

## NEW TRENDS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS ETHICS IN MARKETING FOR EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

It has rightly been said by Charles Darwin that “the fittest will survive”. This dictum has, time and again, been reflected world over that the physical evolution of various species; being the part of natural selection process and the sustainability in their various endeavors; are the part of dominance of the fittest. The business ecosystem in the universe, by option or by compulsion, has been witnessing the similar process of elimination, elevation, endurance & extinction; where consumer is the King. There are innumerable choices and options in offer in the market place which make the consumers selective. These choices are backed by their ever changing behavioural patterns toward a particular product / service; which might have been cherished by them for many years. This manuscript explores the impact of various factors that influence and urge the behaviour of the Customers in opting and availing educational services offered by a few newly emerged Institutions. The selection and choice once made by the customers of a particular product or service doesn't assure any retention of the consumer with the organization. The consumer retention with and loyalty towards a service is based on various factors with ethics and values possess the dominance. The researchers, in this paper, examines various reasons of the selection of specific institution which urged by some unethical marketing practices including deceitful advertising as part of the marketing initiative by a few newly emerged chain of schools while offering wide range of courses than their traditional counterparts having decades old legacies. This manuscript explores the various practices in place pertains to the promotion of their 'products' called education through the most popular method of communication called advertising. The analysis made by the researchers throws lights on how could the institutions make the customers (parents and students) believe on the various facts, figures and offers through their advertisements and how come the customers got distracted due to falsified, misguided, misleading, deceitful deeds on the part of the institutions. The contemplation, on how an invisible force of ethical principles and values greatly impact the shift of changing consumer behaviour from the initial **look** (exaggerated information) to the final **feel** (real experience) of the educational services - the gap between offer and deliver. The personal values of an individual helps to nurture organizational ethics; when he becomes the part of the organization and also the same personal values and principles are foundation of the vision and mission of the organization and also cements the organizational culture. This manuscript throws some lights on the importance of value based ethical organization for sustainable growth where consistent quality of delivery, transparent relationships, and commitment found to be predominant.

**Keywords:** value-based business, ethical marketing, advertising, consumer behaviour, sustainability

### INTRODUCTION

Marketing has evolved many folds both structurally and in the process of promoting the products or service through advertisement. Information and communication Technology (ICT) has the far reaching impact on every domain. It has been the thrust bearing propeller which accelerates the process of informed decision making by the stakeholders (students and parents/guardian) in availing various educational services - ranging from admission counselling and post admission process, further studies to placements. The application of the concept of consumerism has necessitated the educational service providers - schools, colleges, universities - to change their traditional approach towards promotion of their brands. The apparent,

though invisible, cut throat competition between and among all players in the education market to have their niche cemented, generates two extremes to answer in terms of values and ethics - whether **ends justify means** or **means justify ends**. The answer to the questions is to be experienced more than writing and conveying.

In the race of promoting the brand; institutions confronts lots of ethical dilemmas and value conflicts in absorbing which extremes of the 'means and ends' dichotomy. In the process of analyzing various factors responsible for having value based educational institutions with ethical approaches towards every field of their operations, the questions emerge are: Can these Institutions survive without being deviated from the socially accepted ethical principles? Does the governance of the respective Country frame and get the values implemented? Does the judicial system intervene in interpreting and make sure checks and balance in the governance? What are the various benchmarks to determine and defend the ethical principles and also to get rid of the cultural value conflicts in the institutions? Do we have any administrative edifice - a parent body at the Government level - to monitor, regulate, audit and control and also to differentiate and demarcate ethical from unethical, upholding the cultural values in the process. Does the system in place function effectively and has the right to deal with unethical practices legally? Do we have any system in place to assess the various offers and commitments made by the institution, as part of their marketing campaign through advertisement to the students and their parents? Do we have a system in place to ensure the institutions are ideologically committed to the principles of comprehensive education? Do we have strict curriculum prescribed for teaching and to up-skill the students, especially of marketing domain? Do we ensure the students who have opted marketing as their specialization in Under-graduation or Post-graduation do the marketing job? Do we have any checks and balance on various ethical issues to be confronted with at the institutional level? Do we have clear demarcation on What is ethical and what is unethical? Do we follow a specific curriculum which is identical throughout the country and made it mandatory for all professional courses, besides moral values in school curriculum, including teacher training and management from Undergraduate level till PhD?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Leo, Terry W; Linda, Ferrell (2001): The researchers, in their Marketing Education Review titled "Teaching Marketing Ethics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" asserted the role of marketing educators in educating the ethical marketing practices to create and sustain a value based business environment. The society, wherein the business firm operates, has great expectations of the firm and the business in-turn is responsible and accountable to exhibit ethical marketing practices throughout its life time. They recommends that the marketing students should be exposed to various ethical issues and in the process of getting along with the unethical situations; they should find adequate solutions to the ethical problems in hand. The researchers suggested to have an effective pedagogical method to streamline the course of ethics as an integral part of business management.

