

Surrogate Advertisement & Consumer Buying Behavior:A perspective

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Abstract: Surrogate advertising is one of the major emerging ethical issue of the advertisement industry in India as it is used as a strategy to promote injurious products like liquor or alcohol whose advertisement is banned in our country. Whenever a consumer looks at the advertisement they get reminded of these banned products and develop an urge to consume them. Since surrogate advertising takes away the very purpose of banning liquor / alcoholic product advertisement the objective of the research is to understand the impact of surrogate advertisement on consumer buying behavior and whether these advertisement help the firm to reach its final consumer. Thus a pilot study was undertaken via snowball sampling method with a sample size of 100 using Descriptive and Qualitative type of research. The analysis reveals that surrogate advertising is not positively perceived by various section of consumers in the society and major response of the consumer is negative towards surrogate advertising as majority of the consumer consider surrogate advertising as immoral and unethical practice therefore leaving the advertisers to work and modify their advertising strategies and not resort to surrogate advertising to market their products. Also analysis indicates that majority of respondents believe that there are loop-holes in the law abiding surrogate advertising thus transparent laws for different products to ban surrogate advertising under same brand should be made. In future further researches should be undertaken to understand socio economic effects of alcohol abuse and study the impact of interaction between governments and different consumers like youths, society and civil formation to reduce harmful effects of alcohol.

Keywords: *Surrogate advertisement, brand, alcohol, cigarette, tobacco*

1. INTRODUCTION

A surrogate advertisement involves advertising of a product using an already well-established brand or product. Such advertisement or sponsorship also leads to the brand recall of the already well-established brand or the product. The product which takes the help of the well-established product or the brands is known as a surrogate. The surrogate could either be a related product or be an original product but it uses the established brand of the original product. The sponsoring of famous events and activities such as sports cultural and leisure events also falls under surrogate advertising. Surrogate advertising can also be explained as fitting or including a message of a product or brand inside another advertisement which is for a different product or brand. Mostly surrogate advertising is used for advertising such products which are banned by law for advertising purpose due to harming public interest and welfare.

Now a day's surrogate advertising is getting very much popularity in liquor and tobacco Industries. Surrogate adds hide the original features of the product and represent it like a Very ordinary product. The basic purpose of doing this is to promote the product, without coming into the criteria of being illegal. As to advertise the liquors and tobacco on national television is prohibited in India. There are some characteristics of surrogate advertising, by which it can easily be spotted in day to day life.

1.1 Characteristics of Surrogate Advertising:

- This type of advertisement is mostly used for controversial products or those kinds of products that are harmful or restricted for normal public. Just like liquors or tobacco.
- It can also be used to promote or launch any new actor or actress. As in many movies, a guest appearance or item song is given to a celebrity who is not the part of entire movie. This is also a kind of surrogate advertising.
- Surrogate advertisements initially make your thinking get dragged into the product its actually advertising. But at the end. The advertisement will end up with a different product.
- In these type of advertisement, there will be the logo of the product in any corner. Which will help a normal person to easily understand the main purpose of the advertisement.

So, by keeping these characteristics in mind. We can easily spot the surrogated advertisements. There are some examples that can help us to understand this situation

First example is the advertisement of royal stag. In this, some cricketers are playing in the cricket ground and the tag line of advertisement is, "it's your life, make it large ". Though the advertisement is of royal stag whisky, but the advertisement will end up by saying, "royal stag mega music CDs. " Second example is also of a liquor, Imperial blue. Its advertisement's tag line is, "men will be men. " And it ends up by saying "imperial blue superhit music CDs. But the fact is that no CD company in India makes any CD by this name. And we can find so many examples like that.

1.3 Consumer Buying Behavior:

Consumer behavior refers to the psychological and emotional process and the visible behavior of consumers during searching, purchasing and post consumption of a product or a service. The consumer behavior includes study of how people buy, what they buy and when. When we say a study of consumer buying behavior, we are mentioning the study of the process involved when individuals select, use or dispose of the products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and wants.

1.4 Consumer Buying Process:

- *Stage 1: Need recognition*

This is the first and the primary step of the model. The basic requirement of a purchase is the need/urge to buy something. A need arises when there is a difference between the desire and the current situation.

- *Stage 2: Searching of products*

The companies advertise widely and try to reach out to its consumers effectively which imparts awareness. Once a consumer has decided that he wants to buy a product, he would try to analyze appropriate information to come to a decision.

- *Stage 3: Pre-Purchase Evaluation*

For consumers a product should be best in terms of price, quality and benefits. This stage is very critical as the customer decides what brand to buy. A customer tries to collect information but in these circumstances, the companies try to trick the consumer by providing the apt information at the right time.

- *Stage 4: Purchase*

After the decision has been made, the purchase comes into process.

- *Stage 5: Consumption*

Now the consumer actually uses the product according to his need or say desire. All the promotion efforts of a company are put at test at this stage, as the buyer finally consumes the product.

- *Stage 6: Post-Consumption Evaluation*

This is the review stage. After the product has been used, the consumer puts out his/her experience. A good experience will lead to satisfaction and re-purchase of the product and dissatisfaction will lead to rejection and search for another.

Hence the objective of the research is to understand the effect of surrogate advertisement on consumer buying behavior.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Strasburg, Donne Stein (1991) pointed out that out of 20000 ad commercials seen by children within a year, 2000 are for alcoholic drinks like beer and wine which means that these ads will also be viewed by the teenagers approximately around 25 to 50 times for every "just say no" or "know when to say when" advertisement. As more and more beer commercials are seen by the young people, they lure into its trap more easily. These young people have sufficient knowledge about beers and which brands to use hence are keener to drink beer as adults. Not only as adults but they start drinking beer at a very early stage of life (Grube, Wallace, 1994)

A study conducted by Thun, Peto et al (1997) found that if the alcohol consumption amongst the middle-aged to elderly citizens is average then the risk of death reduces by a few years. This varies from people of different age to different background conditions like cardiovascular risk and its connection to the consumption of alcohol.

Malley, Bachman et al (1998): "Adolescents and their usage of alcohol". According to this article, the minimum legal age for drinking is 21 but adolescents under the age of 18 seem to consume alcohol and that is why in recent years the rate of drinking has increased gradually among some age groups. The socio demographic rates show that the consumption of alcohol among white people is presumably low as per sub groups with drinking rates. It states that 2/3 of students from the 12th grade suffer from at least one problem caused due to alcohol. The reason for consuming alcohol among the adolescents is simply because it calms down the nerves and makes the person elated. Adolescents seem to forget the school or family stress and can have a fun time, this is why they get addicted to drinking.

