

# MEASURING CHANGE IN A TRANSITIONAL ECONOMY ATTITUDES TOWARDS ADVERTISING IN KAZAKHSTAN

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## **Abstract:**

The present study measures social attitude toward advertising in Kazakhstan - a rapidly growing transitional economy that was a part of the former Soviet Union. It is related to author's earlier study (Fullerton and Weir's, 2002). While methodology in both cases remains the same, the class/ group-wise respondents, are different. In any way, the present findings reveal some statistically significant shifts in individual attitudes/behavior vis-à-vis consumer advertising industry. Further, the findings suggest that attitudes are generally constant within cultures notwithstanding shifts in external factors.

This study, though limited by its small respondent pool of students and professors at university, provides insight not only about how people in Central Asia view advertising in general, but also how economic changes in a country can alter perceptions of advertising.

## **Keywords:**

Kazakhstan, Advertising, Consumer Attitudes, Economy, Kazakhstan.

## **Introduction:**

There is growing interest among scholars about the subject of advertising and its role in the marketing of products in countries that are under transition, say for example, Vietnam, China and the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> These transitional economies are attractive to advertising business because of the prospects of their growth and development. However, there has not been great deal of research on advertising and marketing.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, few fundamental questions solicit reply of the scholars: how consumers respond to advertising in transitional markets.<sup>3</sup> Do perceptions of general advertising vary cross-culturally?<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rajeev Batra, "Executive insights: Marketing Issues and Challenges in Transitional Economies," *Journal of International Marketing*, 5(4), 1997, 95-114.

<sup>2</sup> M. Abernethy, & G. R. Franke, "The information Content of Advertising: A Meta-analysis," *Journal of Advertising*, 25(2), 1996, 1-17; J. Fullerton, "Images in Post Soviet Advertising: An analysis of Gender Portrayal in Kazakhstani Television Commercials," *Proceedings of the 2003 Conference of the American Academy of Advertising*, Carlson, L (ed.) 16, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Srinivas Durvasula, J. Craig Andrews, & Richard G. Netemeyer, "A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Consumer Ethnocentrism in the United States and Russia," *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 9(4), 1997, 73-93; J.C. Andrews, S.

Since Kazakhstan became independent in 1991 and opted for transitional economy based on capitalism, we made an empirical study of the peoples' attitudes about advertising in this emerging capitalist economy.<sup>5</sup> The research was carried out in May 2000, and the respondents, mostly youth of a university, revealed that people were not familiar with advertising. Accordingly they were uncertain about the role and potential of advertising for improving the quality of life.

Since 2000 and onwards, Kazakhstan made tremendous economic growth.<sup>6</sup> Almaty, the largest city in Kazakhstan, has become a truly global metropolis in various areas. Many agencies have opened their advertising operations and are supporting the growing retail, service, and manufacturing industries.<sup>7</sup>

Nine years later (2009-10), we carried out another empirical study in the same university without change in methodology or tools of investigation. The objective was simply to measure the change in the attitude of the people vis-à-vis advertising in the market products.

### **Background:**

Endowed with natural resources, Kazakhstan's economy has grown dynamically through the 1990s and 2000s, with an average annual GDP growth of 10%.<sup>8</sup> In 1997, President Nazarbayev pledged to double the economy by 2010, which, however, was achieved before time in 2008

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Durvasula & R. G. Netemeyer, "Testing the Cross-Cultural Applicability of U.S. and Russian Advertising Belief and Attitude Measures," *Journal of Advertising* (Special Issue on International Advertising), 23(1), 1994, 71-73.

<sup>4</sup> J. C. Andrews, S. Lysonski, & S. Durvasula, "Understanding Cross-cultural Student Perceptions of Advertising in General: Implications for Advertising Educators and Practitioners," *Journal of Advertising*, 20(2), 1991, 15-28.

<sup>5</sup> J. A. Fullerton, & T. Weir, "Perceptions of Advertising in the Newly Independent States: Kazakhstani Students' Beliefs about Advertising," *Journal of Advertising Education*, 6(1), 2002, 45-53.