Njomo, Louis Mosake (2014): This paper "Analyzing the impact of deceptive advertising in private higher education on students in Cameroon" analyzed how the various factors in advertisement influence to make the students and parents believe the misleading information, facts and figures as genuine at first sight and how they respond to the deception later. The findings provide new insights to not only students and parents, but to all the stake holders such as marketers, academic administrators, teachers and other office bearers, even advertising firms and agents. The researcher has cited number of references wherein how each of part of marketing can be unethical to the customers. The researcher has elaborated six various impact of these deceptive advertising practices on the students - Causes of Deceptive Advertisement, Misleading statement, Inaccurate Testimonials, Misleading, False & Exaggerated Claim.

Sharon, Gewirtz; Stephen, J, Ball; Richard, Bowe (1993): In their manuscripts "Value and Ethics in the Education Market Place - The case of Northwark Park" the researchers explored various reasons and situations which could be major reasons of ethical dilemma and cultural value conflicts confronted by the school in the process of bringing the institutions into mainstream. The pressure from various corners ranging from least preferred destination by the parents for their wards to compromising the decades old legacy of retention, by replacing its committed and old loyal staff with the recruitment of new blood without having any commitment and dedication in the system. The financial constraints, due to inadequate number

of admission made the School to think of cheap manpower (faculty) to earmark the money for other resources to survive in the competitive environment. The authors throughout their manuscript highlighted various such incidents where the school had to compromise its cultural values and ethical principles to various market forces to keep-on moving. There was a gap, as observed by the authors, between **Comprehensive value** and Comprehensive practice. Though, initially the school, owing to the cherished and nurtured cultural values, was reluctant to be subservient to the unethical market forces, it had to think of survival. In nutshell, the authors concluded their observation of fundamental value shift in the United Kingdom's Educational Systems and the similar situation can any time be emerged with any organization. The major changes of preserved ethics and values observed were of changes from social equality to institutional endurance, from ideology to laissez-faire, from collaboration to distrust and need with convenience.

Yoo, Boonghee; Donthu, Naveen (1992): in their manuscript "The effect of Marketing Education and Individual Cultural Values on Marketing Ethics of Students" observed that unethical marketing practices cause terrible damage to the organization. The interpretation of their findings has revealed that marketing ethics must be taught in the formal educational setting of Undergraduate and Postgraduate level to have stronger ethical marketing practices in the profession of marketing. The findings of the data analyzed by the authors show a direct and very closer relations between individual values supported by ethical principles, cultural practices and organizational culture nurtured by the concerned individual. The study investigates that the more the students are nurtured and educated in Ethical Marketing Practices; the better will be adoption and implementation of those practices in their professional life. The authors' observations conveyed an ideal solution to unethical marketing practices by educating and imparting training on ethics to the students of various professional courses including marketing.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

To examine how importance the ethical practices in Educational Marketing to have a value driven institution.

To analyse how the new trend of unethical practices in terms of marketing of educational services including advertisement having exaggerated facts and fig, figures, over commitment and under/zero delivery, misleading offers, malpractices in the emerging private educational institutions and the customers responds to them.

To investigate various situations, processes and activities wherein unethical business or marketing practices can be emerged in educational institutions.

To explore how could the unethical practices (by hook or by crook) followed by new players in the Market Place of the Educational Industry impact the lives of the victims / various stakeholders and be detected.

To examine and throw some lights on whether the enshrined values can be preserved and ethics can be practiced and implemented in marketing of education; in the race for earning more profit in business..

### **Hypothesis:**

H: Some Practices and some kinds of projections in advertisement can be seen as unethical

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

A combination of Empirical and Conceptual methods has been adopted for the purpose of various analysis and their interpretation leading to the this study.

#### **Primary Data**

Data collected directly through interactions with the customers of educational services - Parents, students, teachers, educational administrators randomly were analyzed to find the various forms of unethical marketing practices including advertisement prevalent in the educational institutions.