Pekins (2002) conducted a study on "Colleges and how the alcohol is misused and the consequences faced because of them". According to survey research, colleges do not use the alcohol properly due to which large amounts of damage is caused amongst the students. Not only do they suffer the consequences but the people around them also face the trauma, the survey was conducted and the results recorded are of the last two decades.

Pekins (2002) conducted a comparative study on Male or female drinking, and found that both of them cause havoc and a huge amount of damage. Male drinking was found to cause more of public distractions whereas the female drinking was private and intimate.

Thus Gentile, Bloomgren et al (2001) tries to prove the relationship between the budget of beer advertisements and drinking by the adolescents. It was found that beer adds influences the Buying behavior of consumers. The commercial's main goal is to attract a greater number of customers and provide them with classic beer because of which they will buy again leading an increase in the followers of the brand. Hence the main goal of surrogate advertiser is to ensure that the sales, market or promotion price should be kept in a such a way so as to sell more products within a time period but also gain profits at the same time (Greenberg, Lee et al, 2001)

While Siegal, King et al (2006) in his study "Youths getting exposed inappropriately mainly due to advertisements in youth readerships and magazines" found that there is a growth in the number of articles in such magazines with the increase in proportion of youth readerships even after having control over them. This further proves that the youth is shown alcohol advertisements almost everywhere which is very inappropriate and this increases concern in public policies. "Studies are being done to control the consumption of alcohol of the youth and various policies are also being formed". It is important to tighten and increase the policies related to availability and marketing of alcohol to control the usage of underage people and their consumption of alcohol (Paschal, Grube et al, 2009)

3. OBJECTIVES

3.1 Primary Objective:

To understand the effect of surrogate advertisement on consumer buying behavior.

3.2 Secondary Objective:

The primary objective is attained through following secondary objectives, which are:

- To study about surrogate advertising.
- To find out do surrogate advertisements helps the firm to reach its final consumers.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A pilot study was undertaken via snowball sampling method with a sample size of 100. The study was a combination of both Descriptive and Qualitative type of research. Since the data that is used has been collected through questionnaires & is dealing with behavior and attitudes of people, it comes under qualitative and descriptive kind of research. Primary data was collected by making use of structured questionnaire and secondary data via research papers, books etc. For the purpose of data analysis percentage analysis was used and visual aid like pie chart were used to display data using Ms-excel.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

The analysis and interpretation of various questions of the questionnaire directed towards achieving the objective of the study is divided into two parts. First part aimed at demographic analysis while second part focused on identifying consumer perception and awareness towards surrogate advertising.

5.1 Demographic Analysis

5.1.1 Demographic Profile: Age Group

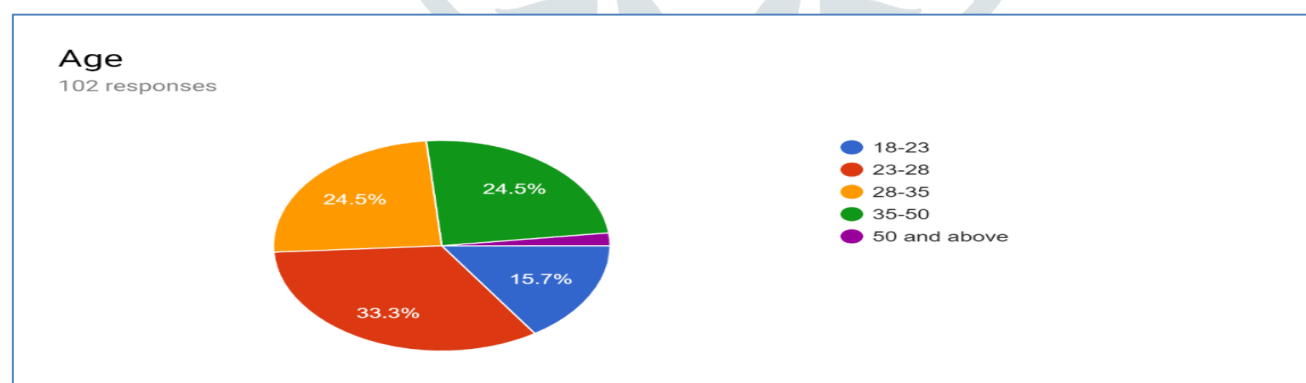


Figure 5.1: Classification of age group of respondents

Interpretation: 15.7% of the respondents belonged to 18-23 years. 33.3% of the people belonged to 23-28 years. 24.5% of the people belonged to 28-35 years. 24.5% of the people belonged to the age group of 35-50 and the remaining were 50 and above.

5.1.2 Demographic Profile: Education Qualification

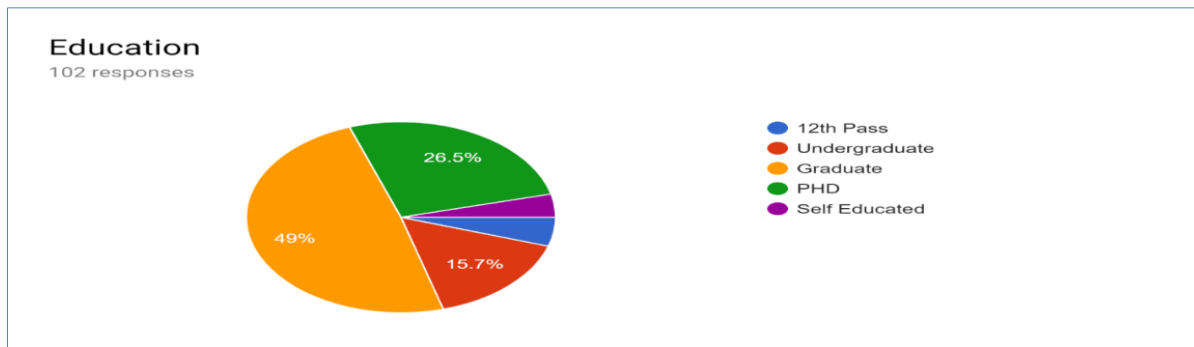


Figure 5.2: Classification of education qualification of respondents

Interpretation: 49% of the respondents are graduated, 26.5% are done with their PHD. 15.7% are undergraduate and remaining are either 12th pass or self-educated.

