

THE INFLUENCE AND TECHNIQUES OF MODERN ADVERTISING: ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Muhammad Wasim Akbar and Wajahat Karim

*Department of Mass Communication, Gomal University Dera Ismail Khan
Journalism & Mass Communication Department, Kohat University of Science and
Technology, Kohat.*

ABSTRACT

Today advertising, like other forms of mass communication, affects our social and economic life immensely. Our world is incomplete without ads. Where the ads are boon, it may be, at the same time bane for the society if ethics of dissemination of information are not taken into consideration. Research has shown that ads containing unethical contents may lead to a great disorders and disturbances in the society. The beauty of life always seems within the limits of some ethical boundaries. It is an era of cut-throat competition among national as well as multi-national companies to promote business and increase sales. They to serve the same purpose make effective and attractive advertisements while crossing ethical limitations. There are some baseless and false claims in the ads of Shampoos, detergents, Tea, Washinf powders, Weight loss medicines and Bleaching cremes. This unethical representation is creating disorders among the members of the society. The ethical dimension of advertising as benefactor tyrant in relation to the mass media has been seen relatively pervasive. In struggling to overcome the moral crises, we do need help from all quarters. Business organizations, professional societies and advertising associations will have to establish stricter codes and ensure their enforcement. Public officials will need to use more imagination in an encouraging behavior. Like any other complex institutions, advertising also has certain fundamental codes of ethics and commonly accepted norms and values for the dissemination of information. Any representation and practice of ads void of business ethics may lead to disruption, chaos and misunderstanding between producers, distributor, advertisers and consumers. The paper, in hand, tries to point out these practices of Modern Advertising which is prevalent in the society.

INTRODUCTION

Today is an advertising age. Advertising is the lifeblood of marketing and no one can deny the importance it has got during the recent decades. It would be no exaggeration to say that the ads industry has brought a great revolution in the lives of people. It is an essential part of every walk of life now ranging from business, commerce, politics, economics, agriculture, public relations or Journalism to mass communication. The prosperous

and flourishing impact of industrial revolution not only brought about a change in every segment of modern age but also accelerated the winning race. Materialistic drives caused the numerous professions. On the other hand, the posters and other modes of advertising are performing their real duties to serve the nation.

Ads are everywhere attracting target consumers by the use of different techniques—mostly unethical. These

include health care education, property dealing, job opportunity, beautification, fast foods, and investment schemes, destined tellers and invented and innovated products.

Functions of Advertising

Advertising fulfills four basic functions in society. First, it serves a marketing function by helping companies sell their products. Second, advertising also performs the function of educating the consumers. Through advertising people learn about new ideas, products and services, or improvements in existing ones. Third, advertising plays an economic role which creates competition in the market, among and between different companies. It promotes business in return. The ability to advertise allows new competitors to enter the business arena. Competition, in turn, encourages product improvements and can lead to lower prices. Moreover, advertising reaches a mass audience, thus greatly reducing the cost of personal selling and distribution. Finally, advertising performs a definite social function. By vividly displaying the material and cultural opportunities available in a free-enterprise society, advertising helps increase productivity and raises the standard of living (Sundhir, 2006).

Advertising and Its Definitions

Advertising is a social construct, a complex phenomenon which has been differently defined by different scholars encompassing wider aspects of the field

(Saqib, 2010). The American Marketing Association (AMA) has defined the advertisement, as Advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor (Sethichuna, 1988).

The main objective of advertisement is to provide information it may be about Government, social, civil matter or about the sale of any material or articles, goods or services" (Jalandri, 1984).

Advertising is the non-personnel communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products, services or ideas by identified sponsors through the various media (Bovee, 1996).

Advertisements are most commonly associated with the mass media of newspapers, Magazines, Cinema, TV and Radio, although frequently flourish in other forms such as bill boards, posters and direct mail as well (Sandge, 1996).

Advertising may be defined as any printed, written. Spoken presentation of an object, person, product or campaign by the advertiser on his expenses for influencing sales Votes or endorsement (Hijazi & Naqqash, 2004).

Advertising has also been called "salesmanship in print" (attributed to John E. Kennedy, it became the creed of Albert Lasker, the unofficial father of modern advertising). Mc-Cann Erickson officials have described advertising as "truth well told", and practitioner and author William Weilbacher has written that advertising can be defined as "a fraction of the incoming message that the individual

receives.

