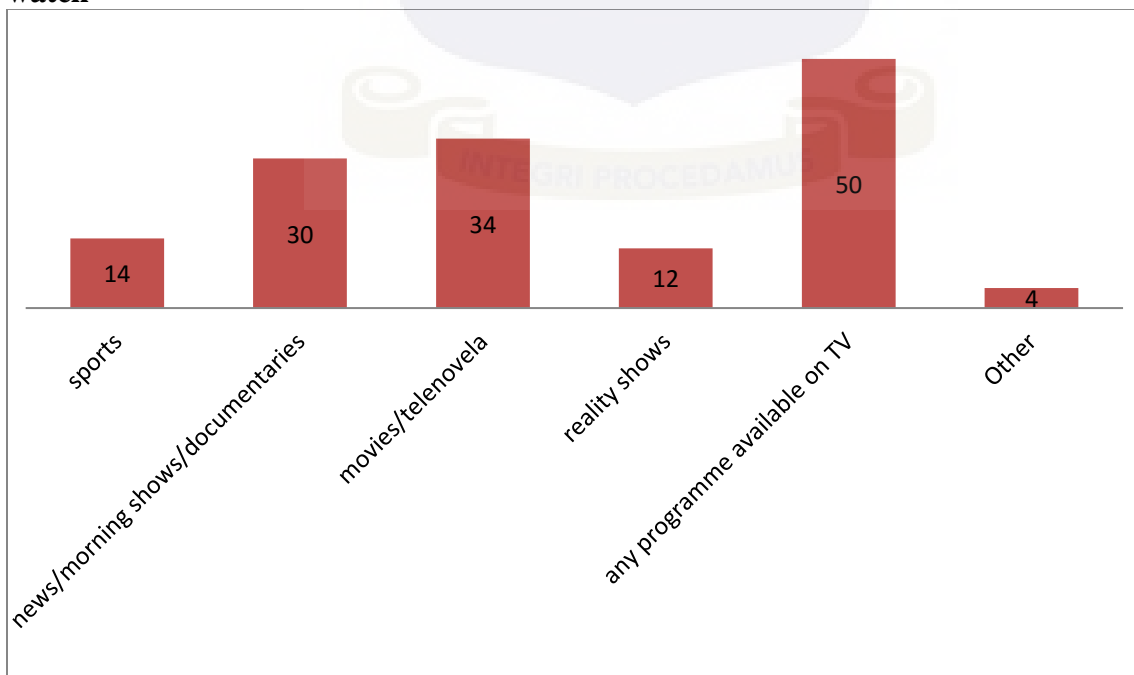
Furthermore, regarding the number of hours they watched TV in a week, 56 representing 38.9% of them watched TV for four hours or more, 25% (36) watched for 1 hour or less, 18.8% (27) watched for two hours and 17.4% (25) watched for three hours as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Respondents who watch commercial breaks and the number of hours they watch TV in a week



Also, as shown in Figure 5, 34.7% (50) said they watched any programme on TV, 23.6% (34) watched movies/telenovelas, 20.8% (30) watched news/morning shows/documentaries, 9.7% (14) watched sports and 8.3% (12) watched reality shows. In the 'other' category, there were four responses but there were more responses for music videos than religious activities.

Figure 5: Respondents who watch commercial breaks and the programmes they mostly watch



4.6.2 When do television audiences avoid commercial break?

Most of the respondents who avoided too watch TV daily (48.2%) and occasionally (42.9%) whilst the remaining 9% watched weekly or every other day as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Respondents who avoid commercial breaks and how often they watch TV

