CHAPTER II
ADVERTISING ETHICS: AN OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

By its very nature, advertising is a prominent feature of economic life. Advertising reaches consumers through their TV sets, radios, newspapers, magazines, mailboxes, computers and more. Not surprisingly, the associated advertising expenditures can be huge. For example, Advertising Age (2005) reports that, in 2003 in the U.S., General Motors spent $3.43 billion to advertise its cars and trucks; Procter and Gamble devoted $3.32 billion to the advertisement of its detergents and cosmetics; and Pfizer incurred a $2.84 billion dollar advertising expense for its drugs. Advertising is big business indeed.

Though the benefits of advertising are widely recognized, some critics still question its ethicality. Historically, scholars have criticized advertising (Pollay: 1986) for the way it influences our society primarily because of its potential implications (e.g. stereotyping, influence on children, sexual preoccupation). Despite these criticisms, questionable advertising (from sex stereotyping in beer commercials to the exaggeration of product claims) seems to pass through any initial screening process to reach the targeted media. Many ads that have been nationally launched have been attacked by various publics and ultimately pulled from the media. Advertising practitioners and academicians are becoming more aware of and concerned about the ethicality of advertisements (Reidenbach and Robin: 1988) and advertising/marketing in general. In fact, in the past decade participation in workshops, training seminars, and academic research on ethical dilemmas in marketing has increased (Zinkhan, Bisesi and Saxton: 1989). Yet the advertising community is still producing ads that certain segments of our society are questioning. Perhaps the reason is a perceived need to take risks in creating attention-grabbing and innovative advertisements.

ADVERTISING AS A DISCIPLINE

Advertising can be viewed as a variable field created by the merged interests of communication and marketing (Nan and Faber: 2004). Variable fields grow or fade based on changing interests and concerns in society. A variable field begins when a group of scholars develop a common interest in a phenomenon and begin to
systematically investigate it (Paisley: 1972). To be successful, there must be common agreement on what constitutes the phenomenon. The development of advertising as an academic discipline emerged in large part from the need to train a body of students to have the skills necessary to engage in this profession. For business schools, there was a need for training students to produce or procure advertising services. In mass communications, advertising emerged from journalism programs where selling (newspaper) advertising space was the primary concern.

As a result of the way it developed, definitions of what constitutes advertising were seen from the perspective of the advertiser rather than that of the consumer of the message. One of the earliest and simplest definitions was ‘selling in print’ (Starch: 1923: 5). Obviously, the focus on print was a reflection of the media available at the time. More recent definitions have updated this by referring to media, mass communication or some similar terms (Lamb et al: 2000; O’Guinn et al: 2000; Wells et al: 1998). By the 1960s and 1970s definitions began to include a number of common elements such as: (i) advertising is paid for; (ii) the sponsor is identifiable; and (iii) the message was non-personal (American Marketing Association: 1960; Cohen: 1972; Dunn: 1969).

Current textbooks offer virtually unchanged definitions of advertising, except for the fact that some now add the goal of advertising, which is to persuade or influence (O’Guinn et al: 2000; Wells et al: 1998). A recent attempt to get academic and professional experts in the field of advertising to examine and reconsider the definition of advertising resulted in an almost unchanged definition, ‘Advertising is a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action now or in the future’ (Richards and Curran, 2002: 74).

While some scholars have forcefully argued that persuasion alone may be too limiting a view of advertising (Duncan and Moriarty: 1998), it is difficult to deny that a good deal of the focus in advertising is to persuade (or reinforce attitudes) (Nan and Faber: 2004). Schramm (1973) claims that persuasion is primarily a communication process and most definitions of advertising classify it as a form of communication (Richards and Curran: 2002). Therefore, it should not be surprising that a large body of research in the field of advertising has utilized attitude change theories.
MEANING OF ETHICS

There is no universally accepted definition for the term ethics, but one way to put it is provided by Magee (1999: 299): “Philosophical reflections on how we should live, and thereby what is right or wrong, good or evil, should or should not be done, duty, and other conceptions of this kind.” It is obvious that the concept is closely intertwined with morality. Wright, Kroll and Parnell (1998: 82) in fact suggest that ethics connotes “standards of conduct and moral judgment.” Hence the concept of ethics is enshrined in morality.

German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) meant that ethics and morals are founded on human reason, just as science is founded on reason. This led to Kant’s formulation of his famous categorical imperative, which was a fundamental rule of morality: “Act only in accordance with principles that you would want to have as general laws (Magee: 1999, 137).” In the English-speaking parts of the world, Scottish-Irish philosopher Francis Hutcheson contributed with a famous principle in the beginning of the 18th century: “The action is the best which gives the greatest possible happiness to the greatest possible number of people” (ibid, p. 183). Around 100 years later, Englishman Jeremy Bentham developed this principle to a moral philosophy, which stated that the question of the rightness or wrongness in an action should be judged only by its consequences. This meant that a person’s motives were irrelevant, and that good consequences were such that caused lust, while bad consequences were such that caused unease or pain. In each situation, the right way to act was the one that would maximize the excess of lust over unease, or minimize the excess of unease over lust. This philosophy became known as utilitarianism, because it meant that every action should be judged by its utility, i.e. its capacity to bring consequences of a certain kind. Its advocates applied these principles on private morals as well as on political activities, legislation, and social politics. “The greatest good to the greatest number” became a catchphrase that was familiar to everyone (ibid).” As applied to business, Nash (1994: 11) defines business ethics in these words: “Business ethics is the study of how personal moral norms apply to the activities and goals of commercial enterprise. It is not a separate moral standard, but the study of how business context poses its own unique problems for the moral person who acts as an agent of this system.”
As a part of the practice of business ethics, companies need to develop what Kotler et al (1999) call corporate marketing ethics policies. In order to understand this concept, marketing must first be defined. Kotler et al (1999:10) describe marketing as “a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others.” Companies can, by implementing ethics policies within their marketing mix, improve their relationship with consumers. The marketing mix, often also referred to as the four P’s, consists of price, promotion, place (or distribution) and product. Ethics policies within marketing thus provide broad guidelines that cover distributor relations, advertising standards, customer service, pricing, product development, and general ethical standards. (ibid) Today, companies are forced to polish and improve their marketing methods in order to be heard in the never-ending media noise (Forsberg: 2000). Zinkhan, Bisesi and Saxton (1989) noted that the increased media attention to unethical marketing practices was a sign of a rising concern from the society, as people felt that there was a decline in marketing and business ethics.

MEANING OF ADVERTISING ETHICS

Historically, the concept and definition of ethics have been vague because of the term's many nuances (Ferrell, Gresham, and Fraedrich 1989). Taylor (1975: 1) defines ethics as "inquiry into the nature and grounds of morality where the term morality is taken to mean moral judgements, standards and rules of conduct." Ferrell, Gresham, and Fraedrich (1989: 56) view ethics as "the study and emphasis on the determination of right and wrong." Thus, ethics is referred to as "just" or "right" standards of behavior between parties in a situation, based on individual moral philosophies. Meijer and Styven (2004: 73) define advertising ethics in these words: “… advertising is unethical if it is done on the expense of someone’s integrity, if it makes you unpleasantly affected, if it exploits other people’s unhappiness, or if it is aimed to minors who have no conception of what is right or wrong.”

THE NOMENCLATURE DEBATE

Advertising effects have always been the focus of debate among communication academicians and society. Scholars categories the research into "controversial advertising" which could be studied in "unmentionables", "socially
sensitive products" "decent products", "acceptable advertising", and "advertising ethics" (Fahy et al: 1995; Wilson and West: 1981). However, Shavit et al (1989) comment that advertising reports positive perception about product information but in reality product information presented is always controversial. Pollay and Mittal (1993) measured the "value corruption" in advertising and evaluated that advertising changes the values of youth, promotes materialism and bad things in society, makes people buy goods for show-off and persuades people to live in the daydreaming. The concept of "promotes undesirable" pointed out by Pollay and Mittal (1993) that there are intense sexual meanings and imagery in advertising.

