



A STUDY ON THE UNETHICAL ASPECTS IN ADVERTISEMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Syed Kazim* & Ajai Abraham Thomas**

Abstract

Modern age is the age of advertisement and advertising has become a necessity for commercial success. The businessmen can demonstrate their commercial ability through advertisement. Advertisement is an impersonal presentation where a standard or common message regarding the merits, price and availability of product or service is given by the producer or marketer. It is a paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor. The advertisement builds pull effect as advertising tries to pull the product by directly appealing to customer to buy it. Every part of advertising is a mode of satisfaction of human needs and wants. This paper includes the theme of how the advertisements will affect the women and children and how the organizations are using their techniques to put the pressures on customer to purchase their product and how the children are forcing their parents to purchase the products. It also gives the information about how much the company is acting with ethical values in their advertisements and how they cheat the people in the society. The first aspect of Triple bottom line is the society i.e., the people, thus the paper strives to understand how the unethical advertisements have a negative impact on a very important segment of the society, who are women and children.

Keywords: Advertisement, Ethics, Women and Children

*Asst. Prof. Dep. of Management, Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous) Bangalore
Email : syedkazim_123@yahoo.co.in

**Asst. Prof. Dep. of Management, Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous) Bangalore Email : ajabth@gmail.com



Introduction

Ethics is a set of moral principles that guide actions and create a sense of responsible behaviour. It is about being able to analyze ethical questions and dilemmas in professional decision making in terms of right and wrong and to determine one's obligations and responsibility to do the right thing. Many laws and regulations are put into force that determines what is permissible in advertising. However, not every issue is controlled by rules. Advertisers are often faced with decisions regarding appropriateness of their actions which are based on ethical considerations rather than what is within the law. Certain actions may be within the law but still unethical. Advertisement law and regulations can only go so far in ensuring ethical practices in advertising. Ultimately, professionals in the industry have to be guided by their own ethical principles.

Every day and everywhere in our life we see, hear and feel a number of products at home, in a shop, while travelling in the bus or train etc. and many talk about their qualities. It is, therefore, anything that turns attention to an article or service might be called advertising. The term advertising originates from the Latin word 'adverto' i.e. ad means 'towards' and 'verto' means 'I turn'. Thus, advertising means 'to turn attention' towards a specific thing. Advertising may be defined as the process of buying sponsor-identified media, space or time of a product or an idea to promote their sales in present and future. Advertising consists of those activities by which visual or oral messages are addressed to select publics for the purpose of informing and influencing them to buy products and services. The first requirement is that the advertisement should capture the attention of its audience. In other words, the advertisement has to go through the attention filter of the target audience. It may give them new information, or it may support the information they already have or it may attempt to alter their existing views or beliefs. It is essential that the advertisement should appeal to them and influence their attitude, though process and purchase behavior in favour of the advertised brand. Advertisement can be defined as the “paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of idea, goods or services by an identified sponsor”

In today's challenging market economy, advertising has become an important element of the society. Moreover, advertisements play a powerful constructive role in the economic growth of the country. On the contrary, they can often play a negative role in hurting the sentiments of an individual or the society. Hence, it is important that advertising



professionals observe high ethical standards in regard to truthfulness, human dignity and social responsibilities. Today television advertisements are mostly viewed by women and children and thus they become soft targets of all the advertisements and on the other hand it is easy to influence women and children when compared to men.

Objectives

- i. To compile the various ethical aspects which have to be considered while advertising
- ii. To study the various unethical aspects in advertisements relating to women and children
- iii. To analysis the impact of unethical advertisements on children and women

Research Methodology

Analytical method was used for the study. For accomplishing the above objectives, secondary data were collected. The necessary secondary data was collected through journals, books, websites, magazines, etc.

Ethical Checklist for Advertising

According to Gene R. Lacznia and Patrick E. Murphy, the following ethical checklist can help advertisers come up with ads which are not questionable on ethical grounds.