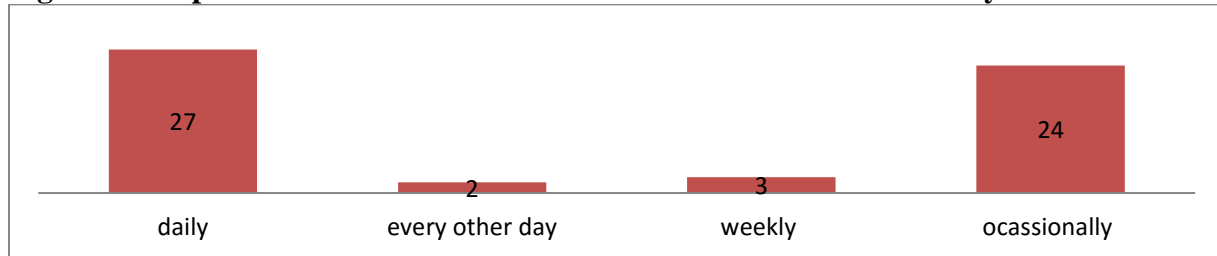
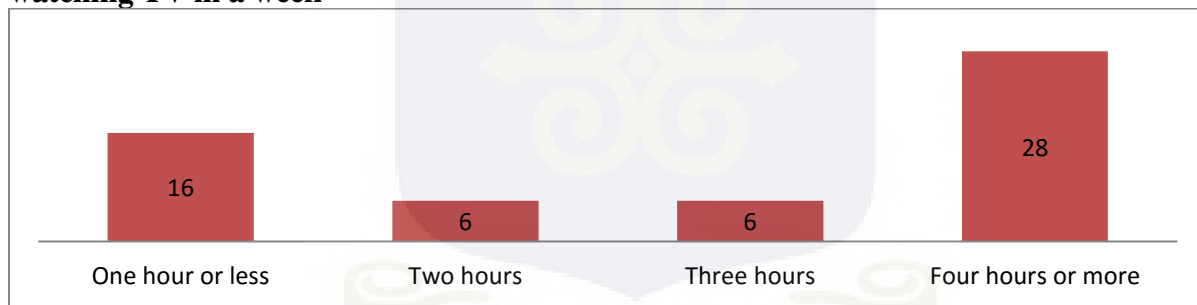
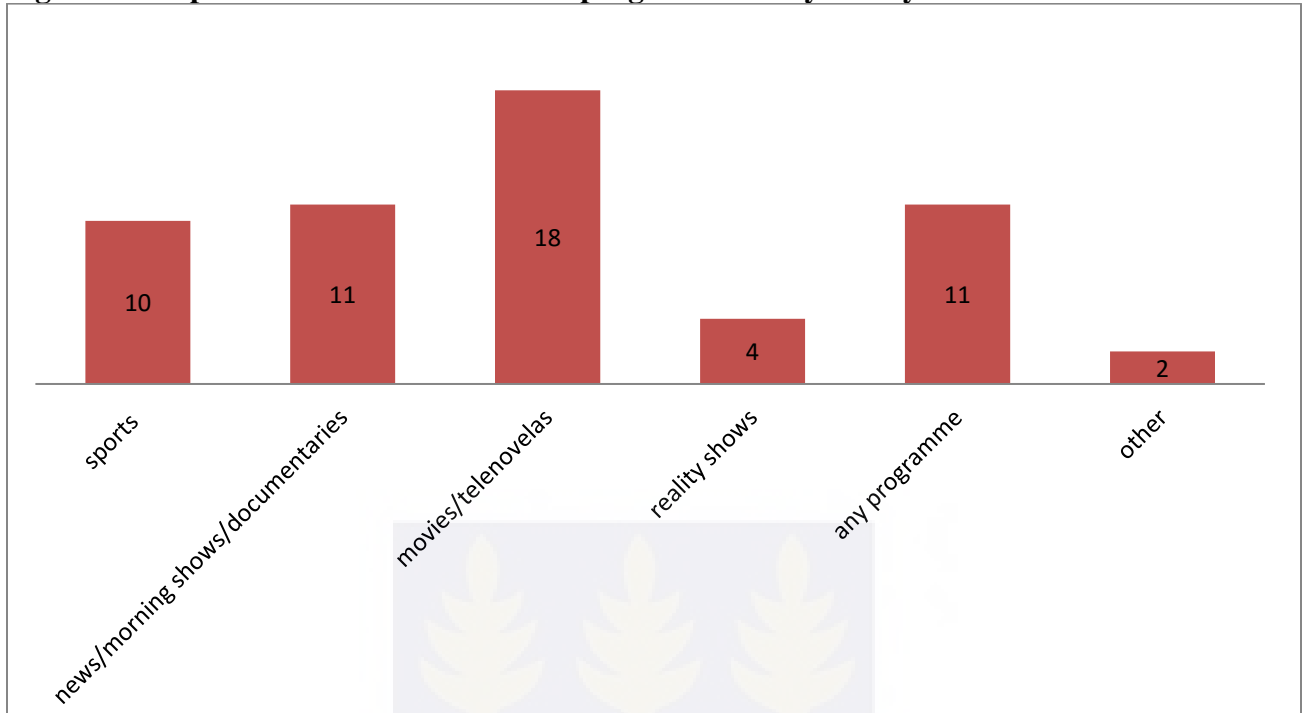


Figure 7 below shows that half of those who avoided commercial breaks watched TV four hours in a week, 28.8% said one hour or less and 10.7% each said they watched for two hours and three hours per week.

Figure 7: Respondents who avoid commercial breaks and the number of hours they spend watching TV in a week



For the programmes they mostly watched, 32.1% watched movies/telenoveelas, 19.6% each watched news and any programme available on TV, 17.9% watched sports and 7.1% watched reality shows In the ‘other’ category were music videos and religious programmes as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Respondents who avoid and the programmes they mostly watch

4.7.1 Gender and behaviour towards commercial breaks.

More than half, 51.4 % (74) of those who watched commercials were females and 48.6% (70) were males. Among those that avoided commercial breaks, 53.6 % (30) were males and 46.4% (26) were females.

4.7.2 Gender and motivation to watch commercial breaks

From Table 4, more females watched commercial breaks because they were entertaining, desire not to miss the next scene in a TV programme and because of the product category being advertised as compared to males.

Responses from males were higher with regards to watching commercial breaks because of the information as compared to females. There was no gender difference among those who said they watch because they are not interested in programmes on other stations.