Pollay and Mittal (1993) revealed that the term, "falsity and misleading," generally connotes misleading and insults the intelligence of average consumer. Wilson and West (1981) Jensen and Collins (2008) asserted "unmentionables" as those goods, ideas and services that for motive of delicacy, politeness, ethics and having opposite reaction of bad taste, hatred and anger when it is advertised or openly presented. They mention the examples of goods as "personal hygiene, birth control, warfare, and drugs for terminal illness", ideas as "political ideas, palliative care, unconventional sexual practice, racial/religious prejudice and terrorism,” services as "abortion, sterilization, VD, mental illness, funeral directors, and artificial insemination.” Hence there is no settled term, under which advertising ethics is studied.

CULTURAL FACTOR IN ETHICS

Ethical behavior is geographic-and culture-specific (Dahl, Frankenberger and Manchandra: 2003). What is considered unethical in one society may be considered perfectly acceptable in another. It is suggested that society is becoming increasingly concerned about the ethical values adopted by its business organizations. In addition, higher levels of media availability and an increasingly informed audience have made it easier to reveal examples of unethical business practice (Meijer and Steyven: 2001: 2). This situation contributes to a higher awareness about ethics among companies today (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, and Wong: 1999) and hence they suggest that “ethical behavior” should be an integral part at all levels of the organization. It is management’s responsibility to set an example by personal conduct that encourages and rewards a correct ethical behavior within the organization (ibid).
ELEMENTS OF ADVERTISING ETHICS

Only the major elements of advertising ethics are explained because umpteen elements may be found in literature, and in fact these elements are expanding. Hence the following elements of advertising ethics have been briefly presented under (i) Consumer Skepticism; (ii) Repetition; (iii) Message Coordination; (iv) Cluttered and Competing Environment; (v) Ad Recall; (vi) Ad information Processing; (vii) Advertising Appeals; and (viii) Reactance.

(i) Consumer Skepticism:

Conceptually, skepticism toward advertising has been defined as consumers’ negative attitudes toward the motives of, and claims made by, advertisers (Boush et al: 1994). Advertising theories, especially those derived from a sociological perspective, seem to assume consumers will accept or believe most messages. However, this may not be the case. Calfee and Ringold (1994) examined data from national surveys of consumer attitudes toward advertising conducted by major polling organizations from 1930 to 1992. They found that about 70 percent of consumers thought that advertising was often untruthful and sought to persuade people to buy things they did not want. The percentage of consumers who held such disbelief toward advertising remained remarkably stable across the entire time period examined.

Some researchers suggest that consumer skepticism toward advertising may be learned (e.g. Mangleburg and Bristol: 1998; Boush et al: 1994). Through a longitudinal study of adolescents’ socialization process, Boush et al (1994) found that as adolescents learned more about advertisers’ persuasion tactics, their skepticism toward advertising was heightened. Mangleburg and Bristol (1998) argue that important socialization agents such as parents, peers and the mass media contribute to adolescents’ skepticism. They also posit that the effects of specific types of socialization are mediated by teens’ marketplace knowledge. Thus, skepticism toward advertising seems to be an outcome of increased knowledge about advertisers’ motives and tactics.

One reason consumer skepticism is important is that it may influence the processing of advertising. Perhaps the most comprehensive account of the way skepticism toward advertising influences consumer processing of persuasive
communication messages comes from Friestad and Wright’s (1994) Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM). According to the PKM, consumers learn knowledge about marketers’ motives, strategies and tactics from various sources such as marketplace experience and social interactions. Consumers then draw on such persuasion knowledge when interpreting and responding to advertising presentations.

PKM suggests that skepticism toward advertising will fundamentally change the way consumers respond to an advertiser’s persuasion attempt. Skeptical consumers may dismiss the arguments made in an advertisement and/or generate more counter-arguments or source derogations. This model also indicates that skeptical consumers may detach themselves from the interaction with the advertising messages and thus prevent further comprehension and elaboration of the information presented.

(ii) Repetition:

Perhaps the most important feature of advertising that distinguishes it from other general communication messages is its highly repetitive nature. A consumer may be exposed to the same advertisement several times a day, and such intensity may last for months. Therefore, researchers have examined the effects of repetition on common advertising effectiveness measures such as recall, recognition, attitude towards the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention. The general finding has been that an advertisement needs a certain number of exposures in order to wear-in (i.e. ad exposure starts to have some positive effects on one or more of the advertising effectiveness measures), and the positive effects keep increasing until at a certain level of repetition the advertisement starts to wear-out (i.e. ad exposure no longer has any effect or it has negative effects on the advertising effectiveness measures) Cacioppo and Petty: 1980; Ray and Swayer: 1971). Thus, the relationship between repetition and advertising effects is typically the shape of an inverted ‘U’.

Most of the studies on repetition effects employed a laboratory experimental design, using a procedure that involves forced, massed repeated exposures (i.e. repeated exposures occurring within a short time period, typically less than one hour) and immediate response measurement (i.e. measuring advertising effects immediately after repeated exposures) (Pechmann and Stewart: 1988). In general, it has been found in these laboratory studies that repetition has a strong effect on
memory measures such as recall and recognition, which increase in a linear fashion until about the fourth exposure, after which they start to level off (Batra and Ray: 1986; Cacioppo and Petty: 1980; Ray and Swayer: 1971). The effects of repetition on attitudes remain less conclusive. Ray and Swayer (1971) found that attitude toward the brand was not significantly affected by ad repetition while other researchers (e.g. Cacioppo and Petty: 1980) found that attitude was most favorable at the third exposure and less favorable with fewer than three, or more than three exposures. On the other hand, purchase intention tends to be positively affected by initial exposures (ranging from three to five) and levels off at additional exposures (Ray and Swayer: 1971).

In a natural scenario, exposures to the same advertisement are voluntary rather than forced, and are typically distributed over the course of several days or months rather than massed (Pechmann and Stewart: 1988). In addition, consumers do not make purchase decisions immediately after seeing ads. Thus, the empirical validity of laboratory studies has been frequently questioned. Field studies that employed more natural settings and measured repetition effects after a delay were conducted to complement laboratory studies (e.g. Grass and Wallace: 1969; Greenberg and Suttoni: 1973). Results from both field studies and laboratory studies are generally consistent, although in field studies more repetition is needed for an advertising effect to reach its highest level. This may be because ad exposures are distributed rather than massed in field studies.

Some researchers have also investigated the process through which repetition influences advertising effects. Studies with such a purpose generally look at mediating variables. Cacioppo and Petty (1980) found that the effects of repetition on outcome variables such as persuasion were mediated by the number of positive and negative thoughts generated during repeated exposures to communication messages. Their findings gave rise to the modified two-factor theory, which posits that persuasion is the net of both positive and negative thoughts generated during an exposure. This theory suggests that persuasion will increase initially as the number of positive thoughts increases with increasing exposure, then decline as the influence of negative thoughts exceeds that of positive thoughts (Nordhiehl: 2002).
(iii) Message Coordination:

Marketers are increasingly using multiple communication options (e.g. TV, magazine, radio, etc.) to reach their customers. The emergence of the Internet provides marketers with additional means to inform, persuade and entice consumers. Coordination of brand messages through multiple communication options is often called Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC). Keller (2001) posits that an integrated marketing communications program involves the development, implementation and evaluation of marketing promotions using multiple communication options where the design and execution of any communication option reflects the nature and content of the other communication options that also make up the campaign. While criticism of IMC is a longstanding part of its history as a concept (Gould: 2000), marketers continue to adopt multiple communication options to reach their customers and label such efforts as IMC. As a result, all IMC programs try to achieve harmonization or consistency among communications delivered through different sources (Fill: 2001). Also according to the encoding variability principle (Unnava and Burnkrant: 1991; Young and Bellaza: 1982), exposure to the same information in different formats or media may facilitate learning. This may be because variable encoding of stimulus information will result in multiple retrieval cues that improve retrieval ability and increase information accessibility (Keller: 2001). The study by Dickson, Edell and Keller (1989) show the benefits of IMC programs.

