

PUFFERY ADVERTISEMENT IN INDIA AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Now day business conquers the world and the competition is at its peak. Advertisement plays a vital role in business, which popularizes the organization, product, or service. It is a non-personal paid form of communication that attracts consumer attention, to convey a business idea. Now we are concentrating on another stream of advertisement that is puffery advertisement. It is how the organization of the product or service gives a vague idea or exaggeration on their product. The idea may be confusing or maybe wrongly interpreted. It is subjective or superlative which the fact may be fair in nature. It simply makes us believe that we are in space. This may largely affect or make an influence on kids under the age group of 10. Children spend more time in television programs more or less suitable for them. In India, there is no statutory body to regulate advertisements, which was necessary. Advertisements are generally regulated by the Advertisement standard council of India, a non-statutory body. But, unfortunately, there is no pre-approval for these advertisements and if anyone claims some companies Advertising Standard Council of India (ASCI) takes action through Consumer Complaints Council (CCC). This study focuses on puffery advertisement in India and its impact on children. Children are the bigger consumers who are attracted by advertisements and they are incapable of critical thinking. They blindly believe in advertisements.

Keywords: Indian Market, Puffery, Advertisement, Consumer Complaints Council.

Introduction

As the markets turn into a global one village, the consumer has the freedom to select the products which are needed or wanted by the consumers. A verity of products are as near to everyone, that's why manufactures are forced to make familiar or popularize the product, and the best option advertisements. Women are easily attracted; it will be successful to the businessman as the purchasing department in the house is run by them. But there is another group in the family who don't know the real facts about what they are seeing that is children. Selling to children is as easy as nailing a nail in the soap. Law also agrees that children cannot identify the correctness or reliability of things that they watch. As an adult can understand that a person, who makes it a habit of using some kind of energy drink only, will never make him like the super sportsman who promotes the advertisement. But the child will dream as he is becoming a superhero.

Puffery is the vague statement that is given by the advertiser for popularizing his product. It is only a subjective statement. An adult will take puffery only as in a reliable sense. It is the nightmare to law segments as puffery may not be proven or disproven.

Statement of the Problem

Puffery is a legal term, it is permitted to advertisement to use Puffery, which is an exaggerated statement of claiming quality. The law believes in caveat emptor that is let the buyer beware. But in the case of children, this will not work. That's why most of the manufacturers use children-friendly advertisements. They are mostly attracted by color, gifts animated superheroes, etc. This will create blind demand for junk foods, energy drinks, etc. The resultant figure is child obesity, mental depression among them.

Literature Review

Puffery is allowed in marketing. As there are several alternatives the manufacturers are struggling to differentiate the product and convey it to the consumers, which may be a little far from reality. From the 1980s it was recovered the importance of visual advertisements and exaggerations are added recently. In India, advertisements are aired on different platforms which are very close to children.

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They are television advertisements, radio advertisements, online advertisements, social media advertisements, etc. puffery advertisements are cheating people to encourage sales (**Foram Shah 2016**) Children are innocent and easily influenced by mass advertisement. They never think about the man's aim behind the advertisement is merely to sell. (**Abbas Dadaras, Zeinab Shah, 2017**) in 2012, Shook Hardy & Bacon LLP noticed the misleading advertisements in child food, need, and the importance of a governing body to the advertisement.

Research Methodology

This study is based on descriptive analysis, as there is a limitation in collecting data across India during this covid pandemic wave-II, Data was collected from newspapers, journals, and certain websites which is secondary data.

Objectives

- To know about puffery advertisement in India.
- To know the Impact of advertisement both positive and negative on children.
- To suggest to parents, how to safeguard your kid from commercials.
- To know the recent ASCI recommendation in advertisements.

Discussion

Advertisement plays a vital role in business, especially in Indian markets. There are some ethical values to advertising such as disclosing the facts about the product, healthy comparison to rival products, no misleading, should be moral, etc. the basic principles of advertisements are having following norms.

- Decency
- Social responsibility
- Honesty
- Truthful presentation
- Comparison
- Avoidance of harmful environmental behavior

Weasel Words

It is a system using words in advertisements. Weasel words are those which modify or reduce the impact of the sentences. It modifies or neglects the sentences practically by certain words such as help, improved, gain, etc. it seems essential in the sentences but degenerates into meaningless. For instance – the popular toothpaste brand Colgate uses the weasel word fight in its advertisements, but, advertising removes the logical aspects of humans.