<sup>6</sup> P. Agrawal, "Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction: Evidence from Kazakhstan," *Asian Development Review*, 24(2), 2007, 90-115; International Monetary Fund, "Kazakhstan," *World Economic Outlook Database*, 2009, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2009/02/weodata/weorept.aspx?sy=2006&ey=2009&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=916&s=NGDPD,NGDPDPC,PPPGDP,PPPPC,LP&grp=0&a=&pr.x=79&pr.y=16>.

<sup>7</sup> TNS Central Asia, 2009, The Volume of the Kazakhstani Advertising Market by Media Type, January-December 2008, <http://www.tns-global.kz/ru/publication/publ190.php> (in Russian).

<sup>8</sup> J. Chung, "Kazakhstan Moves on From Borat: The Central Asian Republic Lamponed on Film is Seeking a Prominent Place in the World's Financial Markets," *Financial Times*, November 22, 2006.

with the GDP at \$135.601 billion in total and the per-capita at \$8,719<sup>9</sup>, compared to \$3,200 in 1999.<sup>10</sup> Between 2000 and 2005, the percentage of people living in poverty shrank from 32% to 10%.<sup>11</sup> After 2007, country's economy was affected by the global economic crisis, and the growth of Kazakhstan's GDP dropped to 19.81% in 2008. As a result, the government had to rescue ailing banks.<sup>12</sup> It is yet unclear as to how well Kazakhstan agenda of growth amid ongoing economic crisis.

### **Advertising:**

The Kazakh advertising market is growing rapidly, powered by media expansion, a burgeoning GDP and multiplying foreign investment. In 2007, Zenith Optimedia anticipated Kazakhstan to be the fastest growing advertising nation through 2010, with expenditures shooting up by 155%.<sup>13</sup> In 2008, advertising spending added up to \$1 billion, up from \$828 million in 2007 (30% growth) and up from \$220 million in 2003. Eighty percent of advertising spending is on TV, 11% print, 5% on outdoor, and 3% on radio. Though sales grew across media platforms, TV dominated the trend at 32%. Advertising budgets ballooned by 175% in 2008.<sup>14</sup>

Procter & Gamble, Kazakhstan Cellular, Kar-Tel, Colgate, Schwarzkopf, and Coca-Cola were among the top six 2008 advertisers,<sup>15</sup> revealing a heavy focus on consumer products related to cosmetics, hygiene, electronics, telecommunications, and food. Other big advertisers are Kaspi Bank, Unilever, Mars, Benckiser, and Gillette. Several international advertising agencies have also relocated branch offices in Kazakhstan, including Ogilvy & Mather, BBDO, and Lentis.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> International Monetary Fund, Kazakhstan, *World Economic Outlook Database*, 2009. Retrieved February 4, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Kazakhstan, *The World Factbook: Central Asia*, 2010, January 26, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kz.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Urban Media (2006). *Kazakhstan media market overview*, <http://www.impz.ae/wp-content/files/File/Kazakhstan-edia%20market%20overview.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> F. Fitzherbert-Brockholes, Kazakhstan – A Litmus Test for Emerging Markets, *The Lawyer*, September 28, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> R.Gerlsbeck, "Selling to Borat's Brethren," *Marketing Magazine*, 112(24), 2007, 10.

<sup>14</sup> The Volume of the Kazakhstani Advertising Market by Media Type, January – December 2008.

<sup>15</sup> The Volume of the Kazakhstani Advertising Market by Media Type, January – December 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Internews Russia, Survey of Non-governmental Kazakhstani Electronic Media, 1998, January; "Perceptions of Advertising in the Newly Independent States: Kazakhstani Students' Beliefs About Advertising," Spring, *Journal of Advertising Education*, 6(1), 2002, 45-53.

### **Attitude Toward Advertising:**

The study of consumer attitudes toward advertising is an important topic as it ultimately affects consumer brand attitudes and purchase intentions<sup>17</sup>. Attitude toward advertising has been studied for decades in the United States<sup>18</sup> and elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> Bauer and Greyser published one of the original large-scale studies of the public's attitude toward advertising.<sup>20</sup> They found that a majority of people thought that advertising was misleading and caused products to cost more, though more people reported favourable attitudes towards advertising. Many of the studies on attitude toward advertising, including this one, have relied on belief statements used by Bauer and Greyser.