- i. In terms of its social impact, does advertising
 - Reinforce negative stereotypes?
 - Damage people's self-concept and create insecurities?
 - Market dangerous products?
 - Contribute to cultural pollution?
 - Violate public standards of good taste?
- ii. In terms of its strategic decisions, does an advertisement
 - Target vulnerable groups?
 - Harm children?
 - Make unsubstantiated claims?
 - Appeal to base motivation such as envy and greed?
 - Drive demand for unnecessary purchases?
- iii. In terms of tactics, does an advertisement
 - Use inappropriate stereotypes?
 - Use ideas, words or images that are offensive or insensitive?



- Manipulate people's emotions unnecessarily?
- Make false, deceptive, or misleading claims?
- Use puffery?

The use of this ethical checklist can help advertisers come up with advertisements which pass the test of ethics and are in good public taste.

Unethical aspects of advertisements relating to women

i. Portraying a particular body image: Advertising has been criticized for glorifying glamorous looks in women. The ideal image of beauty that the advertisements portray creates insecurities in women about the way they look.

Playing on customers insecurities about their appearance presents advertisers with a classical ethical dilemma because self-image advertisement can also be seen as contributing to self-improvement, as far as one's looks are concerned. Sometimes, however, such strategies are questionable because they lead to dangerous practices. Some critics point out that women place their health at risk in order to cultivate an unrealistic or even unhealthy physical appearance. The perfect body type image portrayed by most ads is next to impossible for most women to attain and may therefore, harm their self-image. The problem of stereotyping based on physical appearance exists for women. Female models in advertisements are shown as excessively thin and having the perfect beauty.

One out of every four female college students engages in unhealthy means of controlling their weight. This comes in no small part because of advertising and commercials depicting excessively thin women. Unhealthy body images in advertising regardless of whether they are used to sell weight-loss products or something else project an unrealistic image of women's body weight, and can contribute to the development of anorexia, bulimia and other serious eating disorders in women.

Along with body weight issues, advertisements often depict very young and impossibly beautiful women. Advertiser's covert young demographics since they often have more spending money. That can result in ageism, particularly against women, who may perceive images of unattainable youth as ideals to strive for. As women get older, they feel pressure to look younger, ignoring the natural beauty of a 50 or 60 year old body in an impossible effort to retain a 20 or 30 year old one.



ii. Use of sex appeal and nudity: The portrayal of women as sex objects seems to be an increasingly popular trend in the advertising world these days. Portraying women as objects of desire and displaying their bodies to sell products is probably an example of the most sexually exploitative advertisements. Take for instance, the television commercial of axe deodorant which show women in beach were running after a man who has use axe deodorant. The idea is to use graceful attractive figures of women to grab attention and stimulate desire, which advertisers expect to be transferred to the product. By portraying women as objects of desire, advertisements create an atmosphere that devalues women as people and encourage sexual harassment.

Advertising that portrays woman as sex objects is considered demeaning, particularly if sex is not relevant to the product. But the advertisers ought to make more thoughtful arguments on behalf of their products rather than resorting to such cheap tack tricks. Advertisers are also using the element of nudity in the advertisements to promote their products. One of the fasttrack bags billboard hoarding which was designed to promote summer bags portrayed women with a lot of skin revealing.

Shari Graydon, former president of Canada's Media Action Media, argues that women's bodies are sexualized in ads in order to grab the viewer's attention. Women become sexual objects when their bodies and their sexuality are linked to products that are bought and sold. Media activist Jean Kilbourne agrees. She notes that women's bodies are often dismembered into legs or thighs, reinforcing the message that women are objects rather than whole human beings. When we analyse the current ads, it looks like modesty has just flown away and it has paved way of immodesty and indecency.

When we see the current billboard ads they are filled with immodesty and indecency. Let's see for example, Aishwarya Rai in the L'Oreal Shampoo ad, Liza Ray in the Rado (Watch) ad, Priyanka Chopra in the Nikon (Digital Camera) ad, Deepika Padukone in Sony (Digital Camera) ad, Malika Serawat in 8 PM (Alcohol) ad, Katrina Kaif in Bolly Feet (Air Conditioners) ad, Kareena Kapoor in Sony (Laptop) ad, Aamir Khan with a model in Titan (Watch) ad, models in Manappuram Jewellery and Neelkanth Jewellers ad, etc. The companies advertise it boldly and the public watches it happily.