In the “other” category too, there were more male responses with regards to watching because the commercials in commercial breaks are short in duration and few. It must however be noted that the ‘other’ category includes the two respondents who stated they have no motivation to watched even though they watched and these were only females.

Table 4: Gender and motivation to watch

Motivations	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
They are entertaining	23.0(16.9%)	34.0(22.5%)	57
I do not want to miss the next scene in a TV programme	27.0(19.9%)	36.0(23.8%)	63
I watch because of the product category	29.0(21.3%)	33.0(21.9%)	62
I am not interested in programmes on other stations	6.0(4.4%)	6.0(4%)	12
They provide me with information	41.0(30.1%)	37.0(24.5%)	78
Other	10.0(7.4%)	5.0(3.3%)	15
Total	136	151	287

With regards to gender and the product categories that influence them to watch, Table 5 below indicates more females than males said they will watch commercial breaks that advertise alcoholic beverages and female hygiene products. More males than females said they would watch commercial breaks on household products.

In the ‘other’ category, the male responses were financial institutions, commercials on other TV programmes, technology, mobile communication networks, health, religious activities, real estates and food items. The females also said food items and fashion products.

Table 5: Product categories that influence audiences to watch commercial breaks and gender

Product categories	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Alcoholic beverages	3(3.6%)	5(9.4%)	8
Household product	19(54.3%)	22(41.5%)	41
Female hygiene products	2(5.7%)	21(39.6%)	23
Other	11(31.4%)	5(9.4%)	16
Total	35	53	88

4.7.3 Gender and reasons for not watching commercial breaks

Table 6: Gender and reasons for commercial break avoidance

Reasons	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
They are not informative	6.0(8.3%)	5.0(6.1%)	11
They are boring	14.0(19.4%)	13.0(15.9%)	27
There are programmes on other stations I love to watch	9.0(12.5%)	12.0(14.6%)	21
Commercials in commercial breaks are long	10.0(13.9%)	13.0(15.9%)	23
I avoid because of the product categories	13.0(18.1%)	12(14.6%)	25
Too many commercials in commercial breaks	14.0(19.4%)	22.0(26.8%)	36
Other	6.0(8.3%)	5.0(6.1%)	11
Total	72	82	154

Concerning those who avoided commercial breaks too, table 6 shows that, more males than females said commercial breaks are not informative, boring and because of the product category.

Furthermore, more females than males also said they avoided because there are programmes on other stations they love to watch, the commercials in commercial breaks are long and there are too many commercials in commercial breaks.

In the 'other' category, there were also more male responses among those who avoided because of the repetitive commercials in commercial breaks. Also more females reported to avoid commercial

breaks because they have to perform household chores. All the respondents who said they avoid for no reason too were males.

Table 7: Product categories that influence respondents to avoid commercial breaks and gender

Product categories	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Female hygiene products	3(7.5%)	6(33.3%)	9
Household products	2(22.5%)	7(38.9%)	9
Alcoholic beverages	3(37.5%)	5(27.8%)	8
Other	0(.0%)	0(.0%)	0
Total	8	18	26

Most of those who indicated that they avoided commercial breaks that advertise alcoholic beverages were male. However, there were more female responses for female hygiene products and household products, compared with males (Table 7).

4.7.4 Gender and avoidance behaviour

Table 8: Gender and avoidance behaviour

Avoidance behaviour	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Leave the room to engage in other activities	6.0(11.5%)	9.0(16.4%)	15
Mute/reduce the volume of the TV	1.0 (1.9%)	4.0 (7.3%)	5
Stay in the room but divert attention	19.0(36.5%)	22.0 (40%)	41
Change the channel to watch programmes on other TV stations	25.0(48.1%)	19.0(34.5%)	44
Switch off the TV	1.0(1.9%)	1.0(1.8%)	2
Total	52	55	107

Table 8 shows that more females than males left the room, muted/reduced the volume of the TV or stayed in the room but diverted attention whilst more males said they changed the channel. There was less difference in response rate terms among those who switched off the TV during commercial breaks.

4.8.1 Age and behaviour towards commercial breaks

Majority of the respondents within the ages of 22-25 watched commercial breaks (74.7%), followed by 26-29 (72.1%), 18-21 (71.7%) and 30 and above (57.1%). Respondents who avoided commercial breaks most too were 30 and above (42.9%) followed by 26-29 (27.9%), 18-21 (28.3%) and 22-25 (25.3%).

4.8.2 Age and motivation to watch

Table 9 shows that most respondents between the ages of 18-21 years watched commercial breaks because of information (28.3%) and product category (22.8%). In the 'other' category, some of the respondents said there were few commercials in commercial breaks, short commercials in commercial break and the need to perform household chores whilst one person indicated he watched for no reason. Response rate for the other categories are also listed in the table below.

For those within 22-25 years, there was a higher response rate for those who watched because of the information (24.6%), entertainment (23.8%) and desire not to miss the next scene in a TV programme (23.8%). In the 'other' category, some of the respondents said short commercials and few commercials in commercial breaks and the need to perform household chores.