Larkin used a variation of the Bauer and Greyser instrument to study attitudes toward advertising at one large Midwestern University.<sup>21</sup> During study, students' varying response reflected negative feelings toward advertising. With a series of 25 statements about advertising, Larkin's study analyzed the effects of advertising on four major human areas: social, economic, ethics and regulation. Larkin reported that the majority of students were critical of the social and economic aspects of advertising. Beard replicated Larkin's study at the same University 25

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<sup>17</sup> *Journal of Marketing Management*, 9(3), 1999, 48-59; R. Lutz, S. McKenzie & G. Belch, "Attitude Toward the Ad as a Mediator of Advertising Effectiveness: Determinants and Consequences," *Advances in Consumer Research*, 10(1), 1983, 532-539.

<sup>18</sup> F. Beard, "College Student Attitudes Toward Advertising's Ethical, Economic and Social Consequences," *Journal of Business Ethics*, 48(3), 2003, 217; J.A. Fullerton, A. Kendrick & C. Frazier, "A Nationwide Survey of Advertising Students' Attitudes About Advertising," *Journal of Advertising Education*, 12(1), 2008, 15-25; L. Reid, & L.C. Soley, "Generalized and personalized attitudes toward advertising's social and economic effects," *Journal of Advertising*, 11(3), 1982, 3-7; C.H. Sandage, & J.D. Leckenby, "Student attitudes toward advertising: Institution vs. instrument," *Journal of Advertising*, 9(2), 1980, 29-32, 44; E. Zanot, "Public attitudes towards advertising: The American experience," *International Journal of Advertising*, 3(1), 1984, 3-15.

<sup>19</sup> "Understanding Cross-cultural Student Perceptions of Advertising in General: Implications for Advertising Educators and Practitioners," *Journal of Advertising*, 20(2), 1991, 15-28; J. F. Manso-Pinto, & F. H. Diaz, "Beliefs About Advertising of Chilean University Students," *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 137(2), 1997, 267-269; J.D. Martin-Santana & A. Beerli-Palacio, "Why Attitudes Toward Advertising are not Universal: Cultural Explanations," *Journal of Euromarketing*, 17(3/4), 2008, 159-181; Ling, K.W., Piew T. H., & Chai, L.T. "The Determinants of Consumers' Attitude Towards Advertising." *Canadian Social Science* 6, no. 4 (August 31, 2010): 114-126.

<sup>20</sup> R. A. Bauer & S. A. Greyser, *Advertising in America: The Consumer View*, Boston: MA: Harvard University Press, 1968.

<sup>21</sup> E. F. Larkin, "A Factor Analysis of College Student Attitudes Toward Advertising," *Journal of Advertising*, 6(2), 1977, 42-46.

years later and found that many attitudes toward advertising had not changed, particularly peoples' negative feelings about the truthfulness of advertising.<sup>22</sup> Ethical issues in advertising, however, were not as important to the 21<sup>st</sup> century students as they had been for their parents. Larkin's instrument was used in the current study.

Shavitt, Lowrey and Haefner conducted a large-scale telephone survey of US adults at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and found that attitudes toward advertising were "more favourable than you might think."<sup>23</sup> 75% respondents either reported favorably or remained neutral about their attitudes towards advertising. Men were less offended by advertising and less inclined to regulate it. Respondents labeled "Generation X" (18-34 in 1998) were more favourable towards advertising: they liked advertising, were less offended and insulted by it, and felt less misled by it than their elderly counterparts. A study of US consumers found<sup>24</sup> that people's personalized attitudes about advertising ("advertising insults my intelligence") significantly differed from generalized attitudes ("advertising insults the intelligence of consumers"), and that personalized feelings were better indicators of social attitudes toward advertising in general.

A more recent nationwide survey of around 1,200 advertising students<sup>25</sup> revealed optimism about advertising than did previous advertising and non-advertising studies. The students appreciated the economic benefits of advertising and limiting the level of government regulation for the industry. However, most of them showed no response towards the effects of advertising on social ethics and values.

### **Cross Cultural Studies:**

Attitudes toward advertising have also been studied cross-culturally.<sup>26</sup> During one early study of the undergraduates from the United States,

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<sup>22</sup> *Journal of Business Ethics*, 48(3), 2003, 217.

