Executive Summary

The era today is of marketing and advertising. No part of our life is untouched of it. In recent years it has spread in higher education also. The cut throat competition has forced higher education institutes to understand and follow marketing principles and go for advertising. However, advertising should also be done ethically; genuine information useful for target people must be disclosed. Misleading and false information should be avoided. With this theme in mind, this study has been conducted.

Major objectives of this research included a content analysis of advertisements and edit contents published in newspapers. Another objective has been to assess the perceived reliability and usefulness of various information as disclosed in newspaper advertisements by various respondents. For this purpose, a sample of 437 respondents was selected. Various groups from which sample was selected included students, parents, faculty members, institute heads and media persons. Also a sample of 814 advertisements and 927 edit contents was selected from actual newspapers.

Five questionnaires were developed for respondents. After pilot study, these questionnaires were edited and finally distributed among respondents. The data so collected was codified and data sheet was prepared in MS-Excel. Thereafter, frequencies and percentages were calculated. Cross-tabulation was done to examine the relationships between type of respondents vis-à-vis reliability and usefulness of various advertisements and edit contents. Chi square test was used to test the significance of such relationships.

Results have indicated that television, newspapers and internet have been widely used media. The access of internet and radio has been found to be rather low comparatively. Further, respondents view advertisements in televisions and also read these in newspapers. Not many of the respondents feel comfortable in listening to advertisements in radio or viewing these advertisements at websites. Specific to newspapers, most of the respondents read The Tribune newspaper in English language and DainikBhaskar newspaper in Hindi segment.
It has been found that institute heads take much interest in viewing advertisement and reading about advertisements in newspapers. Students and parents do not show much interest in reading advertisements in newspapers. It has mainly been found that the level of disclosure of various aspects/information is low. Mainly respondents believe that information disclosed in newspaper advertisements like placements at the institutes, faculty profiles, campus pictures and alumni information is not much reliable.

Respondents generally perceive that information like genuine placement record of the organization or alumni information are very useful for potential students. Apart from it, students’ achievements in recent years is also assumed to be useful by various respondents like students and parents. A comparison made has shown that there are many items which are considered to be useful by students, parents, and faculty members and media persons. However, their relative perceived reliability is very low. Thus it indicates that respondents feel many types of information useful but they also are not relying on what is being disclosed to them.

In particular, information related to placements, alumni and faculty members has been considered to be extremely useful by various respondents. However, this type of information has a very low disclosure score. Hence, institutes avoid making disclosures in this reference. Further, the reliability values of such information has also been found to be very low. Thus, it is clear that respondents are not relying upon what is being shown in newspaper advertisements in this regard.

The very purpose of advertisements is to make people aware of what the product or service has to offer. But when false or misleading information is provided, people lose faith in such product or service. Same is also the case with advertisements of higher education. People have lost faith about what is being said by higher education institutes in relation to faculty, placements or alumni and students’ achievements. Hence, institutes must improve their reputation and start advertising with genuine and reliable information only.