Misleading Facts

Here, the advertiser argues a completely false statement about the product regarding quality, style history of the product or service, etc. here ASCI intervenes and asks the manufactures to removes the advertisement. Garnier face wash is the best example of misleading advertisements. They claimed 100% Neem nutrients included in the face wash. Certain educational institution's advertisements were also removed by ASCI, for Example – the Institute of Hotel Management, Meerut – claiming 100% job placement for their students.

Reinforcement Stereotype

The stereotype is the trait or group of traits followed by the pupils. Some advertisements question the traits which may negatively affect them. "Why should boys have all the fun"? Here women are stereotyped.

Surrogate Advertisements

Advertising certain products are prohibited by law. Alcohol products in this category. These producers manufacture other related products and air the advertising on them giving the same brand name to them. As a result. The prohibited advertisement is convenient flows into the mind of consumers. It's simply a surrogate advertisement. Packaged drinking water and club soda in the name of liquor is the best example. Unhealthy products are advertised in such a manner that is banned by law.

Manipulating Advertisements

These types of advertisements explore the emotions of the public. Common emotions like patriotism are taken as the keywords of the advertisements. For instance, Tata salts use the slogan – "Desh Ki Namak" to influence public sentiments.

Concealment of Facts

Most companies highlight the positive side of the product. They cover up the negative aspects of the products this makes the wrong selection of the products. They conceal all facts which will be harmful to the demand for the product. Grainer hair color is the best option to explain here. It may affect the hair. Nestle “Maggi healthy soup” “happy heart” “happy soup” actually saying, extra salt added in this creates hypertension, blood pressure and it is as unknown things that how this will create a healthy heart. ASCI asked to modify these advertisements.

Use of Sex Appeal

For attracting youth most advertisements use women as a sex doll. This trend seems to be increasing which destroys the value of women and encourages someone to harass them. Axe body spray epics that if we use this spray every girl flies over to you and you will be a chocolate man.

Puffery

Puffery may be explained as publicity or acclaim that is full of undue or exaggerated praise. The words used here, words finest, the best, worlds first, etc. Eveready battery argues that nothing outlasts an Eveready battery.

Puffery – Good and Bad Sides

As puffery is legal, it cannot take as 100% reliable as a coin has two sides puffery has positive and more important negative sides. Sometimes puffery may confuse with two other broad ideas. So clarification is necessary for the difference between them -

False Advertisements	Puffery
It is objective in nature	It is subjective in nature
Can be proven or disproven	Cannot be proven or disproven
It is illegal	It is legal as a poet gets a license to make poetry
An example is Dabur Chavanprash claims that children get three times better immunity to fight against the disease.	An example is Gillette – “The best man can get”

There is another classification that shows the difference between fraud and puffery.

Fraud Advertisements	Puffery
Wrongful deception which criminally earns financial gains	It is an exaggeration used to promote the product or service
It is wilfully concealing facts or misleading someone to popularize the product and brand name	The vague statement may not be true or may lead to false implication
Illegal and punishable	It is legal

Now we can concentrate on the term Puffery. We are focusing on how this puffery in advertisements affects children, as kids are the most sophisticated viewers of advertisements and they are attracted by the jungles logos and have strong feelings about the products, they cannot differentiate the truth behind the puffery. So let’s have a look into the impact on kids by puffer. Generally, advertisements have two aims – the first one is to give information to the consumers and the next is to pursue them to buy.

Positives / Advantages

The positive side of puffery maybe:

- Children get a chance to analyze the wordings. It may help them to think properly about the products and their features.
- Social awareness and responsibility are created in the minds of children.

Negative / Drawbacks

Advertisements and puffery create wrong implications in the children, even though they get a picture of the society, culture, and traditions. Puffery may wrongly interpret in the deep minds of the child. They could not identify the real and fantasy world. They tempt parents to buy each thing which is attracted by the puffery words. The disadvantages can be pointed as –

- **Develops an Imaginary World**

The advertisement creates cartoons, logos, ideas for attracting consumers, which is far away from realities. They create a world filled with the characters in the advertisements.

- **Brand Conscious**

The most beautifully attracted advertisement becomes the favorite brand to the child, whether it is good or bad for him, when advertisements exaggerate the quality, use, etc. in a twisted way the kid without confusion believes in the brand.

- **Dangerous**

Some of the advertisement shows dangerous extraordinary action to show the advanced quality or power of the product or service. Imitating action may lead the kid into extreme danger.

- **Impulse Buying Habit**

Every enterprise needs new customers as well as a new one. The advertisement induces repetitive buying behavior in children.

- **Junk Foods**

Eye-catching advertisements for junk foods create a bad idea for children. Rasna Soft drink keeps in mind of a child with the caption that includes all vitamins needed are there in product for the growth of children while advertising. Needs eight glass of water, which can be replaced by Rasna. These type of junk food advertisements and puffery makes wrong food habit and makes children obesity.

