SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Every day, one comes across innumerable images and commercials for various products. This excessive amount of media in our day-to-day lives cannot be sidelined and impacts all those surrounded by it. It is an expression of the society of which we are a part, its mirror image for all practical purposes and has a far-reaching influence on the social, cultural and moral values of its inmates (Ciochetto, 2004).

The world is changing rapidly today and in its footsteps our core values are changing too. The last two decades on account of globalization have seen an unparalleled change, which has expressed itself in the form of diminishing community values. Social values are getting eroded, moral values have become fragmented and the society is facing an unprecedented cultural evasion. Our society today is taking on new values which are at loggerheads with the time tested and religiously accepted principles of our society; a large part of the responsibility for which must be borne by the television commercials and also the unethical practices of the business and corporate houses which sponsor them.

Today, the reach of television is widespread. Commercial television channels have penetrated even the remotest of areas and most adults are exposed to thousands of advertisements annually. It is thus natural for the ramifications of the violations of ethics by TVCs to be seen on our personal lives and also on the society as a whole (Pollay, 1986).

Advertising, now a days is a big business and many industries like magazines, the cable TV industry, newspapers and many other media, non-media and communication industries survive only on the inflow of money due to advertising. It is because of this situation that corporate houses use all possible tactics to get our attention first and money ultimately. Some times these attempts involve illegal, dirty or underhand tricks, making untrue claims and reliance on false information (Drumwright and Murphy, 2009).

Off late, a number of debates have been going on about the social issues in advertising, based on which the catastrophic consequences of improper advertising have
been brought to the forefront. The social effects of improper advertising generally manifest in the form of an adverse effect on child psychology, human behavior, value system and perception, boost to materialism, consumerism and corruption, and decreased integrity and self confidence of women (Richins, 1995).

Consequent to the above discussion, this study is an attempt to examine the extent to which these claims are true in the Indian context.

5.1 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine the extent of value degeneration promoted by Indian television channels, which are sponsored by business houses and in turn assess whether or not business houses in India are fulfilling their responsibility towards society at large. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the impact of television commercials on the social and moral behavior of viewers.
2. To study the theme content of the programs sponsored by the companies floating the television commercials.
3. To assess the extent of financial stress created through television commercials.
4. To suggest means to prevent cultural evasion caused by unethical business practices.

5.2 Data Base and Research Methodology

Since the current research attempts to capture the response of the public, the research strategy, which was considered suitable, was a survey. Towards this end, 600 copies of a well-structured and pretested questionnaire were administered in the state of Punjab over a seven-month period from October 2009 to April 2010. In response however, only 520 usable questionnaires were obtained. The response rate therefore was 86.67 percent.

After the collection of data, the statistical techniques, which were used for data analysis were factor analysis, regression analysis, semantic differential chart, weighted summation method, descriptive statistics and chi-square.

Factor analysis is primarily a data reduction technique aimed at representing the relationships between a set of interdependent variables in terms of a few underlying
In the present study, factor analysis was applied to systematically understand the perceptions of respondents regarding the troublesome impact that TVCs have on the social and moral behavior of the viewers, as well as to comprehend the views of the respondents regarding the probable remedies proposed as means of building ethical considerations into contemporary advertising practices.

*Regression analysis* is a technique adopted to predict the dependent variable on the basis of two or more independent variables. In the current research, regression analysis was used to predict the social and moral behavior of the viewers of TVCs (dependent variable) on the basis of the independent variables, which influence the dependent variable.

Preparation of *semantic differential chart* is considered an especially helpful technique when the objective of the researcher is to assess the exact position of the responses of the respondents between two bipolar adjectives (Himmelfarb, 1993). In the present research, semantic differential chart was prepared to assess the ethical preferences of television program viewers.

*Weighted summation method*, in which incomparable attributes are made comparable by “prioritising them by assigning weights and finally reducing the amount of information by aggregating the standardised weighted scores to provide a clear cut ranking of the alternatives” (Herwijnen, 2006, p. 1), was used to establish popular and unpopular program categories. The same method was used to establish the specific age-wise niches in which particular program categories are popular.

Further, *descriptive statistics and chi-square* were used to establish the extent of financial stress created by TVCs. Chi-square was considered an appropriate statistical tool in this particular circumstance, since it helped the researcher in confirming the results established by descriptive statistics.

The entire analysis was conducted with the help of SPSS Package Version 15.0.
5.3 Major Findings of the Study

The following are the important findings of the current research:

1. TVCs have a significant negative influence on the social and moral behavior of the viewers. This they achieve by undermining social, moral and religious values. TVCs perpetuate ideologies, which are at loggerheads with Indian traditions and norms and in doing so, they impair them. They also violate ethical norms and disrespect the integrity of cultures, the consequences of which are degradation of women, sexual preoccupation, consumer discontent and boost to materialism. Degradation of relationships in Indian families and the misleading and untruthful content of TVCs are yet other points of concern highlighted by the study.

