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## **Role of Advertisement in Promoting Environmental Awareness**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Various media and means are used to spread environmental awareness among the people. The electronic media and the print media are the major mediums of spreading information about environment among the populace—educating them about environmental concerns and ways to address these. News, features, talk shows and discussions on television and radio are increasingly focusing on environmental themes of today. Global warming, air and water pollution, overuse of fertilisers, the negative implication of use of plastics and polythene, conservation of energy and fuel resources, all these are topics of current media debate. Newspapers and magazines too are, one may say, more environment conscious than ever before. Any form of mass communication has a social responsibility attached with it and thus advertisement is no exception. However, one question in this context that needs to be cleared is whether advertisements fulfil the 'so called responsibility' or not. Advertisements are meant for the masses and people relate themselves with this medium. Thus, for understanding its responsibilities towards the public, its positive and the negative aspects needs to be understood. Public Service Advertisements should carry a short message which is to the point. Such messages can be dramatic and should ideally stand out from the clutter of all other advertisements. So it is clear that environment awareness related advertisement falls under the Public Service Advertisement. When it comes to effective Environmental Awareness Advertising, it is essential to keep the target audience in mind while creating the social message. A thorough understanding of the target group further improves the impact of the message being delivered.*

**Keywords:** *Importance of Environmental Studies, Role of Advertisement, Public Service Advertisement.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The need to spread environmental awareness is enormous in the context of successfully addressing environmental problems. It is linked to environmental education. On the one hand, provision of environmental education creates greater awareness in individuals and communities with respect to putting environmental resources to use even while conserving them. On the other hand, greater environmental awareness increases the scope of environmental education—as a discipline as well as inclusion of aspects of it within the scope of other disciplines. The issue of environmental education has been a major cause of concern. Several national and international seminars, conferences and workshops have stressed the need of environmental education.

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The United Nations Conference on Human Environment at Stockholm in 1972 played a key role in the emergence of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The UNESCO held an International Workshop on Environmental Education (ICEE) at Belgrade, Yugoslavia in 1975 to identify the guiding principles of promoting environmental awareness education. It was followed by the International Conference on Environmental Education at Tbilisi, USSR, in 1977 which formulated objectives and principles for developing environmental education at formal and non-formal levels.

The ICEE has been held at New Delhi in the past—in 1980 and in 1985. It was observed during these conferences that the need of the hour was to help create social consciousness and awareness about the harm caused by ecological disruptions. Various media and means are used to spread environmental awareness among the people. The electronic media and the print media are the major mediums of spreading information about environment among the populace—educating them about environmental concerns and ways to address these. News, features, talk shows and discussions on television and radio are increasingly focusing on environmental themes of today.

Global warming, air and water pollution, overuse of fertilisers, the negative implication of use of plastics and polythene, conservation of energy and fuel resources, all these are topics of current media debate. Newspapers and magazines too are, one may say, more environment conscious than ever before. Articles and analyses explore the environmental debacle that our globe is headed towards and create awareness in the common man about environmental problems. Schools and universities play an enormously significant role in generating environmental awareness among children and the youth. Textbooks reveal an increasing concern with environmental problems and solutions and numerous courses are available at the postgraduate level that provide environmental education relating to management and conservation of environment, environmental health, social ecology and so on.

### **IMPORTANCE OF ADVERTISEMENT**

Advertising in its simplest form means “public announcement”. Advertising as described by the American Marketing Association, Chicago is basically “any paid form of non personal presentation of ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor.” This definition in itself states that advertising is mostly a form of persuasive communication with the audience. Further, it is also clear from the definition that advertising is basically one-sided information where information flows from the part of the advertiser (sender) to the public (receiver). Thus, in this context it wouldn't be wrong to say that that advertising forces itself upon the audiences leaving little scope of response from the receiver's end. Advertising is thus not a panacea that can restore a poor product or rejuvenate a declining market rather it is a tool that helps in selling new ideas, products and services through the art and strategy of persuasive communication.

Any form of mass communication has a social responsibility attached with it and thus advertisement is no exception. However, one question in this context that needs to be cleared is whether advertisements fulfill the ‘so called responsibility’ or not. Advertisements are meant for the masses and people relate themselves with this medium. Thus, for understanding its responsibilities towards the public, its positive and the negative aspects needs to be understood. It is not only a powerful medium of mass communication but also is a vital component of the economic system, a means of financing mass media, an art form, a social