(iv) Cluttered and Competing Environment:

An advertisement does not exist in isolation; it typically appears in a medium (e.g. TV) that contains its own programs and other non-programming content (such as public service announcements), as well as numerous other advertisements. Some authors define clutter in terms of all non-programming content (Brown and Rothschild: 1993). Others define it only in terms of advertising. For instance, Ha (1996) defines clutter as the amount of advertising space in a medium, and Guo and Zhao (2009) defines it as the total number of ads in a pod other than the specific advertisement of interest.

Clutter has been addressed sparingly in advertising research (Brown and Rothschild: 1993), even though practitioners have voiced much concern over the cluttered advertising environment. In general, it has been found that a higher level of
advertising clutter decreases viewer attention, memory and recognition, and cognitive responses (Webb: 1979; Webb and Ray: 1979; Zhao: 1997). The impact of the level of clutter, however, is less clear-cut, when it comes to attitude and purchase intention (Keller: 1991; Webb and Ray: 1979; Zhao: 1997). Perhaps the best explanation for advertising clutter effects is that it creates information overload. People are information processors with limited capacity, therefore clutter will reduce the likelihood that any given message will be processed or remembered. Another important factor that may account for clutter effects is that seeing too many ads may cause irritation, which will negatively influence evaluation of succeeding ads.

Kent (1993) elaborated on the distinction between non-competitive clutter and competitive clutter (i.e. the airing of ads for directly competing brands). He argues that competitive clutter may be more detrimental to advertising effectiveness than non-competitive clutter. According to the interference theory from cognitive psychology, memory losses are due to the learning of information that is similar in structure or meaning to test information, rather than the learning of unrelated information or the mere passage of time (Klatzky: 1980). The negative effects of competitive clutter have been demonstrated in several studies (Burke et al: 1988; Keller: 1987, 1991; Kent and Allen: 1997; Law: 2002). For instance, Burke et al (1988) observed both retroactive (i.e. competing ads appear before the target ad) and proactive (i.e. competing ads appear after the target ad) effects of competing ads on memory. Keller (1991) examined the effects of competitive clutter on memory and brand evaluation. He varied the number and valence (i.e. relative distinctiveness of an ad and the advertised brand in terms of appeal of ad execution and persuasiveness of ad claims) of ads in a pod, which represented the two dimensions of clutter. Keller hypothesized that the more competing ads and the more similar the valence of the competing ads, the more competitive inference would occur. This hypothesis was supported for both recall and brand evaluation.

Many advertisers have been cognizant of the negative impact of competitive clutter and tried to avoid competitors’ ads when buying media (Kent and Allen: 1997). However, given the intense competition for limited media space, confronting competitors’ ads within relatively close proximity may be unavoidable, especially for heavily advertised product categories like automobiles and fast foods. Kent (1993) content-analyzed the competitive clutter present in both daytime and prime-
time network television. He found that on average 31 ads were shown during one hour of daytime TV and 20 ads were shown during one hour of prime-time TV. In the most highly cluttered hours, about half of the ads aired were competing ads. Thus, advertising theories seeking empirical support in a non-cluttered environment may lack external validity.

Based on previous studies, competitive and non-competitive clutter may have an impact on consumer attitude (e.g. attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, etc.). The impact may not be uniform – in some cases it may be positive while in others it may be negative. According to Keller (1991), a ‘bad’ ad may benefit from being placed in an ad pod that contains both ‘bad’ and ‘good’ ads while a ‘good’ ad may perform more poorly when it is placed in the same condition. This may, to some extent, explain why some ads that performed very well in copy tests did not live up to expectation when they were aired.

(v) Ad Recall:

The usefulness of memory of advertisement to assess advertising effectiveness is debatable (Steward: 1992). For instance, just because people remember seeing an advertisement does not necessarily mean they will purchase the product. However, memory is a critical component in determining how people respond to advertising, including deciding whether or not to purchase the product. Shimp and Gresham (1983) outlined eight stages of processing advertising: exposure to advertising: attention to it, comprehending the advertising message, evaluate it favorably or unfavorably, encode the message into long-term memory, retrieve the information at a later time, decide among the available options such as what brand to purchase, and buy or not buy the product.

Some evidence suggests that the more individuals are exposed to advertisements for a particular product, the more likely they are to at least consider buying it. Exposure to an advertisement is related to purchasing behavior. Individuals who see products advertised in are more likely to consider buying those products than are those who do not see the products in the magazine (Shapiro, MacInnis, & Heckler: 1997).

Advertising might be effective because it reinforces already developed buying habits (Barnard & Ehrenberg: 1997). Repeated exposure to advertisements of
the preferred product reinforces these buying habits. A possible cognitive mechanism to explain such behavior is the availability heuristic (Tversky & Kahneman: 1973). According to the availability heuristic, individuals make decisions based on the ease with which information comes to mind. Thus, the more exposure individuals have toward something, the more likely it is to come to mind in a decision making situation. With respect to advertising effectiveness, the more an individual is exposed to and remembers advertisements for a given product, the more likely that particular product is to come to mind while shopping.

Being exposed to an advertisement may increase its effectiveness. However, individuals see many advertisements, almost 500 per day (Wilson & Wilson: 1998). Obviously, people do not remember all of them. People might not remember an advertisement either because they do not encode it (encoding failure) or because they encode it but cannot retrieve it later (retrieval failure). Further, Kahneman (1973) and Shimp and Gresham (1983) find that many of the advertisements fail at the encoding stage itself. The study by Hunt and Elis (1999) evidences a retrieval failure of many advertisements viewed. According to Bushman and Bonacci (2002), “One plausible reason is that individuals are not paying sufficient attention to the advertisement to encode it into long-term memory. For example, there might be contextual characteristics of a TV program that draw attention away from commercials embedded in the show. Two such characteristics are violence and sex.”

This argument of contextual characteristics leading to retrieval failure by Bushman and Bonaci (2002) is in fact based on several empirical studies, which focus on sex and violence in advertising. Individuals have a limited amount of attention to direct toward TV programs (Lang, Newhagen & Reeves: 1996). The more attention individuals pay to a TV program, the less attention they have for other stimuli. Thus, the more attentive individuals are toward a TV program, the less attentive capacity they have for the commercials embedded in the program. Research suggests that individuals pay more attention to TV programs with violent content than to TV programs without violent content (Lang et al: 1996; Williamson, Kosmitzki & Kibler: 1995). For example, one study found that individuals use more of their attention resources watching a violent news story than a nonviolent one (Lang et al: 1996). Also, individuals remember more information about violent than
about nonviolent news clips, suggesting that viewers are paying more attention to the violent news clips (Furnham & Gunter: 1987; Lang et al: 1996).

Individuals also appear to pay more attention to sexual content than to nonsexual content. For example, individuals pay more attention to sexual stories than nonsexual stories. In one study, reading times were longer for erotic sentences than for neutral sentences (Geer, Judice & Jackson: 1994). Also, participants had better memory for erotic and romantic sentences than for neutral sentences (Geer & McGlone: 1990). Both these studies suggest that individuals pay more attention to sexual material than to neutral material. Geer and Melton (1997) argued that processing sexual material requires greater cognitive capacity than does processing nonsexual material. Thus, individuals have less cognitive resources to process other stimuli.