Thus the term has been defined differently by different scholars encompassing wider field of Advertising. The following will make the concept clearer apart from clarifying the phenomenon--what is advertising and what it is not. It is based on the definition offered by the American Marketing Association: Advertising is the paid, non-personal, and usually persuasive presentation of ideas, goods, and services by identified sponsors through various media (Imtiaz, 1994).

Advertising is any form of public announcement, intended to aid directly or indirectly in the sale of a commodity or service. Advertising is anything that turns attention to an article or service. Advertising consists of those activities of a visual or oral nature directed to selected publics for the purpose of informing or influencing them about a product or service (Dirksen & Kroeger 1972).

The American Association Committee on Definitions defined advertising as: Any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor. It involves the use of such media as the following: Magazine and newspaper space, motion pictures, outdoor posters, signs, sky writing, direct mail, store signs, novelties, calendars, blotters, Radio, Television, cards, catalogs, directories, references, programs and menus and Circulars (Benjamin, 1948).

Advertisement perform multi-dimensioned function, on one hand it provides recession, information to public and

develop attitude of present and potential customers on the other hand it helps the business in expansion and profitability. To attract the customer by stimulating drives and positive responding is the focus of advertisement. Though this device through which businessmen inform the customers about the attributes, availability, price strategies, incentives, benefits, level of satisfaction and distinction of products from competitors.

These entire motives divert the user moneymaker, ignoring the status of "Haram and Halal" and in this way customers and consumers are trapped to materialistic race. While Islam prohibits us from redundant use of money, notorious affectations, texture and spoilage and advise us for patient control and contentment.

According to Dilshad (1994), Advertisement Agencies should take care of Islamic sensitivity and accustoms before going to make advertisement because clear rules are mentioned not only about production but also for distribution in Islamic ethics.

The Environment: Display Window for Advertising

Open your mail — you find an advertisement. Turn on the radio you hear an advertisement. Watch television — you hear and see an advertisement. Turn the pages of a newspaper or magazine — Ride down the street — advertising billboards and window sign follows. Use Interactive Digital Media, seek refuge in a movie theatre, and before the feature is run what

appears? Advertisements. Traverse the aisles of a supermarket, and what do you notice decorating the wheeled shopping carts? Advertisements. All day, every day, people who want to sell you something compete to capture your attention. In fact, given the pervasiveness of the mass media in our society, it is estimated that you and each member of your family may be confronted with as many as 500 ads a day. Advertising messages color your world, turning it into a display window for goods and services. Today, thousands of advertisements are jockeying for position, trying to do the something at the same time — obtain a piece of your mind. We cannot easily free ourselves from advertising's reach. Advertising is becoming simply inevitable and inescapable part of our lives in Pakistan. Our environment has become almost a blizzard of advertising messages.

But advertising messages do more than merely reach us: whether we are willing to admit it or not, they also affect us and our way of life. Consumers are attracted through various types of motives like Lotteries, gift and incentive schemes.

Usually esteem drives are used as weapon or motivate the customer, like, safety, financial benefits, facilities, status consciousness, expedition romance and social individuality-or actualization.

In open economic age the advertisement got special position of science, therefore, many training agencies and institutions are established. Due to advanced technology and effective means this sector of advertisement has made remarkable

improvements and this is only due to arts, impressive psychological norms, pose and intentions, advanced techniques of expression and communication, printing and publication photography, film, radio, TV that made the advertisement so prominent from all other sectors (Imtiaz, 1994).

Acquisition and Generic Stimulation

Advertiser has taken full advantage of human weakness and use them at high level of exploitations, ultimately which made the man puppet of instinctive derives. Now the people shop even for satisfaction and status

For example, the beautification cream and lotions or white snow and bath soaps, the advertiser of these products know very well that these items are not really doing their job but still they continue to advertise just them for making money.

Similarly, in the cigarette ads the Heroes are posed very healthy, smart, handsome, conqueror and full of confidence whereas, it is crystal clear that smoking is injurious for health. It may cause cancer. It is not enough for miss-communication but Health Department of the Govt. endorses its harmfulness just following the advertisement. Who is the responsible for such kind of representation? The huge responsibility fall under the shoulder of our advertising agencies and media?

Syed Iqbal Qadri (1991) writes Advertisement may be of toothbrush, toothpaste, wool suiting, washing soap, detergent powder or colored TV is patched

with false expression, immoral eloquence and over emphasized statements. Advertiser, however, should not advertise their products with exaggeration, deception and ill-will.

One can see a race of business among the advertisers, in the ads of Slimming Courses, Exercise Machines and hair shampoos, how the things are exaggerated?

