



Status of Ethical Violations in T. V Commercials: A Study

Dr. Sewa Singh Bajwa,
Associate Professor,
Dept. of JMC,
Ch. Devi Lal University, Sirsa

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ABSTRACT

Advertising is a significant and legitimate means for the merchant to stimulate, inform and awaken in goods or services. The success of an advertisement depends heavily on the level of public confidence it is able to build. An Advertisement is defined as a paid form of communication, addressed to the public the purpose of which is to influence the opinions or behavior of those to whom it is addressed. But of late the T.V commercials have indulged in market gimmicks with the with the role motive of selling the product. The commercial interests care little about ethics, social values, ethos and health of the viewers who don't have cognitive tools to evaluate the level of truth involved in the advertisement of the product they are purchased to purpose. There are codes of ethics for advertisement but these codes are often violated. The model code of ethics does not allow the telecast of unethical, vulgar, anti-social, communal and exaggerated advertisement which then to mislead and spread hatred amongst the masses. While the advertisement of beverages, suggestive scenes, exaggerated claims and human nudity are banned every now and then one can comes across many such T.V advertisements which violates the ethics and ethos. Nothing is done to stop the telecast of such advertisements, nudity, suggestive scenes, double meaning sentences, communal hatred, unethical business advertisements condemning the other product etc. seem to have become an accepted norm. False claims of the merits of a product eat up the hard-earned money of the consumers. This paper attempts to analyze some glaring ethical violations in T.V advertisements in India using observation and content analysis methodology.

KEY WORDS: legitimate, stimulate, gimmicks, ethos, exaggerated, suggestive.

I. INTRODUCTION:

Advertising is a must these days. Even the best possible brands and other goods fail to attract the public if they are not properly and extensively published. Advertisers use different and a huge variety of gimmicks to allure the public and make them purchase that product. A variety of appeals are used in both print and electronic media advertisements. Though there are certain ethical codes for the advertisers but even a casual visitor to television may well stand as witness that these codes are frequently violated on Indian television. While advertisement of intoxicants is prohibited on television, but the advertisers find one way or the other to bye-pass them.

According to Asian Market Research News advertisement of liquor, alcoholic beverages, promotion of any contest, disco scenes, feminine napkins and kissing between adults is banned by law in Malaysia.

A guide of principles designed to help professionals conduct business honestly and with integrity. A code of ethics document may outline the mission and values of the business or organization, how professionals are supposed to approach problems, the ethical principles based on the organization's core values and the standards to which the professional will be held.

www.investopedia.com

Code of ethics is a written set of guidelines issued by an organisation to its workers and management to help them conduct their actions in accordance with its primary values and ethical standards.

[www. Businessdictionary.com](http://www.Businessdictionary.com)

Code of Business ethics may set out general principles about an organization's beliefs on matters such as mission, quality, privacy or the environment. The effectiveness of such code of ethics depends on the extent to which management



supports them with sanctions or rewards..... Code of ethics links to and gives rise to a code of conduct for employees. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethical code

Indian Advertising Codes and Ethics emphasize that legal action can be taken if an advertisement ridicules on the basis of caste, color or creed. Glorification of terrorism, obscene depiction of women and encouragement of social evils are strictly disallowed.

An advertisement is a paid-for communication addressed to the public or a section of it, the purpose of which is to influence the opinions or behavior of those to whom it is addressed. Any written or graphic matter on packaging, or contained in it, is subject to this code.

THE ADVERTISING STANDARDS COUNCIL OF INDIA

According to ASCI advertising is an important and legitimate means for the seller to awaken interest in his product. The success of advertising depends on public confidence. Hence ASCI does not permit any practice which tends to impair this confidence. Women are depicted as sex-starved and chase after men uninhibitedly.

Two TV advertisements were banned in India in 2008 for being indecent, vulgar and suggestive by I&B Ministry. One of these advertisements was that of Amul Macho Underwear in which a young lady was shown washing her husband's underwear on a river bank reciting some indecent words with another woman eyeing on her curiosity. The second one was that of Lux Cozy Underwear showing a half-naked man with a towel wrapped around his waist. While answering a young girl at the door the towel slips and the girl's eyes gaze downwards at his underwear in amazement.

