# ETHICS IN ADVERTISEMENT OF COSMETIC PRODUCTS – A STUDY ON CONSUMER PERCEPTION

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**Abstract:** The influential role of advertisement in fostering economic growth through individuals, groups and society has grown into a powerful tool in reshaping consumers perceptions. Riding on the media vehicle, advertisements have influenced the thinking of every individual in all spheres of life. It has become the most persuasive, pervasive and powerful enough to metamorphize attitudes and beliefs and behaviour in everyday life. It should be well known that every individual on this earth has the right to information which is authentic so that they develop the right kind of values while making choices in their lives. This paper analyses consumers intention to buy products on the basis of claims made in the advertisement. The study focusses on the ethical aspects of advertising which is limited only to cosmetic products.

Key words: Advertising, Business Ethics, Cosmetic products, Consumer Perception.

## INTRODUCTION

Communication is an inherent aspect of human activity. Advertising is the skillful use of the communication for exchanging information and ideas. It fosters solidarity among individuals and groups in a society at large. Advertising is a also a persuasive vital marketing tool which helps in selling the goods, services, images and ideas through channels of information. It makes the potential audience aware of the existence of the product, service or idea which helps them to fulfill their felt needs. It is a forceful tool in molding our attitudes towards products, ideas and services. Advertisements provide information about a product/ services, create demand for a product, serve the existing customers by providing information about new offers, convert prospective customers into real buyers, support personal buying, helps to increase sale and reduce cost, helps to reduce middlemen, create goodwill/brand image, remind the customers about product and offers and also helps to maintain relationship between company and its customers. Manolatha (2007) opined that advertisement is intended to persuade buyers to buy products through different media like print, radio, television and internet. According to Wiles, Wiles and Tjernlund (1995), advertising is a source of information about values, beliefs, and lifestyles of people. In order to be consumer oriented, an advertisement will have to be truthful and ethical. The acceptability of ethical behaviour is determined by an individual's personal values and moral principles. Advertisements which was meant for informing consumers about products and services has been accused of an array of ethical issues. This paper looks into the use of ethics in advertisements with regard to cosmetic products.

## COSMETIC INDUSTRY IN INDIA: MARKET SIZE

India's cosmetics and grooming industry market size is expected to rise manifold to \$35 billion by 2035, with consumption of cosmetics among teenagers increasing rapidly, says a joint study by The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham) and research agency MRSS (Majestic Market Research Support Services Ltd) India touched the current market size at \$6.5 billion. "The consumption pattern of cosmetics among teenagers have gone up substantially between 2005 and 2017 due to increasing awareness and the desire to look good," the survey said. The herbal cosmetic industry is expected to grow at 12 per cent in India. "The Indian men's grooming market is witnessing a growth of more than 42 per cent in the last five years which is faster than the growth rate of the total personal care and beauty industry in India," study reveals(www.economictimes.indiatimes.com).

# REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ethics is a choice between good and bad, right and wrong and just and unjust actions of human behaviour. It is governed by a set of moral principles. Advertising too has ethical values. Advertising is alleged to misrepresent reality, by pushing its own values, artificial or false as they may be, as to what is good for consumers (Belch and Belch, 2004). Pollay (1986) argued that the aim of advertising is to preoccupy society with material concerns, seeing commercially available goods or services as the path to happiness. Advertising generates artificial wants in order to create demand for new products (Crane and Matten, 2007). Fink (1988) says that consumers believe advertising raises product costs and sometimes it is untruthful as well as misleading also. According to Wells et al (2000), the main issues of ethical advertising are that they are highly persuasive in nature and target vulnerable section of society like children who don't have analytical/judgment abilities, (Preston, 2004). Advertisements make exaggerated claim of a product's superiority or the use of subjective/vague statements(puffery) and also use subliminal advertising which is designed to engage people subconsciously. (Wiles, Wiles and Tjernlund,1995). Drumwright (2007) claims that although there have been countless criticisms of advertising, they can be grouped into three categories. They are encouraging excessive materialism, reinforcing problematic stereotypes, and creating false values and the resulting problematic behavior. Deceptive claims are an inherent part of advertising messages (Kimmel, 2001) that substantially interferes with the ability of people to make rational consumer choices" (Crane and Matten, 2007).