Also most of those who were within the ages of 26-29 years watched because of the information (28%) and desire not to miss the next scene in a TV programme (24%). In the 'other' category, some respondents said they watched because there are short commercials in commercial breaks, the need to perform household chores and one respondent said he avoided for no reason.

Majority of the respondents who were 30 years and above said the motivation to watch is the product category and information. None of them watched because of lack of interest in

programmes on other stations. The ‘other’ category shows that one person avoided because of household chores.

Table 9: Age and motivation to watch

Motivations	Age				Total
	18 to 21	22 to 25	26 to 29	30 and above	
They are entertaining	16.0 (17.4%)	30.0(23.8%)	9(18%)	2(15.8%)	57
I do not want to miss the next scene in a TV programme	18.0 (19.6%)	30.0(23.8%)	12.0(24%)	3.0(15.8%)	63
I watch because of the product category	21.0(22.88%)	26.0(20.6%)	8.0(16%)	7.0(36.8%)	62
I am not interested in programmes on other stations	5.0 (5.4%)	3.0(2.4%)	4.0(8.0%)	0.0(.0%)	12
They provide me with information	26.0 (28.3%)	31.0(24.6%)	14.0(28%)	7.0(36.8%)	78
Other	6.0 (6.5%)	6.0(4.8%)	3.0(6%)	0.0(.0%)	15
Total	92	126	50	19	287

From Table 10 below, household products (37.5%) and females hygiene products (31%) had the highest response rate among respondents influenced by the product category and were within the 18-21 age group. The ‘other’ category also showed that other product categories that can influence audiences to watch are commercials on other TV programmes, food items and mobile communication networks.

Respondents within the ages of 22-25 years were also mostly influenced to watch commercial breaks on household products (47.2%), female hygiene products (25%). In the ‘other’ category, respondents stated technology, food items, financial institutions, fashion products, other TV programmes, religious activities, health and real estate.

For the 26-29 years year group, more than half of them said they watched commercial breaks on household products (58.3%) and female hygiene products with a percentage of 25%. None of the

respondents watched commercials on alcoholic beverages. In the ‘other’ category, some respondents said financial institutions, technology and mobile communication networks.

The 30 and above years age group were also influenced to watch commercials on household products (54.5%), female hygiene products (18.2%), technology (9.1%). In the ‘other’ category, the responses were technology and religious activities.

Table 10: Age and product categories that influence respondents to watch commercial breaks

Product categories	Age				Total
	18-21	22-25	26-29	30 and above	
Alcoholic beverages	4(13.8%)	3(8.3%)	0(.0%)	1(9.1%)	8
Household products	11(37.5%)	17(47.2%)	7(58.3%)	6(54.5%)	41
Female hygiene products	9(31%)	9(25%)	3(25%)	2(18.2%)	23
Other	5(17.2%)	7(19.4%)	2(16.7%)	2(18.2%)	16
Total	29	36	12	11	88

4.8.3 Age and reasons to avoid

As shown in Table 11, the highest response count, 27.7% of respondents within the ages of 18-21 years said there were too many commercials in commercial breaks. In the ‘other’ category, one respondent said he had no reason for avoiding them. Also some respondents said they avoided because of household chores.

The highest response rate for the 22-25 years age group are those who avoided commercial breaks because there are too many commercials in a commercial break (22.2%). The ‘other’ category also shows they avoided because of repetitive commercials in commercial breaks and household chores. One respondent avoided for no reason.

Furthermore, 25.8% of the respondents within the ages of 26-29 years selected product category and 22.6% said there were too many commercials in commercial breaks. In the ‘other’ category too, there was household chores.

For the rest of the respondents, 23.1% each within ages of 30 years and above said there were too many commercials in commercial breaks and they are boring. This is the highest response rate. Household chores was the only reason stated for the ‘other’ category.

Table 11: Age and reasons to avoid commercial breaks

Reasons1	Age				Total
	18 to 21	22 to 25	26 to 29	30 and above	
They are not informative	4.0 (8.5%)	5.0 (7.9%)	2.0 (6.5%)	0.0 (.0%)	11
They are boring	9.0 (19.1%)	11.0(17.5%)	4.0(12.9%)	3(23.1%)	27
There are programmes on other stations I love to watch	5.0(10.6%)	9.0 (14.3%)	5.0(16.1%)	2.0 (15.4%)	21
Long commercials in commercial breaks	6.0(12.8%)	10.0(15.9%)	5.0(16.1%)	2.0(15.4%)	23
I avoid because of the product category	7.0 (14.9%)	7.0 (11.1%)	8.0(25.8%)	3.0(23.11%)	25
Too many commercials in a commercial break	13.0(27.7%)	14.0(22.2%)	7.0(22.6%)	2.0(15.4%)	36
Other	3(6.4%)	7.0 (11.1%)	0.0 (.0%)	1.0 (7.7%)	11
Total	47	63	31	13	154

For the respondents who are influenced by the product category to avoid commercials, there were no responses in ‘other’ category (Table 12).