- **Inferiority Complex**

In advertisements, words like "world's best" or "the champion own this" etc. create an inferiority complex in children compared to other ones.

- **Acceptable**

Advertisement some picture lies or cheating in an attractive way. This may make a thought in them that these features are acceptable and it is good to adopt that behavior. The detergents advertisement shows playing in the dirty land and getting dirty in cloth is good to learn good habits.

- **Giving the Wrong Social Value**

Women are portrayed in advertisements giving sex appeal. This may create that's the way women behave in society as in the advertisements has. For example, a man uses AXE body spray and he becomes a chocolate man indicating he will be a sweet person. And all women follow him. Women in our society haven't such a character in reality.

- **False Imaging**

Advertisements use false images to attract children as they are easy to be influenced. Such images kept in them and make a belief that it was really not reel.

- **Violence**

Themes adopted by some advertisements focus on violence and the hero uses the product and the hero removes the anti-hero using violence. This creates a base for violence in the mind of the child.

- **Dissatisfaction**

Believing in Puffery, once the product is acquired and when realizing that the quality is not the same as the aired dissatisfaction creates in the mind of children.

- **Financial Loss**

Puffery tempts the kids to acquire unwanted products at a high cost. This creates a loss for the parents.

- **Reduction in the Brand Images**

Puffery exaggerates the quality of the product. When kids realize it was not real they give negative publicity from mouth to mouth. This will cut down the brand image of the product.

- **No Best Selection**

Always brand claims as the best option child can't select the best product which suits him from the market. This makes both financial and timer losses.

- **Low Product Information**

As the puffery in the advertisements gives a vague idea of the product, truthful information about the product cannot be traced.

Advertising Standard Council of India (ASCI) – Watching to Indian Advertising

Indian Advertising is thoroughly checked by ASCI. Any type of unethical advertising is handled by ASCI, a non-statutory body. There is no pre-approval process for Indian advertising but if any complaints are received from any customer review ASCI has consumer complaints council (CCC) they review advertisement and take remedial action. They ensure and protect the interest of consumers since 1985, having headquarters in Maharashtra, Mumbai. Any misleading or fraudulent advertisements are upheld by CCC. But puffery is allowed by ASCI.

Recently, ASCI got 319 complaints against misleading advertisements and they pull up popular brands like HUL Uber, Dabur, etc. Consumer complaints councils handle some major complaints and its recommendation given below in brief.

Product and Company	Complaint	Recommendation
iQOO3 iQOO Communication technology	India's Fastest Smartphone	As the claim was exaggerated with some usages world's fastest smartphone, the complaints have upheld by CCC
G- Tech Computer Education, G-Tech Virtual University	For the first time in India, SAP accepted online courses through G-Tech	The claim wasn't sustained and the complaint has upheld
ME Digital Mentors Eduserve digitals	No – 1 Coaching Institute of eastern India Eastern India's most trusted name – Mentors Eduserve	Misleading by exaggeration and supposed to be widespread and as result upheld
ABC Classes	Best ever team for IIT, JEE, & NEET in Gorakhpur, UP	No coaching center can claim a superlative sentence and the complaint upheld
CrackIAS.com	India's biggest scholarship test	CCC argued that India biggest scholarship was not sustained and the exaggerated
The EarthankarMahaveer University	India's fastest-growing University	The statement was not sustained and not verified with any comparable data and CCC upheld the advertisement
Dalmia Bharat Sugar and Industries limited, DalmaSanjeevani Sanitizer	Most trusted sanitizer brand	The third party couldn't prove that the sanitizer is the most trusted one with any market study or samples the complaint was upheld

These are a few analyses of complaints handled by ASCI and CCC recommendation for the same in the last year 2020.

Conclusion and Recommendation

As discussed above study children are the audience who mostly influence by advertisements, especially puffery. They spend more time in front of the television or we may say it has increased due to the wide-spreading pandemic covid-19 pandemic. Children observe this audiovisual and react as what they saw in them. Children lack cognitive defense when watching the puffery. Puffery complains the child to buy something unnecessary. It badly affects mainly the food habit of the child. Children are mainly encouraged by the puffery used in food advertisements. According to this analysis following suggestion can be given to the parents.

- Short down the spent by the child of the television program and emphasizes physical activities.
- Communicate freely with the child about the real and reel world.
- Convey about the product and educate those products quality.
- Differentiate between child needs and wants.
- Make it clear to the children that the unnecessary product which harms the child, will not be bought for them.
- Make a flow of some social value to your child, not be influenced by any puffery advertisements.

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