# **OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:**

The main objective of the study is to know the ethical application in advertisement of cosmetic products. The other objectives are:

- To study the demographic profile of cosmetic product users
- To know the role played by advertisements in purchase decision
- To understand customers' perceptions related to the ethical aspects of advertising

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher had undertaken a study to know the ethical application in advertising with special reference to cosmetic products. The research design was both descriptive and exploratory in nature. The primary data was collected from well-designed questionnaires and an attempt was made to draw proportionate representative sampling units in Anand. The researcher collected primary data from those who are using / are aware of cosmetic products. Structured non-disguised questionnaire was put to use to collect primary data. Cosmetic users and nonusers staying in Anand were taken as representative sample. The sampling design was non-probability method of sampling based on quota sampling and convenient sampling methods. Personal interviews were conducted. 150 representative samples were selected for the purpose of the research study. This study was limited to measure the ethical application of advertisement in cosmetic products in a general way without special emphasize to any products. Moreover, the study was limited to people residing in Anand only.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

An empirical study to measure the ethical application in advertising of cosmetic products was undertaken by the researcher for which 150 people from different sections of the society who stays in Anand were selected at random and a questionnaire was administered to them. Out of 150 respondents, 145 have given proper response. The questionnaire mainly contained questions of two types, multiple choice and dichotomous type. Apart from this it also includes the profile of respondents. The questionnaire incorporated in the questionnaire were regarding the use of cosmetic products, source of information about cosmetic product, role of advertising in their buying decision, problems faced by the advertisers due to unethical ads and their opinion about the advertising practices. The z-test and  $\chi^2$  tests were applied in some questions including the questions related to the profile of respondents.

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Out of 145 respondents, 41 percent are in the age group of 21-30 years, 33 percent are between 31-40 years, 18percent between 41-50years, 6 percent are below 20 years where as only 2percent people are above 50 years of age. Male and female ratio were almost equal (50.3 percent and 49.7 percent respectively). Regarding their occupation, 45 percent are service persons, 28 percent are students, 14 percent house wives, 12 percent businessmen and the remaining one percent are involved in agricultural activities. As far as educational qualification of respondents are concerned 48 percent are graduates, 44 percent are post graduates, 4 percent respondents have passed 12<sup>th</sup> std and the remaining respondents have passed 10<sup>th</sup> standard.

# Table showing Sex v/s Advertising is necessary for promoting a product

Sex	Advertising in necessary in product promotion					1
Sex	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Female	69	95.8	3	4.2	72	100
Male	68	93.2	5	6.8	73	100
Total	137	94.5	8	5.5	145	100

From the above table it can be seen that out of 145 respondents, 95.8 percent of the female and 93.2 percent of male respondents feels that advertising is necessary for promoting a product. So, it can be concluded that "There is no significant difference in the attitude of males and females towards the necessity of advertising for promoting a product". Z-value is 0.5 (p-value: 0.479).

#### Table showing Education v/s Advertising is necessary for promoting a product

	Advertis	Advertising is necessary in product promotion						
Education	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Total	Percentage		
Secondary	5	83.3	1	16.7	6	100		
Higher Secondary	6	100	0	0	6	100		
Graduation	65	94.2	4	5.8	69	100		
Post Graduation	61	95.3	3	4.7	64	100		
Total	137	94.5	8	5.5	145	100		

Out of 145 respondents, 83.3 percent respondents who have education up to secondary level, 100 percent having education up to higher secondary, 94.2 percent graduate and 95.3 percent post graduate says that advertisement is necessary for promoting the product.  $\chi^2$ -value is 1.876 (p-value: 0.599). So, it can be concluded that There is no significant association between education qualification and their attitude towards necessity of advertisement for promoting the product.

## Table showing Occupation v/s Advertising is necessary for promoting a product

		Advertising is necessary in product promotion						
Occupation	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Total	Percentage		
Agriculture	1	100	0	0	1	100		
Business	17	94.4	1	5.6	18	100		
House wife	20	100	0	0	20	100		
Service	59	89.4	7	10.6	66	100		
Student	40	100	0	0	40	100		
Total	137	94.5	8	5.5	145	100		

Almost all respondents irrespective of their occupation agree with the statement that "advertisement is necessary for promoting a product". There is no significant association between occupation and necessity of advertisement for promoting the product.

