Chapter-1

Introduction

Advertisement is a form of marketing communication used to promote or sell something, usually a business product or service. The Oxford Dictionary has defined advertisement as ‘a notice or announcement in a public medium promoting a product, service, or event or publicizing a job vacancy’\(^1\). In Latin *ad vertere* means ‘to turn toward’\(^2\). Egyptians used papyrus to make sales messages and wall posters. Commercial massages and political campaign displays have been found in the ruins of Pompeii and Ancient Arabia. Lost and Found advertising on papyrus was common in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome. Wall or rock painting for commercial advertising is another manifestation of an ancient advertising form. In ancient China, the earliest advertising known was oral, as recorded in the Classic of Poetry (11\(^{th}\) to 7\(^{th}\) centuries BC) of bamboo flutes played to sell candy. A copper printing plate dated back to the Song dynasty used to print posters in the form of square sheet of paper with a rabbit logo with “Jinana Liu’s Fine Needle shop” and “We buy high quality steel rods and make fine quality needles to be ready for use at home in no time” written above and below is considered the world’s earliest identified advertising medium.\(^3\)

In the 18\(^{th}\) Century, advertisements started to appear in weekly newspapers in England. These early advertisements were used mainly to promote books and newspapers in England. In India interestingly when a British citizen James Augustus
Hicky started the first newspaper in January, 1780, its name was *Hicky's Bengal Gazette or the Original Calcutta General Advertiser*. Advertisements of trade, legal notices as well as matters of personal nature like people looking for employment, etc., were published in the issues of the paper. Though there was need for government assistance through advertisement, the *Bengal Gazette* received little support from the East India Company by way of advertisement\(^4\). Within a short time of publication of the Hicky’s Bengal Gazette, several papers were published in Bengal like *India Gazette, Calcutta Gazette, the Bengal Journal* (1785), the *Oriental Magazine* (1785), the *Calcutta Chronicle* (1786), etc. Though these papers had limited circulation, the papers survived because of the advertisements and mainly for government advertisements\(^5\). The *Madras Courier* launched in 1785 which was recognized by the Presidency Government as the official mouthpiece strives on advertisement. Its fourth page was for advertisements.\(^6\) In 1790, Luke Ashburner, an Alderman of the Mayor’s Court of Bombay, founded the *Bombay Courier*. The *Bombay Courier* still exists as a leading publication of the country. It is now called *The Times of India*.\(^7\) The paper has made immense contributions to the field of advertising. It was very interesting that though the *Bombay Courier* was an English newspaper, advertisements were also published there in *Gujrati*. The *Gujrati* printed form fonts moulded by a Parsee printer, Mobed Jijibhai Behramji Chapgar. It seems Chapgar created his fonts in Gujrati a few years before Panchanan Karmakar and his son in law moulded Bengali types.\(^8\) A revolutionary development took place in the field of advertising during this period. Gradually advertisement became an indispensible part of the print media. With the establishment of B. Dattaram and
Company, the first advertising agency in India, the world of advertising got a new booster. The advertisements of different places were sent by such companies to different states. The advertisements of different products of various places were published in the print media in different vernacular languages.

It is a matter of curiosity for all as to what might have been the impact of advertisement when it appeared for the first time in Assam through the news papers and magazines as till now no specific study has been made regarding advertisements. During the colonial period, nearly one hundred news papers and magazines were published in Assam mainly in Assamese, English and Bengali. Though the total number is nearly hundred, many of them were institutional journals and magazines. Moreover, many of them were short lived. At the initial stage, advertisement was not a regular feature of these news papers and magazines. The first Assamese news paper *Orunudoi* appeared in 1846. There was no such advertisement in the *Orunudoi* between 1846 and 1854. They published few advertisements like seeking agents for the paper, printed form for tea gardens, etc.

