



ETHICAL ADVERTISING IS A VITAL RESPONSIBILITY OF BUSINESS TOWARDS THE SOCIETY

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Abstract: *In the present scenario of marketing, the influence of advertising is such that marketing becomes standstill in the absence of advertising. An inferior product with intense advertising captures more market than a best product with low advertising. The social significance of advertising is such that it cannot be restricted within the boundaries of business because it influences all walks of human life. No intelligent person can remain fully ignorant of advertising or can distant himself from it. Emotions and sentiments of the people are the focal areas of advertising. All ads appeal to and commercialise the soft feelings of the consumers. Through this strategy, companies catch hold of the minds of consumers and influence their buying behaviour. In this juncture, an ethical perspective in ad making and ad strategies are highly essential for ensuring a value based living and a civilised society.*

Keywords: *Advertising, ethics, advertising appeals, ethical concerns*

Introduction

The literary meaning of advertising is turning of attention to something, or drawing and calling attention to something. When a company designs a product and wants to sell it in the target market, it needs to communicate with the customers about the product and its features. Mass communication is required to reach all the customers in the target market. Advertising is the best way to make such mass communication in the target market. It aims at benefiting the producer, educating the consumer and supporting the salesmen. It is a link between the producer and the consumer. Modern world passes through an era of advertising. Today, one cannot limit advertising within the boundaries of business because it influences all walks of human life. No intelligent person can remain fully ignorant of advertising or can distant himself from it. Like the other dimensions of business, advertising and sales promotion also have their own pros and cons.

Wise advertising and sales promotion strategies generate handsome return for the advertisers. But unwise advertising results in loss and complete wastage of money.

It is difficult to find the exact period of evolution of advertising because there are many types of actions and communications which can be included in advertising. But the commercial type of advertisements was evolved during the late 17th century. The first advertisement may have been a sign painted on a wall of a building. In the ancient times the most common form of advertising was by the word of mouth. The early outdoor-advertising competitors were 'town criers' employed by merchants to praise their products.

The history of advertising in India started with street hawkers and peddlers selling their products by means of public outcry when markets first began. The country has a long tradition of advertising. The rock art paintings in India that date back to 4000 B.C. is considered as the root of wall paintings in the modern scenario of advertising. The history of professional advertising in India begins with the classified advertisements appears for the first time in the first issue of the first newspaper of the Indian subcontinent, the 'Bengal Gazette' on January 29, 1780. The first advertising agency of the country was established in 1905 by B. Dattaram and Company.

Why Ads are so Crucial?

In the present scenario of marketing, the influence of advertising is such that marketing becomes standstill in the absence of advertising. An inferior product with intense advertising captures more market than a best product with low advertising. Companies are spending more amount of money on ad making than product development, modification and quality assurance. The ads of companies cost more than the budget of movies. Modern companies widely use the image and popularity of celebrities in their ads. Emotions and sentiments of the people are the focal areas of advertising. All ads appeal to and commercialise the soft feelings of the consumers. Through this strategy, companies catch hold of the minds of consumers and influence their buying behaviour. Advertising is a big industry in the modern business world which promulgates the commercial messages of other industries. All the industries have to rely on advertising for their survival and progress. The major source of income of electronic and print media is advertising.

There is a popular saying about advertising; "the company who saves money by not advertising is like the man who stops the clock to save time." This shows the role of advertising in business. Advertising is a favorable representation of product to make customers aware of it. In a successful business, advertising play an essential and important role. Advertising popularises a product among the targeted customers. It gives companies the opportunity to build up a brand and an identity. The remarkable feature of advertising

is mass communication. It communicates a product related message to large number of people. Advertising helps to foster sales and enable companies to create a specific image in the minds of consumers. Advertising plays a crucial role in the modern society. Without advertising, the average consumer would not get product and market related information.

Effective Tool for Large Scale Production and Marketing

Advertising is useful tool of market communication. It gives information to consumers and encourages them to purchase more. Manufacturers can expand their production as a result of higher market demand created through advertising.

Facilitates the Introduction of new products

Advertising facilitates the introduction of new products. Through advertising, information about new products can be given to the prospective buyers. This facilitates the sale of new products in the market.

Ad Creates New Demand

Advertising spreads information and encourages consumers to purchase products. Such advertising leads to the creation of new demand. It helps to create new demand from non-users.

Ad Builds Brand Image

Manufacturers use advertising to create distinct image for their product in the target market. The brands are made popular through advertising. As a result, consumers develop loyalty towards a specific brand.