<sup>23</sup> S. Shavitt, P. Lowrey & J. Haefner, "Public Attitudes Toward Advertising: More Favorable than you Might Think," *Journal of Advertising Research*, 38(4), 1998, 7-22.

<sup>24</sup> N. Xiaoli, "Perceptual Predictors of Global Attitude Toward Advertising: An Investigation of Both Generalized and Personalized Beliefs," *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 28(1), 2006, 31-44.

<sup>25</sup> *Journal of Advertising Education*, 12(1), 2008, 15-25.

<sup>26</sup> D. Zhou, W. Zhang, & I. Vertinsky, "Advertising Trends in Urban China," *Journal of Advertising Research*, 42(3), 2002, 73-81; *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 11(2), 1999, 79-98; L. Wells, S. Van Auken & W. Ritchie, "Russian Advertising Attitudes: Reassessing the Two-Factor Model," *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 20(2), 2007, 5; J. Wills & J. Ryans "Attitudes Toward Advertising: A Multinational Study," *Journal of International Business Studies*, 13(3), 1982, 121-130.

New Zealand, Denmark, Greece and India about general advertising, researchers found that as ad expenditures and exposures increased, ad perceptions switched from function-related to practice-related issues.<sup>27</sup>

Most recent studies on the attitudes toward advertising have focused on cross-cultural differences and other moderators. An experimental study of individuals from four European countries demonstrated differences in attitudes toward advertising in terms of cultural values. This is perhaps why attitudes toward advertising are not universal.<sup>28</sup> Osmonbekov, Gregory, Brown, and Xie examined the relationship between materialism and attitudes toward advertising among a sample of 1,854 consumers in the United States, China and Japan and found the relationship to be moderated by consumer expertise.<sup>29</sup> While sorting out determinants of attitudes towards advertising during a study of Malaysian consumers, researchers, found that the factors of credibility, content of information, and hedonic/pleasure, are the ideally suited attractions of the advertising industry.<sup>30</sup>

#### **Attitude toward Advertising in Transitional Economies:**

Studies conducted at universities in Chile<sup>31</sup> and Russia<sup>32</sup> represent early response of the people towards advertising in transitional economies. These revealed that students of those countries are softly inclined to advertising than their American counterparts. Darley and Johnson studied attitudes toward advertising in four developing (though not necessarily transitional) countries (Nigeria, Kenya, India, and Singapore), and found attitudes similar to the US except on the dimension of impact on product costs.<sup>33</sup> The researchers noted the respondents could not believe the rather complex idea that advertising actually lowers the costs of products.

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<sup>27</sup> Andrews, Lysonski, & Durvasula, *Journal of Advertising*, 20(2), 1991, 15-28.

<sup>28</sup> Martin-Santana & Beerli-Palacio, *Journal of Euromarketing*, 17(3/4), 2008, 159-181.

<sup>29</sup> T. Osmonbekov, B.T. Gregory, W. Brown, & F. T. Xie, "How Consumer Expertise Moderates the Relationship Between Materialism and Attitude Toward Advertising," *Journal of Targeting, Measurement & Analysis for Marketing*, 17(4), 2009, 321-327.

<sup>30</sup> L. Kwek Choon, P. Tan Hoi, & C. Lau Teck, "The Determinants of Consumers' Attitude Towards Advertising," *Canadian Social Science*, 6(4), 2010, 114-126.

<sup>31</sup> J. F. Manso-Pinto & F.H. Diaz, "Beliefs About Advertising of Chilean University Students," *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 137(2), 1997, 267-269.

<sup>32</sup> Andrews, Durvasula & Netemeyer, *Journal of Advertising*, 23(1), 1994, 71-73.

<sup>33</sup> Darley, W. K. & Johnson, D.M., An Exploratory Investigation of Dimensions of Beliefs Toward Advertising in General: A Comparative Analysis of Four Developing Countries, *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 7(1), 1994, 5-21.