#### **Secondary Data**

The review of related literature already published were analyzed. The findings thus drawn by the researchers from the available data have been analyzed and interpreted to reach a conclusion on the significance of ethical and value driven marketing practices for Educational Services.

### **Research Gap**

The researches on Ethics and Values in various social science disciplines have long and century old legacy. But the researches on Ethical practices on various professions, functions and disciplines have decade old legacy. The ethical practices of Marketing should be subjective and separate system, process and control mechanism are advisable

### **Sampling Design**

Sampling aims to get an appropriate sample size having some unique or homogeneous features relevant to the topic under exploration. The sample design has been made on the basis of the theory building by reviewing the relevant and related literature as the base and also the opinions of respondents on the advertisement of educational services in unethical ways were recorded, analyzed and interpreted.

### **Sampling Method**

The review of related literature could help to understand the general issues of marketing ethics in different forms and at different levels of the organizational pyramid. To delimit the study to the core so as to focus more attention on specific issue pertaining to the advertisements which create such unethical practices in the marketing function. A questionnaire was designed enlisting specific issues confronted by many students and their parents in the process of getting admitted trusting the advertisements and their real experience during the post admission. The experience of the respondents were similar to a certain extent and their experiences shared as responses are expected to be identical.

### **Population**

The population drawn is a pool of students (200 Nos.) who are having homogeneous aspirations, joined a few newly emerged chains of private schools, in Bangalore, affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) schools with lot of aspirations as envisaged in the advertisement for admission. These schools cater regular needs of its curriculum along with preparing the students for various national and international competitive exams such as Olympiads, Subject-wise Olympiads of Science and Mathematics, National Talent Search Examination (NTSE), Kishore Vigyanic Protsahan Yojana (KVPY) for research aspirants in traditional science subjects, National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) UG for medical aspirants, Joint Engineering Exam (JEE) for engineering aspirants. The various responses from students, parents, teachers and school administrators were obtained for doing this study and out of those; two hundred (200) responses were analyzed in detail.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework is structured grouping the various micro issues of misleading advertisement and its aftereffect confronted by students and their parents, under six broad segments. 1. Reasons of duplicitous advertising, 2. Different Kinds of misleading advertisements, 3. Endorsement by Alumni, 4. Magnified Affirmation, 5. Falsified Fee Structure & 6. Aftermath of falsified advertisements. Response on Likert Scale collected were reviewed, analyzed, presented (only the Strongly agreed & agreed are considered together eliminating Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree) presented and interpreted.

### **Data Analysis**

The result drawn from a survey conducted among the parents & students of a few Private Educational Institutions in Bangalore; along with regular courses that offer special coaching for various professional courses like IIT, JEE, National & International Olympiads, National Talent Search Exams (NTSE) Kishore Vigyanic Protsahan Joyana (KVPY), Common Proficiency Test for Chartered Accountant (CA CPT), Olympiads on individual Science Subjects and Mathematics etc. The randomly conducted survey by the researchers shows that out 200 sample collected from the students or their parents on various unethical practices adopted by the institutions misleading the students and their parents, by way of various forms of advertisement, while persuading the target audience - the students and their parents in the process of selling the product called education