Although advertisers market their products to people of all ages, many advertisers target 18- to 34-year-old viewers whom they believe to be the most impressionable. However, individuals in this age-group watch fewer hours of television than do older viewers (Hamilton: 1998). Thus, advertisers want to
promote their products on shows that younger viewers do watch. Programs that contain sex and violence typically attract younger viewers (Hamilton: 1998; Parents Television Council: 1999). In fact, stations that market to the 18- to 34-year-old demographics, such as the Warner Brothers Network, program air high amounts of sexual and violent content (Parents Television Council: 1999).

Although programs with violent and sexual content attract younger viewers, overall they attract fewer viewers than programs without violence and sex, thus reducing the impact of the advertisement (Hamilton: 1998; Parents Television Council: 1999). The impact of the advertisement would be further reduced, if viewers of the TV program could not remember the product being advertised. Research has shown that individuals remember related information better than unrelated information (Hunt & Ellis: 1999).

An experimental study conducted by Bushman and Bonacci (2002) by making the participants recall the ads 24 hours later showed better memory for people who saw the ads during a neutral program than for people who saw the ads during a violent or sexual program both immediately after exposure and 24 hours later. Violence and sex impaired memory for males and females of all ages, regardless of whether they liked programs containing violence and sex. These results suggest that sponsoring violent and sexually explicit TV programs might not be a profitable venture for advertisers.

(vi) Ad Information Processing:

Persuasion plays a significant role in our everyday lives. Communication of all types is persuasion. Communication researchers have identified two models of communication these have been analyzed under (a) The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM); (b) The Heuristic-Systematic Model of Information Processing (HSM); and (c) An Evaluation.

(a) Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM):

A popular model used as a principle in persuasion work is the Elaboration Likelihood Model created by Richard E Petty and John T Cacioppo (1979). The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) states that there are two routes through which persuasive messages are processed: the central route and the peripheral route. Developed in 1979, this relatively new persuasion model attempts to “explain how a
persuasive message works to change the attitude of the receiver” (Moore: 2001). Both central and peripheral routes are effective styles of persuasion techniques, but each one has strategies and guiding principles to make it more effective. Understanding the two routes of persuasion discussed in the Elaboration Likelihood Model is vital to the persuasion process. The Elaboration Likelihood Model states that there are two routes through which persuasive messages are processed: the central route, which provides complete information and is straightforward, and the peripheral route, which uses means like catchy tunes, colors, and celebrity endorsements. A brief analysis of ELM has been presented under (1) The Central Route; and (2) The Peripheral Route.

(1) The Central Route:

Messages sent via the central route of persuasion must be straightforward and complete. The central route consists of “thoughtful consideration of the arguments (ideas, content) in the message” (Benoit et al: 2001). The receiver carefully scrutinizes the message and evaluates the subject matter of the idea. Messages sent through this route must possess a high level of receiver involvement, that is, the receiver must actually care about and be related to the subject. Because it is of importance to them, the message will be evaluated thoroughly. Central route messages must be strong. The message is going to be dissected and analyzed from every angle, so it had better have some substance to it.

A disadvantage to sending messages by means of the central route is that receivers must have the motivation to analyze the message. If a receiver is not directly affected by the message, he or she will not put forth the effort to consider it. Therefore, the persuasive message is lost on many people. However, for those immediately involved with the issue, there are two important advantages associated with the central route of persuasion. Scott (1996) observes: “Attitudinal changes tend to persist longer and are more predictive of behavior than are changes induced through the peripheral route.” In other words, if the attitude of the receiver has been changed as a result, it will likely stay that way. Feelings achieved by the central route of persuasion are more permanent than with the peripheral route.

(2) The Peripheral Route:

The peripheral route of persuasion is successful for messages with low receiver involvement, low receiver motivation, and weak messages. Unlike the
central route persuasion, messages sent via the peripheral route are not processed
cognitively. Rather, the peripheral route states that “if a person is unable to elaborate
on a message extensively, then she may still be persuaded by factors that have
nothing to do with the actual content of the message itself” (Moore: 2001). This is
where marketing, advertising, and public relations come in. According to Professors
Dean Kruckeberg and Ken Starck, “The dominant public view of public relations, in
fact, is one of persuasive communication actions…” (Quoted in Wilcox et al: 2003,
214). Catchy tunes, bright colors, and celebrity endorsements are all ways of
peripheral persuasion. Peripheral route messages focus on practically everything but
the message itself. “The message will attempt to grab attention by making the
receiver think about something that she is already familiar with and has positive
thoughts about (Moore and Hutchinson: 1983).”

Peripheral persuasion is somewhat simpler to develop because it has no
grounds in a strong factual message. Instead, peripheral cues such as scarcity or
perceived credibility are the factors that receivers base their decisions on. However,
peripheral persuasion is not as strong nor as long lasting as central persuasion.

Although it can produce a positive change in behavior, “for it to become a
more lasting change the message should be repeated over a period of time (Moore:
1983).” Attitude changes can be fleeting when simply based on promotions or
jingles.

(b) Heuristic-Systematic Model of Information Processing (HSM):

Heuristic processing uses judgmental rules known as knowledge structures
that are learned and stored in memory (Chen, Duckworth and Chaiken: 1998). The
heuristic approach offers an economic advantage by requiring minimal cognitive
effort on the part of the recipient (Englmaier and Schmoller: 2009). Heuristic
processing is governed by availability, accessibility, and applicability. Availability
refers to the knowledge structure, or heuristic, being stored in memory for future
use. Accessibility of the heuristic applies to the ability to retrieve the memory for
use. Applicability of the heuristic refers to the relevancy of the memory to the
judgmental task (Chen, Duckworth and Chaiken: 1998). Due to the use of
knowledge structures, heuristic information processors are likely to agree with
messages delivered by experts, or messages that are endorsed by others, without
fully processing the semantic content of the message (Eagly and Chaiken: 1993). In
comparison to systematic recipients, in judging the validity of messages and rely more on accessible information such as the identity of the source or other non-content cues which exert more impact on persuasion than message characteristics. Heuristic views de-emphasize detailed information processing and focuses on the role of simple rules or cognitive heuristics in mediating persuasion (Englmaier and Schmoller: 2009).

Both heuristic and systematic processes may occur independently; it is also possible for both to co-occur in an additive fashion or in a way that the judgmental implications of one process lend a bias nature to the other (Chen, Duckworth and Chaiken: 1998). The Heuristic-Systematic Model includes the hypothesis that attitudes developed or changed by utilizing heuristic processing alone will likely be less stable, less resistant to counterarguments, and will be less predictive of subsequent behavior than attitudes developed or changed utilizing systematic processing (Chaiken:1980).

Recipients may sometimes choose to accept message conclusions they might otherwise have correctly rejected, or vice versa, had they properly invested the time and effort needed to receive and scrutinize the message (Englmaier and Schmoller: 2009). When the recipient views the argumentation judgment as being inconsequential, the recipient will likely place greater value on economical concerns than reliability concerns.

When economic concerns are predominant, the recipient will likely employ heuristic processing when formulating argumentation judgment. Reliability concerns are influenced by the level of the recipient’s issue-involvement or response-involvement.

When reliability concerns are predominant, the recipient will likely employ systematic processing when formulating argumentation judgment. When recipients perceive significant importance in formulating highly accurate argumentation judgment, the recipient will likely employ a systematic processing strategy. Source credibility affects persuasion under conditions of low, but not high, issue-involvement and response-involvement (Englmaier and Schmoller: 2009).

The HSM also has been researched by the economists also. Although economic models are based on the assumption that agents are unconstrained in their
ability to process information, economists have long recognized that individuals have limited cognitive abilities (Simon: 1955). A large body of literature on heuristics and biases, originating primarily in psychology, has shown that people often use simple cognitive short cuts when processing information, leading to systematic biases in decision making (Gilovich, Griffin, and Kahneman: 2002). Further, a growing body of literature in economics shows how inattention impacts market outcomes. Gabaix and Laibson’s (2006) work on shrouded attributes and Mullainathan, Schwartzstein, and Shleifer’s (2008) work on coarse thinking provide general frameworks for the type of inattention. A few recent works by Chetty, Looney, and Kroft (2009), Finkelstein (2009), Lee and Malmendier (2011), and Pope (2009) find evidence of consumer inattention in market settings. Most of this existing evidence on the effects of limited attention comes from settings where certain product attributes are shrouded or hidden in some way.