The case is same for the print ads too. Let's take for example of Kareena Kapoor in Sangini Diamond Jewellery, Celina Jaitley in Diya Diamond Jewellery, Priyanka Chopra in Asmi Diamond Jewellery, Katrina Kaif in *Nakshatra* Jewellery ad, a model in Roca Bathroom Fittings ad, a model in Cera Bathroom Fittings at, a model in Spring's Towels ad, a model in Kerala Tourism ad, etc. All of them are dressed immodestly and an individual with moral values would not prefer these types of ads.

When we see the current scenario, we can almost find every advertisement features a women and more astonishing is that we also find women featuring in advertisements and promoting products with which they have no relation what so ever. Say for example, the use of women in a swimming suit by JK Cement, in Castrol Oil, in Amul Macho, in Vi-John Shaving Cream, in SF Sonic Batteries, in Savsol Oil (for Lorries), in Brylcreem Hail Gel, etc.

iii. Materialism: Advertisements promote materialism in several ways. The first is by creating new needs and desires among people. Advertisements also encourage people to compete with each other by purchasing more and better objects. Finally, advertisements often encourage consumers to replace their old possessions by purchasing the newest and best model. This fosters a “throwaway society”. Your business can oppose this materialism by offering products that are built to last and meeting real, instead of manufactured, needs. For example, the cosmetic industry has introduced several products for the customers, so that they can consume more and more.

They sell various products like skin care cream, fairness cream, lips stick, powder, perfume, lotion, nail polish, contact lenses, deodorants, hand sanitizer, eye liner, hair sprays, hair colour, gel, gloss (on lips stick), foundations and what not.



Fig.1 Discrimination based on Skin Colour



Fig.2 Sexual Object



Fig.3. Sexual Object



Fig.4. Nudity



Fig.5. Nudity



Fig.6. Materialism

Unethical aspects of advertisements relating to children

Advertisements through various media have much to teach but some of what these advertisements teach may not be what we want our children to learn. The fundamental reason is that they cater to all sections of society and address to varied themes. Therefore, one of the most controversial topics advertisers must deal with is the issue of advertising to children. According to an in depth research done on the influence of advertising on children it was found that children between the age of 2 and 11 watch an average of 21.5 hours of TV a week and may see between 22,000 and 25,000 commercials a year. And its impact on children cannot be overlooked.

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The recent series of ads by Vodafone and an ad by McDonalds **exhibiting a romantic angle** have created waves in the advertisement industry. They feature something which people had never witnessed before in the advertisement industry with respect to India.

The Vodafone 'Instant connections' ad has the pug (symbolizing the brand - Vodafone) deliberately snatching the girl's scarf and leading her to the boy, so that the shy twosome gets to initiate conversation. The second ad shows 'Uninterrupted conversations', where the pug is stopping a worker from climbing up the stairs of a building as the two children enjoy private conversations on the staircase. The third ad, 'Hear every second', has the pug alerting the boy about the girl riding on a cycle, on the basis of the bell which he hears from afar, so that the boy can get to watch her as she passes by his home.

McDonald's is advertising the McAloo Tikki burger and Fries in what has become a popular and controversial advertising campaign in India and the Philippines. The Boyfriend/Girlfriend television commercial at the centre of the campaign features two young children sitting on a bench. The girl asks the boy if he would consider them boyfriend and girlfriend. He is not keen, saying that girlfriends demand too much. He changes his mind when she says that she'd be satisfied with a McAloo Tikki Burger (India) or McDonalds Fries (Philippines). The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines has slammed the advertisement, saying that it trivialises relationships.

ii. Promoting immoral values: Communication is all about the message rather than the characters involved. The effectiveness of an ad is in understanding the way to reach the target audience and knowing the idea to make the target audience relate to the message and thus the product/service. This has been understood by the Indian advertising industry. Through an advertisement, the company is not only selling a product but are also selling a concept or ideology. For example, we see the latest offering from Metlife fixed income plan where we see the grandson blackmailing his grandmother for buying stuff and relating it to fixed income from financial products. And the child in the advertisements does not know

what insurance means, but on the other hand has thought him to blackmail his elders, when he gets to know their weakness. In another McDonald's advertisement, a son borrows money from his father to treat his girlfriend at McDonald. In Maruti Esteem advertisement, two children were shown comparing whose daddy has the bigger car.