Moral Boundaries

Absurdities or non-adorned language should not be used in the Jungle of advertisement against any person, organization or institution. Islamic affection, mutual candor, civil defense, sacrifices should be provoked through campaigns, which develop the love, unity, sincerity and national unanimity among respondents.

Islam has given us clear guidance of modest, nobility, politeness and dignity. It is, therefore, essential for the owners and employees of advertising agencies to take care of these directions honestly because Islam is a complete code of life which has given us a complete business system. It is the only confirmed step towards successful business (Modoodi, 1990).

The major stress of advertisement is to provide information and attract the potential customer to positively respond to buy. In this sense advertisement only recommend buying, therefore, advertising companies should not provoke for deceptive products. Verses from Holy Quran:

"Those who will provoke for virtual get

their shares and these will provoke for evil will get their share".

Therefore, those who advertise for gambling, lottery, interest, alcoholic products and family planning they virtually negate the Holy Verses. Our mass media also recommend for them these unethical and un-Islamic practices.

Nudity, Obscenity and Vulgarity

Common female stereotypes found in the media have a powerful influence over how society views women and how women view themselves. Western civilization dragged the females from household life to decorate them in offices, nightclubs and now even in "Beauty Contests". Modeling has become an important and glamorous profession for advertising. Women are mostly used to sell the products. Every third advertisement appears in the media contains obscene and vulgar contents using models—the female models—as tool to increase sales.

Means of communication have also played a vital role in this context. Since last two or three decades when the female is used as model, singer and artist if really eradicated her effeminacies, which resulted as, "No one business is considered complete without involving semi-nude or nude picture of females. Even in Hotels, Restaurants and showroom females are engaged to attract the male community (Hassan, 1987)

Now-a-days product re-introduced through advertisement by involving film artists, singer and models Even the females

models are involved in advertisements of Cements, cigarettes, motor Bikes, Pickles, Mandates, Jams, Soap washing powder and pesticides killers which is unethical and immoral. Advertiser should not violate the effeminacies of females.

Females are considered part and parcel of each advertisement given by communication media. Customer are made habitual to shop under influence of non-verbal communication i.e. through, posture, and gesture presentation of Models without watching time to read, think and understand the advertisement (Qayyum, 1987).

In fact, it is an attempt to sell the products affecting internal drives, which is contempt of religious and social laws.

Unreasonably the females poses are used in advertisement, which instigates the emotions, even in many advertisements the immoral slogans are also used. It is moral duty of any media not to carry such advertisements which involve nude pictures of females or trivial sentences (Iqbal, 1989).

Nudity and obscenity is used at extreme in advertisement presented by western media. Under this influence our advertisers also using smart and good-looking models to sell the products, which are against the religion and ethics.

Sub-standard goods and advertisements

Our religious, moral and social norms and customs preach us not to use such advertisements, which involve ill material about competitors, religious sects or personalities (Akhtar, 1990). On the

contrary and unfortunately, most of the ads regarding substandard goods are given space and time just to make money. It is the foremost duty of our media to check and review any ad before displaying.

Advertising agencies should launch such types of advertisements, which reflect honesty, virtue, affability, selflessness, sacrifice, security and morality (Dilshad, 1991).

Ethics and Responsibilities

Advertising bears a dual responsibility in the economic system and way of life to the public. It is a primary way of knowing about the goods and services, which are the products of free enterprises, goods, and services and can be freely chosen to suit the desires and needs of the individual. The public is entitled to expect that advertising will be reliable in content and honest in presentation.

To the advertiser it is a primary way of persuading people to sell his goods or services, within the framework of a highly competitive economic system, or to make company's image better. He is entitled to regard advertising as a dynamic means of building his business and his profits.

Advertising should be considered from the point of view of commercial ethics. Advertising is by its nature so complex that its ethical problems should be considered from various points of view. In the first place, both small and large companies, conduct it by advertising agencies, by advertising departments, by media of all kinds, by individuals, and with a hierarchy of sales organizations

acting in commercial relationship. They will be faced with the ethical problems of employer-employee relations, of civic responsibility of compliance with tax and labor law and the problem of mass communication and of sales promotion (Dirksen & Kroeger 1972).

They should think that is product serve a useful purpose or merely appeal to selfish desires .Are benefits inherent in the product to offer increased comfort, convenience, service or other advantages (Hileman, 1974).

