

Social & Ethical Issues in Advertising

Since advertisement is for the society, it affects the society in multiple ways. Society is worried with how the advertising is done and its effects on it. Advertising is condemned because of deception, manipulation, bad taste and manipulating consumers against their will. It is supposed that the expressiveness of the advertisement has an impact on the value system of the society. The consumer is betrayed when the benefits he perceives are far below his expectations. This could be due to misrepresentation or improper importance on attributes. Advertisement as a whole should not be deceptive. It should not hide material facts and give a true picture of the advantages, the rate and the offer.

For example:

“Buy Z brand of toothpaste with a trip to Europe”

The Advertisement is misleading it should be written as,

“Buy Z brand of toothpaste with chance of a trip to Europe”

Let us talk about Ethics and Advertisements

Business ethics is the behaviour that business adapts to in its dealings with the world.

The ethics of a particular business can be varied.

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Many businesses have earned a bad image just by being in business. Business line is adopted to earn money; making money is not incorrect in itself. It is the way in which some businesses do themselves that arises the question of ethical behaviour.

Advertising is condemned of influencing the buyers to make a decision against their will or interest; Advertisements also play with the sub-conscious mind, motives of consumers. The appeals created by the advertisements are sometimes so strong that the consumer fully believe in them, does not apply their mind to make a choice, and buys it without much consideration.

Advertising has also been condemned because of:

- Advertisement of harmful products without crossing the legal limits like advertisement of Soda having same brand as of whiskey.
- Over stress on sex—sex appeals.
- Majority of exposure scenes (not suitable as children also watch them).
- Advertising strategy of extreme repetition of the advertisement.
- Accused of offering too much importance to the material facets of life.
- It encourages certain individuals as stereotype. Mostly women are always displayed in the role of a mother or a homemaker, in place of business executives except in few cases. Similarly, business executives are displayed with a cigarette. Women are shown to display a romantic situation.

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- Excess advertising on children is a great matter of worry.
- Due to advertisement price of product tends to rise thus provides sensitivity to price. It shows demarcation among closely resembling brands.
- Advertisement creates unnecessary fear among consumers. Advertising create insecurity by making people worried about their health like tooth decay, body odours, lack of memory etc.

Impact of advertising on society

Advertising bears several responsibilities towards society. Advertising informs the people so that they can be conscious of products and make informed choices among varied products or brands. Advertising also helps businesses in assisting them to sell their products. However, while fulfilling its role as a dream merchant, advertising has also been in the circle of controversy of the many ills that it delivers to society. It is accused of promoting materialism and consumption, of causing us to buy items for which we have no need, of taking advantage of kids, of influencing our behaviour, using sex to sell, and usually contributing to the damage of our social system.

Advertising does not operate in a vacuum but in a market environment where different forces like consumer requirements, business interests and government laws are at work. It is an influential force in terms of its expressiveness and functions a critical social role. In addition, the high visibility and pervasiveness, it creates criticism

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and controversy. Much of this controversy comes from the fact that advertising is used more as an influential communication tool thereby generating serious impact on the tastes, values and lifestyles of society. As consumers, when we purchase a product or service, it is probable a decision we take based on our needs and wants.

In spite of the above condemnation, the advertisement has come to play its role in the system. It sends messages and makes goods available. It encourages purchases and inspires to consume. It is a necessary part of marketing tactic. It promotes various social issues and brings awareness in the public like regarding family planning, health care, avoidance of accidents are the major topics. If certain system, policy and regulations are followed, advertising benefits are greater than its condemnation . The Advertisement must be legal with moral, sincere, truthful and civilized. This will make sure the expansion of the advertising both in India and abroad.

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