Fullerton and Deushev studied attitudes of students in Uzbekistan, a neighbour of Kazakhstan, which revealed that the students held somewhat negative attitudes towards advertising, particularly on the dimension of ethics and social effects.<sup>34</sup> However, their attitude was quite positive as regards the regulation of advertising and the economics of advertising, indicating that Uzbek students are aware of the positive role of advertising towards their country's overall development.

A more recent study of Romanian consumers' attitudes suggests that the institution, instrument, product information, and hedonic/pleasure have a positive effect on general attitude toward advertising. However, image had a negative effect on attitudes of Romanians, something the researchers did not predict because image typically has a positive effect on attitudes in developing countries.<sup>35</sup>

### **Attitude toward Advertising in Kazakhstan:**

During interaction with 82 students of Kazakhstan State University towards advertising in Kazakhstan in May 2000,<sup>36</sup> and while using Larkin's statements (translated into the local language) and questions regarding demography, the investigator marked certain significant results on the subject. Overall, the students who participated in this study were young (89% were 17 and 18) and mostly male (69%). The sample as a whole reflected a mixed ethnic background with 67% Kazakhs and 16% Russians. The findings revealed an overall negative view about advertising, although the respondents did not report an aggregate mean score for over all attitudes. By and large, they agreed to the effect that "There is too much exaggeration in advertising today" (mean score: 4.13). The single statement that had the lowest mean agreement score, "In general, advertisements present a true picture of the product advertised" (mean score: 2.33). Responses varied by gender and ethnicity with women believing there should be more regulation of advertising and that advertising makes things costlier. Men found advertising to be much more "silly and ridiculous" than did women. Ethnicity played a role in the students' agreement: "There should be less stress on sex in advertising." Russian students were in disagreement with this statement (mean rating=1.62) than the Kazakhs (mean rating=3.40). Respondents

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<sup>34</sup> *Perceptions of Advertising in the Newly Independent States: Uzbekistani Students' Beliefs About Advertising*, 2005, May. Paper presented at the American Academy of Advertising Asia-Pacific Conference, Hong Kong, China.

<sup>35</sup> Petrovici, D. & Paliwoda, S. "An empirical examination of public attitudes towards advertising in a transitional economy," *International Journal of Advertising* 26, 2 (May 2007), 247-276.

<sup>36</sup> *Journal of Advertising Education*, 6(1), 2002, 45-53.

noted that the Islamic tradition might have influenced the attitude of the Kazak students on this subject.

**Objective of Study:**

Recognizing that Kazakhstan has changed dramatically, especially in terms of growth in the advertising sector, during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the purpose of the present study is to explore potential changes in attitudes toward advertising over the time. It attempts to identify differences between groups from the two studies and within groups from the current study. Specific research questions included: (i) What are the prevailing beliefs about advertising held by the people in Kazakhstan (in 2009)? (ii) Do attitudes towards advertising vary according to the gender or ethnicity? and (iii) Did attitudes of the Kazakh respondents in 2000 change by 2009?

**Method:**

Data was collected in a classroom setting from a non-probability sample of 74 undergraduate students and professors at the Al-Farabi Kazakhstan National University (formerly Kazakhstan State University) in Almaty during May 2009.

**Instrument:**

The instrument consisted of a 12-page questionnaire containing multiple scales about media use and brand preference including Larkin's (1977) scale to measure attitude toward advertising ( $\alpha=.789$ ). The instrument also contained questions about students' interest in visiting the US and demographic questions. For the purposes of this study, only 17 attitude statements about advertising used by Fullerton and Weir earlier were analyzed. The statements were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1).

**Procedure:**

Because Russian is the predominant language of instruction at the university, a US graduate student fluent in both English and Russian translated the questionnaire into Russian. A Kazakh graduate student, fluent in English and Russian, then back translated the questionnaire to ensure the correct meaning and cross cultural equivalence of measures.<sup>37</sup> The back translation revealed only one discrepancy in the meaning of the statements. Therefore, that item was removed from the analysis.

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<sup>37</sup> J. W. Berry, "Introduction to Methodology," Eds., H.C. Triandis & J.W. Berry, *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Boston: MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 2, 1980, 1-29.



Students were given instruction on how to complete the questionnaire in Russian by a Kazakh professor fluent in both English and Russian. Respondents were encouraged to answer the questions honestly and independently. Respondents completed the questionnaires in class, and these were later translated and transferred into an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed using PASW Statistics 18.0.