Table 12: Age and product categories that influence respondents to avoid commercial breaks

Product categories	Age				Total
	18-21	22-25	26-29	30 and above	
Female hygiene products	5(38.5%)	3(33.3%)	1(50%)	0(.0%)	9
Household products	4(30.8%)	3(33.3%)	1(50%)	1(50%)	9
Alcoholic beverages	4(30.8%)	3(33.3%)	0(.0%)	1(50%)	8
Other	0(.0%)	0(.0%)	0(.0%)	0(.0%)	0(.0)
Total	13	9	2	2	26

Respondents who were 18-21 years indicated they mostly avoided commercial breaks that advertised alcoholic beverages, followed by female hygiene products and household products.

The 22-25 years age group also indicated they would avoid commercial breaks that advertised alcoholic beverages (53.8%) and 23.1% each said female hygiene products and household products.

Almost all the respondents within 26-29 years age group said they will avoid commercial breaks on alcoholic beverages (75%) and 12.5% each said female hygiene products and household products.

None of the respondents within 30 and above years age group was influenced to watch commercial breaks that advertised female hygiene products. However, majority avoided commercials on alcoholic beverages and 33.3% avoided commercials on household products.

4.8.4 Age and avoidance activities

Table 13: Age and avoidance behaviour

Avoidance Behaviour	Age				Total
	18 to 21	22 to 25	26 to 29	30 and above	
Leave the room	7.0 (20%)	4.0 (10.3%)	4.0 (16.7%)	0.0 (.0%)	15
Mute/reduce the volume of the TV	2.0 (5.7%)	2.0 (5.1%)	1.0 (4.2%)	0.0 (.0%)	5
Stay in the room but divert attention	12.0(34.3%)	15.0 (38.5%)	10.0 (41.7%)	4.0(44.4%)	41
Change the channel to watch	14.0 (40%)	16.0 (41%)	9.0 (37.5%)	5.0 (55.6%)	44
Switch off the TV	0.0 (.0%)	2.0 (5.1%)	0.0 (.0%)	0.0 (.0%)	2
Total	35	39	24	9	107

From Table 13, among respondents within the 18-21 years age group, majority of them either changed the channel during commercial breaks, stayed in the room but diverted attention or left the room to engage in other activities during commercial breaks. None of them switched off the

TV during commercial breaks. This means 45.7% engaged in mechanical avoidance, 34.3% were also involved in cognitive avoidance and 20% in physical avoidance.

Most of the respondents within the 22-25 years age group also changed channel during commercial breaks or stayed in the room but diverted attention. Hence, 46.1% engaged in mechanical avoidance, 38.5% in cognitive avoidance and 10.3% in physical avoidance.

However among the respondents within the 26-29 years age group, majority (41.7%) stayed in the room but diverted attention and this is followed by those who change the channel (37.5%). None switches off the TV. Hence 41.7% each are engaged in mechanical and cognitive avoidance and 16.7% in physical avoidance.

The 30 and above years age group were only involved in changing the channel and staying in the room but diverting attention during commercial breaks. This means 55.6% engaged in mechanical and 44.4% engaged in cognitive avoidance. None of them switched off the TV, muted/reduced the volume of the TV and switched off the TV.

4.9 Summary

Majority of the respondents indicated they watched commercial breaks in TV programmes. The decision to watch or avoid these commercial breaks were based on various reasons which tends to emphasize they were active audiences. However there were few respondents who said they had no motivation for the actions they took during these commercial breaks. Also, majority of the respondents engaged in mechanical and cognitive avoidance and the specific activities mostly engaged in were switching the channel or staying in the room but diverting attention during commercial breaks.

Regarding demographic differences, more females watched whilst more males avoided commercial breaks. Motivations and reasons for watching or avoiding commercial breaks too were similar. There was also less difference with regards to age, except for the 30 years and above age group who mostly avoided commercial breaks.



CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussions of the findings of this study with reference to the objectives for this research. Also outlined here are the limitations and recommendations.

5.2 Discussion of key findings

In line with the selective exposure theory, it was found that respondents were selective as to which media content to be exposed to. Interestingly majority of the respondents indicated they watch any programme available on television but still actively control their exposure to commercial breaks and this is at variance with Barnice and Errenberg (1998) who supported the passive ideology and claimed that audiences put on their television sets and watched any programme available which included commercial breaks. Majority of the respondents also indicated they preferred commercial breaks either before or after television programmes.

Concerning the first objective of this study, it was found that majority of the respondents watched commercial breaks in TV programmes. This is consistent with Saignaesh and Parameswaran (2012) research who found that 278 out of 300 respondents watched television commercials. However finding was contrary to research by Yosaf and Shehzad (2013) who found that 92% of respondents avoided commercial breaks and Perchu (2014) who found that only 32 out of 108 respondents watched commercial breaks.

