Advertising has become a part of our everyday life. It provides us information and entertainment. But still, we do not always like its presence. Its repetition sometimes irritates us. Some of it may make our stomachs turn; some of them make us nervous in our own sitting rooms while watching television with our family and friends. We may distrust its impact on our family spending patterns. But advertising is here to stay for the unforeseeable future. Modern free and market-friendly economies cannot function without it. We have to learn to live with it.

Advertising's predominance is so high that the demand for the advertising services is growing steadily over the last two decades. Particularly in the last ten years, there has been a rapid development of the means of mass communication along with the growth of mass marketing of branded goods. Together with increased traffic in products, knowledge, life-styles and social attitudes, it has been successful in transforming our industrial and social structure. There have been many influences at work, but advertising is one of them.

Since the consumers, with all the varying needs and aspirations, age groups, income groups is the constituency of the advertisers, they need to be responsible in fulfilling their obligations. Particularly in India, a vast majority of consumers are poor, inadequately informed and less educated. The onus on advertisers and advertising agencies is clearly greater to accept and practise the code
of ethical behaviour. But at times it has been noticed, that non-adherence to laws, rules and self-regulatory code by them is doing more social damage than social good.

Even looking suspiciously at advertising all the time, is not a right attitude. One should consider its positive contribution in financing media and its ability to influence and inform consumers. It is even a source of entertainment for many.

Though everyone is aware of the power of advertising, hardly any studies have been conducted so far, to understand the reactions of the people, or its impact on consumers. However some efforts are made by advertisers to assess socio-economic effects of advertising for their own purposes.

Similarly consumer organisations have conducted some studies of unethical and misleading advertisements to demand further restrictions on advertising. But these studies were governed by emotions rather than logic and each study covered only certain aspects of the case.

The present study is different from all the previous studies. It considers different but interrelated issues of the problem simultaneously. It not only studies the impact of advertising, but also gives weightage to advertiser’s point of view and then evaluates the various measures of controlling advertising to protect the consumer interests. While studying protection of consumers against misleading and unethical advertising, it takes into consideration
government, industrial houses, consumer organisations and self-regulatory mechanism of advertising industry itself.

Number of difficulties were faced while collecting the required data. Accurate data was often not easily available. While collecting primary data, number of difficulties were faced, particularly certain questionnaires had to be discarded as they were not answered by the respondents properly.

With liberalisation and following the principles of market economy, India has formulated an ambitious plan for entering into the 21st century. One cannot therefore sidetrack the issue of impact of advertising on consumers in India. The need of the hour is, consumer awareness, consumer education, as well as, well designed policy to minimise the adverse effects of advertising on life-styles, traditions, culture and social structure. Otherwise the times are not far off, when the consumers will get united and demand strict control on advertisments or censorship of advertisments before release.