### **Respondent Profile:**

Overall, the participants in this study were predominantly female (80%) and young (73.8% 20 or younger). However, 14.9% of the sample was over 30. The respondent pool reflected the ethnic mix of the country as a whole with 70% of the sample (n=52) identifying themselves as Kazakh, while 18% (n=14) were of Russian ethnicity. Almost 10% of the respondents did not reveal their ethnicity and one student identified as Tartar.

### **Findings:**

Respondents strongly agreed<sup>38</sup> that “too many of today’s advertisements are silly and ridiculous” (mean=4.22) and disagreed to the effect that “in general, advertisements present a true picture of the product advertised” (mean =2.82). In order to calculate an overall attitude toward advertising score, negative statements were back coded so that all items scored in the same direction. An overall attitude towards advertising score of 2.57 (on a 5-point scale) was found, indicating somewhat negative attitudes in general.

Overall attitude to advertising scores did not vary significantly between ethnic groups (Kazak and Russian)<sup>39</sup> or gender; however, significant differences were found on some individual items. Russians agreed more strongly with the statement “advertising often persuades people to buy things that they really don’t need” (4.14 vs. 3.60; p=.02). Kazakhs agreed more strongly with the statements “advertising helps raise our standard of living” (3.37 v. 2.64; p=.03), and “there is a need for more truth in advertising” (4.12v.3.57; p=.05). Likewise, “advertising results in better products for the public,” (3.35 v. 2.36; p=.002) and “there should be less stress on sex in advertising” (3.94 v. 3.36; p=.05). Women felt more strongly than men that there should be more government regulation for advertising (3.88 v. 3.21; p=.05), and that there should be less exposure of sex in advertising (3.96 v. 3.21; p=.016).

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<sup>38</sup> RQ1: What are the prevailing attitudes toward advertising held by Kazakhstanis in 2009?

<sup>39</sup> RQ2: Do attitudes vary according to demographic variables such as ethnicity or gender?

Because access to the original data was available, tests of significance were performed and presented.<sup>40</sup> Overall attitude toward advertising remained stable over the nine-year period with a mean score of 2.62 in 2000 and 2.57 in 2009 ( $p = .393$ ).

While overall attitudes remained fairly constant, there were significant shifts in some attitude statements. The largest shift occurred on the statement that “there should be more government regulation of advertising.” Respondents in 2000 (mean=3.01) were neutral on this item versus respondents in 2009 (mean=3.76;  $p = .0001$ ), who generally agreed with it. The second largest shift occurred with the statement: “there should be less stress on sex in advertising” with current respondents again agreeing more strongly (2009 Mean = 3.78; 2000 Mean = 3.22;  $p = .001$ ). Respondents in 2009 also believed that advertising provided a somewhat truer picture of the products being advertised (2009 Mean = 2.82; 2000 Mean = 2.33;  $p = .001$ ), and were less likely to think that there should be less advertising (2009 Mean = 3.19; 2000 Mean = 3.66;  $p = .004$ ) versus respondents from nine years ago.

The 2009 study showed more significant differences between the two ethnic groups than were found in 2000. The statement regarding too much sex in advertising remained an item that was found to be significantly different between Kazakhs and Russians with Kazakhs feeling more strongly than Russians on this issue in both studies. Similar to the 2000 study, women felt more strongly than men that there should be more government regulation for advertising and that there should be less sex in advertising. However, gender differences on other items such as “advertising increases the cost of goods and services,” were found in 2000, but not in 2009. Additionally, men in 2000 found advertising to be much more silly and ridiculous than did women, a difference which disappeared among the 2009 respondents.