Also the rest of the respondents who avoided commercial breaks engaged more in mechanical avoidance than cognitive and physical avoidance and this was similar to Saignaesh and Parameswaran (2012) which found that most respondents engaged in mechanical avoidance. It was

however at variance with findings from El-Adly (2010) in which respondents mostly engaged in cognitive avoidance.

Regarding the specific avoidance activities, more respondents were engaged in changing the channel (zapping) during commercial breaks and this agreed with findings from Phau & Dix (2003), Yosaf and Shehzad (2013), Perchu (2014) and Saignaesh & Prameswaran (2012). El-Adly (2010) and Jardine et al (2009) however found that zapping was moderately engaged in and it was not a common phenomenon.

Concerning the second objective of this study, which sought to find the motivation to watch or avoid commercial breaks, most of the respondents indicated that they watched because of information, desire not to miss the scene in a programme, product category and entertainment. This supports the claim by O'Donohoe (1993) that audiences liked entertaining and informative commercials and commercials with entertainment value were not skipped by audiences (Saignaesh & Parameswaran, 2012) but not consistent with findings from Ewing (2013) since most respondents in that study believed TV commercials were not informative and entertaining.

For those that avoided commercial breaks, majority of them avoided because of too many, boring and long commercials in commercial breaks and a number of them also indicated that there were similar programmes on other stations they loved to watch.

Contrary to the active audience ideology which assumes that audiences have motivations or reasons for the decisions they make during commercial breaks, four respondents indicated that they have no motivation for their decision to watch or avoid. But in line with the uses and gratifications theory, it was found that most of the respondents have various motivations for their exposure to the media content which in this case is commercial breaks in programmes.

The product category was also found to motivate audiences to watch or avoid commercial breaks. Just as was found in El-Adly (2010) and Wilbur (2016) studies, product category played a role in determining whether audiences watched commercial breaks. Majority indicated they were influenced to watch commercial breaks that advertised household products and would avoid commercial breaks on alcoholic beverages.

The third objective sought to find out when audiences watched or avoided commercial breaks. There was less difference between those who watched and avoided with regards to how often they watched TV. Both those who avoided and those that watched commercial breaks had the majority of respondents watching TV daily and occasionally. However those who avoided had the highest response rate in terms of those that watched TV daily and those that watched commercial breaks had the highest response rate in terms of those that watched occasionally.

Additionally for both groups (those who watched and those who avoided), the majority watched TV for 4 hours or more per week but it was higher for the group that avoided commercial breaks.

Furthermore, most of those who watched commercial breaks watched any programme available on TV (34.7%) followed by news/morning shows/documentaries and movies/telenovelas whilst those who avoid mostly watch movies/telenovelas.

The last objective also sought to find out if gender and age have any influence on audiences' attitude towards commercial breaks. In terms of gender, even though there was less difference in response rate, more females than males watched commercial breaks. This means more males avoided too. It seemed quite consistent with findings from Atlas and Otunc (2012) who investigated which gender watched or avoided during the first few minutes of a commercial break and found that more females than males watched commercial breaks. Also a study by Tirean and

Roman (2015) showed that those who watched commercial breaks were females. However finding was inconsistent with findings from Rojas Mendez et al (2008) and Morley (1986) who in their study realized females avoided commercial breaks because they multi-tasked and had to attend to domestic activities.

The major motivations to watch commercial breaks were the same for both genders. The motivations were entertainment, desire not to miss the next scene in a TV programme and information. However there were more male responses with regards to information and more females said they watched because they did not want to miss the next scene in a TV programme and entertainment as compared to males. Finding was similar to Yasin et al (2013) where females watched commercials because they were entertaining. This is however inconsistent with findings in Yarahmadi (2015) in which females preferred informative commercials as compared to males and Logan et al (2012) in their study of only females found informativeness of commercials is highly valued by females.

Among those who avoided commercial breaks, most of the males said they avoided because there were too many commercials in commercial breaks and commercial breaks were boring. Most of the females also indicated that they avoided because of too many, long and boring commercial breaks. Even though both genders said they avoided because of too many and boring commercial in commercial breaks, more males indicated they avoided because they were boring and more females indicated they avoided because there are too many commercials in it.

There was less gender difference in terms of avoidance behaviour. However, more females than males said they engaged in physical and cognitive avoidance whilst there were more male responses in terms of mechanical avoidance. Finding was similar to Rojas-Mendez et al (2008) who found that significantly more females were engaged in behavioural avoidance (physical and

cognitive avoidance) in Turkey and Chile. Their study also revealed that males were more engaged in mechanical avoidance in Turkey and Chile. Also consistent with this finding is the research by Tirean and Roman (2015) which also revealed that females were engaged in behavioural avoidance (physical and cognitive avoidance) whilst men engaged in mechanical avoidance.

Furthermore, in terms of the specific activities engaged in during commercial breaks, both genders mostly changed the channel or stayed in the room but diverted attention. However more females than males reported staying in the room and diverting attention and more males changing the channel.