(c) An Evaluation:

A major criticism of HSM is that the model closely relates to ELM, which is also a dual-processing model discussing paths to persuasion. The main similarity between the two models is that they both discuss two routes of persuasion, which either examines central or systematic processing in particular. The differences between HSM and ELM are that ELM discusses two main routes of persuasion processing: central route processing and peripheral route processing unlike HSM. These two routes of processing define related theories behind attitude change. The central route is reflective and requires a willingness to process and think about the message. The peripheral route occurs when attitudes are formed without extensive thought, but more from mental shortcuts, credibility, and appearance cues. The route of persuasion processing depends on the level of involvement in the topic or issue. High involvement or elaboration increases central route processing especially when motivation and ability in the message exists. Therefore, low involvement increases peripheral route processing when motivation and ability conditions of persuasion do not exist. However, if the topic or idea is irrelevant to the individual, then the message takes the peripheral route (Griffin: 2006).

HSM specifically examines “validity seeking” persuasion settings concerning people’s motivations within the social environment (Eagly and Chaiken: 1993, 326). The limitation of HSM exists in the inability to define the specific
motivations of persuasion, which is why Chaiken expanded HSM to illustrate that heuristic and systematic processing can “serve defense-motivation, the desire to form or defend particular attitudinal positions, and impression- motivation, the desire to form or hold socially acceptable attitudinal positions” (Eagly and Chaiken: 1993, 326).

Major assumptions exist with both HSM and ELM, which is why both models have generated debate and are often misconstrued. Systematic processing assumes that persuasion has been “mediated by the recipients understanding and cognitive elaboration of persuasive argumentation” (Eagly and Chaiken: 1993, 327). In addition, researchers hypothesize that systematic processing actually requires and “consumes cognitive capacity, whereas heuristic processing makes few capacity demands” (Eagly and Chaiken: 1993, 328). Furthermore, both HSM and ELM assume that “capacity and motivation are important determinants of systematic process” which results in biased modes of processing (Eagly and Chaiken: 1993, 327). With heuristic processing, there is less need to process information and cognitively in comparison to systematic processing. Heuristic processing occurs when people simply form immediate decisions and conclusions based on the information available versus analytical processing of information given that obviously requires more cognition. Heuristic processing as defined by HSM, illustrates that people can formulate decisions utilizing basic rules such as “experts’ statements can be trusted” and “consensus implies correctness” to establish validity within messages (Eagly and Chaiken: 1993, 327). Therefore, individuals who process messages through heuristic processing routes of persuasion, likely formulate decisions based on experts’ opinion and what the consensus believes opposed to fully processing the message in its entirety.

This leads to another similarity between HSM and ELM, as attitudes and opinions developed through heuristic processing will tend to be “less stable, less resistant to counter-propaganda, and less predictive of behavior’ in comparison to attitudes and opinions formed through detailed information within systematic processing (Eagly and Chaiken: 1993, 327).

The main assumption is that HSM postulates that heuristic and systematic processing can influence both “independent” and “interdependent” effects on decision making by occurring simultaneously (Eagly and Chaiken: 1993, 328).
Unlike HSM, ELM does not postulate whether central route processing and peripheral route processing can co-occur or not. Another assumption by Chaiken and her colleagues is that systematic processing does in fact provide people with more “judgment relevant information” in comparison to heuristic processing of information, which does not account for any weaknesses in expert subject matter material, which can exist (Eagly and Chaiken: 1993, 328). Therefore, while systematic processing may be prevalent within many social environments, HSM, unlike its model counterpart ELM, does illustrate “the possibility that heuristic processing can exert a significant and independent influence on persuasion (Eagly and Chaiken: 1993, 329).”

(vii) Advertising Appeals:

An appeal, according to Manrai et al (1992), is the basic idea behind an advertisement or the basic reason why an audience should act. As a rule of thumb, the appeal is categorized as emotional or rational, even though these two types are, in other contexts, used interchangeably as mood/logical and transformational/informational appeals. Copeland who set forth the basic distinctions between emotional and rational appeals proposed that “an individual must have a reason for buying a product; that reason is either emotional or rational” (Quoted in Stafford: 1993).

Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) suggest that emotional appeals come from the emotional, experiential side of consumption. Kotler and Armstrong (1991: 426-427) observe: “[Emotional appeal] is an attempt to stir up either negative or positive emotions that can motivate purchase. These include fear, guilt, and shame appeals that get people to do things they should or stop doing things they shouldn’t. Communicators also use positive emotional appeals such as love, humor, pride and joy.”

Emotional appeals are often strategically employed to influence consumers indirectly and make the consumer feel good about the product (Calder and Gruder: 1989) and make a brand liked or friendly relying on feelings for effectiveness (Aaker et al: 1992). When it comes to changing the message receiver’s beliefs about the advertised brand (Stafford: 1993), rational appeals are favored by advertising practitioners. Stafford (1993) suggested that rational appeals contain basic facts about the product. According to Kotler and Armstrong (1991: 426), “Rational
appeals relate to the audience’s self-interest. They show that the product will produce the desired benefits. Examples are messages showing a product’s quality, economy, value, or performance.” Rational appeals come from the traditional information processing models of decision making which presume that consumers make logical and rational decisions (Holbrook and O’Shaughness: 1984). Rational appeals rely on their persuasiveness, the power of arguments or reasons for brand attributes (Aaker et al 1992).

Emotional appeals have been used prevalently regardless of product categories, central route processes or peripheral route processes, and high involvement or low involvement products. For example, Healy (2007) reports that nearly 95 per cent of the pharmaceutical ads are based on emotional appeals; few provide needed details about the causes of medical conditions, risk factors or lifestyle changes. Automotive advertising also employs a great deal of emotional appeal, featuring a car’s shape or the prestige associated with it (Um: 2008).

However, there have been some concerns shared by researchers that emotional and rational appeals are not mutually exclusive (Pechman and Stewwart: 1989; Puto and Wells: 1984). That is, an ad cannot be completely one or the other. Emotional appeal ads may have rational appeal components while rational appeal ads can have emotional appeal component respectively. Stafford (1993) suggests that both types of meanings occur in all ads and only case by case does the balance vary.

Inconsistent and conflicting research findings on emotional appeal being more effective than rational appeal or vice versa has been laid out in previous literature (Aaker and Norris 1982; Aaker; Shimp 1981; Golden and Johnson 1983; Liu and Stout 1987; Stout and Leckenby 1986; Page, Goldberg and Gorn 1987; Choi and Thorson 1983). Based on their study of 524 television commercials, Aaker and Norris (1982) claim that informational appeals result in higher effectiveness ratings than emotional appeals. Golden and Johnson (1983), based on their study of four products, maintain that behavioral effectiveness of feeling advertisements may be lower than thinking ads. They found that thinking ads were better liked and resulted in higher purchase intentions (Golden and Johnson: 1983). Similarly, Holbrook (1978) found that rational appeals resulted in higher purchase intentions than did mood commercials. In terms of impact on message recall, some research (Zielske:
suggests that rational appeals are more effective than emotional appeals whereas others (Choi and Thorson 1983; Aaker, Goldberg and Gorn 1987) suggest the exact opposite.

