



TOO LITTLE IS TOO MUCH: IMPACT OF ADVERTISEMENTS ON THE MORALITY OF YOUTH

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ABSTRACT



Advertisements have become an integral part of modern man's life. This commerce related activity came into existence with the onset of industrialization. With production going sky high, the producers felt the need to find new markets to sell their products in order to survive and keep their business rolling. In an effort to create market, advertisements have become the most effective tool as they create demand for those products whose demand does not exist. Advertisements are basically designed to provide consumers the knowledge of the products and to lure them to buy the same. No doubt, advertisements have become a powerful tool which surrounds the modern man completely. This business has flourished in the later half of twentieth century. The means of mass communication are indulging mainly in money making process leading to the de-generation of morality and ethics. Whether an advertisement is good or bad depends on how it influences the economic and social fabric of the society. It may be good for manufacturers as it leads to the increase in demand of their products but at the same time it can have a negative influence on the moral fabric of society. This paper aims to study advertisements on TV, the most popular source of entertainment for the young and the old alike and to find out the elements which are leading towards the erosion of moral and social values in the young generation. It also intends to study the influence of advertisements on the social fabric in general and the psyche of youth in particular.

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Advertisements have become an inseparable and integral part of modern man's life. Mass media is the biggest source of advertisements in the modern time. From the advertisement of pencil to that of house every kind of advertisement is available on the platform of mass media. Advertising is a commerce related activity which shot into prominence with the onset of industrialisation. As per Harper Collins dictionary advertisement is "a business that specializes in creating publicity, marketing communication used to promote or sell

something." Advertisements were basically designed to provide consumers the knowledge, information and intimation of new products in order to lure them to buy the same. With production going sky high the producers felt need to find new market to sell their product in order to survive and keep their business rolling. So in this new age of consumerism, advertisements have become a wonderful tool in the hands of producers to induce demand and sell their products. According to Pulitzer Prize winning famous American writer Herman Wouk, advertisers

advertise only those products which are required less by the people. They create a demand where there is no demand. No doubt, advertisements have become a powerful way to influence modern man. Advertisements on the means of mass communication are luring modern man to buy more than what is required.

Advertisement business has flourished in the later part of 20th century where this money making process has trespassed into the moral fabric of society. Whether advertising is good or bad depends upon how it influences the social and economic fabric of a society. It may be good for manufacturers as it leads to increase the demand of a particular product but at the same time it can have a negative influence on the morality and culture of the society as the concept or language used by the advertisers may not be carefully crafted.

The purpose of advertisement is to get the consumer to buy their products. According to Breuer (2008): "Advertisements target specific audience - Copywriters use a formula, summarised in the acronym AIDA, to construct their ads." Gaining **Attention** of the audience is the first motive of advertisers, for which they use bold colours or arresting images. Holding **Interest** of the audience by creating suspense humour or surprise, Provoking **Desire** by using words which make the product appear attractive and Prompting the audience to **Action** by creating a sense of urgency, pick your phone now, Call urgently Free gifts for first 50 callers etc. So the primary focus of the advertisers is to catch the attention and interest of the people with the help of colourful pictures, sexy models and attractive jingles and slogans. Then they provoke desire in the consumers by showing the effects of these products and create urgency for the consumers to go and catch these products as they are the key to their success. However in this process, they break all the norms and ethical standards and go to the lowest of the low level just for the sale of their product. They are unmindful of the fact that the advertisements use concept or language which inculcates unconscious disregard for elders by using sex appeals, inappropriate stereotypes or language and induce immorality in the youth.

Disregard for Elders: Advertisers, in their zeal to attract consumers' attention, use common place relations and play with the emotions of people. They land up showing disregard to elders thereby having a negative impact on the morality of youth. Various advertisements sell their products by showing parents or grandparents as people to be taken casually. The grandparents conjure up a picture of sweet plump grey haired smiling woman or an elderly man with kindly twinkling eyes and a hearty laugh. In one's mind they are associated with a constant supply of goodies, comfortable lap one can climb on to listen to the best stories, sage advice and endless pampering in general.