5.1.3 Demographic Profile: Employment

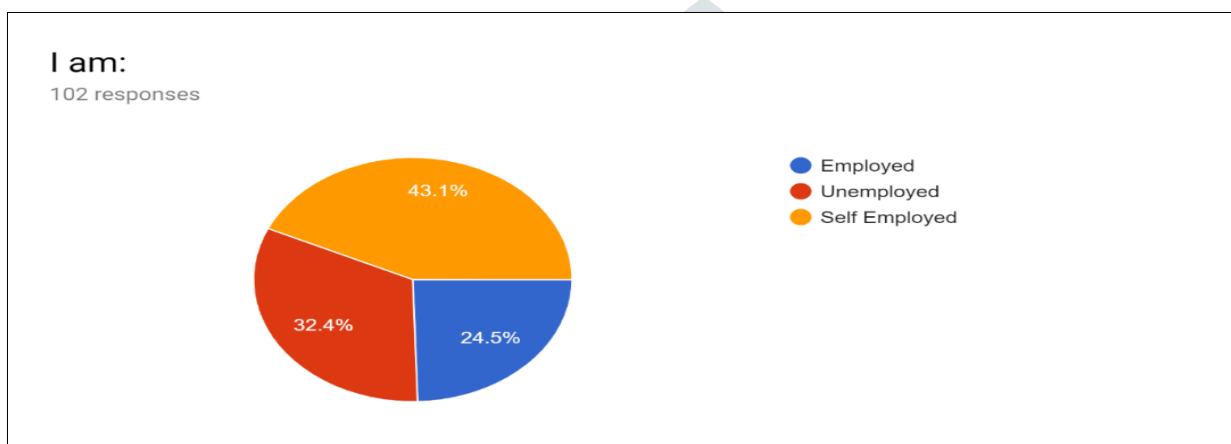


Figure 5.3: Classification of employment status of respondents

Interpretation: 24.5% of the respondents are employed, 32.4% are unemployed while 43.1% are self-employed.

5.1.4 Demographic Profile: Income

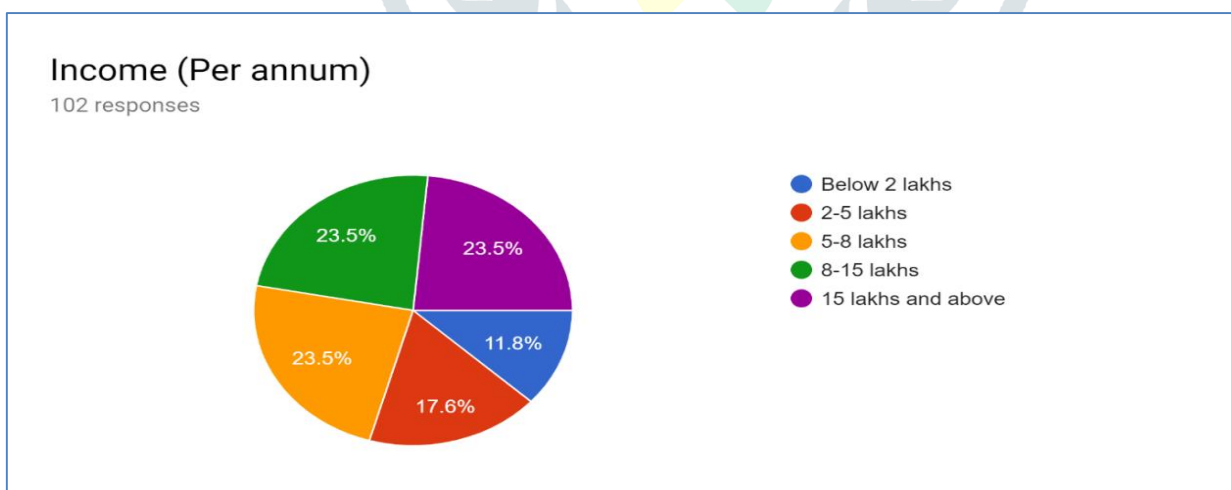


Figure 5.4: Classification of income of respondents

Interpretation: 11.8% people have their annual income below 2 lakh rupees. 17.6% have 2-5 lakhs, 23.5% have 5-8 lakh rupees. 23.5% have 8-15 lakh rupees while the remaining 23.5% have more than 15 lakh rupees as their annual income.

5.2 Consumer Perception Awareness Analysis

5.2.1 There is nothing wrong in consuming tobacco and liquor

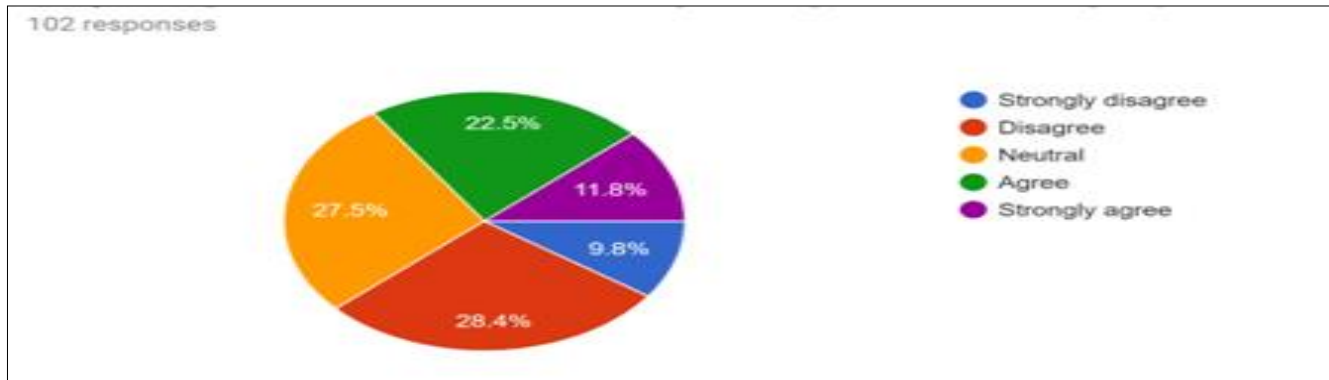


Figure 5.5: Perception towards consumption of tobacco and liquor

Interpretation: 11.8% of the people strongly agree that consumption of liquor and tobacco is wrong. 22.8% only agree with this fact. 27.5% are neutral. 28.4% disagree to this fact and 9.8% strongly disagree.