Moley (1986) in his study found that in most homes, males were in control of the remote control and so this could be used to explain why few females zapped. Moreover because of the multi-tasking skills of females (Rojas-Mendez 2008), they may have also diverted their attention to other activities during commercial breaks.

Regarding the product category and gender, most of the females among those who watched commercial breaks said they will watch commercial breaks that advertised household products and female hygiene products whilst most males indicated household products. Surprisingly some males said they will watch commercial breaks that advertise female hygiene products but the female responses for that product category was higher and this agrees with finding from Yaramadi (2015) that females will watch commercials on feminine products and males will watch masculine ones. Both genders watched commercials relevant to their needs as males and females (Yasin et al, 2013).

In line with the social role theory, because of the various roles assigned to both genders, it has an effect on how they attend to commercial breaks. For those who avoid, majority from both males

and females said they will avoid commercial breaks on alcoholic beverages. For the respondents that left the room during commercial breaks to attend to household chores, majority were females.

Regarding the age groups, even though there was less difference in the response rate amongst those who watched commercial breaks, 22-25 years age group had the highest response rate, followed by 26-29, 18-21 and 30 and above. Most of the respondents who avoided commercial breaks were 30 years and above.

All the age groups indicated they mostly watched commercial breaks because of the entertainment, information and desire not to miss the next scene in a TV programme. But those in the 30 and above years age group had the highest response rate in terms of watching commercial breaks because of the information and none of those who avoided commercial breaks within this age group said they were not informative.

Across all age groups, the avoidance activities mostly engaged in were staying in the room and diverting attention and changing the channel. Whilst other age groups would leave the room or mute/reduce the volume of the TV set, none of the respondents within the 30 and above years age group did that.

5.3 Limitations

The study was limited to students of University of Ghana with a sample size of 200 due to inadequate time and funding. Respondents answered questions based on their general TV viewing experience. This was based on the assumption that their experiences would reflect their general viewing behaviour at home because in the academic environment, students have limited access to TV. For instance, the various halls have one TV each and no one controls the watching

environment. The researcher recognizes the limitation in using this population since responses to the questionnaire may be problematic.

5.4 Recommendations

Due to the limitations noted above, researcher recommends future studies to consider a different population which would also give more insight into gender and viewership behaviours. It is also recommended that researchers look into television viewing in tertiary institutions. In this case, students may be studied in groups in the context of a television room and the observational method is recommended. Observation from research also shows little literature especially in Africa, hence this research seem to be exploratory. Therefore, researcher suggests more studies to be done in this area.

5.5 Conclusion

In line with the Selective Exposure Theory, this study revealed respondents were selective as to which media content to be exposed to. Whilst some audiences chose to watch the commercial breaks, others chose to avoid them based on various motivations as said in the Uses and Gratifications Theory. It is also worth noting that few respondents did not have motivations for the actions they take when they encounter commercial breaks in programmes.

Also the study revealed that few respondents preferred commercial breaks within programmes and this might be because as rational audiences they put on their television sets to watch programmes but not commercial breaks. Interestingly majority of them still watched commercial breaks and this was based on certain motivations as active audiences. The main motivations for watching were because they were entertaining, informative and desire not to miss the next scene in a programme. They were therefore influenced to watch because of the benefits that could be derived from the exposure.

Furthermore, commercial breaks were avoided mostly because of too many commercials in commercial breaks. Respondents were irritated by the numerous commercials within the commercial breaks hence chose to engage mostly in mechanical and cognitive avoidance. This has serious implications for advertisers since findings indicated that most of the respondents changed the channel or stayed in the room but diverted attention.

There was less difference in how often those who watched or avoided commercial breaks watched TV and the number of hours they watched TV since in both groups, respondents mostly watched TV daily or occasionally and for 4 hours or more. Therefore how often they watched TV and the number of hours they spent watching TV had no relationship with their decision to watch or avoid commercial breaks.

Most of those who watched commercial breaks watched any programme available on TV but these audiences still actively controlled their exposure by deciding to watch based on the motivations. However those who avoided commercial breaks mostly watched movies/telenovelas. Perhaps they avoided because they had a specific programme (movies/telenovelas) they wanted to watch, hence these commercial breaks were irritating to them.

As indicated in the Social Role Theory, there were some gender differences. More males avoided commercial breaks and more females watched commercial breaks. It was also assumed that domestic activity was likely to influence attitude toward commercial breaks and from findings some respondents indicated they avoided commercial breaks because of household chores and most of them were females. This comes as no surprise since women are still believed to be in charge of domestic activities in the Ghanaian society. Whilst the males were more motivated to watch because of the information, the females were more concerned with entertainment and the desire not to miss the next scene in a TV programme. Perhaps because of the communal nature of

females as indicated in the Social Role Theory, they were emotional, hence were more likely to be influenced by the entertainment value to watch commercial breaks. Both genders also watched commercial breaks relevant to their gender as males and females.