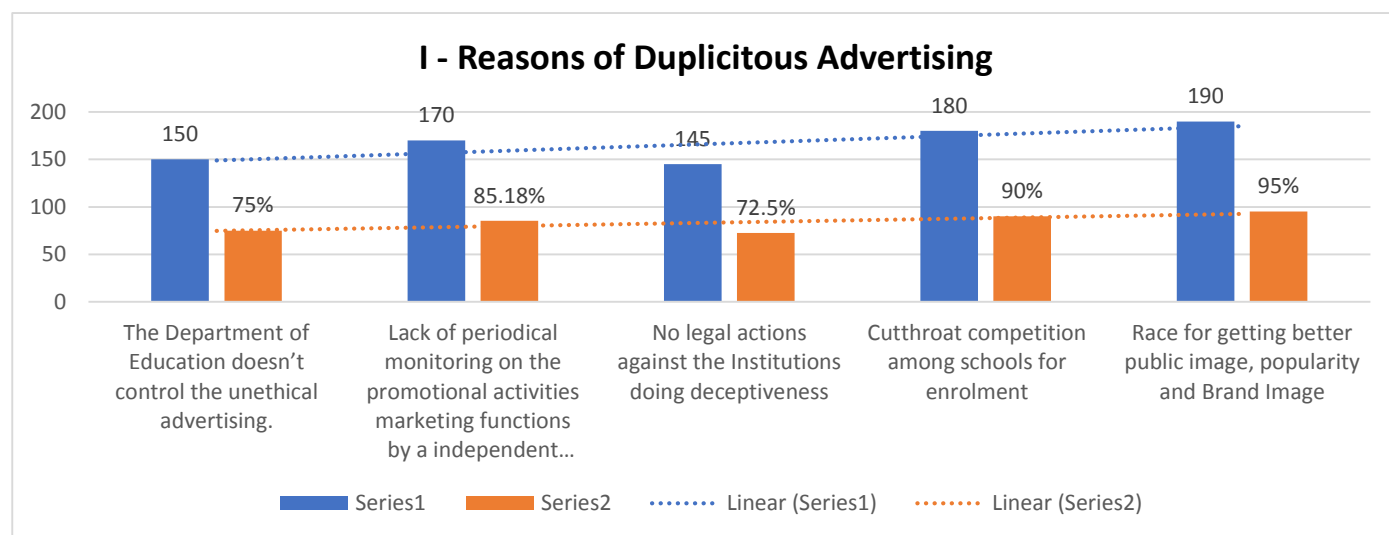
The questionnaire was segmented into Six Broad categories and micro-categorizations were under each broad category. The responses were obtained on Likert Five Scales and only relevant responses were analyzed (Strongly Agree and Agree) and eliminated Neutral Responses, Strongly Disagree and Disagree as the case may be to delimit to the core.

### Data Analysis & Interpretations

Unethical Advertising -Marketing for Education -Negative Impact on Students and Parents (I of VI)

Table I -Reasons of duplicitous Advertising - Number & Percentage of respondents

Variables (Samples Size: 200 Nos.)	Number of Respondents (favoured the view)	% of Respondents
<b>I - Reasons of Duplicitous Advertising</b>		
1. The Department of Education doesn't control the unethical advertising.	150	75
2. Lack of periodical monitoring on the promotional activities marketing functions by a independent agency without having any favour to or fear of the Institution.	170	85.18
3. No legal actions against the Institutions doing deceptiveness	145	72.5
4. Cutthroat competition among schools for enrolment	180	90
Race for getting better public image, popularity and Brand Image	190	95



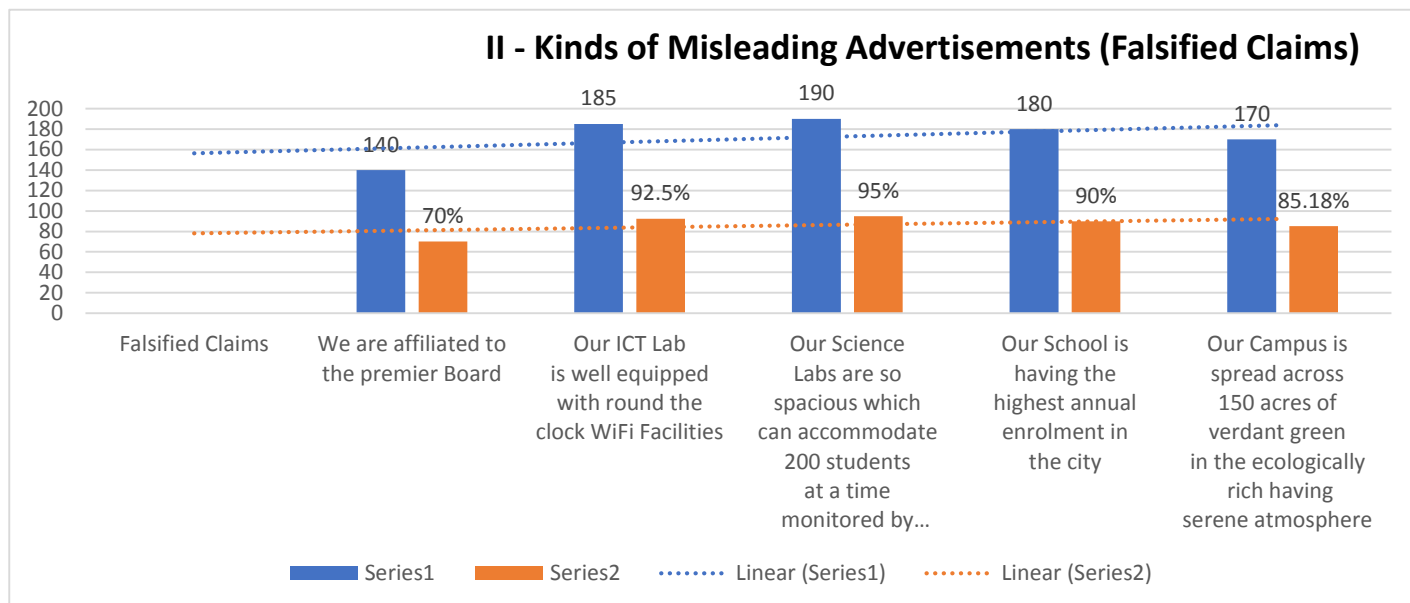
[Chart I: Reasons of duplicitous Advertising - Number & Percentage of respondents]