## Table showing Age v/s Advertising is necessary for promoting a product

	Advertising is necessary in product promotion							
Age	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Total	Percentage		
<20	9	100	0	0	9	100		
21-30	58	98.3	1	1.7	59	100		
31-40	41	85.4	7	14.6	48	100		
41-50	26	100	0	0	26	100		
51-60	3	100	0	0	3	100		
Total	137	94.5	8	5.5	145	100		

From the table it can be seen that out of 145 respondents, except those having age between 31-40 years(85.4percent), almost all other respondents says that advertisement is necessary for promoting the product.

There is significant association between age and their views towards the necessity of advertisement for promoting the product. The  $\chi$  2 value is 11.4 (p-value: 0.02)

## Table showing Sex v/s Advertisement plays an important role in influencing your purchase decision

	Ads play	Ads play an important role in influencing purchase decision						
Sex	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Total	Percentage		
Female	51	71.8	20	28.2	71	100		
Male	58	79.5	15	20.5	73	100		
Total	109	75.7	35	24.3	144	100		

Out of 144 respondents, 71.8 female respondents say that advertisement play an important role in influencing purchase decision. There is no significant difference between attitude of males and females as far as the attitude towards the importance of advertisement in influencing their purchase decision is concerned. Z-value is 1.136 (p-value: 0.286).

## Table showing Education v/s Ads play an important role in influencing purchase decision

Education	Ads play an important role in influencing purchase decision						
	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Total	Percentage	
Secondary	4	66.7	2	33.3	6	100	
Higher	6	100	0	0	6	100	
Secondary							
Graduation	47	69.1	21	30.9	68	100	
Post	52	81.3	12	18.8	64	100	
Graduation							
Total	109	75.7	35	24.3	144	100	

Out of 144 respondents, most of all respondents who are having different types of educational qualifications feel that advertisement play an important role in influencing their purchase decision. The  $\chi$  2 value is 4.86(p-value: 0.18)

## Table showing Occupation v/s Advertisement plays an important role in influencing purchase decision

Occupation	Ads play	Ads play an important role in influencing purchase decision						
	Yes	Yes Percentage No Percentage Total Percentage						
Agriculture	0	0	1	100	1	100		
Business	15	83.3	3	16.7	18	100		
House wife	14	70	6	30	20	100		
Service	47	71.2	19	28.8	66	100		

Student	33	84.6	6	15.4	39	100
Total	109	75.7	35	24.3	144	100

There is no significant difference in the attitude of respondents of different occupations as far as the role of advertising in influencing their purchase decision is concerned. The  $\chi$  2 value is 6.44 (p-value: 0.168)

## Table showing Age v/s Ads play an important role in influencing purchase decision

	Ads pla	Ads play an important role in influencing purchase decision						
Age	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Total	Percentage		
<20	7	87.5	1	12.5	8	100		
21-30	49	83.1	10	16.9	59	100		
31-40	33	68.8	15	31.3	48	100		
41-50	18	69.2	8	30.8	26	100		
51-60	2	66.7	1	33.3	3	100		
Total	109	75.7	35	24.3	144	100		

Out of 144 respondents 83.1 percent having age between 21-30 years, 68.8 percent having age between 31-40 years, 69.2 percent having age between 41-50 years, says advertisement play an important role in influencing the decision. The  $\chi$  2 value is 4.32(p-value: 0.364).

# Table showing Ads play an important role in influencing decision v/s made any change in purchase decision.

in no	D	Made changes in purchase decision after seeing the Ads				
nt role in decision	Response	Yes (percentage)	No (percentage)	Total(percentage)		
ase	Yes	79	29	108		
n important role purchase decisi	(percentage	(73.1)	(26.9)	(100)		
_ <del>Q</del>	No	5	30	35		
	(percentage)	(14.3)	(85.7)	(100)		
Ads play influencir	Total	84	59	143		
- ds	(percentage)	58.7	(41.3)	(100)		
A :II						

Out of 108 respondents who says that advertisement play an important role in influencing purchase decision, 73.1percent have changed their decision while making the actual purchase.

This means that respondents, who say that advertisement has made changes in their purchase decision, have changed their views at the time of actual purchase.

The  $\chi$  2 value is 37.79 (p-value: 0.00001).