Ads Reduce Cost of Production

Advertising creates demand and promotes sales. This enables a manufacturer to conduct production on a large scale. This leads to reduction in the cost of production and distribution. As a result, the profit margin of the manufacturer increases.

Ads Equip Firms to Face Competition

Manufacturers can face market competition effectively and can make his products popular through advertising. He can remove misunderstanding among consumers about his products through appropriate advertising.

Goodwill Builder

A manufacturer can build up goodwill and good image in the business world and also among the consumers through advertising. The social welfare programmes and community service activities can be given wide publicity through advertising. The progress of the Organisation can be brought to the notice of the public through advertising.

Ads Serve the Society

Advertising offers numerous benefits to the society. Advertising leads to large-scale production creating more employment opportunities to the public in various industries directly or indirectly. It creates more wants and their satisfaction. For example, advertising has made more popular and universal the uses of inventions as the automobiles, TV, mobile phones, computers etc. Ads facilitate the availability of newspapers and visual media at cheaper rates. The cheap production of newspapers is possible only through the publication of advertisements in them. It assures employment opportunities for artists who innovate and create ads. It educates people about new uses of products and provides information for leading better life.

Ads and Appeals

An advertisement appeal is a theme in which the advertisement is created. Appeals target the buying motives of consumers. They are developed on the basis of the buying motives which influence the purchase decision of the consumers. For example, the ad of a low priced product arouses the economy motive of consumers. Several types of appeals can be used in advertising

- **Emotional appeal:** An emotional appeal is related to a person's psychological and social needs for purchasing certain products and services. Many consumers are emotionally motivated to make certain purchases. Advertisers aim to cash in on the emotional appeal and this works particularly well where there is not much difference between multiple product brands and its offerings. Emotional appeal includes personal and social aspects. Some personal emotions that drive individuals to purchase products. They are safety, fear, love, humor, joy, happiness, sentiment, pride, self esteem, pleasure, comfort etc.
- **Rational Appeal:** Rational appeal focuses on the practical needs of the consumers. Such appeals emphasize the characteristics and features that are beneficial to the consumers. It highlights the value, quality and performance of a product to motivate the rational buyers. For example, an ad of a car highlighting its fuel efficiency.
- **Moral Appeal:** Moral appeals emphasize on rights and wrongs. The advertisements of moral appeal are designed on social causes. Ads showing equal rights for women, payment of taxes, donations for the poor are examples of moral appeal.
- **Humour Appeal:** Humor is an excellent tool to catch the attention of the viewers. Humour has been widely used in advertising due to its power of create liking in the consumers towards the advertisement. Ads of Fevi kwik, Cadbury Perk, Cadbury 5 Star, Cadbury Dairy Milk Shots are examples humour appeal.
- **Beauty Appeal:** Beauty appeal is widely used in beauty products, such as soaps, skin cream, shampoo and fragrances. The advert will often include an attractive celebrity to talk about the product and say how good it is. It will make a feel among the consumers that if they use the product, they will be attractive like the celebrity in the ad.

- **Scarcity Appeal:** Scarcity appeals focus on limited supplies or limited time period for purchase of products. They are usually followed while employing promotional tools including gift coupons, discounts, contests etc.

Ethical Concerns and Criticisms

Ethics refers to a set of moral standards and principles for leading the people in a right direction throughout their life. Some of the criticisms against advertising on ethical grounds are;

Attracts People to Harmful Products

Advertising appeals make people to use certain products, which are harmful to health. For example alcoholic drinks and cigarettes.

Dissatisfaction among Poor People

People with less purchasing power cannot afford to buy articles even though advertisements create a strong need in them. Thus a section of society remains discontented.

Obscene Advertisements

The use of nudity, indecent images, uncultured languages, words and captions in advertisements is a major ethical issue. Most companies see nude images as an essential thing for marketing their products.

Subliminal Advertisements

Subliminal messages are words, images, sounds and visuals which are below the entry of the conscious mind or not sufficient enough for conscious perception. But the subconscious mind instantly understands and accepts them. They are used in advertisements to mislead and misguide the consumers. Subliminal advertisements communicate more indirect messages than direct messages. For example, in most films, smoking and drinking scenes occur many times. When the conscious mind of the viewers concentrate on the main theme of such scenes, their subconscious mind perceives that smoking and drinking are not bad.

Advertising is a tool of communication in marketing. It communicates all relevant information about a product, its features and benefits to the targeted customers. It is through advertising, customers are well informed about the special offers, price discounts, gift vouchers and authorised dealers (stores) of a product. An ethical perspective in ad making and ad strategies are highly essential for ensuring a value based living and a civilised society.

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