Since the inception of *Jonaki* (1889), advertisement became a regular feature of the news papers and magazines. Some papers like *the Times of Assam, Asomiya, Deka Asom*, etc., got a good number of advertisements. Out of 12 pages, 5 pages of *Sadiniya Asomiya* were used for advertisements in 1922. There were not less than 100 advertisements in each issue of *Asomiya*. *The Dainik Batori*, the first Assamese daily got on an average 50 advertisements for each of its issue in 1935. Interestingly
in the first issue of *Dainik Batori*, there were 17 advertisements in the first page of
the paper and in the second page there were 8 advertisements.\(^\text{10}\)

Different advertisers advertised different items in these newspapers. Advertisements of different jobs, books, ready-made clothes, cosmetics, hotels, train fares of the railway companies, conducted tours, cars, house building materials, medicines, gramophone records, guide or *pandas* of tourist places of religious interest, nurse, nursing home, etc., appeared in the papers and magazines regularly. The collection of these advertisements from these scattered and mostly poorly preserved sources and their analysis has revealed many information of the social-political, economic, cultural life of the people of Assam in the colonial period.

However, such a potential source of history has not yet been used by the historians of Assam. Even in the greater Indian scenario we have not come across any book of history where we can observe the use of advertisements as a source. It is in this context that the proposed work is initiated as an attempt to look into the society, economy and culture of Assam in the colonial period with the help of these advertisements. It is expected that apart from getting information on the socio-cultural and economic condition of colonial Assam, this study will also reveal the usefulness of advertisements as a source of history.

**Concept of Advertisement**

Advertising is a mass communication tool and the ultimate purpose of which is to give information, develop attitudes and induce action, which are useful to the advertiser. If we look into the advertising we will see that the prime objective of
advertising is to sell something—a product, a service or an idea. The real objective of advertising is effective communication between goods and clients and increasing awareness. Mathews, Buzzell, Levitt and Frank have listed some specific objective of advertising

- To make an immediate sell.
- To build primary demand.
- To introduce a price deal.
- To build brand recognition or brand insistence.
- To help salesman by building an awareness of a product among retailers.
- To create a reputation for service, reliability or research strength.
- To increase market share.

An analysis of the functions of advertising brings the following points to the mind-

- To distinguish products from their competitors.
- To communicate product information. Through advertisement one company can send its product information to the target readers or audience.
- To urge product use. The advertisements can create the urge within us for a product.
To expand product distribution. When the market demand for a particular product increases, the retailer and distributor are engaged in the sale of that product.

To increase brand preference. Among various brands of the same product advertisements help us to choose the particular band.

To reduce overall sale cost.

With this preliminary idea of advertising management we are going to make an analysis of the advertisements published in the print media of colonial Assam being made.

**Area and the Period of Study**

The geographical area of the study is colonial Assam. The modern North East India was considered as one administrative unit during the colonial period. The printed media relating to this region is considered for this study. The period of study is colonial period. The British occupied Assam in 1826 and attained independence in 1947. Thus the period from 1826 to 1947 is considered as the colonial period. The first Assamese newspaper *Orunudoi* was published in 1846 and therefore the period of the study is also from 1846 to 1947. Though India got independence in August, 1947, all papers or magazines published in 1947 are considered for this study.

**Objective of the Study**

The main objective of the study is to establish advertisements, hitherto not used, as a significant source of history. Another important objective of this study is
to use the information from advertisements as a source of history writing to reconstruct the socio-cultural, political and economic life of the people of colonial Assam. It is expected that such newly discovered information will throw new light on the socio-cultural and economic history of the region.

Review of the existing literature

The proposed area of study being largely a virgin area, not much published work is available. There are however some work done on the history of print media in Assam. These books guide us not only to identify the sources but also to understand the background of our study. Moreover few available books of marketing management and advertising are also beneficial to understand the concept of advertising. Some books published in different parts of the world on advertising and its history is also available.