A code of ethics is a set of principles of conduct within an organization that guide decision making and behavior. The purpose of the code is to provide members and other interested persons with guidelines for making ethical choices in the conduct of their work.

There are numerous illustrations of gross violation of social taboos, ethics and rules of the land in Television advertisements in India. Having the ulterior motive of impressing upon the viewers and make them think and rethink about their needs and necessities, corporate house doesn't leave any stone unturned. At times they stoop too low in order to impress upon fragile minds that ethical connotations are thrown to the winds. Advertisements are a major source of revenue for Media Houses but discarding ethical norms and

values for the sake of petty gains is shameful as well as dishonesty.

There are several openings for indecency to creep in among advertisements. Broadly speaking they may be counted as picturization that includes camera angles, camera position, focus and shots etc. Dress up, costume or attire of celebrities in advertisement have enough to do with socio-ethical chores. Inappropriate, indecent and suggestive clothing leads to nudity and absurd presentation of celebrities. At times double-meaning, lecherous, indecent or even suggestive words contribute in the construction of dialogues which may sound inappropriate. There are occasions when dialogue delivery by virtue of pause, enunciation or pronunciation shatters social taboos. Locales have great role to play in advertisements. Locale, object or backgrounds are at times quite suggestive. Celebrity arising out of swimming pool, twisting in bathing tub, bed room, parks, riding vehicles etc. lend suggestive element to commercials. Low pitched or high pitched music and a wide range of sound effects also have the potential to lend indecency to advertisements. Non-verbal language consisting of a variety of facial expressions, sitting-standing-lying postures, eye movements, nods, smiles, gestures, eye-lids etc. add to the apprehension of indecency to creep in scenes. Actions in commercials might be objectionable. Actions include stunts, physical proximity, hugs, adult kissing, embraces etc. are often the cause of concern for the custodians of ethical values. Human relations, at times, are ill-depicted in commercials which castigate old generation and propagate value-ridden new generation. Then lofty claims made in advertisements are often found miles away from truth. Cosmetics, power enhancing, height increasing and weight loss advertisements make claims which fall nothing short of blatant lies. Allurements by way of concessions, free gifts, socio-cultural traditions etc. also come in the vicinity of ethical violations. Magical remedies in any context be it fair skin, dark spots, pimples, rashes, body pain, tooth pain, odor, joint pain, power enhancers, hair fall, grey hair, dandruff, baldness, washing powders and general weakness etc. are all open violation of Drugs and Magical Remedies act.

Let us have a stern look at the advertisements violating one or the other ethical, social or moral value or transcend and violate well established laws.

Liqueur manufacturing companies advertise their products in a feigned way. While they suggest they advertise soda in fact they propagate the wine they manufacture under the same



name and label. This is true about McDowell, Blender Pride, Seagram's, Royal Stag and Kingfisher. These brands are endorsed by Akshay Kumar, M.S. Dhoni, Gautam Gambhir and Harbhajan Singh etc. The schrewed pause in uttering the slogan is enough to testify that these companies advertise alcohol and not soda. Even a fool can read between the lines when the slogan says, "khhoob Mza Ayega Jab Mil Biathlete Teen Yaar, Aap, Mein Aur Bagpiper --- Soda." No fun at all is involved in having soda in the company of friends. The same is true about other intoxicants aired on TV.

Cosmetics producing companies take the audience to some fairyland and promise what seems in the realm of impossibility in real life. They know well the female yearnings to look beautiful, charming and fair. Indians wish to be fair skinned. That's precisely why all advertisements of bathing soaps promise moon to people. Every thinking head knows that no soap whichever can change the skin color but companies emphasize that the soap they manufacture contains ingredients like Santoor, turmeric, milk, cream, almonds, lemon, orange, neem, tulsi, rose etc. which would make the skin soft, silky, fair, glow, charming and above all attractive. This is true about Lux, Rexona, Santoor, Godrej No. 1, Fair Glow, Liril, Dove, Moti, Faa, Vivel etc. Lux even offer Gold Coins hidden in soap cake. Soap removes dust particles and render freshness to the skin but no soap changes skin color. Fairness and beauty are attributed to women. A Juhi Chawla, Sri Devi, Mema Malini etc. acting as Brand Ambassador is acceptable but it looks absurd beyond comprehension when Shah Rukh Khan is seen endorsing Lux soap. Apart from unreal promises the advertisements of Dove, Vivel and Liril soaps exhibit unacceptable nudity. In case of Lux, Liril and Dove soaps, the fairness promised in just 7 days defies every logic. But the soap advertisements have been befooling the customers for years.