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institution, an instrument of business management, a profession and last but not the least a field of employment. In simple terms, advertising is an announcement regarding the launch of a product, service or idea through the usage of basically the most popular mass media. Medium is chosen based on its popularity and the one which has maximum reach. It may vary from audio-visual medium, audio medium to print medium, etc. As advertising is a form of mass communication and thus just like other popular forms it too have some social responsibilities associated with it. Here at this stage, one big question arises whether advertising people do have a responsibility only towards their clients or does this sphere of social responsibility is much bigger than that? Negative and Positive Aspects of Advertising Like any other medium of mass communication, advertisements also have certain positive as well negative aspects. Several studies have been conducted on the effect of advertising on the price sensitivity of consumers. At first sight, the results of the conducted studies appear to be quite conflicting. Like for instance, some of the studies imply that an increase in advertising leads to an increase in the anticipated price sensitivity of the public. On the other hand, some studies have indicated that an increase in advertising leads to a decrease in the price sensitivity of the consumers. In this competitive market, with the advent of so many advertising agencies as well as with the arrival of billions of products, services and ideas, satisfying the needs of the clients have become the ultimate objective for the advertisers. In several cases, we find portrayal of misleading and false information in advertisements. People are often left with ample choices about the same kind of products which guarantee almost the same facilities but are not really the same. The advertisers rarely think about the benefit of the people, they are more inclined towards making profit. Further, advertising, apart from its plentiful direct effects, also affects the price sensitivity of the consumers as well as the prices of goods in the market directly. The advertisers including the ones involved in market research are mostly interested in assessing the sensitivities of the consumers to price. This assessment is treated as an input to take strategic and tactical decisions regarding market segmentation, marketing activities, price, as well as cutthroat marketing 2 strategies. The claims made by advertising need to ensure honesty and truthfulness. On a lighter note, advertising people are citizens of the community and thus being a part of the community they do have certain duties to develop towards the society rather than demolishing the values of the civil society (here it needs to be specified that values do not mean the ones that degrade human dignity). Social responsibility advertisements that help in creating awareness against the evil systems such as dowry system, bonded labour, child labour, caste system, discrimination, etc. Thus, the advertisers in the effort to promote only commercial profit and prosperity cannot simply turn their backs on improving the social, ethical and cultural development of the community. They cannot deny the fact that it is only because of this context of the social and cultural development, people mostly understand and accept the advertiser's messages. Messages in any advertisement when delivered in real circumstances grab maximum attention of the audiences. It is truthfully stated by experts that an exotic environment might grab attention and can probably retain their interest for a while but eventually fails to persuade and convince as effectively. The big question that remains yet unanswered is that whether advertising which is one of the most powerful tools of mass media is fulfilling its social responsibility towards the society or not. According to surveys, majority of the consumers felt that advertising holds quite a relevant and significant position in present day society. However, they also feel that the advertisements should be properly

censored and checked for the claims being made in order to avoid any type of socially irresponsible advertisements.

Over the years, many discussions have taken place about the question - 'Is Advertising Essential?' Despite conflicting views, if there is a mass acceptance of a particular kind of advertising, it has to be Public Service Advertising.

### **Public Awareness Advertising/Social Service Advertising / Social Awareness Advertising**

Public Service Advertising refers to those advertising efforts that are done as a part of social responsibility by entities like advertising agencies, Government, NGO's as well as other business organizations. The primary objective of Public Service Advertising is to spread social consciousness among the masses and promote important social issues which go unnoticed. Such advertisements may range from being subtle to direct, and practical to ironic. Alyque Padamsee was the first Indian to enter the "CLIO Hall of Fame" for his public service film-India on Handicapped Children: The Story of Hope.

Today, Public Service Advertising has become very popular and is considered to be one of the most effective means to create social awareness and bring about a change / shift in the mindsets of people.

#### **Some of the issues discussed through Public Service Advertising campaigns over the years include -**

- Female Foeticide
- Blood Donation
- Importance of Going to School
- AIDS Awareness
- Use of Condoms
- Right To Vote
- Save Electricity, Save the Planet for Our Children
- Polio Eradication
- Eve Teasing
- Anti-Smoking Campaign
- Respect for National Anthem
- Family Planning
- National Integration

When it comes to effective Public Service Advertising, it is essential to keep the target audience in mind while creating the social message. A thorough understanding of the target group further improves the impact of the message being delivered.

Public Service Advertisements should carry a short message which is to the point. Such messages can be dramatic and should ideally stand out from the clutter of all other advertisements. So it is clear that environment awareness related advertisement falls under the Public Service Advertisement. The most popular advertisement campaign on environment in India are:

1. Go Green, Plant Tree
2. Anti Smoking
3. Save Petrol
4. Save Electricity
5. Save endangered species
6. Swacch Bharat

7. Save Water
8. Say no to plastic bag
9. Noise pollution
10. Saviour of humanity

## CONCLUSION

Environmental sensitivity in our country can only grow through a major public awareness campaign. This has several tools —the electronic media, the press, school and college education, adult education, which are all essentially complementary to each other. Green movements can grow out of small local initiatives to become major players in advocating environmental protection to the Government. Policy makers will only work towards environmental preservation if there is a sufficiently large bank of voters that insist on protecting the environment.

Orienting the media to project pro-environmental issues is an important aspect. Several advertising campaigns frequently have messages that are negative to environmental preservation. The increasing awareness of environmental issues has generated great activity in recent years. It has also brought to the knowledge of common citizens of India that for sustaining agriculture and maintaining the quality of environment at least one-third of the country's land should be under forest. This public awareness has helped government as well as voluntary organizations to take up the issue of environmental protection. People and activists agitation in connection with Chipko Movement, Appiko Movement, Silent Valley (Kerala) and Sardar Sarovar Project on Narmada are some illustrations to show how to clean and pollution free.

There has been several tools, the electronic media, the press, school and college education, adult education, which are all essentially complementary to each other. Green movements can grow out of small local initiatives to become major players in advocating environmental protection to the government. Merging the ideas and philosophy of environmentalism with the structure of formal education systems, it strives to increase awareness of environmental problems as well as to foster the skills and strategies for solving those problems. In the age of information society where information flows from one corner of the globe to other corners within a fraction of a second there advertisement can play a major role to motivate the public mind towards pollution less world which enable the next generation to live freely.

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