However, Stayman and Aaker (1988) found a positive relationship between the level of warmth created by a commercial and the attitude toward the ad. Page, Thorson and Heide (1990) also found that emotional advertisements may be more effective and memorable than rational advertisements. Goldberg and Gorn (1987) also reported more positive reactions for emotional appeal advertisements than for informational appeal advertisements. Similarly, Choi and Thorson (1983) found that emotional ads were better than rational ads by most recall measures. McGuire (1969) argues that there is no difference between emotional appeals and rational appeals in terms of the effectiveness or emotional appeals being more effective.

Lastly, Um (2008) finds that (i) the effectiveness of advertising appeals (emotional vs. rational) vary depending on product types whether the product advertised is high-involvement or low involvement; (ii) not advertising appeals but the types of involvement increase the brand affect, brand identification, brand trust, attitudinal and behavioral brand loyalty.

(viii) Reactance:

Brehm and Brehm (1981) describe attempts to change behavior as involving both persuasion and coercion and believe that the degree to which these attempts intrude on a person's freedom determine that consumer's response. Brehm (1966) terms this feeling 'reactance' and proposes that it occurs to the degree that (1) the behavior threatened is important, (2) the severity of the threat to the behavior increases, (3) the threat affects other freedoms, and (4) the person ever actually enjoyed the freedom. Clee and Wicklund (1980) describe reactance as a boomerang effect in which the perception of coercion is met with an equal but opposite influence, which is used by consumers to restore their freedom of choice. This effect can foster a desire to engage in the threatened behavior even more strongly (rebellion) or can be manifested as an attitude change in the person's belief that the activity is important (acquiescence).

Several studies demonstrate that hard-sell tactics are less persuasive than soft-sell tactics (Clee and Wicklund 1980; Reizenstine: 1971), and Brehm and
Brehm (1981) point out that hard-sell messages reveal the intent of the persuader and therefore should be met with greater resistance. Robertson and Rossiter (1974) find that perceptions of persuasion correlated with less favorable attitudes toward the product being sold. To the degree that advertisements are recognized as simply attempts at persuasion, they could evoke a mild form of reactance.

In a survey of U.S. consumers, Bauer and Greyser (1968) identify as the main reasons people criticize advertising the annoyance or irritation it causes, which is believed to lead to a general reduction in advertising effectiveness (Aaker and Bruzzone: 1985). However, research also indicates that consumers' criticisms of advertising are generally directed at the tactics advertisers employ that make the experience of processing advertising negative, rather than at the institution of advertising itself (Bauer and Greyser: 1968; Ducoffe: 1996; Sandage and Leckenby: 1980). Therefore, developing a better understanding of these "annoying" or "irritating" tactics should allow for the creation of more effective advertisements.

A few studies have identified aspects of advertising that lead to negative feelings. For example, some believe that irritation occurs as a function of the advertising content and level of stimulation. Content that talks down to consumers, is overly exaggerated, or makes confusing statements has been identified as irritating to consumers (Bauer and Greyser: 1968). Advertisements that excessively stimulate consumers' senses can also elicit feelings of irritation. Consumers can become overwhelmed if the ads are too long, too loud, or too big (Aaker and Bruzzone: 1985; Bauer and Greyser: 1968). Consumers may also feel over-stimulated when viewing many ads in a short time or seeing a single ad too frequently (Bauer and Greyser: 1968). The likely result is a retreat away from the source of irritation, or ad avoidance (Krugman: 1983; Soldow and Principe: 1981). Abernethy (1991) finds that consumers often leave the room or change channels to avoid advertising.

Others have shown that television viewers simply ignore ads (Clancey 1994; Krugman and Johnson: 1991). However, what is not clear is why the same advertising is annoying to some but not all consumers. A possible explanation for why consumers view only some advertising as irritating is the concept of intrusiveness. Ha (1996) defines intrusiveness as the interruption of editorial content. Because the first objective of advertising is to get noticed, by definition, advertisements seek to interrupt editorial content. Consumers actively interpret the
techniques that ads use to persuade (Friestad and Wright: 1994) and form counterarguments against ad claims when they are highly involved (Petty and Cacioppo: 1979), all in an effort to defend themselves or react against persuasive messages.

By interfering with the goals of consumers, advertising effectively limits the number of actions that consumers can take to attain their goals. Consumers must reevaluate their goals to include advertising (acquiesce), or negative reactions are likely to result in the avoidance of advertising in some way. Aaker and Bruzzone (1985) suggest that negative reactions to advertisements occur to the degree that they cause impatience.

To the extent that advertisements are recognized as disturbing, negative outcomes such as irritation and avoidance may result (Krugran: 1983; Soldow and Principe: 1981). Therefore, though irritation is a possible emotional reaction and avoidance is a potential behavioral outcome in response to intrusive advertising, the perception of an ad as intrusive is something different. The perception of an advertisement as intrusive should be considered a cognitive evaluation of the degree to which the advertisement interrupts a person's goals. If we define what is intrusive according to the person, advertising itself is not intrusive. Rather, intrusiveness is defined by the degree to which a person deems the presentation of information as contrary to his or her goals (either functional or hedonic). As such, intrusiveness should be considered distinct from the emotional or behavioral outcomes that may result. Therefore, it becomes important to understand the means by which perceptions of intrusiveness can be limited to reduce the negative outcomes that are likely to result.

Pasadeos (1990) finds that when ads are perceived as valuable (containing useful information), they elicit less irritation and avoidance. According to Ducoffe (1995), advertising value is best understood as an overall representation of the worth of advertising to consumers. Ducoffe's (1995, 1996) studies indicate that ad value is positively correlated with the informativeness and entertainment value of an ad and that both information and entertainment value are essential for communication exchanges between advertisers and consumers. Therefore, the perception of intrusiveness may be affected when an ad offers the viewer either utilitarian or aesthetic value or both. To the degree that advertising does not provide value, it may
be perceived as coercive and unwelcome. It is this feeling of intrusiveness that may drive negative reactions toward ads that are recognized as trying to persuade.

Persuasion attempts are not always perceived as intrusive and met with skepticism, counterarguments, or source derogations; they can be met with support arguments (Petty and Cacioppo: 1979). Advertisements often provide relevant information and/or consumer gratifications, such as escapism, diversion, esthetic enjoyment, or emotional release (McQuail: 1983). This psychological force, in opposition to reactance, has been termed positive social influence. Clee and Wicklund (1980) posit that persuasive communications elicit both reactance and positive social change and that the net result of any persuasive communication must take into account both forces. Given the existence of a positive social interpretation of persuasive communication, the degree to which viewers perceive benefits or gratifications from persuasion attempts should counter the perception of intrusiveness.

A second positive social influence identified by Bauer and Greyser (1968) and Ducoffe (1995) is entertainment. To the degree that advertisements are perceived as entertaining, they should provide value to the viewer. To the degree that the entertainment is welcome, it should not be perceived as interrupting the cognitive goals of the viewer, and, therefore, it should garner less psychological reactance than advertising judged less entertaining.

As reviewed previously, theories of psychological reactance suggest that, in response to a loss of freedom, viewers will feel uncomfortable and attempt to regain control of their experience. When advertising interrupts the goals of consumers, consumers are likely to seek their freedom either passively or ignoring the interruption (Clancey: 1994; Krugman and Johnson: 1991), or actively, by dispensing with it (Abernethy: 1991; Speck and Elliott: 1997). The degree to which viewers seek freedom will be directly proportional to the perception of the ad as an intrusive threat to that freedom. The perception of the intrusiveness of an ad likely results in feelings of irritation and ultimately the avoidance of that ad, if possible. Therefore, perceived intrusiveness, level of irritation experienced, and avoidance behaviors should all be related.
ADVERTISING REGULATION

Advertising is the most widely regulated institution in the world. Advertising regulation mainly takes place through voluntary regulation by the industry and the regulation by the government. These two forms of regulations are constantly watched by consumer associations. Since an advertisement is a very delicate and sensitive issue sparking off controversies, the advertising message is monitored constantly by advertisers in their board rooms and then the advertising copy is transmitted to the advertising agency, which in turn is expected to check the ethicality of the transmitted message found in the form of syntax, voice and images. Then the media is expected to examine the ethicality of the advertising message and then go for print or telecast. In other words, advertising is checked from the viewpoint of ethics at every stage of advertising. A brief analysis of advertising regulation has been presented under (i) Self Regulation; (ii) Government Regulation; and (iii) Ad Regulation in India.