In his book Asomar Sambad Patrar Samikhyatmak Adhyayan (1846-1986), Prasanna Kumar Phukan has discussed the history of print media in Assam in detail. He gives a chronological account of almost all newspapers and magazines up to 1986. This will help us a lot in finding out the sources of our study. He has also tried to discuss the history of advertisement in the Assamese print media in brief. Dr. Nagen Saikia in his editorial to Jonaki, (Compiled volume, 1889-99, 1901-03), deals elaborately on the advertisements of Jonaki, the first Assamese newspaper to deal with advertisement professionally. Dr. Saikia has mentioned the names of the companies and professionals who gave advertisements in Jonaki. Starting from the language and literature of the advertisements, the author has discussed in detail all the dimensions of these advertisements like frequency of occurrence, variety, size etc. The author has also tried to briefly analyse the impact of the advertisements on the contemporary society and economy. The benefit of advertisement for both the paper and the advertisers is discussed well by the author.
One of the most significant books on the history of newspapers and magazines of Assam is *Asomor Batori Kakot Alochanir Dersa Bosoriya Itihash*, Published by The Celebration Committee of 150 Years of News Papers in Assam, Guwahati, 1998. The book is edited by Chandraprasad Saikia. In this book the leading journalists of the state have discussed in details the important papers and magazines of Assam published up to 1996. In the same publication, an article is also included on the commercial aspects like advertisement, circulation, finance, etc.

Another important book regarding the history of newspapers and magazines of Assam is *Asomar Batori Kakot – Eti Ruprekha* by Prafulla Chandra Barua. This is the first book in Assamese to deal with all important news papers published between 1846 to 1946-47. In this book, the writer has tried to give a detailed description of all the important news papers published in his period of study. One of the important dimensions of the book is that the author, apart from describing the content of the papers is trying to provide information of the situation faced by the publisher which is a reflection of the socio-economic condition of the period. In another edited book of Mr. Barua, entitled *Dainik Asomor Jolongaidi Asomor Batori Kakot*, Late Bijay Chandra Bhagawati, a veteran politician of the state has portrayed very well the condition of the news papers and magazines of Assam in the colonial period.

*Indian Advertising 1780-1950* is a book by Arun Chaudhuri and published by Tata McGraw Hill in 2007. In this book the writer has tried to unfold the history of Indian advertising, a comparatively less discussed topic. He gave an analysis of the role of advertisement in the newspaper industry in India at its nascent stage. This book helps us a lot to understand the history of advertisement of print media in colonial India. He has discussed in brief the different types of advertisements, advertising companies and other
related topics. He made an analysis how with the growth of advertising industry in India, the influence of government which played an important role in getting advertisement by a newspaper was very high at the beginning but got subsequently decreased. *Advertising in India: Trends and Impact* by Om Gupta is a book published by Kalpaz Publication in 2005. In this book the author has made an overall analysis of the advertising industry in India with its impact on market economy. He has covered all sorts of advertising up to the recent period.

*Adhunik Vigyapan: Ongo O Anusango* is a book by Smarajit Dutta in Bengali language published by Agrani Book Club in 1996. In this book the author has discussed the various types of advertisements, their character, design, etc. He has discussed the relation of consumer psychology and advertisements which is very important to make an advertisement popular. Another book in Bengali language on advertising is *Visay Vigyapan* by Partha Chattopadhyay. This book was published by Lipika in 1998. In this small book the author has critically examined the role of advertisement in the market economy. The book is very attractive for the readers because of its style of presentation and language.

*Advertising in India* by Jiban Mukherjee and published by the author himself in 1954 was a book on the Indian advertising industry. In this book the author has tried to portray a picture of different stages of development of Indian advertising industry. Inspite of many shortcomings, this book, one of the earliest attempts to write a book on Indian advertising can be regarded as an important book to understand the condition of the Indian advertising industry at its initial stage. *Press Advertising: A Study of Selected Advertisements* is a book by Navin Mathur and published by Himalaya Publishing House in 1987. This work is a study made by author on some selected advertisements of print media.
In this study of some popular advertisements, the author has made an analysis of the various aspects of the advertisements like design, frequency of publication, impact etc.