### Data Analysis & Interpretations

Unethical Advertising-Marketing for Education -Negative Impact on Students and Parents (II of VI)

Table II -Kinds of Misleading Advertisement (Falsified Claims)

Variables (Samples Size: 200 Nos.)	Number of Respondents (favoured the view)	% of Respondents
<b>II- Kinds of Misleading Advertisement (Falsified Claims)</b>		
1. We are affiliated to the premier Board	140	70
2. Our ICT Lab is well equipped with round the clock WiFi Facilities	185	92.5
3. Our Science Labs are so spacious which can accommodate 200 students at a time monitored by well qualified faculty members	190	95
4. Our School is having the highest annual enrolment in the city	180	90
5. Our Campus is spread across 150 acres of verdant green in the ecologically rich having serene atmosphere	170	85.18



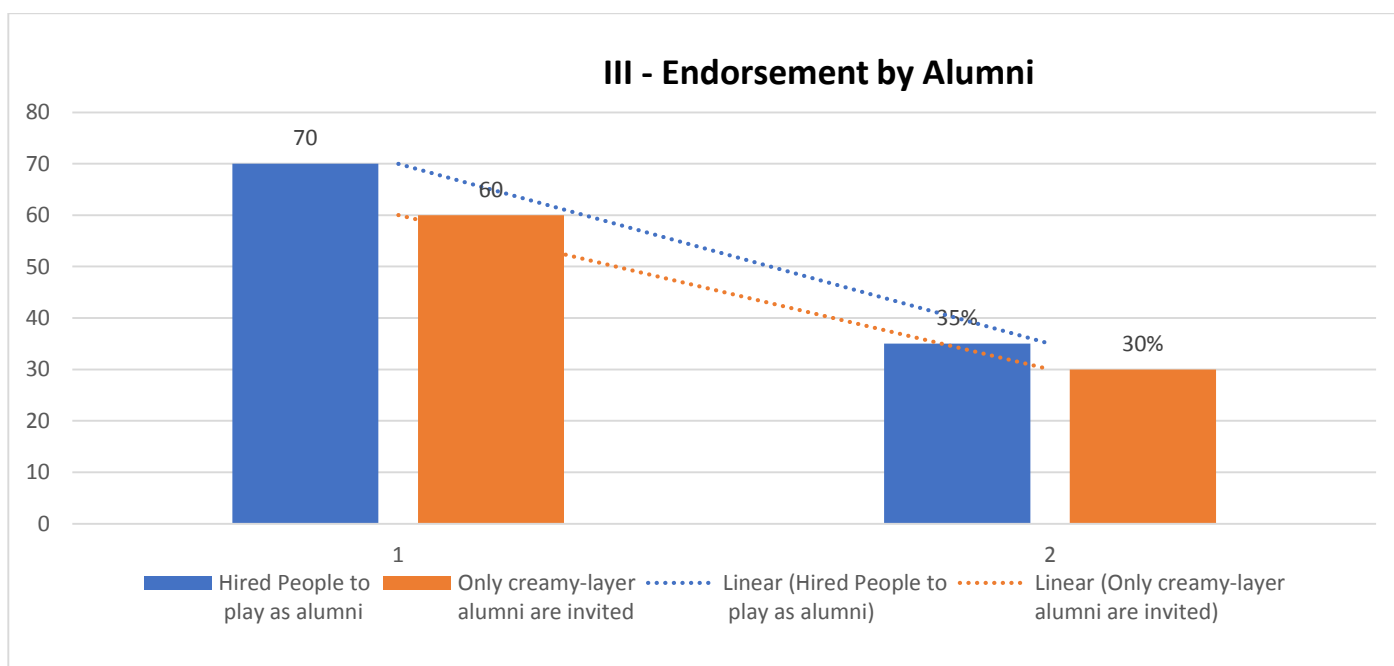
[Chart II -Kinds of Misleading Advertisement (Falsified Claims)]

