



## Significance of ethics in advertising

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### Abstract

Advertising is explained as mass communication of information intended to persuade buyers to buy products and with a view to maximizing a company's profits. Communication achieves the purpose of getting one's ideas across to the other party. But, more important purpose of communication is to draw the desired response from the target audience.

Advertising in its present form is about 200 years old. But, advertising has been in use in some form or the other in the history of the mankind, even in the ancient times till 5th century and then in the Dark Age, middle age and till 19th century. The 20th century presented the means like radio, television and satellite communication which increased the reach of the advertiser all over the world. The current article highlights the significance of business ethics and self control.

**Keywords:** advertisement, communication, information

### Introduction

The Indian advertising industry is talking business today. It has evolved from being a small-scale business to a full fledged industry. It has emerged as one of the major industries and tertiary sectors and has broadened its horizons be it the creative aspect, the capital employed or the number of personnel involved. Indian advertising industry in very little time has carved a niche for itself and placed itself on the global map.

Indian economy is on a boom and the market is on a continuous trail of expansion. With the market gaining grounds, Indian advertising has every reason to celebrate. Businesses are looking up to advertising as a tool to cash in on lucrative business opportunities. Growth in business has led to a consecutive boom in the advertising industry as well.

Advertising has ethical value. The mixing of Art and facts in advertising communication are subservient to ethical principles. In today's competitive and buyer's market, advertisements have to be truthful and ethical. If an advertisement is misleading, the credibility of the organization is lost. To view the truth in advertisement, it has to be seen from to consumer's point of view rather than from legal point. The advertising industry has been frequently criticized for putting out misleading or exaggerated claims in respect of product, goods and services advertised.

The Indian Media & Entertainment (M&E) industry is the fastest growing industry followed by China (14 per cent), Russia (12 per cent) and Brazil (11 per cent) as is projected to grow at 17 per cent compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) between 2012 and 2016. Its various segments -film; television, animation, print and Out of home advertising (OOH) among others-have witnessed remarkable growth in the past few years.

The Indian M&E industry is expected to continue its strong growth momentum over 2012-2017 to reach an overall

revenue of 2,245 billion INR at a CAGR of about 18%. Television, the largest E&M sector, is expected to grow at about 18% CAGR over 2012-2017, driven by growth in subscription payment and advertising revenues. The entire M&E landscape is witnessing a shift; thanks to cable digitization, wireless broadband penetration, increasing direct-to-home (DTH) penetration, digitization of film distribution and growing internet usage. Overall, the industry is expected to register a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 15 percent to touch Rs 1,45,700 crore by 2016.

The purpose of advertising is to induce the customers to buy products. Advertising communicates information to potential customers and attempts to persuade them. Advertising has an impact on increase in sales but for it to be successful, it has to be well coordinated with the entire marketing mix. There is a tendency among the general public to look at the advertisements with some amount of distrust. This poses a challenge to the advertisers. If one advertisement among the several advertisements seen regularly is not truthful, the public tends to feel that all advertisements are like that i.e., dishonest. Advertisement analysis is no different from any other type of analysis. The goal is to break down a specific advertisement down into its component parts to see how it works, to see how it persuades. Treat the ad as a puzzle; all you are trying to do is to see how the pieces of the puzzle work individually and how it all fits together. An advertisement should be broken down into the following parts:

### Purpose

The majority of ads have a very simple purpose: To convince the audience to purchase a particular product or service. Other types of ads include public service (information) ads and ideological ads such as those for Greenpeace or the National Rifle Association (selling ideas).

### Picture

Nothing in the picture is there by accident; everything has a purpose. Look for a pattern of symbols or images. For example, a champagne advertisement may have a couple walking hand in hand on a moonlit beach (symbols of romance). The key is the association of the product to a certain idea. In other words, advertisements are primarily illogical. They are used to persuade. So, this champagne advertisement will not tell how much the product costs, what it tastes like, and so on. The goal of the advertiser is to get the audience to associate the product with something positive, so champagne = romance. Look for patterns of symbols or images that develop a certain dominant theme(s).

### Language

Similar to the picture, none of the words in an ad are there by accident; they are all very carefully chosen, and this includes not only the wording in the ad but also the product name and slogan. Look again for patterns of words that develop certain themes. For example, a computer advertisement will contain words like high performance, powerful, and so on. Usually, the themes present in the language will echo or reinforce the themes present in the picture.

### Audience

There is no such thing as a general audience. Advertisers direct their ads toward specific audiences. Audiences are broken down in such categories as age, race, gender, economic class, region of the country, and so on. In addition, these are the broad categories. The magazine the ad is placed in will give a very clear indication of the specific audience targeted. In other words, Bride magazine has a very specific audience. An advertisement in Business Week will target business people. Cosmopolitan ads target contemporary women. You will not find many Harley Davidson motorcycle ads in Cosmo, just like you will not find any champagne advertisements in Field and Stream. The magazine, the product, the language, and the picture will help to clarify whom the specific audience that is being targeted by advertisers. Try to be as specific as possible when narrowing down the audience.