Fig.7. Popular Culture



Fig.8. Popular Culture



Fig.9. Popular Culture



Fig.10. Popular Culture



Fig.11. Moral Values



Negative Impacts of advertising on Women

- i. Women will only look good when they are slim
- ii. Women will only be acceptable in the society when they are fair
- iii. Women will only get a job and get recognised when they are fair
- iv. Women should look fair if they want to attract the opposite sex
- v. Women is a mere sexual object and treated as an object of lust
- vi. Women has to show more and more skin in order to look beautiful
- vii. Women should buy more products if they want to beautify themselves

Negative Impacts of advertising on children

- i. One should have a girlfriend/boyfriend and there is nothing wrong in it
- ii. There nothing wrong in kissing a girl in public
- iii. One should go beyond his financial capability to buy things for his girlfriend
- iv. Parents will support the girlfriend/boyfriend relationship
- v. One should blackmail his elders when he comes to know about their weakness
- vi. One should make a girlfriend by following certain steps and using an intermediary
- vii. Parents should be compared based on the material wealth they own

Recommendations and Suggestions

Based on the study it has been suggested that advertisement in any media should enhance the public morality and living standards of the general public. It is recommended to the media owners that only the advertisement which will give more prestige, code of conduct, moral values and thereby increase the standard of living and maintaining good living style of the consumers should be permitted to be aired.

The following are the various recommendations and suggestions:

The advertisement should create awareness and influence the consumers by providing valuable suggestions to make their purchase decision. Thus, the advertisements shall not be so framed as to abuse the trust of consumers or exploit their lack of knowledge.

The public should be aware of the message which the advertisement is trying to put into the minds of the viewer, sub-consciously or unconsciously.

Every advertisement should be unique in nature and it should create integrity and honesty among consumers for the social welfare. Advertisements shall not be allowed to take the



advantage of the superstitions or ignorance of the general public.

Don't take all advice for granted by advertiser. Public should pick what's useful for their best use. Make up their own rules and change them at their will.

Consumer should be a self-starter. If they identify an idea take charge and go for it. Do not blame others. If they are unhappy about something take the initiative to change instead of whining about it. Be decisive even if sometimes wrong with their feelings.

Do not overestimate the value of formal education. Most successful adman never had formal advertising education. Real work experience is more valuable than any education.

Advertise maker should be loyal to their clients and their agency. It will be appreciated even by the competition. Be honest with their work. Never lie or mislead to the consumer.

If admen clearly see they're going into the wrong direction with their strategy, do not be afraid to stop and rethink everything even if it means they have to start everything from scratch.

Conclusion

This study includes the importance of ethics, morality and standards to be applied for designing the good advertisements. In order to make advertisements as an effective based on the ethics considered and important to get the public involvement. Representative of the public should participate in the formulation application and periodic updating of ethical codes. In this regards honesty which costs nothing is the foundation of confidence and that confidence is the greatest asset that any business can have. Dishonesty in advertising not only destroys confidence in a particular advertising but also in the medium which carries such dishonest advertisement.

Advertising is a highly visible business activity and any lapse in the ethical standards can lead to severe consequences for the company. An advertisement which is questionable on ethical grounds invites criticism. It may also lead to some action taken against the advertisers by public interest groups, consumer protection councils and bodies like the ASCI. Thus, professionals in the advertising industry need to have strong ethical standards while designing their ad campaigns. They should always try to eliminate the socially harmful aspects of advertising and observe high ethical standards with regard to



truthfulness, human dignity and social responsibility. In this way, they will make an exceptional and important contribution to human progress and to the common good. Leo Burnett once said, “Let's gear our advertising to sell goods, but let's recognize also that advertising has a broad social responsibility”.

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