

# Advertising Ethics in India

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## I. INTRODUCTION

**Advertising** is the commercial promotion of goods and services done in order to increase the sales. There are number of means of advertising which includes television, newspapers, wall paintings, billboards, magazines, Internet, by the word-of-mouth and in many other ways. **Advertising informs the buyers about the availability of a certain product or service in the market and encourages them to buy it.**

**The main objectives of advertising:**

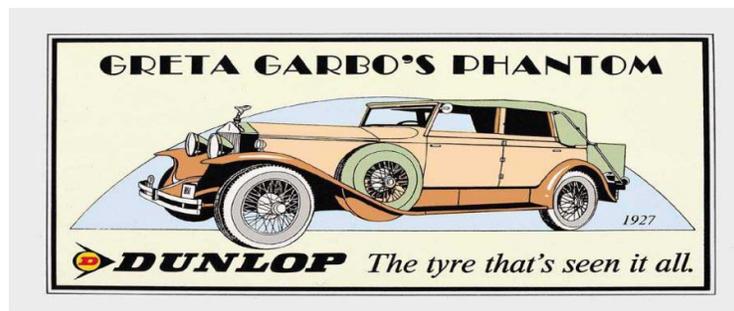
- \* Increase the use of certain products and increase demand for that product in-turn.
- \* Increase the brand name by creating new consumers.
- \* To indicate introduction of new products or replacement of old ones.

**Ethics is the rules or standards governing the particular advertisement.** Ethics is the requirement for deciding a means of action. With the proper standard and code the advertisements are properly categorised.

## II. ADVERTISING HISTORY IN INDIA (1900- 1989)

Advertising history first began with classified advertising. Advertisements started appearing for the first time in India's first newspaper - **Hickey's Bengal Gazette**. Studios were set up for bold type, ornate fonts, fancier, larger advertisements. Major advertisers during that time were retailers like **Spencer's, Army & Navy and Whiteaway and Laidlaw**. **Horlicks becomes the first 'malted milk' to be patented in 1883.**

**B Dattaram and Co.** is the oldest existing Indian agency in Mumbai which was started in 1902. **Ogilvy and Mather and Hindustan Thompson Associate agencies** were formed in the early 1920s. In 1939, Lever's advertising department launched **Dalda** – the first major example of a brand and a marketing campaign specifically developed for India. In 1967, the first commercial was aired on **Vividh Bharati** and in 1978; the first television commercial was aired.



In the eighties it saw the **development of media boom** with the growth of cable and satellite and increase of titles in the print medium. It also saw the growth of public relations and other new promotions introduced by various companies and advertising agencies. **Mudra Communications Ltd was set up in 1980 which produced daily soaps, telefilms and commercials in television.** **Bombay Dyeing** was the first colour advertisement to be telecasted in TV. Many popular advertisements like **Nirma, Maggi, Vico** enjoyed its success among the people.

## 1990 - 1999

This new era saw the beginning of new medium of advertising – **Internet**. Agencies started opening media shops through internet advertising. In 1991 **Zee TV and Star Plus** was launched. In 1993, India's only advertising school **MICA (Mudra Institute of Communications Ahmedabad)** was set up. Internet advertising gained popularity among the people because of the boom of computers and new software technologies in the internet medium. **Equitor Consulting** becomes the only

independent brand consultancy company in the country. **Sun TV** was the first regional channel set up during 1996 which went on live for 24 hours. In 1997 **Reinventing of cinema** -advertising through cinema begins. **B2B site agencyfaqs.com** was launched on September 28, 1999.



2000 - 2012

Mudra Communication launched **magindia.com**, the first advertising and marketing gallery in 2000. A portal named **bigideasunlimited.com** was launched by **Alyque Padamsee and Sam Mathews** which offered free and fee ideas on money. In 2002 **Kamal Oberoi** became the first president for Hindustan Thompson Associates (HTA). This era saw the agencies using the film personalities, sports personalities to brand their products. This concept became very popular and attractive among the public as they were happy to see their stars endorsing the products. Various new marketing strategies like innovative advertising concepts, new visualization, usage of E-Marketing were used by the companies to market their products. Agencies started creating advertisement films to be aired before the people and spent a lot of money exclusively as advertising expense.



### III. ETHICAL VALUE THROUGH AGES

The word **ethics** was given much importance during the early periods as the advertisements prepared were very short, informative, and brief with the information to be conveyed to the consumers. There was no need of unnecessary additions to the product to attract the consumers. The companies created attractive paper advertisements to impress the consumers with the limited technology and resource available. The ethical value was high during these periods as the product was given more importance rather the materials used for the advertisement.

But slowly the agencies started using various modes of advertisements to reach the consumers. So to attract the consumers they started using catchy words, phrases in their advertisements. Famous personalities were also used by them as their brand ambassadors. Since the agencies started diverting themselves from informative advertisements to popularity the ethical value gets a slowdown. People are keen to see their favourite personality performing in the advertisements rather the knowing about the product or its features. They tend to buy the product since it was being endorsed by their favourites.

Does the agency follow the ethical value while creating the advertisement films? The answer is NO. Since there is no censorship for the advertisements, the creation of advertisements doesn't follow the basic moral and ethical standard. The only

aim for them is to increase the sales through marketing which makes them to create few cheaper advertisements with unethical words and phrases. Some goes to the extent of using unethical picturization which has to be strictly offended by the government. They fail to keep in mind that the advertisements are watched by all age group of people and not by the people above 20 years. The mind set of children gets affected by watching those advertisements which they tend to follow too. Is it a good practice for agency to spoil the minds of the children?

Few examples of unethical advertisements are as follows:

- Axe Deodorant – The advertisements depicts women badly as following the man using their deodorant.
- Virgin Mobile - The advertisement is about two guys admitted in a hospital who are exploiting a pure profession - 'Nursing'.

There are few advertisements which really teach the people too. For example, a dad will teach his son to say “thank you” to the servant appreciating the service done to them. This creates a good manner among the children as they benefit from it. Similarly in another ad the creative concept ZOO ZOO was made mainly to target audience with their new strategy. It did impress all with its innovative creatures.

Another way of unethical advertising is by showing unfair advertisements for basic needs like tooth paste, soaps, fairness creams, oils and shampoos. They spread false information that the consumers will become very fair using their products or their hair grows long with their oils and shampoos. But in reality it is not the true facts. There are cases where the consumer's gets mentally depressed when the reality is not happening as shown in the advertisements.

#### IV. WHY ETHICS IS IMPORTANT?

- Number of advertising agencies is more across the country. As the population is more there is B-Line of many international companies trying to put their hand in Indian Market. These advertising agencies are exploiting these Indian manufacturers in putting their market through advertising suitable to Indian conditions.
- The severe competition for the same product and services bring in fierce advertisement from agencies counteracting on each other's specifications. For example: The recent advertisement between Times of India and The Hindu competing on each other.
- The design patents have become legal in India only in recent times. Until now advertisements also boost the sales of duplicate and malnutrition products.



#### V. CONCLUSION

With the invent of new technology and software the agencies are able to market their products with ease and reach a larger group but what really matters is how far they are produced ethically with the true facts and ideas. It's high time the censorship board must intervene in this marketing department to make sure the advertisements produced are of ethical and high values. The quality of advertisements must be tested before aired in the market. Again, the board must give certificates to the advertisements based on the content of the advertisement. By this way, there will be better advertisements which benefit the entire category of the consumers.

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