2. Respondents prefer programs that respond to ethical issues as against those, which do not. The respondents prefer television programs that uphold Indian values over the ones that undermine them. They look up to television to glorify Indian values. Consequently, overtly sexual programs were found to have a lower appeal among the respondents than the ones which were non sexual in content. On the same lines, programs, which upheld the dignity of women and presented them in a respectable manner had a greater acceptance among the viewers than the ones which degraded them.

Further, according to the current study, television programs that are good for children were preferred over the ones that are not. Within the context, it can be concluded that the respondents are aware of their duty to be conscious of everything that children are exposed to on television because it affects their future as human resources of the society. Also, the respondents did not view disregard for social responsibility positively. It can thus be said that social considerations built into television programs make them popular among the viewers.

The current study also found out that the Indian society is ready to embrace certain positive aspects of modernity but does not appreciate erosion of Indian values on the pretext of modernity. Modern programs which are family programs and do not pose a threat to the Indian culture are appreciated by the viewers as against the modern programs that harm/undermine indigenous culture. It can also be
concluded from the current study that unconvincing content renders a program unpopular. Respondents like watching programs they can believe and relate to. Also, in the current research, informative programs scored over the uninformative ones, as did programs with a pleasing content over programs, which were irritating (This parameter emerged as an important parameter in the current research.).

Furthermore, the current research specifically pointed out that family programs in India were more popular than the programs, which could not be watched with the entire family. For the Indian masses, it can thus be said that it is important that they should be able to watch a program with their elders and the youngsters / children in the family. Lastly, the current study also found out that programs whose content was offensive were less popular among the public than the ones, which were inoffensive.

As can be seen, the respondents are in favour of airing programs, which fulfil their ethical and social responsibility. However, putting their commercial responsibility before their social responsibility, companies and business houses are sponsoring programs with unethical content. This is harmful for the Indian society and measures must be taken to check this practice.

3. Program categories popular among the respondents are soap operas, infotainment, news, reality shows and movies. These results coincide with actual TRPs.

Further, an exploration of the content of these programs revealed that most of the popular programs can be enjoyed with the entire family together and fare well on the ethical front. They are family dramas with social themes, scientific programs with wholesome content (which is suitable for children and adults both and improves their knowledge), news, which acquaints with the latest and reality shows where the viewers become a part of an actual life situation. The last lends believability to the program and its convincing nature makes the program popular. Also, one time watch movies have always been popular with the viewers and the results of the current study are no different

4. The program categories, which are unpopular among the respondents, are teleshopping, travel shows, super natural thrillers, programs for children and sports. However, lacking widespread popularity, these program categories are popular in
niches. Since these programs are popular in specific niches only, their overall popularity is low.

This study also establishes that trends like teleshopping, shopping on the internet and travelling abroad for holidays have not really caught up with Indians, which makes teleshopping and travel shows unpopular categories of programs.

5. More often than not, the viewers are enticed by TVCs to buy products they do not need and cannot afford and are thus encouraged to borrow money to buy the advertised products. Further TVCs play a very vital role in purchase decisions and a very large proportion of the population buys products based entirely on them. Where the dependence on TVCs for purchase decisions is heavy, people spend greater proportions of their income on the repayment of borrowed money. Advertisers thus very well persuade the viewers to spend huge sums of money on goods and services, which they do not really need and in the bargain create financial stress in their lives.

6. Respondents uphold the need of making advertising socially responsible.

### 5.4 Implications of the Study

The main implications of the study are as follows:

1. Corporate houses use TVCs to serve their selfish and commercial interests, resulting in exploitation of the society.

2. TVCs socially disadvantage women. Their depiction in stereotypical roles perpetuates gender hierarchies, which work in the disfavour of women. Also, an excessive focus on their sexuality, not only degrades them, but also leads to rise in crime and violence against women.

3. Advertising agencies via TVCs, take away the freedom of choice from the hands of the consumers and vest it in the hands of corporate houses, which do not hesitate in abusing their power.

4. In these times of waning community values, the respondents are looking up to television to remind the upcoming generations of the rich values for which India has been famous worldwide.
5. For ensuring universal appeal of their programs, commercial broadcasters and advertisers must choose program categories, which are popular among the masses and received well by them. This will help them increase the number of their audiences and hence revenues. However, the current research also shows that even the unpopular programs are popular in niches and the most popular television channels in India (Star Plus, Zee TV and Colors as per the TAM peoplemeter system ratings for the year 2009 and 2010), do not cater to them. Commercial broadcasters and advertisers can hence also earn substantial profits by catering to specific niches like tele-shoppers, business enthusiasts, sports lovers etc.

5.5 Suggestions

1. Ethics have always been studied in conjunction with law. Now they also need to be studied separately from it. Glamorous images, depiction of unaffordable lifestyles, inappropriate comments etc. while meeting the legal standards leave much to be desired on the ethical front. There do not exist laws against it, but as can be seen from the current research, they go a long way in promoting undesirables values in the society, which are in conflict with the basic Indian maxim of “simple living.” Advertisers must thus, take a detailed look at the symbolic meanings that ads carry and their influence on public virtues. They must build moral affirmations into their communication strategies and try to connect with the consumer on an ethical level.