*ADLAND: A Global History of Advertising* by Mark Tungate is a book on the history of advertising of the world. In this book, the author has tried to explore the history of advertisement. He had discussed in detail the different stages of development of the advertising industry which can be termed as milestones. He has narrated the contributions of different persons in shaping the industry. He has discussed the developments in countries like Britain, France, Brazil, Japan, Italy, Germany, Australia, China, America and many other countries of the world.

*Advertising and Society an Introduction*, edited by Carol J Pardun is a book on the impacts of advertisement on society, economy, politics, etc. In the introduction of the book the editor of the book has elaborately analysed why everyone have an opinion on advertising. She has made an analysis of the impact of advertisement on every human being. This book categorically mentioned different types of advertisements like political advertisements, tobacco advertisements, sports advertisements, etc., and discussed about each category. In this book discussions were made on the emerging issues in the field of advertising including issues like social responsibility.

*What Happens to Advertisements When They Grow Up* is an article by W M Weilbacher in the Public Opinion Quarterly published by the Oxford University Press. This article analyzes the implications of a major study of consumer response to advertising for an understanding of the advertising process and for advertising practice. The study seems to throw new light on the life cycle of an advertisement; what happens to an advertisement and its impact when it is advertised over a long duration.
*Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising* is a book by Jackson Lears where the author has tried to make an analysis of the impact of advertisement in the society and culture of America.

*Advertising and Sales Management* by Mukesh Trehan and Ranju Trehan is a book on the concept and theories of advertisement and its utility in sales promotion. The book discusses how the advertisement help in marketing and what are the parameters followed by the advertisers.

*Asomiya Manuhar Itihash* by Dr. Nagen Saikia is a book on the overall developments of Assamese society and culture. In this book the author has discussed in detail the developments of Assamese language, literature, culture, etc. His book also helps us to understand the background of the society formation in Assam. He also throw light on important topics like the growth of the Assamese middle class, language crises, etc. The volumes of the *Comprehensive History of Assam* edited by H.K. Barpujari give us a broad view of the different aspects of Assam. Especially, Volumes IV and V help us to understand the socio-economic and political developments of the colonial Assam.

*Social and Economic History of Assam, 1853-1921* by Dr. Rajen Saikia is a book on the society and economy of colonial Assam. In this book the author has made critical analysis of the developments in the field of society and economy of that period. This book also helps us to have an understanding of the developments in these fields.

**Methodology**

As the proposed research is a historical work, the historical analytical method is used in the study. The work is based on primary sources, though secondary sources are also consulted wherever necessary. A list of books is included
in the bibliography. Oral sources are also used to understand the impact of the advertisements on the people. The logic used is both inductive, that is from the particular to the general and deductive that is from the general to the particular.

Since Orunudoi (1846), nearly one hundred news papers and magazines were published in the state. Unfortunately the preservation of these papers and magazines is not good. Apart from the National and State archives, many of these papers are lying scattered in the nooks and corners of the state. To collect the advertisements different archives and libraries of the country were visited. Among those libraries the National Library, Kolkata, library of Banga Sahitya Parishad, Kolkata, the Nehru Museum Library, New Delhi, library of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Guwahati, the Media Archive, Guwahati, the library of the Nanda Talukdar Foundation, Guwahati, the library of the Assam State Legislative Assembly, Dispur, the State Archive, Dispur, the library of Assam Sahitya Sabha, Guwahati, the library of Late Prafulla Chandra Bezbarua, Sibsagar were visited. In these places some papers and magazines published in the colonial period in Assam were found. Moreover for such primary sources houses of some people were visited where some rare copies of newspapers and magazines were found. The condition of these papers, especially in the government archives is not satisfactory. As most of these were not fit for photo copying those were collected either through photograph or by writing those in papers.