(i) Self Regulation:

For many years, the advertising industry has practiced and promoted voluntary self-regulation. Most advertisers, advertising agencies and the media have recognized the importance of maintaining consumer trust and confidence, hence they have taken the initiative to develop systems of self-regulation. Advertising professions foresee self regulation as limiting the government interference that may result in more stringent and troublesome regulations. For example, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) initiated self regulation in compliance with the British Code of Advertising Practices for Print and Cinema advertising in the U.K. and later on with Independent Broadcasting Authority for television and radio advertising. The ASA works independently and is financed by the advertising industry. Many countries have self-regulatory bodies for advertising and these bodies include Advertising Industry Council (Australia); Oesterreichische Weeberat (Austria); CONAR (Brazil); National Advertising Council (France); Institute of Consumer Ombudsman (Denmark); American Advertising Federation (AAF) (USA); American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) (USA); Association of National Advertisers (ANA) (USA); the Council of Better Business Bureaus (USA) and so on.
Under self regulation, the three major participants in the advertising process—advertisers, agencies and the media—work individually and collectively to encourage truthful, ethical, and responsible advertising (Belch and Belch: 1999). The advertising industry views self regulation as an effective mechanism for controlling advertising abuses and avoiding the use of offensive, misleading, or deceptive practices, and it prefers this form of regulation to government intervention (Russel and Verill: 1986). Self regulation of advertising has been effective and in many instances probably led to the development of more stringent standards and practices than those imposed by or beyond the scope of legislation (Rayudu: 1993).

Normally, the complaints received are examined and if needed, advertisers are instructed to amend or remove the concerned advertisement. Special attention by these associations to children’s ads, ads related to alcohol, slimming aids and devices, cosmetics and the like.

(ii) Government Regulation:

Almost all the countries of the world have statutory regulation of advertising. For example, the UK has Consumer Protect Act, 1987; Control of Misleading Advertisements Regulations, 1988; Fair Trading Act, 1973; and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1976. In the United States, the government controls and regulates advertising through federal, state and local laws and regulations enforced by various government agencies. The federal government, through the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), is the most important source of external regulations. In addition to FTC, various other federal agencies are responsible for or involved in advertising regulation. The authority of these agencies is limited, however, to a particular product area or service and they often rely on FTC to assist in handling false or deceptive advertising cases. The most relevant act of the United States is the Lanham Act, which was originally written in 1947 as the Lanham Trade Marks Act. This Act was amended to encompass false advertisement by prohibiting “any false description or presentation including words or other symbols tending falsely to describe or represent the same.”

(iii) Ad Regulation in India:

In tune with the international developments, advertising regulation in India has evolved over the years and it continues to expand. The developments in India have been presented under (i) Self Regulation; and (ii) Government Regulation.
(i) Self Regulation:

In India, the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), established in 1985, is committed to the cause of self-regulation in advertising thereby ensuring the protection of the interests of consumers. The ASCI was formed with the support of all four sectors connected with Advertising, viz. Advertisers, Ad Agencies, Media (including Broadcasters and the Press) and others like PR Agencies, Market Research Companies etc. Its main objective is to promote responsible advertising thus enhancing the public's confidence in Advertising. The ASCI is represented in all committees working on advertising content in every Ministry of the Government of India. ASCI’s Code for Self-Regulation in Advertising is now part of ad code under Cable TV Act’s Rules. Violation of ASCI’s Code is now violation of Government rules. ASCI’s membership of The European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA) ensures that it gets valuable advice, learning and even influence at the international level. The Consumer Complaints Council is ASCI's heart and soul.

The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) has drawn up a detailed and elaborate code. It has also established a Consumer Complaints Council (CCC) to examine the complaints received. Code of the Advertising Standards Council of India has listed the following codes:

(a) The basic goal of the Code is to ensure the truthfulness and honesty of representation and claims made by advertisements and to safeguard against misleading advertisements; (i) the advertisements must be truthful and all descriptions, claims and comparisons related to matters of objectively ascertainable fact should be capable of substantiation and they are required to produce such substantiation as and when required to produce by ASCI; (ii) the source and date of claims based on research or assessment should be indicated in advertisement. (ii) the source and date of claims based on research or assessment should be indicated in advertisement. (iii) Advertisements should not contain any reference to any person, firm or institution, picture without due permission; (iv) advertisements shall not distort facts or mislead the consumers by means of implications or omissions; (v) advertisements shall not be so framed as to abuse the trust of consumers or exploit their lack of experience or knowledge and advertisements shall not be permitted to contain any claim so exaggerated as to lead to grave disappointment in the minds of
consumers; and (vi) obvious untruths or exaggerations intended to amuse or to catch the eyes of consumer are permissible.

(b) The advertisers should ensure that advertisements are not offensive to generally accepted standards of public decency, advertisements shall contain nothing indecent, vulgar or repulsive to cause grave or widespread offence.

(c) The advertisers are to safeguard against the indiscriminate use of advertising for promotion of products hazardous to society or individuals to such degree which is unacceptable to society at large. (i) No advertisements shall be permitted which tends to incite people to crime, disorder, violence or intolerance and divides any race, caste, color, creed or nationality and adversely affects friendly relations with a foreign state; (ii) advertisements addressed to children shall not contain anything in illustration or otherwise, which might result in their physical, mental or moral harm or which exploits their vulnerability. (iii) Advertisements should contain nothing in breach of law; and (iv) advertisements shall not propagate products, the use of which is banned under the law.

In essence, the following are the excerpts from code of ethics for advertising: (i) Advertisement should be so designed as to confirm not only to the laws but also to the morals, aesthetic and religious sentiments of the country; (ii) No advertisement likely to bring advertising into contempt or disrepute should be permitted; (iii) No advertisement of talismans, charms and character reading from photographs; (iv) Advertisement should be truthful avoid distorting facts and misleading the public by means of implications and omission; (v) No advertisement should be permitted to contain any claim so exaggerator as to lead inevitably to disappoint in the mind of public. (vi) Special care is called for in the advertisements related with illness, investment of money, invitation to lotteries, publication of employment notices requiring fees for application forms, prospects, etc.; (vii) Methods of advertising designed to create confusion in the minds of consumers as between goods of one make and another; (viii) Advertising should endeavor to gain the goodwill of public on the basis of merits of good, or services advertised; (ix) Vulgar, suggestive, repulsive or offensive theme or treatment should be avoided in all advertisements; (x) Advertisements addressed to children shall not contain anything, whether in illustration or otherwise, which might result in their physical, mental or moral harm or which exploits their vulnerability; (xi) Advertisements shall
not propagate products, the use of which is banned under the law.; and (xi) The use of national emblem is prohibited by law in advertisements, trademarks, etc.

(ii) Government Regulation:

With extant legislation on advertising found directly or indirectly in different statutes, the Verghese Committee Report (1978) paved the way for more serious regulation of advertising. Even though its recommendations were mainly applicable to AIR/DD, they find their entry into all spectrums of advertising industry in India. The following were the salient recommendations:

(1) Advertising should be so designed as to confirm to the laws of the country and should not offend against any morality decency and religious susceptibilities of the people.

(2) No advertisement should be permitted (i) which divides any race, caste, color, creed, nationality except wherein such usage would be for specific purpose of effective dramatization; (ii) which is against any of objectives, principles of provisions of the Constitution of India; (iii) which will tend to incite people to crime or to promote disorder, violence or breach of law; (iv) which presents criminality as desirable, or furnish details of crime or imitation thereof; (v) which would adversely affect friendly relations with foreign states; (vi) which exploits the national emblem; and (vii) which encourages the use of cigarettes and tobacco products.