2. The ethical content of television programs needs to be seriously examined, since the masses are sensitive towards this issue and prefer ethical programs. In the light of this revelation, the existing unethical programs must be revamped and new programs must be developed that respond to ethical issues. Self-regulation for socially responsible conduct is the most lucrative option; however concerned associations and controlling bodies must also carefully monitor the ethical content of the television programs lest it proposes an ethical dilemma.

In this context, it is heartening to see that BCCI has become quite active off late. It is hoped that it will continue to do the same in the future also. It may not be amiss to point out here that the role of controlling and monitoring bodies has become all the more crucial in the wake of globalization, which has given entry to many western
mainly American) programs, whose content at times is in conflict with basic Indian values and culture.

Television is accountable to society as it wields a great power over it. It has already been established that television brings awareness which in its wake triggers thinking (Johnson, 2001). Exposure to good content will automatically make the viewers think better and create a good society. It should thus be ensured that only good content is supplied to the audience. Balanced television programs must therefore be developed and closer attention be paid to the values and beliefs that the viewers may draw upon when exposed to them.

3. The companies that float television commercials and sponsor television programs must be conscious of what programs they sponsor. Honouring their social responsibility, companies should take a strict stance against the programs the content of which is injurious to the value system of the country.

4. TVCs are a potent social device. They must as a result, enact the part of a public helper and informer, be accountable to the society and serve people. They must honor facts and not twist them to bring business to corporate houses. Business houses and marketers keen to remain socially conscious must always remain critical of their practices and communication strategies. They must be philanthropic and see the picture in entirety. They must, no matter what, address their social obligations along with their commercial obligations. The call of the hour is to ensure that business and corporate houses build moral and ethical considerations into their public communication. They must make sure that their actions remain pro social and ‘humanistic.’ Towards this end, they must balance their bottom line and welfare of public at large.

5. Self-regulation by advertisers is the most lucrative means to ensure ethicality of ads. But so far, since the corporate houses and advertisers have shown an acute lack of enthusiasm in self-regulation, it is time to turn to the regulatory mechanism for the same. It is recommended that the regulatory framework and industry standards be seriously reexamined and suitably amended to develop a new standard of ethics. Towards this end it is proposed that ads for harmful products like coke, pepsi, tobacco etc., ads which can not be watched with the family due to their
objectionable content, overt use of sex/sexual appeals in ads and ads aimed at children be completely banned. Further, to ensure greater consumer autonomy and protection, it must be made mandatory to display the negative effects of the products advertised as warning messages before the telecast of TVCs. Also, it is suggested that the participation of the parents in the censor board be solicited while reviewing the content of ads aimed at children. However, none of the above mentioned suggestions will yield the desired results if the ad controlling agencies are not given the requisite autonomy. It is thus suggested that they be given judicial powers. Since these are the bodies that monitor the content of TVCs, required power vested in them can help them discharge their duty better.

6. Universal appeal of TVCs may also be exploited for the betterment of the society. TVCs may be used for educating the masses and seeking their cooperation in combating social problems like female foeticide, dowry, child marriage, consumption of alcohol, drugs, tobacco etc. Last but not the least, they may also be used to reintroduce the Indian audience to basic values which seem to have some how lost their impact today.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

Like most of the earlier studies, this study also suffers from some limitations. The following are some of the limitations of the current study:

1. Though an extensive review of existing literature was undertaken with a view to integrate all available literature, its finding and understanding may have been constrained by the vision of the researcher.

2. In the current research, questions dealt with sexuality, the nature of depiction of women in television commercials/programs, extent of loans taken etc. Because of inhibitions regarding the nature of the questions, there is a possibility that the respondents may not have given totally honest responses.

3. The population from which the sample was drawn was limited to the state of Punjab in India and hence would have an effect on the generalization of the findings.
4. The attitude of the respondent towards particular commercials/programs may be influenced by his/her attitude towards the actors/characters that star in those commercials/programs.

5.7 Recommendations for Further Research

Limitations of the current research provide avenues for future research. To obtain a clearer and more representative picture, it is recommended that future studies may be conducted devoid of the limitations of the current study.

Having established that television commercials negatively influence the ethical values of the society, further research may be undertaken to study the correlation, if any, between value degeneration and number of hours of television viewing. Future researchers may try and find whether advertising has a greater impact on heavy advertising viewers as against light advertising viewers.

An attempt may also be made to find out if there exists a correlation between crime rate (specifically crime against women) and viewing of TVCs.

Further, globalisation in its wake has brought to India many advertising campaigns and non-Indian private television networks, which have a wide reach (especially in the urban areas) and feature many Western (mainly American) programs. Future research is required to determine how far it is ethical to air advertising campaigns/television programs in India, not originally designed and developed for the Indian audience. The content of these commercials/programs may be analyzed to assess their suitability for being aired in India.