Apart from the primary sources many libraries were visited in search of secondary sources. The library of Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, library of
Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh, library of Jorhat College, Jorhat, library of Assam Sahitya Sabha, Jorhat, Johat District Library were visited in search of books and documents related to the history of colonial Assam.

Interviews of few octogenarians were taken to understand the impact of the advertisements in their early age. These octogenarians were selected from different socio-economic background in their early age. People from remote areas, from towns and cities, from educated families, from relatively less educated families, families with different occupational and financial background were taken to get a real picture. These people were asked about different newspapers and magazines they had seen during their early years, the advertisements published in those papers and the impact of advertisement on the people.

Analysis of these advertisements was done to assess their importance as source for constructing the economic, social, cultural and political history of the state. In this process the information provided by one source was cross examined with that of the other. The advertisements were divided in to various groups on the basis of fields in which they provide information like social, cultural, political, literary etc and the information provided by these advertisements were incorporated in different chapters of the thesis.

**Chapterisation**

The entire work is presented in seven chapters including the introduction and the conclusion.
**Chapter I**, *i.e.*, the current chapter with the title ‘Introduction’ is introductory in nature. It begins with a brief analysis of the concept of advertisement which is purely related to economics or better to say marketing management. Attempt has been made to discuss how advertisement can provide information for historical studies. A brief discussion is also made on the history of advertisement in the Print media with special reference to colonial Assam. Moreover the objective of the study, importance of the study, area and period of study, methodology followed are included in this chapter. A review of existing literature on the topic is also incorporated in this chapter.

**Chapter II**, with the title ‘History of Print Media in Colonial Period in Assam’ is the brief history of the Print Media in the colonial Assam. Attempt has been made in this chapter to give a small profile of all the newspapers and magazines published in the colonial period in Assam. A Total of 106 entries have been incorporated in this chapter with their names, periodicity, year of launching, first editor, and language. Additional information is incorporated about the newspapers and magazines wherever necessary. Analysis has been made on the life span and impact of the magazines.

**Chapter III**, with the title ‘Understanding Colonial Economy through Advertisement’ is a chapter on the economy of colonial Assam as reflected by the advertisements. In this chapter attempt has been made to throw light on various segments of economy like transport and communication, industry, banking, insurance, price, business concept, tax and tariff, etc. In almost all spheres,
information was provided by the advertisements. The information provided by the advertisement is supplemented by the information from other sources.

Chapter IV, with the title ‘Socio-Cultural and Political Scenario of the Colonial Assam as Depicted by the Advertisements’ throws light on the developments in the fields of culture, politics and society with the help of the information provided by the advertisements. While analyzing the information related to society, the information of education, position of women, caste system, religious belief, life style, food habit, medical system, and laws was incorporated with analysis. It appears that the advertisements had something to say in all fields. Regarding politics, the advertisements have lot to speak as the Struggle for Independence of the country was in full swing during the period. At the dawn of the modern age of Assamese culture the advertisements provide us various information which are incorporated in this chapter with analysis.

Chapter V, with the title ‘Assamese Language and Literature in the Colonial Period: Reflection in Advertisement’ is a chapter on the developments in the field of Assamese literature and language during that period. Little information of the literatures in English created in Assam during colonial period was also incorporated there. During this period, Hindi also head its way to this province and in this chapter information whatever these advertisements have provided regarding this language is included in this chapter.

Chapter VI, with the title ‘Advertisements in the Print Media in Colonial Assam: Analyzing Impact’ is a Chapter on the analysis of the impact of
advertisements on the society. Information about the advertisements, their numbers, source, role in the financial management of the papers, etc., was collected from different sources and analysis was made. Information provided by the octogenarians on the reach and impact of advertisements were analysed in this chapter.

Chapter VII, with the title ‘conclusion’ is a sum up of the whole study. An assessment of advertisement as source of history is made in this chapter. An attempt has been made to identify the advantages and disadvantages of advertisements as source of History. The findings of the entire study are also incorporated in this chapter.
Notes and References

5. *ibid*, p. 4.
10. *ibid*, p. 204.