5.2.2 Need to ban advertisements of tobacco and liquor

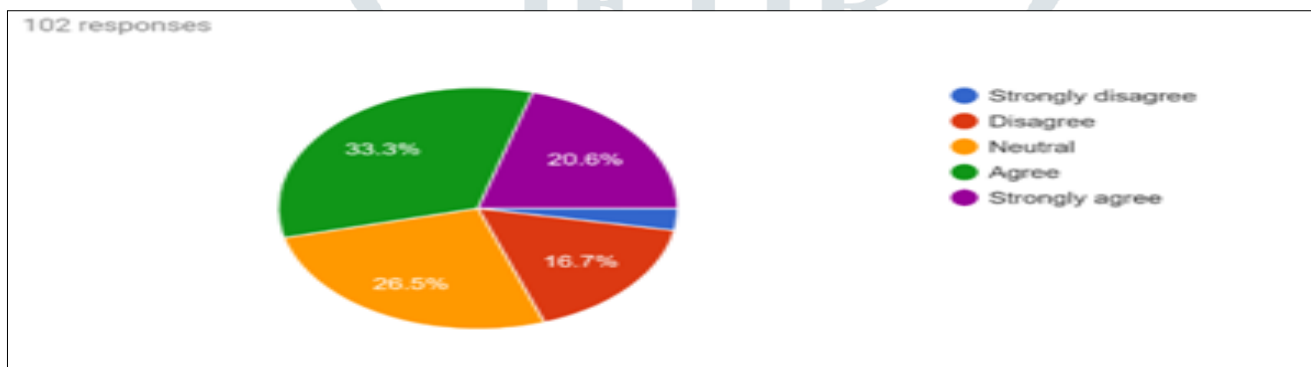


Figure 5.6: Should ban advertisements of tobacco and liquor

Interpretation: 20.6% of the people strongly agree that there is a need of ban of advertisements of liquor and tobacco. 33.3% only agree with this fact. 26.5% are neutral. 16.7% disagree to this fact and remaining strongly disagree.

5.2.3. The laws have succeeded in banning surrogate advertising

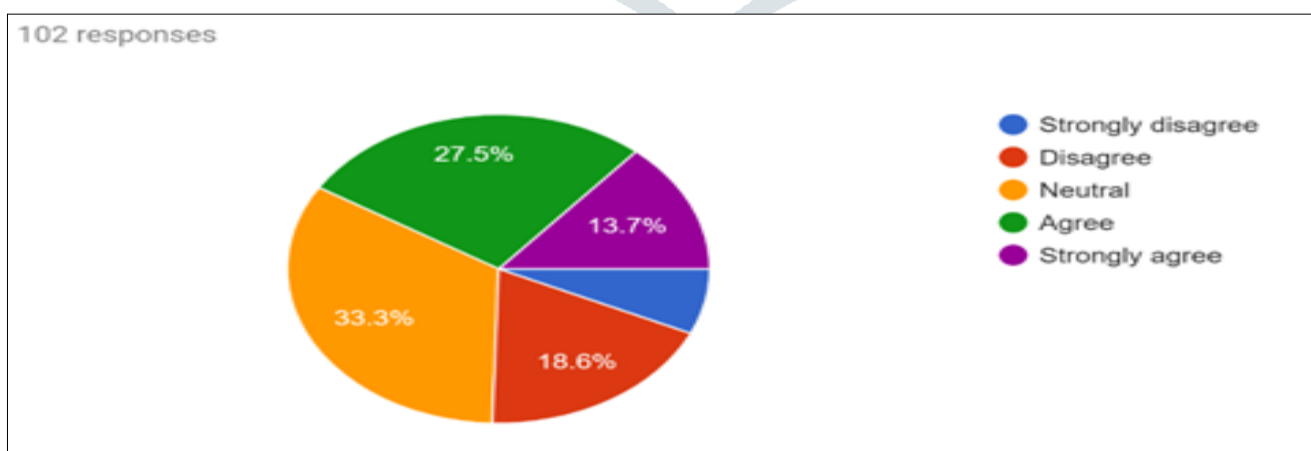


Figure 5.7: Perception regarding success of laws towards banning surrogate advertising

Interpretation: 13.7% of the people strongly agree that there is a need of ban of Surrogate advertisements. 27.5% only agree with this fact. 33.3% are neutral. 18.6% disagree to this fact and remaining strongly disagree. It can be interpreted that most of the people are neutral towards the fact if laws have been successful towards banning surrogate advertising.

5.2.4. The ban of advertisement have controlled their consumption by consumers

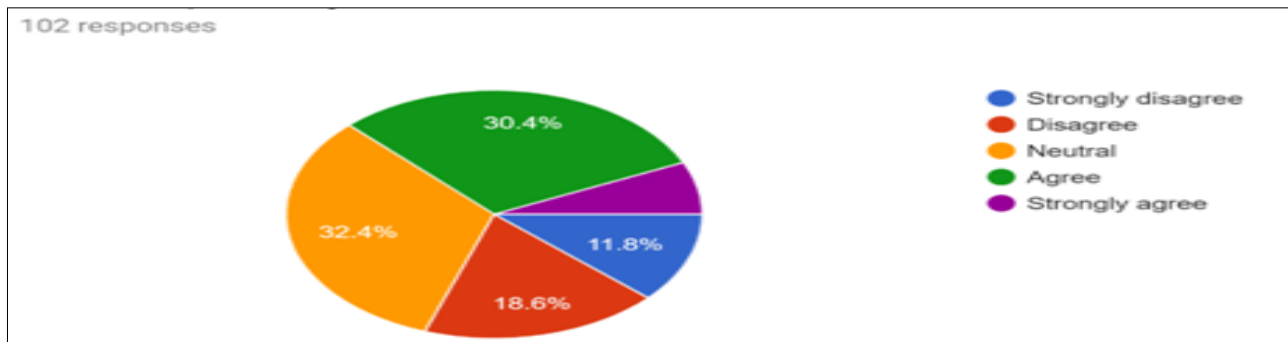


Figure 5.8: Perception towards reduced consumption by consumers due to ban

Interpretation: 11.8% of the people strongly disagree banning of such advertisements have controlled their consumption. 18.6% only disagree with this fact. 32.4% are neutral. 30.4% agree to this fact and remaining strongly agree. In the above pie chart also, we can see that most of the people are neutral towards the fact that banning of such advertisements have controlled their consumption. Consumption of liquor and tobacco is not due to its advertisements; therefore, it is difficult to judge.