# Table showing Advertising is necessary for promoting a product v/s Product fulfils the promises made by the advertisement

for	Danasa	Product fulfils the promises made by the Advertiser					
necessary 1 duct	Responses	Yes (percentage)	No (percentage)	Total (percentage)			
is nece product	Yes (percentage)	60 (45.8)	71 (54.2)	131 (100)			
Advertising i promoting a p	No (percentage) Total (percentage)	2 (25) 62 (44.6)	6 (75) 77 (55.5)	8 (100) 139 (100)			

Out of 131 respondents who say that advertisement is necessary for promoting a product, only 45.8 percent says product fulfils the claim made by the advertiser. It means that there is no significant association between the above two statements given by the respondents. The  $\chi$  2 value is 1.32 (p-value: 0.25).

## Table showing Education v/s the product fulfils the claims made by the advertiser

Education	Product f	Product fulfils the promises/claims made by the advertiser					
Vs Promise							
Education	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Total	Percentage	
Secondary	3	50	3	50	6	100	
Higher	4	66.7	2	33.3	6	100	
Secondary							
Graduation	29	44.6	36	54.4	65	100	
Post	26	41.9	36	58.1	62	100	
Graduation							
Total	62	44.6	77	55.4	139	100	

There is no significant association between educational qualification of respondent and their reply about the product's fulfil the claim made by the advertiser. The  $\chi$  2 value is 1.43 (p-value: 0.698)

## Table showing Occupation v/s the product fulfils the promises / claims made by the advertiser

Occupation	Product fulfils the promises/claims made by the advertiser					
Vs Q.8						
Occupation	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Agriculture	0	0	1	100	1	100
Business	12	70.6	5	29.4	17	100
House wife	8	42.1	11	57.9	19	100
Service	22	35.5	40	64.5	62	100
Student	20	50	20	50	40	100
Total	62	44.6	77	55.4	139	100

29.4 per cent of businessmen, 57.9 percent of house wives, 64.5 per cent service person and 50 percent of students say that the product doesn't fulfil the claims/ promises made by the advertiser. The  $\chi$  2 value is 8.057(p-value: 0.09)

# Table showing Age v/s product fulfils the promises / claims made by the advertiser

Age Vs Q.8	Product fulfils the promises/claims made by the advertiser					
Age	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Total	Percentage
<20	4	44.4	5	55.6	9	100
21-30	29	49.2	30	50.8	59	100
31-40	18	40	27	60	45	100
41-50	10	43.5	13	56.5	23	100
51-60	1	33.3	2	66.7	3	100
Total	62	44.6	77	55.4	139	100

There is no significant association between age of respondents and product's fulfilment of the claim made by the advertiser. The  $\chi$  2 value is 1.04(p-value: 0.903)

## Table showing Face problem after buying product v/s product fulfils the claims made by the advertiser:

ng		Product fulfils the prom	Product fulfils the promises made by the Advertiser				
buying	Responses	Yes (percentage)	No (percentage)	Total (percentage)			
n after luct	Yes (percentage)	24 (37.5)	40 (62.5)	64 (100)			
Face problem a cosmetic product	No (percentage)	36 (50.7)	35 (49.3)	71 (100)			
Face	Total (percentage)	60 (44.4)	75 (55.6)	135 (100)			

Out of 60 respondents who says that the product fulfils the claim made by the advertiser, 37.5 percent of them have faced problem after buying the product whereas among those who says that the product do not fulfil the claim made by the advertiser, 50.7 percent of them have faced problem after buying cosmetic product. Thus, overall 64 percent of respondents have faced problem after buying cosmetic product.

## Table showing Faced problem after buying cosmetic product v/s changed purchase decision

gı	Response	Changed purchase decis	Changed purchase decision after seeing the Advertisement					
buying		Yes (percentage)	No (percentage)	Total (percentage)				
after	Yes	41	25	66				
aft	(percentage)	(62.1)	(37.9)	(100)				
problem c product	No (percentage)	41 (55.4)	33 (44.6)	74 (100)				
Faced	Total (percentage)	82 (58.6)	58 (41.4)	140 (100)				

Out of 82 respondents who have changed their purchase decision after seeing the advertisement, 62.1 percent have faced problem after buying cosmetic product.