### Research Study

According to one market survey, unethical advertising will have following situations:

- a) It degrades the rival's product or substitute product.
- b) It gives misleading information
- c) It gives false information.
- d) It conceals information that vitally effect human life (e.g. side effects of drugs)
- e) It makes exaggerated claims.
- f) It is obscene or immoral
- g) It is against national and public interest.
- h) Endorsements of products by celebrities who are opinion leader is also sometimes criticized for spreading falsehood.

### Techniques

The ultimate goal is to uncover the specific persuasive techniques employed by the advertisers to sell their product. The following techniques are generally the most common

strategies used by advertisers:

- a) **Name calling:** When a company puts down another company or product in order to make itself or its product look superior. The MCI and Sprint ads are examples. When Ford refers to Honda or Toyota as foreign cars. Political ads are also good examples of name-calling.
- b) **Bandwagon:** The majority is right. If you want to be popular or successful, you need to be using this product, like the popular, successful people in the ad. Very often targeting a young audience, most ads on MTV are bandwagon ads. If you want to be popular like these people having such a fun time, you need to wear the jeans they are wearing. Join the Pepsi Generation is another such ad. Everyone is using this product so why aren't you?
- c) **Glittering Generalities:** Advertisements associating the product with positive language, either in the wording of the ad, the slogan, or the product name.
- d) **Testimonial:** There are two types of testimonial: Celebrity and Expert. Celebrities such as Michael Jordan endorse everything from sneakers to hot dogs and underwear. These ads are usually very age-oriented: Ed McMahon selling life insurance to people over 65. These celebrities are familiar and trustworthy and people believe they support such products because they use them themselves. Expert testimony includes doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc. vouching for the product.
- e) **Plain Folks:** There are two types of Plain Folks: Real and Professional. Real plain folks include those average people populating Saturn commercials, Toyota ads, and detergent ads. The idea is that if it works for them, then it will work for me.
- f) **Emotional Appeal:** Advertisers associate their products with emotional elements like family, country, children, and animals. For example, the golden retriever puppies in the Red Devil vacuum cleaner commercials, the little girl in the Pepsi commercials, the Coca-Cola Polar Bears. This type of strategy could also use scare tactics, such as protecting your family from intruders in security system ads.
- g) **Stereotypes:** Be aware of the stereotypes, especially gender, in ads. The advertising world is somewhat trapped in the two-parent, suburban, white picket fence, wood-paneled station wagon world of the past, where the father goes off to work and the mother raises the kids and cleans the house. Domestic and cleaning products are usually pictured with women, while tools and other outdoor equipment are associated with men. Some advertisements are starting to appeal to professional women, but overall the ad world is slow to change in this respect.

### Definitions

#### Advertising

Any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor.

#### Advertising Agency

A marketing services firm that assists companies in planning, preparing, implementing and evaluating all or portions of their advertising programs.



("Ba Da Ba Ba Ba"). In short, advertisements inform every aspect of our lives. Yet we often give them very little thought. We may make aesthetic judgments about them (e.g., "That commercial was funny" or "That commercial was stupid") or view them as innocent means to purchasing ends, but we rarely acknowledge them as messages that require critical attention.

ASCI will not accept the ads which offends the provisions of the following Acts of Government of India or various State Governments.

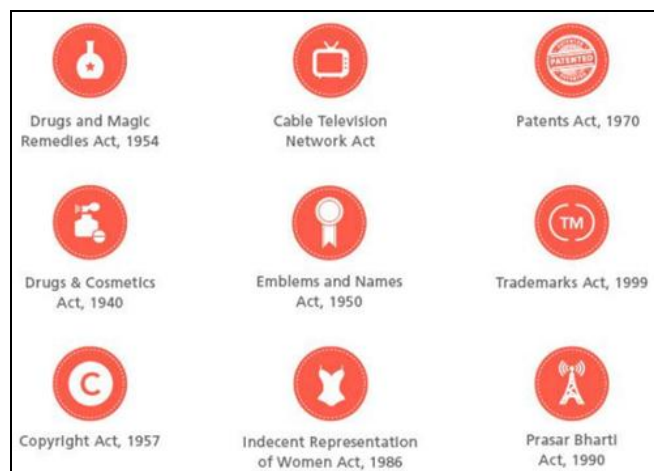


Fig 2

## Conclusion

Media such as newspapers, radio, television, outdoor board, and websites are used for advertising. Through these media marketing communication takes place. The study in this research focuses on unethical marketing communication with specific reference to the portrayal of women. An advertiser has to be conscious of his moral and social responsibility. A false or misleading advertisement will certainly be harmful to the reputation of the company and the product being advertised. Hence the advertiser has to be mindful of ethics involved in advertising. Ethics is a choice between good and bad, between right and wrong with reference to a particular culture at a given point of time.

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