

# Advertising Ethics

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**Abstract:** Modern age is the age of advertisement and advertising has become a necessity for commercial success. The businessmen can demonstrate their commercial ability through advertisement. Advertisement is an impersonal presentation where a standard or common message regarding the merits, price and availability of product or service is given by the producer or marketer. It is a paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor. The advertisement builds pull effect as advertising tries to pull the product by directly appealing to customer to buy it. Every part of advertising is a mode of satisfaction of human needs and wants. This paper includes the positive and negative. It also gives the information about how much the company are acting with ethical values in their advertisements and how they cheat the people in the society.

**Keywords:** Advertisement, Ethics, Ethics in Advertising.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Every day and everywhere in our life we see, hear and feel a number of products at home, in a shop, while travelling in the bus or train etc. and many talk about their qualities. It is, therefore, anything that turns attention to an article or service might be called advertising. The term advertising originates from the Latin word 'adverto' i.e. ad means 'towards' and 'verto' means 'I turn'. Thus advertising means 'to turn attention' towards a specific thing. Advertising may be defined as the process of buying sponsor-identified media, space or time of a product or an idea to promote their sales in present and future. Advertising consists of those activities by which visual or oral messages are addressed to select publics for the purpose of informing and influencing them to buy products and services. The first requirement is that the advertisement should capture the attention of its audience. In other words, the advertisement has to go through the attention filter of the target audience. It may give them new information, or it may support the information they already have or it may attempt to alter their existing views or beliefs. It is essential that the advertisement should appeal to them and influence their attitude, though process and purchase behavior in favour of the advertised brand. Advertisement can be defined as the "paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of idea, goods or services by an identified sponsor".

## 2. ADVERTISING

Advertising (or advertizing) is a form of marketing communication used to persuade an audience to take or continue some action, usually with respect to a commercial offering, or political or ideological support.

In Latin, *ad vertere* means "to turn toward". The purpose of advertising may also be to reassure employees or shareholders that a company is viable or successful. Advertising messages are usually paid for by sponsors and viewed via various old media; including mass media such as newspaper, magazines, television advertisement, radio advertisement outdoor advertising or direct mail; or new media such as blogs, websites or text messages.

Advertising is the communication relayed from companies to persuade an audience to purchase their products. This communication is usually through various forms of paid media -- TV and radio commercials, print ads, billboards and more recently, product placement.



#### ***BENEFITS OF ADVERTISING:***

- **Economic:** useful tool for sustaining honest and ethically responsible competition by informing people of the availability of rationally desirable new products and services and improvements in existing ones
- **Political:** helps counteract tendencies toward the monopolization of power by informing people of the ideas and policy proposals of parties and candidates
- **Cultural:** can exert a positive influence on decisions about media content; contribute the betterment of society by uplifting and inspiring people and motivating them to act in ways that benefit themselves and others. Importance of witty, tasteful and entertaining advertising, even to the point of becoming art.↓
- **Moral and Religious:** communicate messages of faith, patriotism, tolerance, compassion and neighborly service, charity, health, education.

#### ***HARMS OF ADVERTISING:***

- **Economic:** misrepresent and without relevant facts; subvert the media by pressure not to treat of questions that are embarrassing and inconvenient; tout harmful or useless goods; move people based on non-rational decisions; become a tool of "consumerism"; particularly harmful in economically less developed countries
- **Political:** costs of advertising can limit political competition to wealthy candidates or to those willing to compromise their integrity; distorts the views and records of opponents
- **Cultural:** corrupt culture and cultural values by contradicting sound traditional values; can create superficiality, tawdriness, and moral squalor; ignore educational and social needs of certain segments of the audience; contributes to stereotyping of particular groups
- **Moral and religious harms:** deliberate appeals to motives of envy, status seeking, and lust creates vulgar and morally degrading advertising; treat of religion in obnoxious and offensive manners; can promote morally suspect or perverse products and practices.

### **3. ETHICS**

Ethics (also moral philosophy) is the branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct.

Ethics (also moral philosophy) is the branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct. The term *ethics* derives from the Ancient Greek word ἠθικός *ethikos*, which is derived from the word ἦθος *ethos* (habit, "custom"). The branch of philosophy axiology comprises the sub-branches of Ethics and aesthetics, each concerned with concepts of value.

