

**Participants'
Perspectives on
Fine-Print
Disclosures in TV
Advertisements**

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Background

**Content Analyses of Prime
Time and Children's TV
Ads**

**Survey of Those Who are
Involved in the Presentation
of Disclosures in TV Ads
(Conducted in 1995)**

**All studies were conducted with
Darrel Muehling
Washington State University**

Sample of Top Managers

**100 Leading National
Advertisers**

**100 Largest U.S.
Advertising Agencies**

As listed in Advertising Age

65 Major Television Media Firms

ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, MTV,
ESPN, CNN, The Disney Channel

27 Regulatory Agencies and Advertising Trade Associations

FCC, FDA, FTC,
U.S. Chamber of Commerce,
NAD/NARB, AAAA,
Advertising Council,
Association of National
Advertisers

Response Rate

Advertisers: 21 percent

Ad Agencies: 24 percent

Media Firms: 23 percent

**Regulatory Agencies and
Trade Associations:
48 percent**

**Overall Response Rate:
25 percent**

Fine-Print Disclosures

Defined:

Any part of an advertisement that appears in type size noticeably smaller than the headline or dominant ad copy

Any statement that is intended to augment, document, clarify, or delimit the selling message, offer advice, identify the product manufacturer, and/or provide supplemental information to the viewer

Issues Addressed

How do participants feel about fine-print disclosures on the dimension this advertising practice is most often criticized (i.e., **readability**)?

Why are fine-print disclosures used in ads?

How important is the issue of fine-print disclosures to participants and to whom do they perceive this issue is most important?

Major Findings

On the Issue of Readability

Most respondents believed that:

Consumers **do not** read, **cannot** read, **do not attempt to** read fine-print disclosures in TV ads.

Consumers cannot read disclosures in TV ads because it is on the screen too briefly

Advertisers do not expect consumers to read disclosures in TV ads

To Whom is the Issue of Fine-Print Disclosures Important?

The issue was perceived as important by each group of respondents.

Participants gave the issue more importance to other groups than themselves

Top Importance Ratings by Each Respondent Group

Advertisers: **Regulators and Media**

Ad Agencies: **Regulators and Media**

Media Firms: **Ad Agencies and
Regulators**

Regulatory Bodies: **Ad Agencies and
Regulators**

Trade Associations: **Ad Agencies and
Media**

Why are Fine-Print Disclosures Used in TV Advertisements?

In response to the question:
Fine-print disclosures are usually placed in ads because advertisers are required to do so.

Ad Agencies	4.92
Media	4.67
Trade Associations and Regulators	4.54
Advertisers	4.33

(Based on a 5-point scale)

Conclusions

Participants in the presentation of fine-print disclosures in TV ads recognize that the messages are not readable and therefore have little communication value

Participants saw fine-print disclosures as an important issue, but saw it as more important to others than themselves

Value of a Dialogue between Participants to Generate Consumer Useful Remedies