

Ethics in Advertising

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Advertising is an essential component of Sales Promotion. The population explosion and the phenomenal increase in products of human interest, have resulted in advertising becoming a major profession. Earlier this was carried out in print and posters but now electronic media has taken over. One cannot escape the numerous advertisements while watching ones favourite T.V. programmes, whether they are films, sports, serials or news broadcast. One can only wish that the advertised products do justify at least part of the qualities, advantages and the results of the products advertised.

Early days

The advertisement of “Scissors Cigarettes” was one which caught the attention of readers during the late forties and fifties. Titled as “You do not know what you are missing” with suitable caricatures each differing from the other, of the addicted smoker so absorbed as not to see attractions and dangers ahead was very eye catching. This brand of Cigarettes was very popular in Kerala.

Another humorous advertisement ran like this ...

“Newly married Damodaran after a few months of marriage, sent his wife home to be

with her mother for a few days. When he went to collect her after a fortnight, his mother-in-law threw a challenge. Damodaran’s wife was made to sit on a sofa next to her twin sister, wearing identical dress and make up. Damodaran was to pick up his wife. Though confused for a moment, he identified his partner within a minute. Her sparkling white teeth due to the regular use of “KOLYNOS” tooth paste was very revealing and Damodaran had no difficulty”.

One paper advertisement asks the readers “Does the Sea horse sing? Frankly we do not know Sir – But we know that the house wife sings when she uses “Sapotex powder while she cleans the vessels. “VIM” the famous cleaning soap sought a catchy slogan or couplet from public for advertising the product. I responded thus:-

When cups and saucers look glum and dim
All they need is a pinch of VIM!
But the one that got selected was much superior
“VIM leaves nothing but the sparkle”

During fifties, ready made garments made their appearance. LIBERTY shirts were

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preferred by many. Other brands came up later. "LIBERTY responded "When others were in their nappies, we were fashioning dresses for Men".

Those were enjoyable days with healthy competition.

Fair & Lovely Creams

We, Indians, are highly critical of racism and therefore our obsession with fair skin is incomprehensible. This is a wrong sense of beauty but it looks as though the fairness creams have come to stay. The reason could be popularity of the Indian and world beauty contests. A decade ago the claims made by the fairness creams to give a fair complexion to the users in six weeks time did not seem to yield the expected results and then the time span was reduced to four weeks and now the claim is "instant fairness" – tantamount to bleaching. This is dangerous.

The "Melanin" produced in the body to combat the effect of bright sunlight and preventing skin cancer is what gives darker colour to our skin. This protects us from harmful ultraviolet rays. Usage of these creams reducing the Melanin content may have dangerous consequences if used for long time.

Advertisements of "lightening creams" have caught up with men as well. With celebrities like film stars 'SHARUKH KHAN' and JOHN ABRAHAM endorsing the products, men make haste to catch up with the fairer counterparts. This is sad indeed.

Other T.V Advertisements

Amazing results of growth, stamina and enhancement of sharpness for children are ensured as per energy drinks offered. Are the mothers taken for a ride or are they for real? Popular film stars and cricket greats are part of many advertisements of many items to increase their market reach. In fact, they may

not be using the product at all. These do make an impact and the advertised products are in great demand and use. How silly can an advertisement be? A top most actor of the Hindi cinema is having a nice time on the snow laden slopes of a high mountain, when he spots a sports woman rolling down the slopes. At the nick of time before falling down to the deep abyss the lady is saved by the actor, not by his powerful arms but by the rubber straps of his Hawalian slipper! Two simple questions prop up. Why is the actor wearing a Hawalian slipper on a snow laden mountain top? Straps made of natural rubber loses their elasticity when subjected to very cold temperature and they become brittle and lose all their tensile strength. Persons who buy this brand of slipper on the strength of this advertisement must really be stupid. The copy writer who conceived and executed the advertisement need be Crowned!

Deodarant Sprays for MEN

There are many sprays in the market for men but two of them are regularly advertised in T.V. One of them shows the "Axe Effect" on the female sex which turn them on to men, who use this deodarant spray. The advertisements are so funny and inconsequential that they can be laughed off.

The other spray differentiates its superiority by announcing that their brand gives out more liquid sprays as compared to others which produces more gas. This advertised brand boasts of giving 800 sprays which is very unrealistic. The advertisement is factually incorrect and misleading. As per marketing rules the weight and volume of the contents are to be printed in all deodarant spray containers. They are more or less comparable among various brands including the one advertised. The weight indicated is that of liquid as gas under normal temperature and pressure carry negligible

weight. No manufacturer will think of putting more gas in the container as they have to be made stronger and safer to carry the gas under pressure. Adding a few more grams of the liquid would be cheaper and safer. I checked the weight of contents in a few containers of different brands and they are more or less comparable. I brought this to the notice to the Manufacturers (FOGG). They did not respond but still carry on with their T.V. advertisement.

Apartments

The growth of Bangalore City in terms of employment, construction activities has been phenomenal. Over five decades, a quiet pensioners' paradise became the most happening city. Because of Information Technology and growth of service sector, the City expanded much beyond the old Kempegowda Region and now population is leading to almost Ten Million. This has resulted in construction of houses, apartments, roads, transport, power - water supply, etc. The daily News papers especially those on Property carry advertisements of the Villas and apartments readily available and under construction giving the location, proximity to Centre and various facilities offered like Club House, Gymnasium, Swimming pool, ambient surroundings, etc. These are very eye catching and attractive and priced at various levels to suit the pockets of the customers. Because of the salubrious climate and the cosmopolitan nature - Bangalore has become the most desired City. But what is missing in all the advertisements of apartments is the availability of water – for potable and other uses on regular basis

The Bangalore Water and Sewage Board (BWSSB) could extend Cauvery water to some extent but bulk of the other areas of Brahut Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is beyond their coverage. Underground water

resources are over exploited and further usage would endanger the population by contamination of pollutants – Bangalore City had many lakes and water bodies which became defunct or non existent, because of the construction sector and the water availability for the expanding population has become a casualty. Even though the Government and the multitudes of building magnates are aware of the seriousness of the situation, no lasting solution has been found. We do not know as to how many apartments are recharging their bore wells and utilizing recycled water for non potable uses. The Construction Sector should find ways and means to overcome the problem with the help of the State Government and public. Part of the amount received for construction should be tailored for improving the water table by recharge of the under ground water. Because of the very nature of terrain and the regularity of South West and North East Monsoon rain water harvesting can easily be done. So far, we have only done lip service to this activity. It is the prime responsibility of Builders to find a solution to the problem. Many of the residents of the apartments are resorting to water tankers for filling their sumps. This is not what is expected of the moneyed construction Corporations which have means to find and implement water availability to their clients. They can join together and approach the Government with viable proposals such as rejuvenation of the lakes, rain water harvesting, recycling of water, etc instead of leaving the problem to the residents. Their regular advertisements should carry as to what they are doing for ensuring regular water supply to the residents of their apartments. The present day advertisements speak of luxury and comforts of their offer avoiding the most essential requirement of house holds – WATER. This is un-ethical.