Among those that avoided, most of the females were engaged in physical and cognitive avoidance whilst males engaged in mechanical avoidance. Females' engagement in physical and cognitive may also have been as a result of their multitasking skills as indicated in literature review. Zapping was usually engaged in by the males whilst the females stayed in the room but diverted attention during commercial breaks. Since males are seen to be in control of the home and usually have no household chores in the Ghanaian society, it could account for why they were more engaged in mechanical avoidance than the females.

Also, even though among all age groups, information, entertainment, product category and desire not to miss the next scene are major motivations to watch commercial breaks, respondents who were 30 years and above had the majority in terms of the information value of commercial breaks. The other age groups did not have any major differences. Most of the respondents who avoided commercial breaks were 30 years and above. This can be attributed to the fact that at that age, people have various commitments such as work and education, hence their main focus might be on just watching the programme and using the period for commercial breaks to attend to other commitments. None of the respondents who avoided commercial breaks within that age group said they avoided because they were not informative. In all age groups, the avoidance behaviour mostly engaged in, were mechanical and cognitive avoidance.

This study showed that respondents were active as to which media content to be exposed to. Even when they sit to watch any programme available on TV, they still choose to watch or avoid

commercial breaks. Where there is a benefit, audiences watch but when irritated by certain characteristics of the commercials they avoid these commercials breaks.



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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondents

I am Adwoa Serwaa Danso, a student of the University of Ghana pursuing an MA programme in Communication Studies. As part of my course I need to submit a research project. I am conducting a study on the **Attitude of Television Audiences towards Commercial Breaks in Programmes**. The data collected will be used for academic purpose only. I request your voluntary participation in the study and wish to assure you that your responses would be treated with utmost respect and confidentiality. Should you need to ask any questions, please call me on the phone number indicated on this questionnaire.

Screener: 1. Do you watch television (TV)?

1. Yes []
2. No []

2. How often do you watch TV?

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Daily [] | 3. Every other day [] |
| 2. Occasionally [] | 4. Weekly [] |

3. How many hours per **WEEK** do you watch TV?

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. One hour or less [] | 3. Three hours [] |
| 2. Two hours [] | 4. Four hours or more [] |

4. Which TV programme do you **MOSTLY** watch? (**TICK ONLY ONE OR STATE**)

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. Sports [] | 3. Movies/Telenovelas [] |
| 2. News/morning shows/documentaries [] | 4. Reality shows [] |
| 5. I watch any programme available on television [] | |
| 6. Other, please state..... | |

RESPONSE TO COMMERCIAL BREAKS WITHIN TV PROGRAMMES

5. Do you watch commercials during commercial breaks in TV programmes?

1. Yes []

2. No []

WATCHING

6a. If **YES to Q5**, what is your motivation for watching TV commercials during commercial breaks in programmes? (**Tick as many as are applicable to you and specify if necessary**).

1. I watch because they are entertaining []

2. I watch because they provide me with information []

3. I watch because I do not want to miss the next scene in a television programme []

4. I watch because I am not interested in programmes on other stations []

5. Other please state.....

6b. Does the product category of the commercials aired have any influence on your decision to watch?

1. Yes []

2. No []

6c. If, **Yes to 6b**, which product categories do you watch commercials on (**TICK AS MANY AS ARE APPLICABLE TO YOU AND SPECIFY IF NECESSARY**)?

1. Alcoholic beverages []

3. Female Hygiene products (eg. sanitary pad) []

2. Household products (eg. utensils) []

3. Other, please state.....

AVOIDANCE

7a. If **NO to Q5**, why do you avoid the commercials during commercial breaks in a TV programme

(TICK AS MANY AS ARE APPLICABLE TO YOU AND SPECIFY IF NECESSARY)

1. I avoid because they are not informative []
2. I avoid because they are boring []
3. I avoid because there are programmes on other stations I love to watch []
4. I avoid because there are long commercials in commercial breaks []
5. I avoid because there are too many commercials in commercial breaks []
6. Other please state

7b. What do you do when there is a commercial break in a television programme you are watching?

(Tick as many as are applicable to you and specify if necessary)

1. Leave the room to engage in other activities []
2. Mute/reduce the volume of the television []
3. Stay in the room but divert attention (use my phone, talk to others read etc) []
4. Change the channel to watch programmes on other TV stations []
5. Switch off the television []
6. Other, please state

7c. Does the product category of the commercial aired have any influence on your decision to avoid?

1. Yes [] 2. No []

7d. If, Yes to 7e, which product categories do you avoid commercials on?

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Alcoholic beverages [<input type="checkbox"/>] | 3. Female Hygiene products (eg. sanitary pad) [<input type="checkbox"/>] |
| 2. Household products (eg. utensils) | 4. Other, please state |

PERIOD OF EXPOSURE

8. At what period will you **prefer** a commercial break? (**TICK ONLY ONE**)

1. Before a programme starts []

3. Within a programme []

2. After the programme has ended []

DEMOGRAPHICS

9. Gender: 1. Male []

2. Female []

10. Age: 1. 18-21 []

2. 22-25 []

3. 26-29 []

4. 30 and above []

11. Level: 1. Undergraduate []

2. Postgraduate []