However in the advertisement of Just Jelly the child refuses to touch the feet of his grandfather as per Indian tradition. Not only the child refuses to bow down, he shows further disregard by raising the feet of his grandfather in order to fulfill the custom of feet touching. This advertisement shows the idea that even grandparents are selfish who want to grab the sweets of young children. This advertisement conveys the idea that relationships are less important than just jelly and parents and grandparents are generally selfish people robbing children of their favourite things. This advertisement instills in the mind of youth the immoral idea that every relation can try to cheat you and you have every right to show disregard to your elders.

In Indian culture grandfather is such a figure who should be revered and paid highest respect. Funny and frivolous representation of grandfather is highly objectionable and undesirable. In Alpenlibe advertisement the child tells his friend that "Mere Dadaji Mein Nagin Rahti Hai" and the grand father is shown to dance ridiculously like a snake in a prestigious gathering. This is very much against Indian culture as it tends to let the young minds imbibe immorality.

Parents defer many of their own desires to fulfill the needs and desires of their children. They are emblem of selfless sacrifice and devotion. In an advertisement of Tata Sky, the father is shown as a foolish and forgetful person who forgets everything from key to his wallet and does not know how to use microwave. It is not only his wife but his daughter too who keep on reminding him about

common things. The expressions (facial) of the daughter for her father are derogatory (which by no means are accepted in Indian culture). This advertisement tends to send a message to the youth that even a father can be mocked at.

Again in 5 star chocolate advertisement the two brothers are shown to be so busy in enjoying their chocolate that they neglect what their father has asked them to do. They even neglect the guest who has come to meet their father. Thereby behaving exactly opposite to what the Indian culture preaches Atithi devo bhav "The guest is God".

Dinyar Godrej puts in his article "How the Ad Industry Pins us Down" is much worse because it is not easy to detect. The "Images, dreams and emotions ... that we are evolutionary programmed to engage with" are pasted together in a fashion that toys with our minds.(125) In Bournvita advertisement a 5 year old child mocks at his mother by saying that "Ja Mummy Jee Le Apni Jindgi". The mother who never gets tired taking care of the child is mocked at by the child who projects himself to be a tormentor.

"Uncle Ka TV Dabba" is yet another example of such advertisements. In this advertisement many children from the neighbourhood of a person tease him for not having HD connection on his set top box. They constantly embarrass the gentlemen. The advertisement seems to preach materialism to the children by showing disregard to age and lack of mannerism.

Juxtaposing serious with frivolous: Another harm that advertisements are causing to the society is that they are using the trump card of social cause for advertising their goods. For example the advertisement given by Rajshree Pan Masala is mixing serious issues like Donate old Clothes, Save Water, Donate Blood, Bring home Daughter not Daughter-in-law, adopt one orphan child etc with its tag line Swad mein Soch hai. Do they want to convey the idea that the deadly taste of pan masala gives good thoughts to people to do good to the society or is this only a tactic to save Tax. The product is advertised under the garb of social upliftment. These types of advertisements, by preaching morality are in fact eating at the roots of the society

by increasing addiction to pan masala, the biggest source of Oral Cancer.

The advertisement portraying young children trying to remove intolerance and instill love in the hearts of people by the jingle "ho ek India Happy wala", appears catchy and attractive. But this advertisement is instilling the fact that India can be united and happy only with IPL cricket matches. Are these preaching correct morals to the children? Can only cricket unite India? This is really disgusting that we are stressing that intolerance is prevalent in our society and this can be removed by diverting the attention to cricket. Does the cure to all the problems of society lie in cricket? What kind of values and morality are these advertisements giving to the children?

Then there is an advertisement in which an old man is dying and the doctor comes to see him .He asks kya chal raha hai? To which the dying old man opens his eyes and replies aaj kal Fogg chal raha hai. Can the very mention of Fogg make a person alive? Isn't this lowering the standard of moral values to the lowest of the low level?

