

Ethics in Advertising: An Indian Outlook

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ABSTRACT

Advertisement is an important means to grow business and to reach out to larger market of consumers. The main problem arises when advertisement is used to induce customers by way of unsubstantial claims, it is against their interests. Now manufacturers or service providers are spending large amount of budget on marketing. Customers recommended that some regulatory authority should be there that looks into various ethical issues related to advertising. There is need of the hour that customers aware about the strength of their own.

Key Words: ethics

Introduction

The 20th Century was landmarked with the beginning of two interesting media of mass communication namely, radio, and television. Radio in India that was introduced by All India Radio (AIR) ruled the market from 1922 to 1947 but 1947 onwards television took over. The first experience of public sector advertising on television was in 1980s and went on to become the major indoor influential media of advertising. Technological advancements have changed the success of these media. Many new media like transit, online, infomercials etc. are showing up to attract the consumers.

What is Ethics

Ethics is derived from Greek word "ETHOS" which means character, norms, morals, and ideals prevailing in-group and society. Ethics examines the rational justification for our moral judgments; it studies what is morally right or wrong, just or unjust. Ethics are the set of principles, rules, standard, and values that guide actions and create a sense of responsible behavior. The Code of Business Conduct is extent through Code of Ethics for Advertising to include the way in which we approach all our advertising and marketing communications.

Ethics in Advertising

Advertisement is an important means to grow business and to reach out to larger market of consumers. Now manufacturers or service providers are spending large amount of budget on marketing. The main problem arises when advertisement is used to induce customers by way of unsubstantial claims, it is against their interests. However, when advertisements are deceptive, false, or misleading then it is a question actually of ethics of manufacturers and sellers. Various companies neglect their ethical responsibility by continually producing and airing unethical advertisements.

Self Regulating Agencies for Advertising in World

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) initiated in agreement with the British Code of Advertising Practices for Print, Cinema, television, & radio advertising in the U.K. The ASA works independently & financed by the advertising industry. The received complaint are examined and if required, the advertisers are instructed to modify or remove the concerned advertisement. Special attention paid for kids and teenagers advertisements, products such as alcohol, slimming aids, & devices, cosmetics & hypnotherapy, etc. The following are various organizations that self regulates the advertising in different countries:-

Table 1
Self Regulating Agencies for Advertising in World

Country	Organization
Australia	Advertising Industry Council (1978)
Austria	Oesterreichische Weeberat
Brazil	CONAR Brazilian Advertising Self-Regulation Council (in Portuguese)
Denmark	Institute of Consumer Ombudsman
France	National Advertising Council
New Zealand ,	Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)
United States	The federal trade commission

SELF-REGULATION IN INDIA

The Advertising Club, Mumbai organized a workshop on “Code for Self-Regulation in Indian Advertising,” with the association of International Advertising Association (IAA). Professionals from various Indian Advertisers & Advertising Agencies, the World President Emeritus of the IAA and the Director General of the Advertising Standards Authority addressed the workshop. The main objectives of the workshop were.

- a) To review the self – regulation on advertising in various countries with particular reference to the infrastructure as set up in the U.K.
- b) To develop a code for self – regulation in advertising in India as a plan for an effective infrastructure for enforcing it.

The discussions resulted in setting up of a committee on self-regulation code in India. This was set out to ensure that the consumers are protected against unauthentic advertising and the generally accepted norms of morality are upheld.

In June 2015, Consumer Complaints Council (CCC) under the Advertising standard council of India (ASCI) has received 148 complaints across various segments. Some of them are as follows:

Table 2
Category and Number of Complaints

Category	Number of complaints
Personal and Healthcare	26
Education	22
Food and Beverage	9
Media and Entertainment	7
Other	18

From prominent brands like including Flip kart, BSNL, Uber, Vodafone Akash institute, Amity and Snapdeal. Various complaints had been made with

Consequently the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) was set up to check down on misleading and unethical advertisements. The membership of ASCI is divided into four categories: the advertisers, the press, the advertising agencies, and the allied professions.

Advertising should be designed to conform to the laws of the country and should not offend against morality, decency, and religious susceptibilities of the people. Advertisements are termed as ethical advertisements when it contributes to a good corporate reputation, heighten morale and, thus, increases the business for the advertised product.

When dealing with public companies should follow ethical and honest procedure, if not then it can results serious consequences. The final blame must rest with the public relation or advertising arm of any organization. They are the final filter through which information and facts flow out to the public. They are responsible for the accurate and honest reporting of information.

the ASCI, It's the need of the hour to be aware about the legal aspects related to advertisements.

Table 3
Complains by customers to Advertising Standard Council of India

Sr. No	COMPANY	PRODUCT	COMPLAINTS
1	Bharti Airtel Ltd,	Airtel 4G	Largest telecom services provider of India asking the firm to withdraw its 4G speed challenge advertisement on grounds that it is misleading."The claim in the ad, 'Airtel 4G is the fastest network ever' and 'If your network is faster, we will pay your mobile bills for life', is misleading by omission is inappropriate disclaimers in the print, TV, hoarding advertisements
2	L'Oreal India P. Ltd	Garnier PureActive Neem+ Tulsi High Foaming Facewash	The advertisement, promotional pamphlets and leaflets of the product claim, "removal of 99.9 % pimple causing germs" was found vague and unsubstantiated
3	Lotus Herbals Limited	Lotus Herbals Youth RX	The advertisement claims, "A firmer and younger skin in just 7 days", " In 4 weeks 96 percent of users have agreed that effects of ageing are almost gone", were incorrectly substantiated.
4	Heinz India P. Ltd	Complan	The advertisement claims that Complan has 100% milk protein and comparing it versus other malt based drinks, which is misleading by implication. By choosing this comparison, it bestows an artificial advantage on milk protein based drinks and creates an impression that a better bargain is offered than truly is the case.
5	Flipkart Internet Private Limited:	The website communication claims the MRP of the product as Rs.799, when actual printed MRP on product is Rs. 399 which is being offered as the discounted price for Canvera	The website communication claims the MRP of the product as Rs. 999, when actual printed MRP on product is Rs. 449, which is offer as the discounted price for OBS. Flipkart distorts facts and is therefore misleading the consumers as to actual discount being offer.
6	Aakash Institute	Promotion for the Aakash Institute	The advertisement shows the visual of "a boy pillion riding a bike without a helmet" which depicts an unsafe practice.
7	Vodafone Essar Ltd.	Vodafone	The claim of "uninterrupted voice calls on 3G Network," was not substantiated.
8	Living Media Ltd. India Today	Promotion	The advertisement of India Today depicts a graph showing 4 News Channels i.e. India Today, Times Now, CNN IBN & NDTV 24*7 and in the graph. It is displayed that India Today is leading the market by holding 33.1 % Market share, followed by Times Now channel with 24.8 %, CNN IBN with 10.5 % and NDTV 24*7 with 10. This advertisement does not show the total market share of 100%. They also claim to be 'No.1 English News Channel' without any source data specified in the advertisement. By providing incorrect information for the purposes of substantiating the claim made by India Today, the advertisement is false, misleading, and disparaging to the other news channels.

Source: <http://articles.economictimes.com/keyword/asci>
 These are few cases of complaints by consumers till date.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that customers now a days are becoming more aware about ethical perception towards TV advertisements. TV advertisements are an important source of information for customers. TV advertisements are influencing, entertaining, convincing, and impactful and on the other hand create some confusion among the customer while choosing the product brand. Customers recommended that some regulatory authority should be there that looks into various ethical issues related to advertising. There is need of the hour that customers aware about the strength of their own.

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