# Table showing Price matches with the quality promised in the advertisement v/s Education

Education v/s Q.12	Price matches with quality promised in the advertisement							
Education	Yes	Vec Describes as Describes Total Describes						
Education	res	Percentage	no	Percentage	Total	Percentage		
Secondary	1	2.6	5	4.8	6	4.2		
Higher	1	.56	5	4.81	6	4.20		
Secondary								
Graduation	19	48.7	50	48.1	69	48.3		
Post	18	46.2	44	42.3	62	43.4		
Graduation								
Total	39	100	104	100	143	100		

Out of 143 respondents, only 39 say the price matches with quality promised in the advertisement. There is no significant association between education of the respondents and the way they evaluate the advertisement to see whether the price they pay to acquire the product matches with its quality. The  $\chi$  2 value is 0.78 (p-value: 0.854).

## FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

- Out of 145 respondents almost all (95.2 percent) respondents have used cosmetic products which shows that cosmetic products are an integral part of their lifestyle. They feel that the use of cosmetic products in their daily life has improved their personality and their confidence level which has helped them maintain their youthfulness, health and beauty.
- Apart from internet and social media 91 percent of the respondents are gaining information from television advertisement. This reveals the relevance of tv ads in the internet era.
- 95 percent of the respondents are of the opinion that advertisement is necessary in promoting a product.
- 76 percentage of the customers have opined that advertising, especially through traditional media influence their buying decision.
- 58.3 percentage of respondents have changed their purchase decision after seeing the advertisement.
- Majority (80. 3 percent) of the respondents are satisfied with purchase they made on the basis of advertisement.
- Interestingly 55.4 percent of the customers feels that the product does not fulfil the claims made by the advertisers.
- 53.8 percent of the respondent are of the opinion that product fails to satisfy the respondent in the long run.
- Almost all (90.3 percent) of the respondents feels that advertisement of cosmetic products does not convey the product features truly,
  the main reason being they are not getting the desired results as claimed in the advertisement. In order to overcome this problem,
  manufactures of cosmetic products must conform to certain labelling requirements informing the pros and cons of using the product.
- 47.5 percent of the respondents are of the opinion that they have faced problems after buying a cosmetic product as per the claims made in the advertisement, some of them had side effects (23.88 percent) also.
- 72.7 percent of the respondents feels that price of the product does not match with the quality promised in the advertisement.
- Even though some of the respondents are not satisfied with the product quality and price, 75.5 percent are showing willingness to repurchase the product.
- 76.3percent of the respondents were benefited by using the cosmetic product. Most of the respondents feel that the use of cosmetic products helps to increase their self-confidence, personality and social status.
- Most of the respondents (66.2 percent) are of the opinion that it is not fair to use woman for product promotion which is meant for men. 82.8 percent feels that it is unethical to target children for products which is not meant for them.
- Majority of the respondents (88.3percent) says that it is unfair to show vulgar ads for gaining attention.

• 68.3 percent of the respondents says that it is fair to use celebrities to endorse products.

Many women and men professionally engaged in advertising do have sensitive consciences, high ethical standards and a strong sense of responsibility. But due to external pressures — from the clients who commission their work as well as from the competitive internal dynamics of their profession — can create powerful inducements to unethical behavior. That underlines the need for external structures and systems to support and encourage responsible practice in advertising and to discourage the irresponsible. In order to overcome this problem, the advertising agencies have to coordinate with product owners and the media who carry the advertisements to understand the general public's sentiments related to ethical behaviour that prevails in India. Public authorities and representatives of the public should participate in the formulation, application and periodic updating of ethical codes leading to Government regulations regarding the quantity of advertising, as well as the content of advertising.

## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In the final analysis, however, where freedom of speech and communication exists, it is largely up to advertisers themselves to ensure ethically responsible practices in their profession. Besides avoiding abuses, advertisers should also undertake to repair the harm done by advertising either by publishing corrective notices or by compensating the injured parties. The advertising professionals should be involved in the process of commissioning and disseminating advertising to eliminate its socially harmful aspects and observe high ethical standards in regard to truthfulness, human dignity and social responsibility. In this way, they will make a special and significant contribution to human progress and to the common good.

This study was confined to only one tool of Integrated Marketing Communication, i.e., advertising, studies can be taken up in other tools like Promotion, Publicity, Packaging etc. from ethical perspectives. Studies can also be undertaken in other product categories. Studies can be undertaken to know the role of media in bringing unfiltered and unethical advertisements to the consumer and also find out whether it is due to media's dependence on advertising for revenue can be analysed.

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