5.2.5. Surrogate advertisement help brand reach mass

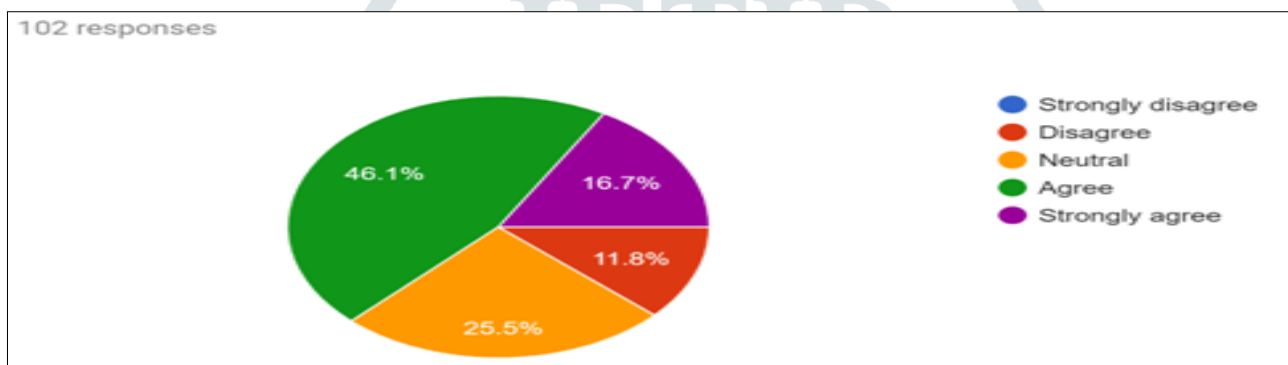


Figure 5.9: Perception towards surrogate advertising reaching mass

Interpretation: 16.7% of the people strongly agree that Surrogate advertisements have led the brand to reach mass. 46.1% only agree with this fact. 25.5% are neutral. 11.8% disagree to this fact. It can be interpreted that people have different opinions regarding surrogate advertising leading brand to reach mass. However, most of the people agree to this fact.

5.2.6. Surrogate advertisement lead to negative impact on children

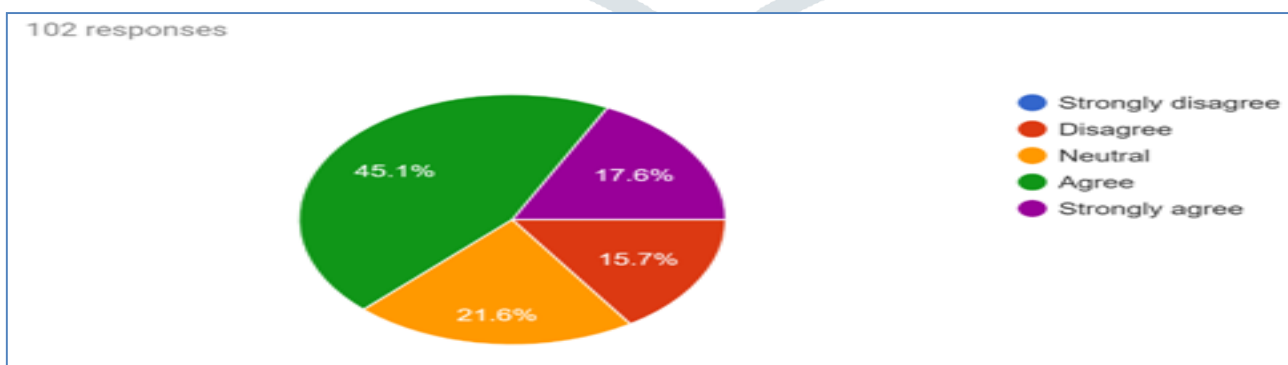


Figure 5.10: Perception towards negative impact of surrogate advertising

Interpretation: 17.6% of the people strongly agree that there is a negative impact on children due to such advertisements 45.1% only agree with this fact. 21.6% are neutral. 15.7% disagree to this fact. Here we can say that most of the people feel that these advertisements create a negative impact on children and therefore it is important to ban them.

5.2.7. Surrogate advertisement focuses on advertising the product

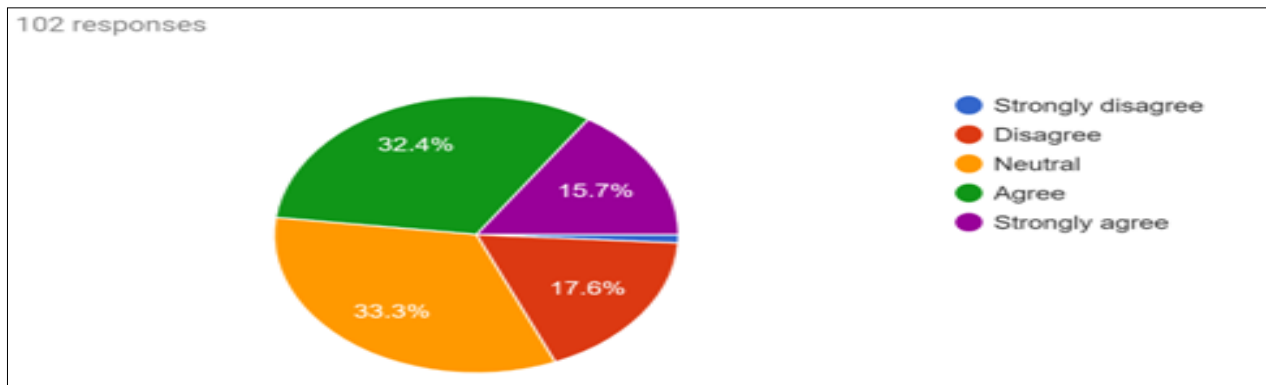


Figure 5.11: Focus on advertising product

Interpretation: 15.7% of the people strongly agree that Surrogate advertisements only focus on advertising products. 32.4% only agree with this fact. 33.3% are neutral. 17.6% disagree to this fact and remaining strongly disagree. It can be interpreted that some people do believe that surrogate advertising focus on the advertising product and thus indirectly create their market.