(3) Advertisement wholly or mainly must not be directed towards any religious or political end and have any relation to any industrial dispute.

(4) Advertisement for services concerned with the following are not acceptable (i) moneylenders; (ii) chit fund and saving schemes; (iii) unlicensed employment service; (iv) Matrimonial agencies; (v) fortune-tellers, etc. and those with claims of hypnotism; (vi) betting tips and guide books, etc., relating to horse racing or other games of chance.

(5) No advertisement shall contain references which are likely to lead public to infer that the product advertised or any of its gradients has some property or quality which is incapable of being established e.g. care for baldness.

(6) Scientific or statistical accepts from technical literature are not acceptable except that advertisers or their agents must be prepared to produce evidence to substantiate any claims or illustrations.
(7) Advertisement should not contain (i) disparaging reference to another product or service; (ii) imitation likely to mislead viewers; (iii) visual and verbal representation of actual and comparative prices and costs to be accurate and not to mislead.

(8) Testimonials must be genuine and must not be used in a manner likely to mislead the viewers.

All these recommendations of the Committee have found their way into the rules framed under the following Acts both in action and spirit so that advertising becomes more ethical: Indian Penal Code, 1860 (Sections 292 and 293 on obscene matter); Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940; Pharmacy Act, 1948; Drugs Control Act, 1950; Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950; Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisement) Act, 1954; Copyright Act, 1957; Trade and Merchandise Marks Act, 1958; Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954; Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954; Prize Competitions Act, 1955; Young Person (Harmful Publications) Act, 1956; Children Act, 1960; Monopolies and Restrictive Practices Act, 1969; The Criminal Procedure Code, 1973; Prize Chits and Money Circulation Schemes (Banning) Act, 1978; Consumer Protection Act, 1986; Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986; Competition Act, 2002; AIR/Doordarshan Code; Code of Ethics for advertising in India issued by the Advertising Council of India; Code of Standards in relation to the advertising of medicines and treatments; and Standards of Practice for Advertising Agencies. However, these regulations are illustrative and not exhaustive.

Above all these enactments, even though the Constitution of India ensures freedom of expression as a fundamental right, it permits to impose reasonable restrictions on the right of freedom of speech and expression. Article 19(1) (a) gives right to freedom of speech and expression and under Article 19 (2) of the constitution has been added to impose reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right to freedom of speech and expression given in Article 19(1) (a). The Article 19(2) reads that “Nothing in sub-clause (a) of Clause (1) shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law, in so far as such law imposes reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clause in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the
state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.”

With an array of self regulation as well as government regulation, it seems that advertising has become more ethical in its delivery as well as content. However, it seems that ethical practices in advertising have not improved, instead the advertisers and the media have become immune to these regulations and have resorted to deeper unethical practices. There seems to be an inverse relationship the regulatory level and advertising ethics. This situation prevails both in developed economies and emerging economies. It is also disheartening to note that no empirical study has been conducted the impact of regulation on advertising ethics.

**ISSUES FOR CRITICISM**

Advertising is criticized on the three following issues of ethical concern: (i) Advocacy; (ii) Accuracy; and (iii) Acquisitiveness.

(i) **Advocacy:**

Advertising’s objective is not only to inform but also to be persuasive in nature. However, critics often say that advertisements should be objective, informative and neutral. But the goal of advertising to create a distinctive image for the brand advertised has to be achieved for this advocacy or taking one’s side is a must.

(ii) **Accuracy:**

Advertised products do not always fulfill their advertised clauses. The subjective claims are inaccurate deceptive and misleading is the matter of concern for critics. The claims are a mere matter of perception. Critics claim the people often fall prey to these kinds of claims. But in fact, it is difficult to fool people nowadays. They are smart enough to understand exaggeration and false claims. But to attract the consumer’s attention to such believable lies are used.

(iii) **Acquisitiveness:**

Critics often accuse advertising for creating and fostering materialism. Advertising corrupts consumers mind to buy the things they are not needed even. Hence the argument follows that it should be informative only.

These three issues land researchers and advertisers in asking the following set of questions before releasing an advertisement through media to avoid ethical
controversies (i) Who should, and should not, be advertised to? (ii) What should, and should not, be advertised? (iii) What should, and should not, be the content of advertising message? (iv) What should, and should not, be the tone of the advertising message? These questions essentially stem from the perspectives of advertising ethics.

**IMPLICATIONS ON AD ETHICS**

Ethics means “good conduct” or “conduct which is right in view of the society and the time period”. By common consent, various modes of behavior and conduct are viewed as “good” or “bad”. In other word, we can say that ethics are moral principles and values that govern the actions and decisions of an individual group. Ethics is a choice between good and bad, between right and wrong. It is governed by a set of principles of morality at a given time and at a given place and in a given society. Ethics is related to group behavior in ultimate analysis, thus setting norms for an individual to follow in consistence with the group norms.

The foundation of an enquiry into advertising ethics stems from cultural behavior of the viewers or the consumers. With varying cultural typology across people and nations, advertising information processing varies. Therefore, advertisers adopt repetition, message coordination, cluttering, appeals, and reactance to make viewers or consumer recall advertisements. Added to this, the advertisers seek to maximize their own welfare by making people want more through ‘hidden persuasion’ or ‘hidden coercion.’ These five factors along with management’s maximization motive make advertising a subversive instrument to be used unethically and hence emergence of social resistance through what is known as consumer skepticism.

The result is that many critics claim that advertising encourages materialism. A few critics attribute advertising that (a) it seeks to create needs rather than merely showing how a product or service fulfils them; (b) it surrounds consumers with the images of good life and convinces how the materialistic possessions leads to happiness in life; and c) it portrays these possessions as symbol of status, success, social acceptance, popularity, sex appeal; (d) it makes people need things which are not needed; (e) it claims and plays with numbers and facts while comparing with competitors in the form of testimonials; (f) it creates and perpetuates stereotypes through portrayal of women, ethnic minorities & other groups; (g) it depicts women
as preoccupied with beauty, household duties and motherhood or shows them as decorative objects or sexually provocative figures and young girls occupied with beauty and boys. Pollay remarks: “It reinforces materialism, cynicism, irritation, selfishness, anxiety, social competitiveness, powerlessness and loss of self-respect.”

In view of the above implications, the present research on advertising ethics has moved on these lines of (i) Information content of advertising; (ii) Economic impact of advertising; (iii) Abuse of women in advertising; (iv) Falsity in advertising; (v) Ads creating affluence attitude; (vi) Cultural degradation of society; (vii) Exploitation of consumer psychology; (viii) Puffery in advertising; (ix) Non-receptivity of Ads; and (x) Behavior during commercials; (xi) Ineffectiveness of ad regulation. Not much of the research has been found on the impact of television advertising on cultural degradation, exploitation of consumer psychology, and ineffectiveness of ad regulation on one hand and the impact of all these variables on the perceptions towards advertising ethics on the other. Further, a cost-benefit analysis of advertising, especially televisions advertising, has not been made so far. Hence the present empirical study makes a comprehensive analysis of ad ethics on the basis of these dimensions.

CONCLUSION

There is an increasing concern on television advertising, which is characterized by a high level of expenditure coercing viewers through constant repetition to attract the viewers by many dubious means to increase their sales. The formation towards attitude television advertising is the result of how and why advertising message is delivered to the general public, which has been forced and conditioned to a high level exposure based on the above theoretical observations. This process of constant exposure cuts across all sections of the society. The viewers are conditioned to believe that life is not worth living, if the advertised products are not possessed and used by them. This seems to be the pinnacle of bad ethics. Hence advertising has become a more serious social issue than an economic issue of the millennium.