Advertising enjoys a particularly intimate relationship to the families. Media is a family member today. It enters the home as an integral part of television and radio programs, to speak to the individual and often to the entire family. It shares the pages of favorite newspapers and magazines. It presents itself to travelers and to readers of the daily mails. In all these forms, it bears a special responsibility to respect the tastes and set interest of the public.

Advertising is directed to sizable groups or to the public at large which is made up of many interests and many tastes. As in the case with all public enterprises, ranging from sports to education and even to religion, it is almost impossible to speak without finding someone in disagreement. Nonetheless, advertising people must recognize their obligation to operate within the traditional limitations: to serve the interests of the majority and to respect the rights of the minority.

Therefore, advertising agencies, in addition to supporting and obeying the

laws and legal regulations pertaining to advertising, should undertake to extend and broaden the application of high ethical standards. Specifically, no one should knowingly produce advertising containing the following contents:

False or misleading statements or exaggerations, visual verbal. Testimonials, which do not reflect the real choice of a competent witness. Price claims which are misleading.

Comparisons, which unfairly disparage a competitive product or service. Claims insufficiently supported, or which distort the true meaning or practicable application of statements made by professional or scientific authority.

Statements, suggestions or pictures offensive to public decency.

CONCLUSION

It is the duty of advertisers and all those involved in the business to discourage the practice of displaying objectionable and questionable ads which is deliberately irritating through their content, representation or excessive repetition (Imtiaz, 1994). Code of ethic should be developed for advertisements under Islamic Laws and strictly be observed and implemented. To earn the money should not only be the motive for advertiser but they should also give full weightage to their conscience and not to spoil their lives hereafter for materialistic gains. Islam does not tell its follower to present an ad sensationally and with exaggeration just for the sake of business. Islam provides a complete way of presentation of advertisements.

REFERENCES

Advertising: Report of Definitions Committee, Journal of Marketing, vol.xiii, No.2, 1948

AI-Quran Surah AI-Nisa verse No.85.

Akhtar A N (1990) Sahafati Zinadarian, Muktaddara Qaumi Zaban, Islamabad Pakistan (P. 87)

Bove *et al.*, Issues (1996) Contemporary Advertising (1982) USA (p.7)

Dilshad, K M (1991) Ishtahiriati, Muktaddara Qaumi Zaban Islamabad Pakistan (P. 332)

Dilshad K M (1991) Ishtahiriati, Muktaddara Qaumi Zaban Islamabad Pakistan (P. 331)

Dilshad, Kanwar Muhammad 1991, Ishtahiriati, Muktaddara Qaumi Zaban Islamabad Pakistan (P. 332)

Dirksen J C & Kroeger A (1972) Advertising Principles and Problems, Richard D.Irwin Inc.USA, (P. 55)

Dirksen J C & Kroeger A (1972) Advertising Principles and Problems, Richard D.Irwin Inc.USA, (P. 768)

Hassan M (1987) Tasweeri Sahafat, Muktaddara Qaumi Zaban Islamabad Pakistan (P. 147)

Hileman G D, Brown J, Cannon, Sel Horn, Hall Lloyd (1974) an article, Ethics in Advertising. Book, Advertising's role in society, By John S.Wright, John E.Mertes, West Publishing co. New York, (P.263)

Imtiaz M S (1994) Mass Communication, The Caravan Enterprises Lahore Pakistan (P.298)

Imtiaz M S (1994) Mass Communication, The Caravan Enterprises Lahore, Pakistan (P. 314)

Iqbal S Q (1989) Rahber-e-Akhbar Naweesi, Tasaki-e-Urdu Bureau Delhi, India (P. 434)

Iqbal Q S (1991), Rahbar Akhbar Naweeri, Taraki-e-Urdu Bureau, Delhi, India (P. 434).

Mishra S (2006). Mass Communication and Specific Media Profession, Veers & Sons New Delhi (P. 113)

Modoodi A A (1990) Parada, Islamic Publications Lahore (P. 71)

Qayyum A M (1987) Daily Nawa-e-Waqt, Magazine Rawalpindi, Pakistan (P. 9)

R, Saqib, (2010) Advertising National Book Foundation Rawalpindi (P. 3)

Sandge *et al.* (1996) Advertising; theory and practice, AITBS Publishers in Delhi (P.5)

Shafiq J (1984) Sahafat Our Sahafi, Ilmi Kutab Khana Lahore Pakistan (P. 140).

Shahid, Imtiaz M (1994) Mass Communication, The Caravan Enterprises Lahore, Pakistan (P.297).

Wela S (1988). Advertising, principles and practice, Himaliya Publishing House Bombay India (P. 2)