5.2.8. Surrogate advertisement encourages to consume liquor and tobacco

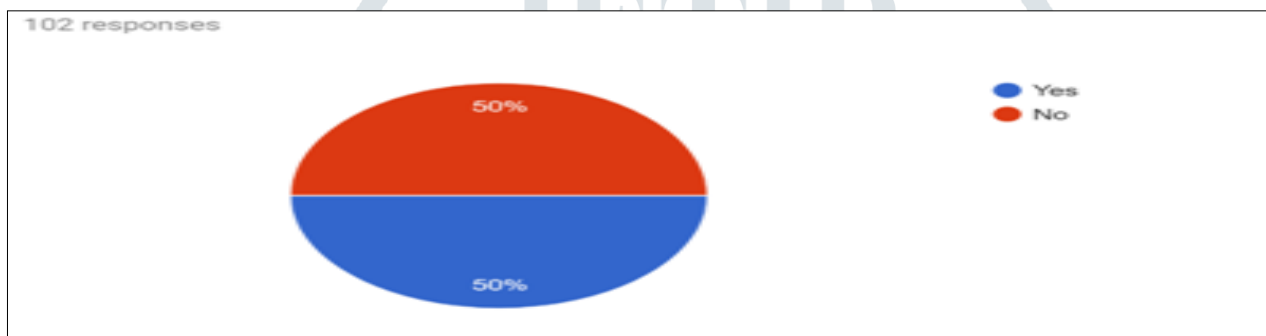


Figure 5.12: Perception towards encouragement to consume liquor and tobacco

Interpretation: 50% of the people agree that these advertisements encourage to consume liquor or tobacco while 50% don't. It can be interpreted that the ratio of agreeing and disagreeing to this fact is equal.

5.2.9. There are loopholes in law abiding towards banning of surrogate advertisement

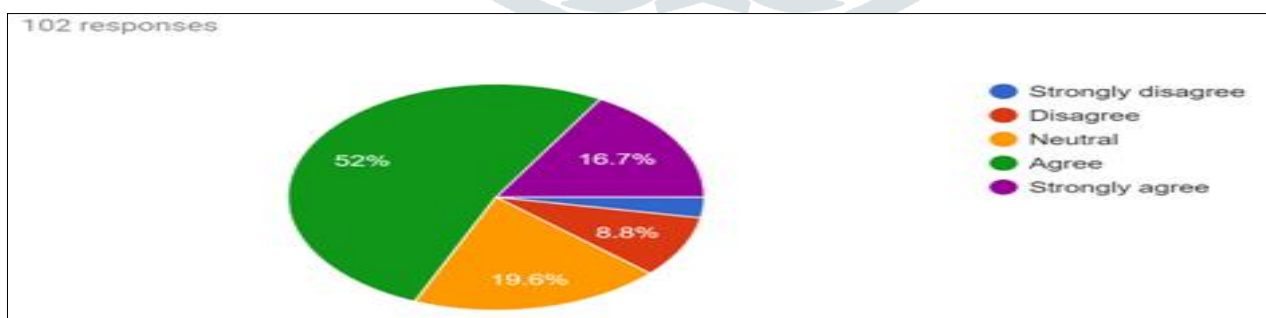


Figure 5.13: Perception towards loopholes in law abiding ban of surrogate advertisement

Interpretation: 16.7% of the people strongly agree that there exist loopholes in laws directed towards banning Surrogate advertisements. 52% only agree with this fact. 19.5% are neutral. 8.8% disagree to this fact and remaining strongly disagree. Here, we see that almost people believe that there is some issue with the laws towards banning of such advertisements and therefore they are still into force.

5.2.10. Agreement towards increased competition leading surrogate advertiser to advertise in on form or another

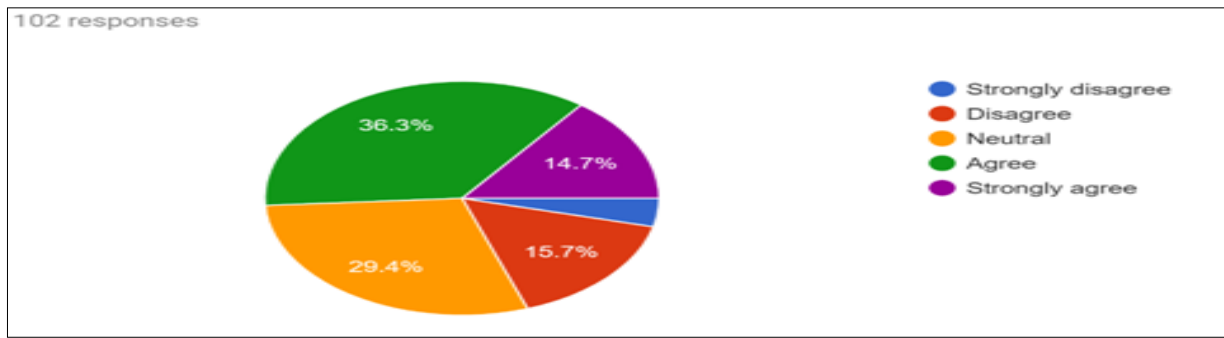


Figure 5.14: Increased competition leading surrogate advertiser to excessive advertisement

Interpretation: 14.7% of the people strongly agree that there is a need of ban of Surrogate advertising due to increased competition of liquor and tobacco. 36.3% only agree with this fact. 29.4% are neutral. 15.7% disagree to this fact and remaining strongly disagree. Hence, it is clear that increasing competition is the main cause of surrogate advertising.