### Data Analysis & Interpretations

### Unethical Advertising - Marketing for Education - Negative Impact on Students and Parents (III of VI)

Table III -Endorsement by Alumni

Variables (Samples Size: 200 Nos.)	Number of Respondents (favoured the view)	% of Respondents
<b>III- Endorsement by Alumni</b>		
1. Hired People to play as alumni	70	35
2. Only creamy-layer alumni are invited	60	30



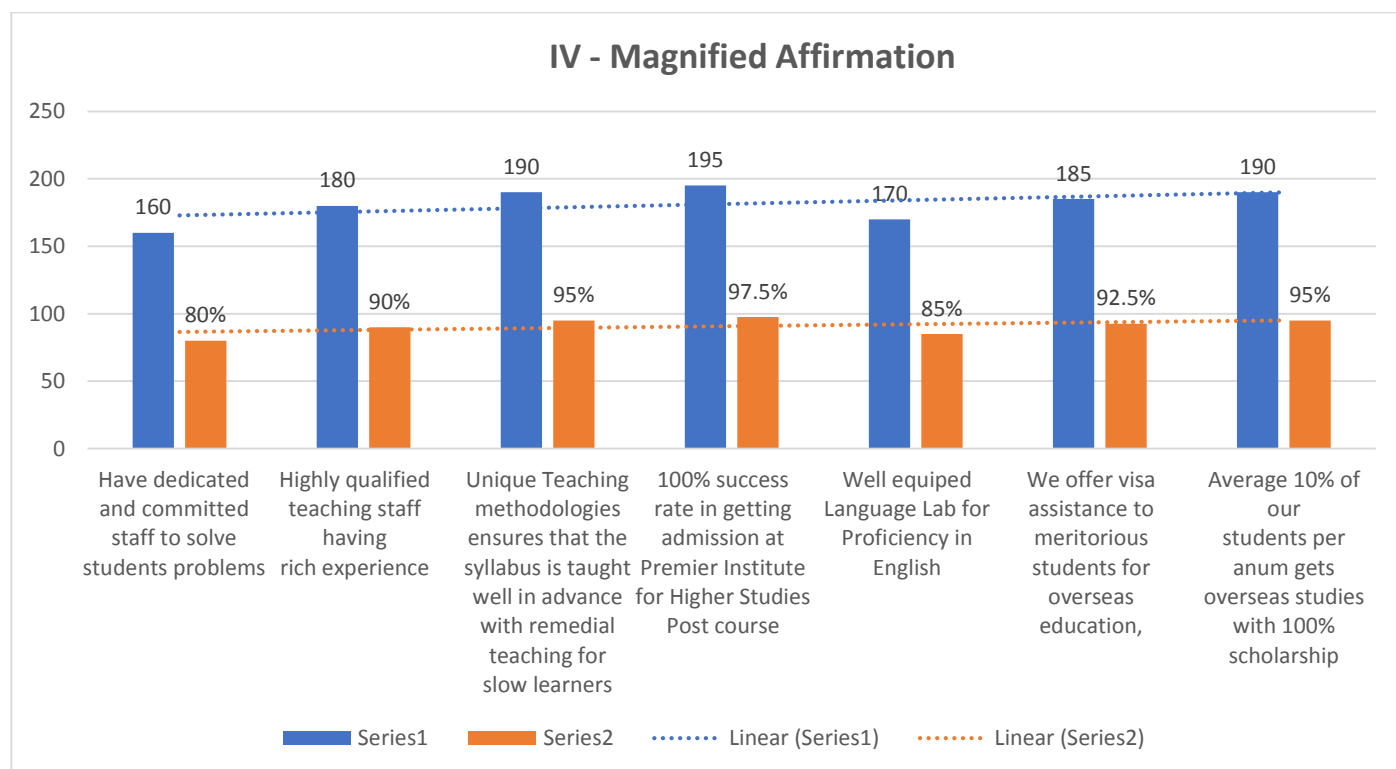
[Chart III - Endorsement by Alumni]

