

# Ethics in advertisements

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



Ethics in advertisements Advertisement is the process of communicating the most persuasive selling message possible, to the right potential consumer of products or services at the right time and place, at least possible cost.

Advertisement acts as a communicating bridge between producer and consumer. With industrialization and expansion of market access, importance of advertising is steadily on the increase in modern society.

Advertising, using media as its vehicle, is a pervasive, powerful force shaping attitudes and behavior in today's world.

At times it goes beyond the traditional role of ' fair and truthful' information and portrays obscene, undesirable and unethical scenes giving a detrimental result especially on the young population of the society. The article have talked about various types of unethical advertisements like advertisements endorsed by children, surrogate advertising, false and misleading advertisements etc. This article also talks about few advertisements which are ethical. The ethical aspect of Indian advertisement is extremely important for restoration of our Indian culture, norms, ethics and heritage.

Introduction: Ethics:

Ethics have always been an important aspect of every business activity, although the term has meant different things at different times in different lands to different people. Nonetheless, as ethical concerns are an inseparable element of business, advertising cannot ignore them. Sadly, the advertising industry has rarely cared to look beyond immediate marketing objectives. The argument in the industry is that it is the government's job to judge what is right and what is wrong. Shirking its own responsibility for

regulation, the industry has belittled business values and agencies have harmed their balance sheets.

For any business, customer is very important, and businessman attempt to communicate to all their target customers using means of communication like advertising and sales promotion. Advertising is a very powerful and most commonly used tool. Definition of ethics in advertising: The term ethics in business involves "morality, organisational ethics and professional deontology" (Isaac, cited in Bergadaa', 2007). Every industry has its own guidelines for the ethical requirements. However, the principal four requirements for marketing communications are to be legal, decent, honest and truthful.

Unfortunately, in a society where the course of action of the companies is determined by profit targets the use of marketing communications messages "may constitute a form of social pollution through the potentially damaging and unintended effects it may have on consumer decision making" (Hackley and Kitchen, 1999). Benefits of advertising Communication The organization has to attract the customer and create a market for its products. For this purpose, advertising is the most powerful and widely used tool for communicating message regarding products/services to a large target audience.

To raise the standard of living In our developing economy, advertising with its micro and macro level influences, exerts vast and varied influences that have played key role in raising the standards of physical and material well being of the Indian society. To make market competitive In India, one finds

many innovations being introduced which has changed the market structure from seller's market, and thus the result is more competitive market conditions. Product differentiation It is a fact that advertising brings about products variety through real and psychological product differentiation.

Critical evaluation of advertising Though many benefits are achieved through advertisements, the ad message is becoming more and more exaggerated. To achieve competitive advantage, advertising magnifies unimportant differences, resorts to clever, tricky product promises, and claims more and more unbelievable benefits. The customer finds many advertisements as false, deceptive, or misleading. Consumers are uncertain regarding whether or not the performance of a product purchased will in fact meet their needs.

If they find that the product lacks in quality, advantage, durability etc. , as advertised they might not buy it again, and develop an aversion to every other product of that company. Unethical advertising Advertisement is considered unethical in the following situations; When it has degraded or underestimated the substitute or rival's product. When it gives false or misleading information on the value of the product. When it fails to give useful information on the possible reaction or side effects of the product. When it is immoral. Ways of misleading the consumers:

Many a time, traders entice the customers into their stores by advertising goods at a very low price, but they stock only a handful of such sale items in the store. When the advertised goods are sold out, consumers are steered towards the higher-priced stock or lower quality goods. Sale offer should be for a limited period. Advertisement should declare that sale offer is for a

limited time period. The period of the offer should be made clear in the advertisement only when the advertised goods are available for a limited period or stocks are limited.

Traders often offer insignificant price reduction. To illustrate, a trader may advertise that the price of product is reduced to Rs. 99. 95, when the normal selling price is Rs. 100. The trader must include the normal selling price and discounted price in his offer . The trader sale offer is misleading if the trader claims the product is below cost, when the price is not below cost after discounts, rebates and other allowances it is misleading if the trader simply shows a fictitious higher price as normal selling price in the advertisement.

Advertisement must clearly indicate the total price of goods or services. All price comparison must be truthful and must not intentionally or unintentionally mislead the consumers. Under the Fair Trade Practices Act, retailers have an obligation to ensure that they do not mislead or make false representations to customers with respect to price of the goods. The consumers who shop around and compare the prices of various products are less likely to be deceived by misleading claims consumers should also be aware of what is a reasonable price of goods and not take any advertised discounts at face value.

While many sales are legitimate or genuine, the consumers should not get attracted to such sales offers i. e. , " Hurry... very few days remain for sale". The consumers should be aware of what to expect when retailers place items on sale and how to avoid being misled by discount advertisements. A marketer should take care to ensure that when goods or services are

advertised to be available at a discount or as being on sale, it is a genuine discount or sale. Categories of advertisements: Personal ethics Business ethics Human values

Societal ethics Personal ethics: Advertisements which shows impact on personal feelings and relations are divided into two categories viz. , ads which convey personal ethics and which do not. Advertisements which convey personal ethics are: HDFC life insurance: This ad tells about personal relationship between father and his daughter. Surf Excel: This ad conveys the student's affection towards his teacher. Advertisements which do not convey personal ethics are: Mentos: This ad shows declining respect of a student towards his teacher.

Close up: This ad degrades the value of friendship. Business ethics: Advertisements which follow the business rules and values are divided into two categories viz. , ads which follow business ethics and which do not. Advertisements which follow business ethics are: Clinic all clear: This ad follows business ethics by only promoting its product. Horlicks: This ad promotes its product by exhibiting its product. Advertisements which do not follow business ethics: Ad wars which come under this category are: Coke vs pepsi Rin vs tide

Human Values : Advertisements which shows human nature, culture and behavior are divided into two categories viz. , ads which convey human values and which do not. Advertisements which convey human values are: Airtel: This ad features its promotions by showing the importance of togetherness. Fair and lovely: This ad shows the importance of human

values. Advertisements which do not convey human values are: Dairy milk silk: This ad features its promotion by degrading the importance of culture Fair and lovely: This ad shows the impact of beauty on culture Societal ethics :

Advertisements which shows responsibilities towards society are divided into two categories viz. , ads which convey societal ethics and which do not.

Advertisements which convey societal ethics are: Tata tea : This ad shows the need of public participation and importance of politician towards society Pulser mania : This ad mainly concentrates on promoting itself rather than safety Idea : This partly conveys societal ethics but donot concentrate on the applicability of it There are many other advertisements which show concern towards the society.

Some of them are: Aircel, which has taken an initiative to save our national animal by the campaign “ save our tigers” Conclusion: Reputable companies and advertising agencies avoid telling lies. They realize the cost of being caught. A dent in trust can prove to be much costlier than the failure of an ad campaign or for that matter, even a brand. The challenge before advertisers and agencies is to ensure that ads reflect our values. We must endeavor to see that " advertising" does not remain a dirty word.