5.2.11. Surrogate advertisement results in better brand recall

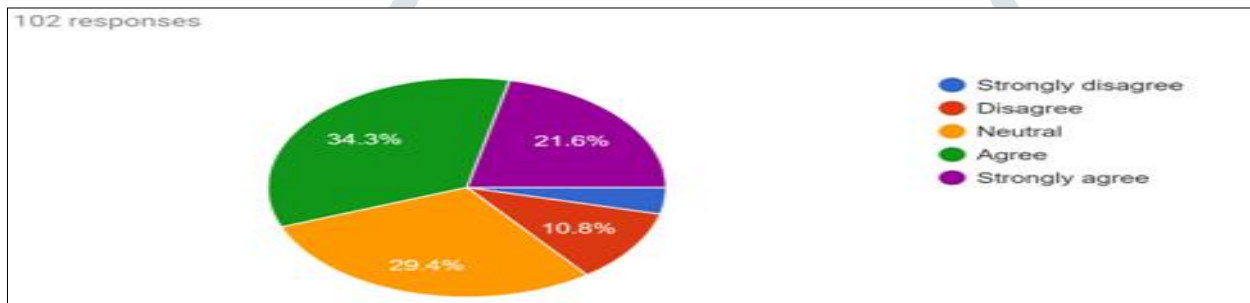


Figure 5.15: Better brand recall

Interpretation: 21.6% of the people strongly agree that there is a need of Surrogate advertisements as it results in a better brand recall. 34.3% only agree with this fact. 29.4% are neutral. 10.8% disagree to this fact and remaining strongly disagree. There is not much agreement to the fact that surrogate advertisements should run as they give better brand recall.

5.2.12. Surrogate advertisement helps in increasing sale of core products

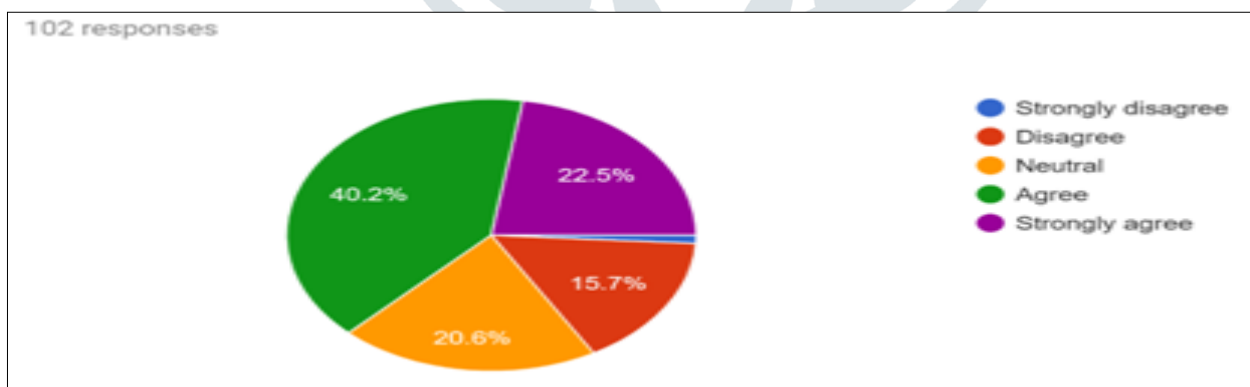


Figure 5.16: Increment on sale of core product

Interpretation: 22.5% of the people strongly agree that Surrogate advertisements help in increasing the sale of core products. 40.2% only agree with this fact. 20.6% are neutral. 15.7% disagree to this fact and remaining strongly disagree.

5.2.13. Surrogate advertisement is good for core products

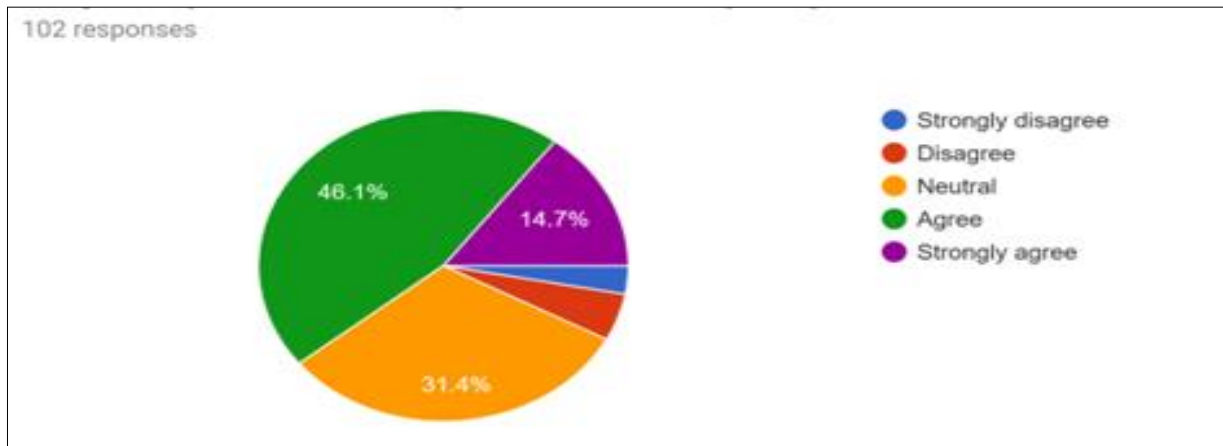


Figure 5.17: Surrogate Advertising impact on core brand

Interpretation: 14.7% of the people strongly agree that Surrogate advertisements are good for the core brand itself. 46.1% only agree with this fact. 31.4% are neutral remaining disagree.

5.2.14. Surrogate advertisement reminds of core products

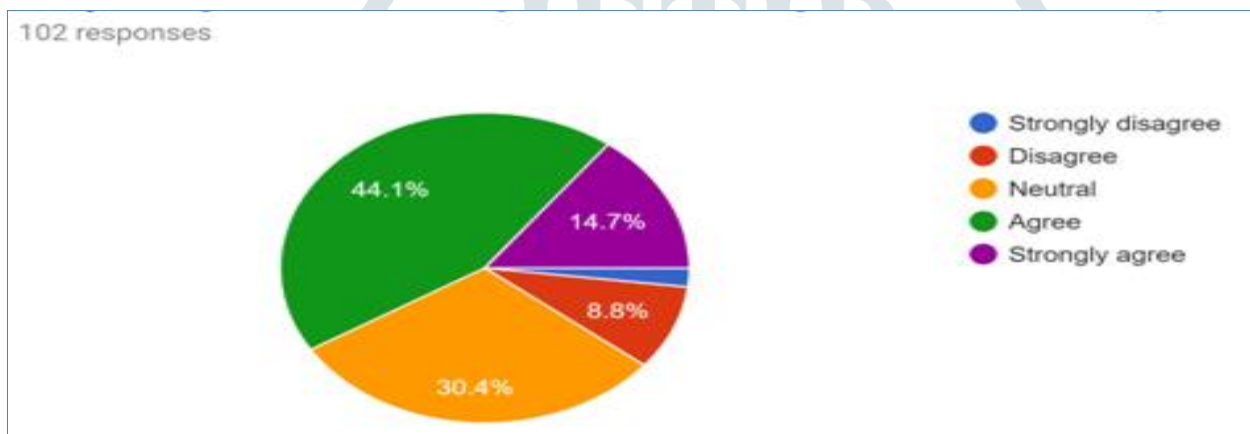


Figure 5.18: Surrogate advertisement a reminder of core brand

Interpretation: 14.7% of the people strongly agree that Surrogate advertisements remind of the core products. 44.1% only agree with this fact. 30.4% are neutral. 8.8% disagree to this fact and remaining strongly disagree.