As a branch of philosophy, ethics investigates the questions "What is the best way for people to live?" and "What actions are right or wrong in particular circumstances?" In practice, ethics seeks to resolve questions of human morality, by defining concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime. As a field of intellectual enquiry, moral philosophy also is related to the fields of moral psychology, descriptive ethics, and value theory.

**The three major areas of study within ethics are.**

- **Meta-ethics**, concerning the theoretical meaning and reference of moral propositions, and how their truth values(if any) can be determined.
- **Normative ethics**, concerning the practical means of determining a moral course of action.
- **Applied ethics**, concerning what a person is obligated to do in a specific situation or a particular domain of action.



Ethics means a set of moral principles which govern a person's behavior or how the activity is conducted. And advertising means a mode of communication between a seller and a buyer.

#### **4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study is carried out with the following objectives:

1. To study the ethics in advertisements.
2. To analysis the impact of ethical and unethical advertisements in respondents.
3. To ascertain where the advertisements were construct through ethical values.

#### **5. METHODOLOGY**

1. It is an analytical study. For accomplishing above objectives secondary data were collected.
2. The necessary secondary data was collected through the books, different websites, magazines and library etc.

#### **6. ETHICS IN ADVERTISING**

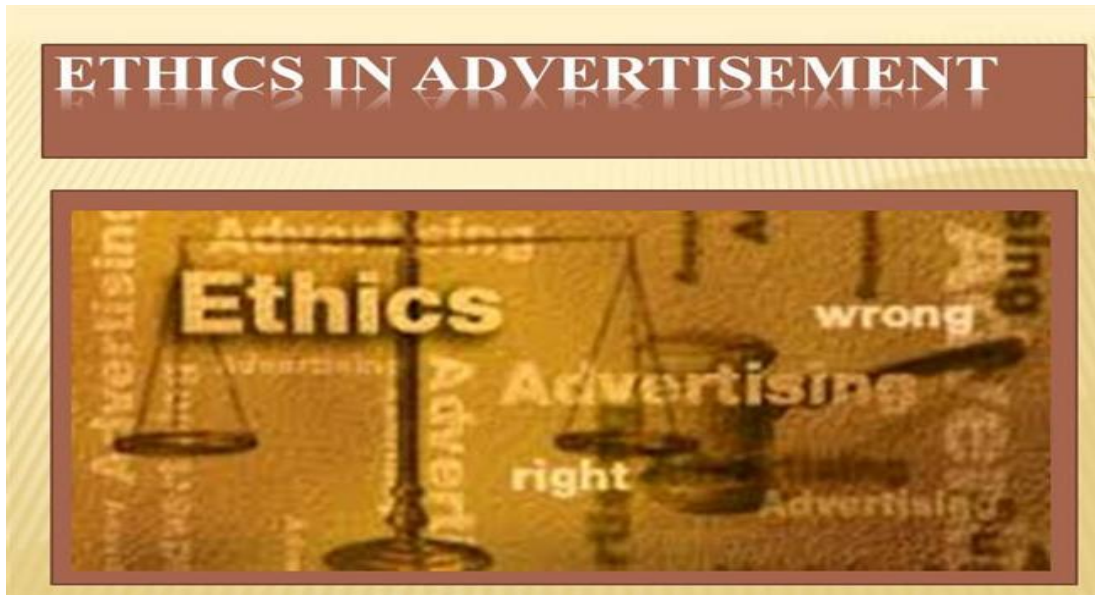
Ethics in advertising means a set of well-defined principles which govern the ways of communication taking place between the seller and the buyer. Ethics is the most important feature of the advertising industry. Though there are many benefits of advertising but then there are some points which don't match the ethical norms of advertising.

An ethical ad is the one which doesn't lie, doesn't make fake or false claims and is in the limit of decency. Nowadays, ads are more exaggerated and a lot of puffing is used. It seems like the advertisers lack knowledge of ethical norms and principles. They just don't understand and are unable to decide what is correct and what is wrong.

The main area of interest for advertisers is to increase their sales, gain more and more customers, and increase the demand for the product by presenting a well decorated, puffed and colorful ad. They claim that their product is the best, having unique qualities than the competitors, more cost effective, and more beneficial. But most of these ads are found to be false, misleading customers and unethical. The best example of these types of ads is the one which shows evening snacks

for the kids, they use coloring and gluing to make the product look glossy and attractive to the consumers who are watching the ads on television and convince them to buy the product without giving a second thought.

