

Advt - boon or bane?

[Media](#), [Advertising](#)



ADVERTISING — A BOON OR A BANE? Advertisements are a necessary evil. But they do more harm than good. They have invaded our personal lives and personal spaces and have led to crass consumerism. There should be some watchdog to oversee the advertisement industry. WHEN THINKING of advertisements, the age-old question, whether the chicken or the egg preceded the other crops up. Similarly, was it business or the advertisement industry that came first? We may not have an answer to the chicken/egg controversy but nature definitely proves that the advertisements came first. When one sees a peacock dancing, it becomes clear that the bird is advertising its beautiful feathers to attract its customers, the peahens. In the bird and the animal kingdom, the male has to advertise its wares, if the species is to perpetuate. Man, the highly evolved animal is not far behind. But if the animals limited themselves to the barest essentials, man added functions not included in the scheme of nature. Advertisement came to occupy a very prominent place in his daily life. The situation is such that no society can imagine of a world without advertisements. All the people use advertisement for all the things all the time. A few instances of the types of things for which advertisements are resorted to can give us an idea of the indispensability of advertisement in the modern age. These include consumer goods of all types, from material for sacred ritual fire to condoms, from a nappy to cremation ground fuel, all essentials and non-essentials, from medicine to chewing gum. In the field of education, it includes stationery, admissions and so on and so forth; fashion, films, food, sports and services of all types. The list is too long. In short one can say that advertisements encompass the entire lifestyle of a modern human being.

You just name it and advertisements will do it for you. It has become a multimillion business, so much so that advertising companies advertise even themselves. Rising consumerism is behind this spurt of advertising. What a progress from the ancient announcements at the beat of drum to the mind boggling ways available now. The grip of this necessary evil is so strong that there is no escape from it. Next come the different ways adopted by the advertising world. There are different advertisements on daytime and night. There are different spots for different items including hoardings, vehicles, balloons, print media, electronic media, mobile phones, internet, skywriting, neon bulbs and tubes and so on and so forth. This makes it very clear that advertisement industry has missed nothing anywhere. It has invaded every aspect of our life and impinged upon our privacy. Advertisements are more of a curse than a boon. It is a fact that the more useless an article is, the more it is advertised. Nobody has seen an advertisement for wheat or pulses, for potatoes or cauliflower. These advertisements are so cleverly prepared that from kids to senior citizens all are targeted and the companies or manufacturers make the killing. The customers make purchases only to find themselves regretting or just helplessly fuming over their stupidity, over how they have been forced to make a false decision. But there is no remission of their agony and impotent anger consumes them. Absurd and silly advertisements are a frequent phenomenon. An old toothless man sucking a polo; a candy with a hole in it; children drumming for a certain eatables, a type of junk food, an actor jumping like Tarzan over cars or swinging like the Spiderman from impossible highest to bring a cold drink for the tantalising lady love, scantily clad beauties promoting sales of certain

useless things are not only silly but offer impossible scenarios to the consumer. Advertising jingles, whether they rhyme or not, an example of fuzzy logic, add a touch of absurdity to make the advertisement effective. Frequently, programmes on the TV are interrupted at dramatic and psychological moments, when the viewers are keyed up to them, to insert advertisements to command full attention. The young minds are corrupted by advertisements of junk food, candies or gums being promoted. The youth too are misguided when status is attached to products, which they otherwise would not have aspired for. Age, sex, profession are kept in view when the customers are targeted as part of the advertisement strategy to boost sales. Companies hire highly paid social psychologists to move among the people and feel the pulse of the public. They advise their employers, in most cases, how to deceive the gullible customers. It is all for selling the goods or services by hook or by crook. Hidden language in advertisements is common. Only the glitter is shown and the muck is hidden. Not just these, some products that are banned from being advertised, are openly advertised in print and electronic media through surrogate advertising. Governments have to allow advertisements of certain products willy-nilly as they have to earn hard to find revenue. Ultimately the unwary consumer is the victim. The consumer courts are a byproduct of mass scale cheating of customers going on through advertisements. It is a step in the right direction and the courts deserve sincere appreciation. Advertisements are, as such, a necessary evil. You can't do without them in the modern scenario. At the same time you can't let advertisers have a freehand in whatever they do. There has to be some control, some censorship with executive powers to take action against

the defaulters. Immoral insinuations, scattering of trash and blatant invasion of our private lives cannot be allowed. Some ethical code has to be evolved and implemented. Timely action by the government and the advertisement industry is needed to correct the situation and save the consumer from the onslaught of this necessary evil. Urgent steps are needed, lest it should be too late to do so. We cannot Escape them. They stare at us from every nook and corner. The highways, the roadways, streets all have hoardings, banners, posters screaming about the goodness of the product they are advertising. Cinema posters on busy roads cause traffic jams. Newspapers have columns and columns, pages and pages devoted to advertisements. Television and Radio stop their suddenly to advertise a shoe, a Saree, a cream or even a toothpaste. There is no subject left which is not advertised. Do we need these advertisements ? Of course , to know about a product we have read or see something about it . We have to be informed about the new quality or higher standard of a product. But do all advertisements tell us this ? No, they use all kinds of diversions to sell their products. Cinema stars sell cars, watches, holiday resorts and even undergarments. Scantly clad models advertise new clothes which I am sure three-fourth of the people will never be seen clad in them or can never afford them. The market is flooded with all kinds of beauty products that can make us fairer, younger in a matter of days. Beauty Parlors tempt us by claiming to make us thinner and with more hair on our heads. Advertisements do not tell the whole truth. In the race to have more consumers millions are spent. Look at the Cola wars. Nearly the entire Indian Cricket Team has advertised for one company or the other. Hasn't it affected their game ? The public is made to part their hard

earned money on things they do not need at all. Women rush to sales where the prices are hardly slashed or come back with damaged goods. Excessive advertisements confuse the public. They create an artificial demand for things, start a race, a competition which people can ill-afford. Greatest curse of modern times, undoubtedly this dubious distinction should go to the Ad Industry. Its tentacles are wide spread and reach every nook and corner of the globe. Blessed are those unaffected by its charms. Satan is the presiding devil by virtue (or is it wise to call it a vice) of being the original tempter to mankind's doom. Advertising attacks all your senses, there is no escape from it during one's wakeful hours, it tries to dictate the mode, style and comfort of sleep as well. It moulds the lifestyles of everyone. Its range is mind boggling- from a few thousand bucks to multi-billion dollar business. It dictates terms and conditions for conducting any event. What is saddening is the abuse of all norms. There is a saying "All is fair in love and war", which the Ad Industry seems to have now modified, as "All is fair in Ads and bloody Ads". For example the cola campaigns, etc. The Ad agencies do not concede an inch of their ground for love or anything. The most sickening part of Advertising is the irrelevance of the subject matter and its presentation. One glaring anomaly is the use of women in the name of glamour, whether the subject matter of the ad-campaign requires even remotely such use or not. The day may be not far off when some enterprising adman would not hesitate to use some lithe lass in a shaving advertisement, remember the Godrej shaving advertisement which ends with a bearded man saying "Me". The bearded man can be easily replaced with a glamorous girl who may

appear like a man from behind, but when she turns to face the camera oozes lots of oomph. Watch out! Beware of Ad-wares.