Use of Sex Appeal: In advertisements, there is a great use of sex appeal to attract the consumers specially the teenagers to buy the products. The portrayal of women as the object of desire has become a popular trend during the modern era. The body of woman has become a display board to display every kind of product ranging from cosmetics to cars, toys to deodorants and even cement. Advertisers also use nudity in the advertisements to promote their product, which also has a bad effect on the morality of society in general and the youth in particular. Advertisements of deodorants and body sprays suggest that you can attract opposite sex by just the application of these products. Models are shown in compromising position which makes the young and impressionable youth to think that only perfumes and deodorants are sufficient to get a real good life partner. Spray a deodorant and get all the females following you is really ridiculous.

Advertisements with Dangerous Stunts: The advertisers make a generous use of stunts in various advertisements. They seem to be unmindful of the impact of their advertised message on the

psychology of the consumers. Mountain Dew advertisement has tag line "Daar Ke Aage Jeet Hai", Victory succeeds Fear. Youth in this advertisement are shown to take risk in order to prove themselves. No doubt we should be brave enough to face dangers in life but the lesson taught by this advertisement is to indulge in perilous tasks just for the sake of fun is highly undesirable. The advertisement of Thums Up is also of a similar kind with a celebrity taking risk just to taste thunder in the bottle of Thums Up. Does the advertisement want to preach the issue that a person can be brave only by doing stunts? All kinds of soft drinks take the refuge of stunts to popularize their drinks amongst youth.

Use of Inappropriate Stereotypes: Usually in Indian advertisements men are depicted as macho, strong, caring and independent whereas women are shown as delicate, soft, submissive and dependent on men. Majority of advertisements try to re-enforce the stereotyped social behaviour of women being the home maker and the man being the bread winner. Kitchen work is supposed to be the arena of females whether working or not working. The advertisement of Airtel in which a women boss asks her subordinate to finish the work and then leave office and finally is shown to be the wife of the subordinate who goes home, cooks food for her husband brands the idea that women has to do the cooking whether she is working or not. Another one Jo bivi se kare pyar wo prestige se kaise kare inkaar, shows that women are the people who cook. So what kind of morality are these advertisements generating in the youth? On one hand we are giving them freedom to be bold towards their parents like western countries then why not leave the stereotypes like the western countries. Why are we inculcating the feeling that woman whether working or not must have kitchen and household chores as their prime area of attention?

Another group which is often subjected to stereotyping is the group of senior citizens. Advertisement generally project elderly people as dependent on their children thereby creating the idea that as a person grows old, he becomes a burden on his children.

Improper Language Usage: During recent times there has been a spurt in advertisements containing improper and derogatory language. Such advertisements make a wrong use of vocabulary which spoils the dignity of the language giving a serious jolt to the hearers, at the same time spoiling the concepts of the young generation. The famous Pepsi product Mountain Dew advertisement has tag line, "Daar Ke Aage Jeet Hai", Victory succeeds Fear. This line spoils language by placing fear against victory. The antonym of victory is defeat, you overcome defeat and move towards victory, but how can you overcome fear to reach the word victory.

Also in advertisements there are certain offensive words used which are covered with a beep sound but beeps are not enough to dissuade children from understanding and using the vocabulary. This vocabulary spoils the morality of youth, assuring them in the process that this is the correct language as it is used by this or that celebrity.

Conclusion

Nowadays the youth are encompassed by the advertisements and the powerful messages they want to convey. They are designed and devised in such a manner that they capture and influence the attention of the young generation. The youth of today lives in an environment with more than 200 TV channels available at a click. Amidst this media explosion and the transient cultural landscape, the youth is bound to be affected by what is given to them though in little doses in the form of advertisements. Creating an advertisement is a sensitive issue as within a few seconds a powerful message is bombarded on raw and sensitive minds. Omnipresent advertisements should have a social and moral responsibility. No doubt in today's highly competitive scenario it is not easy for a brand to survive without advertisements but at the same time there should not be blind race to earn more and more at the cost of moral and ethical values which are the foundation stone of a society. Advertisements, as long as they attract audience are good but if they start catching attention by misusing norms then it becomes a hazard to the society. Our society is based on deep rooted cultural inheritance

which everyone should cherish. One should try to instill moral values in the youth and should not sever their moral basis. Children learn by examples so advertisements should not set bad examples of morality. Advertisements should not thrash the moral structure of the society, rather they should act as a potent vehicle that encourages the youth to imbibe morality and cultural ethics.

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