Ethics in Advertising is directly related to the purpose of advertising and the nature of advertising. Sometimes exaggerating the ad becomes necessary to prove the benefit of the product. For e.g. a sanitary napkin ad which shows that when the napkin was dropped in a river by some girls, the napkin soaked whole water of the river. Thus, the purpose of advertising was only to inform women about the product quality. Obviously, every woman knows that this cannot practically happen but the ad was accepted. This doesn't show that the ad was unethical.



***Ethical Principles especially relevant to Advertising:***

➤ ***General:***

Principles of the moral order must be applied to the domain of media

Human freedom has a purpose: making an authentic moral response. All attempts to inform and persuade must respect the purposes of human freedom if they are to be moral.

Morally good advertising therefore is that advertising that seeks to move people to choose and act rationally in morally good ways; morally evil advertising seeks to move people to do evil deeds that are self-destructive and destructive of authentic community

Means and techniques of advertising must also be considered: manipulative, exploitative, corrupt and corrupting methods of persuasion and motivation.

➤ ***Three Specific Moral Principles:***

**1. RESPECT TRUTHFULNESS (deception objection):**

- Never directly intend to deceive
- Never use simply untrue advertising
- Do not distort the truth by implying things that are not so or withholding relevant facts
- "Puffery" is acceptable where it is consonant with recognized and accepted rhetorical and symbolic practice

**2. RESPECT THE DIGNITY OF EACH HUMAN PERSON (attacks autonomy objection):**

Do not exploit our "lower inclinations" to compromise our capacity to reflect or decide either through its content or through its impact: using appeals to lust, vanity, envy and greed, and other human weakness.

Give special care to the weak and vulnerable: children, young people, the elderly, the poor, and the culturally disadvantaged

### **3. RESPECT SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES (promotes consumption, empties communication, objections):**

Example: Concern for the ecology—advertising should not favor a lavish lifestyle which wastes resources and despoils the environment.

Example: Advertising should not reduce human progress to acquiring material goods and cultivating a lavish lifestyle

#### ***BENEFITS OF ETHICAL ADVERTISING:***

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## **7. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Based on the study it has been suggested that advertisement in any media should enhance the public morality and living standards of the general public. It is recommended to the media owners that only the advertisement which will give more prestige, code of conduct, moral values and thereby increase the standard of living and maintaining good living style of the consumers should be permitted to be aired.
- It is suggested that the advertisement should create awareness and influence the consumers by providing valuable suggestions to make their purchase decision. Thus the advertisements shall not be so framed as to abuse the trust of consumers or exploit their lack of knowledge.
- Every advertisement should be unique in nature and it should create integrity and honesty among consumers for the social welfare. Advertisements shall not be allowed to take the advantage of the superstitions or ignorance of the general public.
- Don't take all advice for granted by advertiser. Public should pick what's useful for their best use. Make up their own rules and change them at their will.
- Consumer should be a self-starter. If they identify an idea take charge and go for it. Do not blame others. If they are unhappy about something take the initiative to change instead of whining about it. Be decisive even if sometimes wrong with their feelings.
- Do not overestimate the value of formal education. Most successful adman never had formal advertising education. Real work experience is more valuable than any education.
- Advertise maker should be loyal to their clients and their agency. It will be appreciated even by the competition. Be honest with their work. Never lie or mislead to the consumer.
- If admen clearly see they're going into the wrong direction with their strategy, do not be afraid to stop and rethink everything even if it means they have to start everything from scratch.
- No advertisement should be allowed regarding drugs and medicines, foodstuff, until they are granted a license of their being of reasonable quality by the medical departments concerned.
- Finally from this study it is suggested to admen that the advertisements shall not make unjustifiable use of the name or initial of any other firm, company or institution, not to take unfair advantage of the goodwill attached to the trademark or symbol of another firm or its product by the advertising campaign. This will able the consumers to have a clear state of mind and they would not be disturbed with the misleading information.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

This study includes the importance of ethics, morality and standards to be applied for designing the good advertisements. In order to make advertisements as an effective based on the ethics considered and important to get the public involvement. Representative of the public should participate in the formulation application and periodic updating of ethical codes. In this regards honesty which costs nothing is the foundation of confidence and that confidence is the greatest asset that any business can have. Dishonesty in advertising not only destroys confidence in a particular advertising but also in the medium which carries such dishonest advertisement.

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