While both studies in 2000 and 2009 were conducted among students (primarily in the school of journalism) at Al-Farabi Kazakhstan National University in Almaty using the same instrument to measure attitude toward advertising, there are noted differences between the two groups surveyed. The 2009 study included some professors (about 15% of the sample) while there were no professors in 2000 respondent pool. Consequently, there was a significant difference in age between the two samples (2000 Mean =17.98; 2009 Mean=23.5;  $p=.001$ ). Also, the questionnaire was much longer in 2009 and included questions other than

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<sup>40</sup> RQ3: How do attitudes toward advertising among Kazakhstanis in 2009 compare with attitudes in 2000?

the attitude toward advertising scale, which may have influenced the responses. Perhaps the most notable difference was the change in the gender make-up of the students. In 2000, most of the journalism students in Kazakhstan were men, but in 2009 they were predominantly women. As the country modernizes, more women are attending universities in Kazakhstan, and, like journalism programmes in the United States,<sup>41</sup> they are now populated with a majority of women.

### **Conclusion:**

The present study revealed overall negative attitudes toward advertising. This finding is not so different from similar studies in US<sup>42</sup> or one conducted at the same location with a similar group of students in 2000.<sup>43</sup> Despite the tremendous growth in the economy, and particularly in the amount of advertising in Kazakhstan,<sup>44</sup> respondents nine years later still believe that advertising should be more truthful, less exaggerated and contain less sexual imagery. However, even though the amount of ad spending rose exponentially during the decade, students in 2009 seem less concerned with the amount of advertising than did their counterparts in 2000.

Some differences among ethnic groups, probably driven by religious affiliation, showed little change during the decade with Kazakhs, who are generally Muslim, being more concerned about sex in advertising versus their less religious Russian compatriots. However, Russian concern about too much sex in advertising grew in nine years, presumably as advertising has become more globalized and thereby more sexual. Additional ethnic differences emerged in 2009, as Kazakhs showed positive attitude towards the economic aspects of advertising, such as its ability to raise the standard of living and promoting products than did the Russians. This change may be a result of overall improvement in their quality of life as they move farther from Soviet

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<sup>41</sup> L. B. Becker, V. Tudor, D. Olin, S. Hanisak & D. Wilcox, "2008 Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates," Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Georgia, 2009, <http://www.grady.uga.edu/annualsurveys>.

<sup>42</sup> E. F. Larkin, "A Factor Analysis of College Student Attitudes Toward Advertising," *Journal of Advertising*, 6(2), 1977, 42-46.

<sup>43</sup> J. Fullerton, "Images in Post Soviet Advertising: An Analysis of Gender Portrayal in Kazakhstani Television Commercials," proceedings of the 2003 *Conference of the American Academy of Advertising*, Ed., L. Carlson, 2003, 16.

<sup>44</sup> The Volume of the Kazakhstani Advertising Market by Media Type, 2009, January – December 2008.

domination compared to the ethnic Russians, whose lifestyle declined, and many of them returning to their Russian homeland.<sup>45</sup>

The respondents in 2009 were predominantly female versus those in 2000. However, some gender differences are constant. Women are more concerned about the amount of sex in advertising and more in favour of government regulation of advertising than men in both studies. However, other gender differences fell away over the decade, including differences dealing with how advertising affects the price and quality of products. This leveling of gender attitudes may be a result of the leveling of women's versus men's roles in the culture. Since 2000, women have become more educated and have taken on a more active role in the modern Kazakh economy.

This study, though limited by its small respondent pool of students and professors at university, provides insight not only about how people in Central Asia view advertising in general, but also how economic changes in a country can alter perceptions of advertising. The ability to compare two groups from the same university almost a decade apart makes an important contribution to the understanding of how attitudes can change, or not, over time.

The country has transitioned from a Soviet system relatively devoid of consumer advertising to an emerging capitalist system with an exploding advertising industry. The change in Kazakhstan between 2000 and 2009 in terms of economic growth, globalization and sophistication of consumer advertising cannot be overstated, though attitudes toward the function of advertising, as measured nine years apart, appear more stable. Although researchers in 2000 noted an unfamiliarity and uncertainty about the role of advertising, a similar examination nine years later in a much more developed Kazakhstan revealed little change in fundamental attitudes. The findings of this study may be an indication, although more research is needed, that attitudes toward advertising in general are relatively constant within cultures, regardless of external shifts in the advertising environment.

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<sup>45</sup> Statistics Agency of Kazakhstan (2009, March 18). *2009 National Census*, In *Kazakhstan Today* (2009, March 18), <http://www.kt.kz/index.php?lang=eng&uin=1133435211&chapter=1153480633>.