5.2.15. Need to spread awareness regarding harmful effects of surrogate advertising

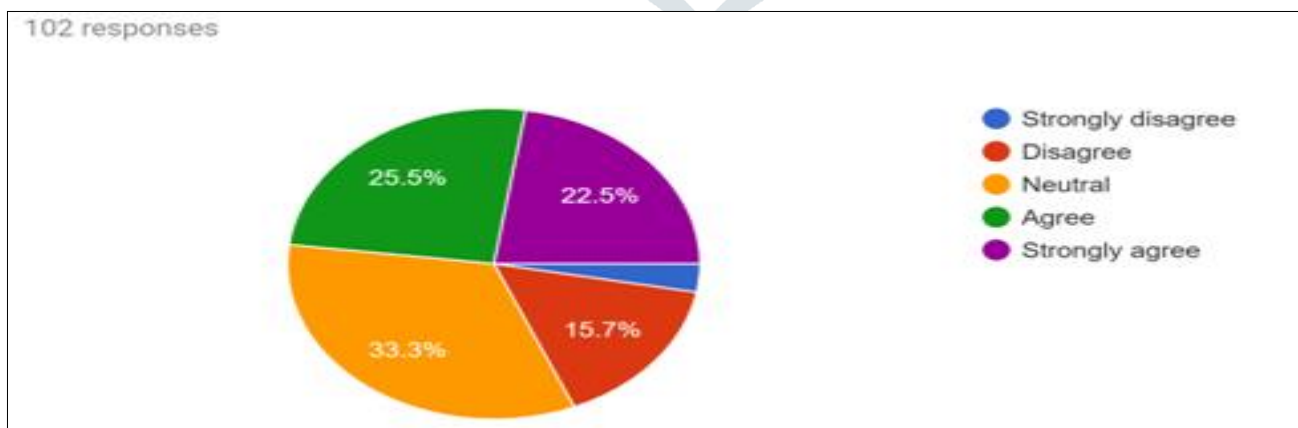


Figure 5.19: Need of spreading awareness regarding surrogate advertisement effects

Interpretation: 22.5% of the people strongly agree that there is a need to organise programmes to spread awareness of the negative impact of surrogate advertisements. 25.5% only agree with this fact. 33.3% are neutral. 15.7% disagree to this fact and remaining strongly disagree.

6. FINDINGS

The finding on the basis of analysis of the responses shown and received in the questionnaire and through interview of customers are as under:

- Based on the survey it was found that the most of the people are neutral towards the fact that banning of such advertisements have controlled their consumption. Therefore it is difficult to judge the consumption of liquor and tobacco as it may or may not be due to its advertisements.
- People do feel that these advertisements may create a negative impact on children so it should be banned.
- It was also found that the ratio of agreeing and disagreeing to the fact that these advertisements encourage to consume liquor or tobacco are equal.
- Most of the respondents believe that there is some issue with the laws towards banning of such advertisements and therefore actions must be taken in this regards
- It is clear from the survey that the increasing competition is the main cause of surrogate advertising.
- Also, respondents agree that there is a need to organize programmes to spread awareness regarding negative/harmful impact of surrogate advertisements.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

There is need of strict measures to be taken to curb the negative impact of surrogate advertisement by making transparent laws for different products to ban surrogate advertising under same brand, changing trademarks act and giving voice to Advertising Council to take a strict action towards false and misleading advertisements and asking advertisers to make advertisement such that they are true over clever.

Also other measures can include:

- Warning print media about advertising codes and asking them to stop motivating Surrogate Advertisements.
- Taking immediate action towards the complaints of consumer to ASCI regarding surrogate advertisements,
- Conducting an awareness programmed for consumers to help them understand impact of surrogate advertisements,
- Taking strict action toward people doing surrogate advertisement without having any actual presence of product;
- Making awareness among advertising agencies that they should have complete knowledge about the product having same brand for which advertisement is done and taking action against producers which do surrogate advertisements.
- Ensuring health warning on the packets as mandatory and even in advertisements health warning should be made mandatory like (“Cigarette smoking is injurious to health”).

Thus corporate and government should also take following measures for consumer awareness like they must promote programmes which state people about harmful effects of liquor, promotion of social responsibility, establishment of recreational facilities, establishment and maintenance of support structures which shows individuals and communities about alcohol abuses.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Surrogate advertising is one of the major emerging ethical issue of the advertisement industry in India. Because it is used as a strategy to promote injurious products like liquor or alcohol whose advertisement is banned in our country. Whenever a consumer looks at the advertisement they get reminded of these banned products and develop an urge to consume them. Since surrogate advertising takes away the very purpose of banning liquor / alcoholic product advertisement. The main issue of this problem lies in the attitude of the target consumers towards advertising because they are the final evaluators of the advertising. Various studies and psychographic profiles of the consumer show that surrogate advertising is not positively perceived by various section of consumers in the society and major response of the consumer work towards the negative side of the surrogate advertising. Majority of the consumer consider surrogate advertising as immoral and unethical practice therefore leaving the advertisers to work and modify their advertising strategies in such a manner so that they can affect their consumers in ethical and positive way and not resort to surrogate advertising to market their products. Finally the whole research was carried out in a systematic way to reach at precise results. The whole research and findings were based on the objectives. However, the study had some limitations also such as lack of time, lack of awareness about surrogate advertisement, getting responses was a major task etc. which posed problems in carrying out the research.

9. SCOPE OF FUTURE RESEARCH

Further researches should be done in order to understand socio economic effects of alcohol abuse and interaction between governments and different consumers like youths, society and civil formation about harmful effects of alcohol

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