

# Ethics in Advertising

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## **Sample of Content:**

What you see is not what you get.

## **Content:**

Making money and corrupting the morals of a minor at the same time is not my idea of ethical advertising. Recently a television ad depicted a small boy breaking a window so the owner's wife could upgrade to their own style of window. There were several messages inherent in this ad that bother me.

First, it says that it is O.K. to destroy other people's property if the owner gets someoneelse to do it. It's like arson, but without the fire. Then, if you lie to the insurance

company(and your husband) and say it was an accident, you can use the money to buy a new window.

Of course, since the damage will be over a thousand dollars, the crime is now a felony. Felons can't hold government jobs and are marked for life. Oh, yeah, insurance fraud is a crime, too. But who would fall for such an idea? You'd have to find a little kid, give him money and get him to promise not to tell who paid him and why. All eight year old children have to face life's decisions sometime, don't they?

Now, some ad executive decided to put these ideas on the tube so that millions of people see it, including a lot of kids. So what if the cost of insurance goes up, the cost of the TV ad is tacked on to the price of the product and everybody makes a profit? That's a good thing, isn't it?

Did you ever buy something advertised on TV or in a magazine and was disappointed with the quality or the performance of the product? While it is impossible to change the way some companies advertise their products, here are a few clues that will warn you away from being cheated. Over-the-counter medications are prime examples of the old carnival pitch. If words like 'sometimes', 'helpful', 'bigger', or 'more effective' are used, then you know that without a comparative study and the percentages to go with them, these modifiers serve only to put a positive spin on the product.

When a medication is helpful, does that mean one per cent of the time or ninety percent of the time? How often is sometimes and bigger than what? Products touted as 'amazing' or 'fantastic' get your adrenaline going, but don't let it get to your wallet. Personal recommendations are purely anecdotal and have nothing to do with a comparative blind study. Adjectives like 'incomparable', 'incredible' and 'unbelievable' often mean exactly what they say. Skin products are rampant with false claims and mythical properties. In science class, we learned that the human skin is practically impervious to anything you put on it except for some acids or strong alkali. A simple softening hand lotion is all you'll ever need and then only in unusual circumstances. Hair shampoo is another catch-all for superlatives. A bar of hand soap in soft water will wash your hair fifty times for eighty cents and do a great job.

I once ordered three 'Multi-fruit trees' from a magazine ad. The picture showed apples, pears, cherries and peaches growing from the same tree! I paid my \$5.95 and received three dried out sticks wrapped in sphagnum moss. Not even Darwin himself could resurrect these specimens. Other similar items found their place in the attic, like FM transmitters (Fool your friends with your voice on the radio!), instant breast enhancers, fifteen watt bulbs that last forever, and an all-purpose stain remover that supposedly helps remove (almost) any stain. So don't be taken in by the seemingly wonderful qualities of 'bargain' products. Rely on scientific studies, consumer reports and trial and error. If that doesn't work, ask your mother.

Great age allows for making a lot of mistakes. I hope I learned from some of them.

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## About the Author:

Kenneth Hoffman