Fairness creams in no way lag behind in making tall claims which end in a smoke. Fair and Lovely, Loreal, Olay, Lakme and Ponds etcetera make promises of unforeseen fairness in just a few days. Olay promises to cure wrinkles which are caused by the deficiency of food nutrients. How can a cream cure them? Fair and Lovely even supplies shade-meter that helps in gauging the extent of fairness achieved. As it was not enough a cream for gents 'Fair and Handsome' was launched with Shah Rukh Khan as its brand ambassador in order to allure whitish or dark skinned males try to look fair. Still tolerable, but Virat Kohli endorsing Fair and

Lovely-Max Freshness is hilarious and intriguing in intent in this cricket-crazy country. All these fake claims end up in bewildered consumers who are instigated to spend their hard earned money on such products which never yield promised results. The video of Fem bleach cream featuring Sonakshi Sinha and Loreal featuring Katrina Kaif are all intriguing. Olay featuring Katrina Kaif promises to cure pimples too. The unauthenticated claims made in the advertisements and the videos of fairness creams products are glaring violation of ethical norms.

Indian women strive for long, dense and zed black hair which are free from dandruff and hair-fall. Companies do not lag behind in promising cure to all hair related ailments. Heads & Shoulders shampoo advertisement makes tall claims about the eradication of dandruff which is untrue. The same is true about the claims made in the advertisements of Sunsilk, Clinic Plus, Garnier, Nyle, Dove and Pantene etc. Loreal shampoo advertisement claims to remove all hair problems in just seven days! Garnier shampoo promises strong hair and its advertisement exhibits a female pulling a 'truck' with her hair. Kesh King, Sesa and Dabur Amla Kesh Tel advertisements promise ultra-long dense hair which sounds amazing keeping in mind the fact that hair require internal nourishment more than any external application. The picturization of Veet hair remover featuring Katrina Kaif is suggestive and unethical. Video of Garnier hair conditioner also compromises many ethical codes and mores of society.

Deodorants help controlling body odour albeit for some time. The same is held true about mouth fresheners. But the advertisements endorsing such products are loaded with objectionable, immoral and unethical videos. The advertisement of Minto Fresh with punch line 'Dimag Ki Batti Jla De' shows a bike rider using water-melon instead of helmet in order to befool a traffic police man. It seems to incite people break traffic rules. The video of Denim Deo featuring Nil Nitin Mukesh has plenty of unethical stuff in it. The way females get prominence over males and their gestures in the video of the advertisement of AXE Deo also makes it objectionable. In the video of Set Wet Deo females are shown hugging a male after smelling the fragrance make it unethical. Again in video of Addiction body spray advertisement Nil Nitin Mukesh is shown in indecent postures with females. In Fogg deodorant advertisement there is obscenity in video. Zatak Deo advertisement is also picturized in indecent way. The videos of mouth fresheners like Pass Pass, Pan Parag, Happiest and Spray Mint also



show unethical stuff. The video and lyrics of Pass advertisement video come in the realm of vulgarity. The video of Happident shows lightening teeth just after chewing a few candies which simply seems impossible. Moreover, it encourages people shed the habit of cleaning their teeth. Even the teeth of a buffalo are shown lightening white when she chews Happident. It is highly unethical propagate animals endorsing the products meant for human beings. Chaini Chaini and Gutka are tobacco products which may cause, still incurable, cancer. There are adult kissing scenes in the advertisement of Spray Mint.

II. CONCLUSION:

The above discussion sums up the state of affairs of TV advertisements in India. There are certain advertisements which blatantly violate the ethical codes. Certain advertisements carry visuals and scenes which are highly objectionable and even

some sensible viewers feel it awkward to see some sensuous scenes sitting along with their family members. Apart from sensuousness fake and false promises are made which can never be met with. For example, how can a bathing soap or beauty cream change the complexion of a person. But the advertisements go a long way in making false promises in advertisements. Thus it can be safely concluded that there are ethical violations in TV advertisements and advertising councils as well as the law enforcing agencies need to be stern in dealing with such cases.

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