### Data Analysis & Interpretations

Unethical Advertising - Marketing for Education - Negative Impact on Students and Parents (IV of VI)

Table IV - Magnified Affirmation

Variables (Samples Size: 200 Nos.)	Number of Respondents (favoured the view)	% of Respondents
<b>IV - Magnified Affirmation</b>		
1. A pool of dedicated and committed staff to solve students problems in a timely manner.	160	80
2. Highly qualified staff having rich experience capable to meet any learning needs of the students at any point of time.	180	90
3. Unique Teaching methodologies ensures that the syllabus is taught well in advance with remedial teaching for slow learners	190	95
4. 100% success story in getting admissions in premier professional institutions of higher learning after the course.	195	97.5
5. Special attention is given for the utmost utilization of our Language Lab to make the student proficient in English Language	170	85
6. We offer visa assistance to meritorious students for overseas education, Education Loan for poor students without any processing fee and commission.	185	92.5
7. On an average, 10% of our students gets overseas educational opportunities at Top Ranking Universities with 100% Scholarship - waive off of tuition fees.	190	95



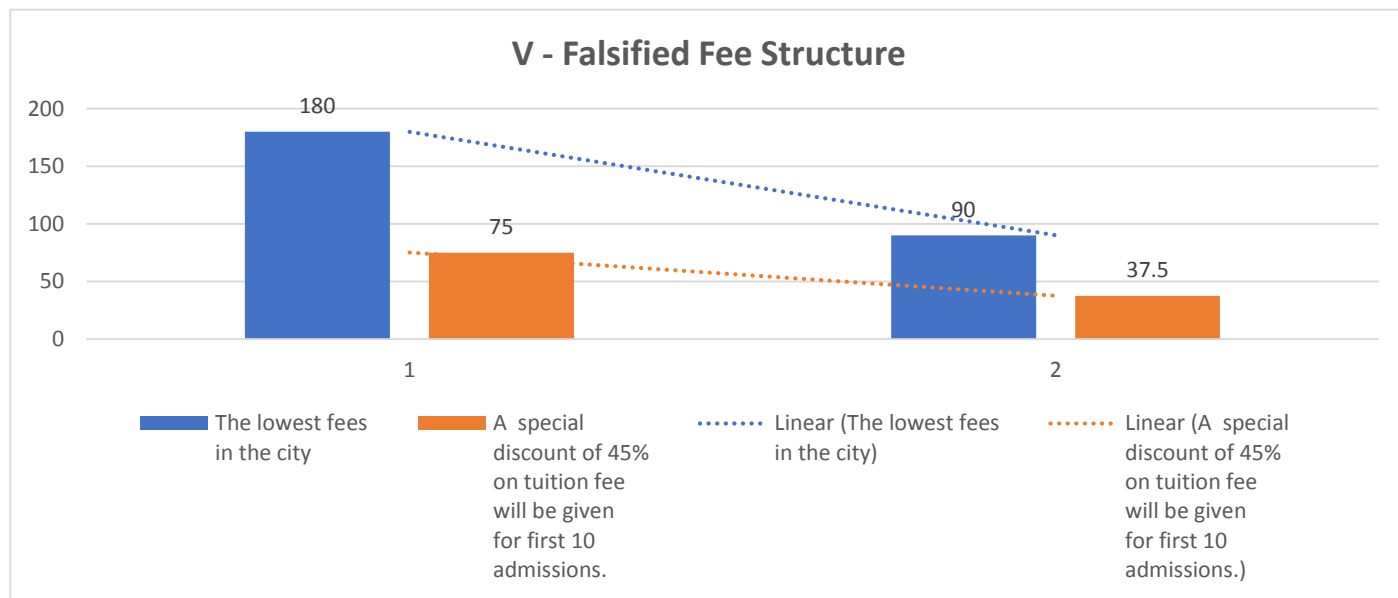
[Chart IV -Magnified Affirmation]

### Data Analysis & Interpretations

Unethical Advertising - Marketing for Education - Negative Impact on Students and Parents ( V of VI)

Table V - Falsified Fee Structure

Variables (Samples Size: 200 Nos.)	Number of Respondents (favoured the view)	% of Respondents
<b>V - Falsified Fee Structure</b>		
1. The lowest fees in the city	180	90
2. A special discount of 45% on tuition fee will be given for first 10 admissions.	75	37.5



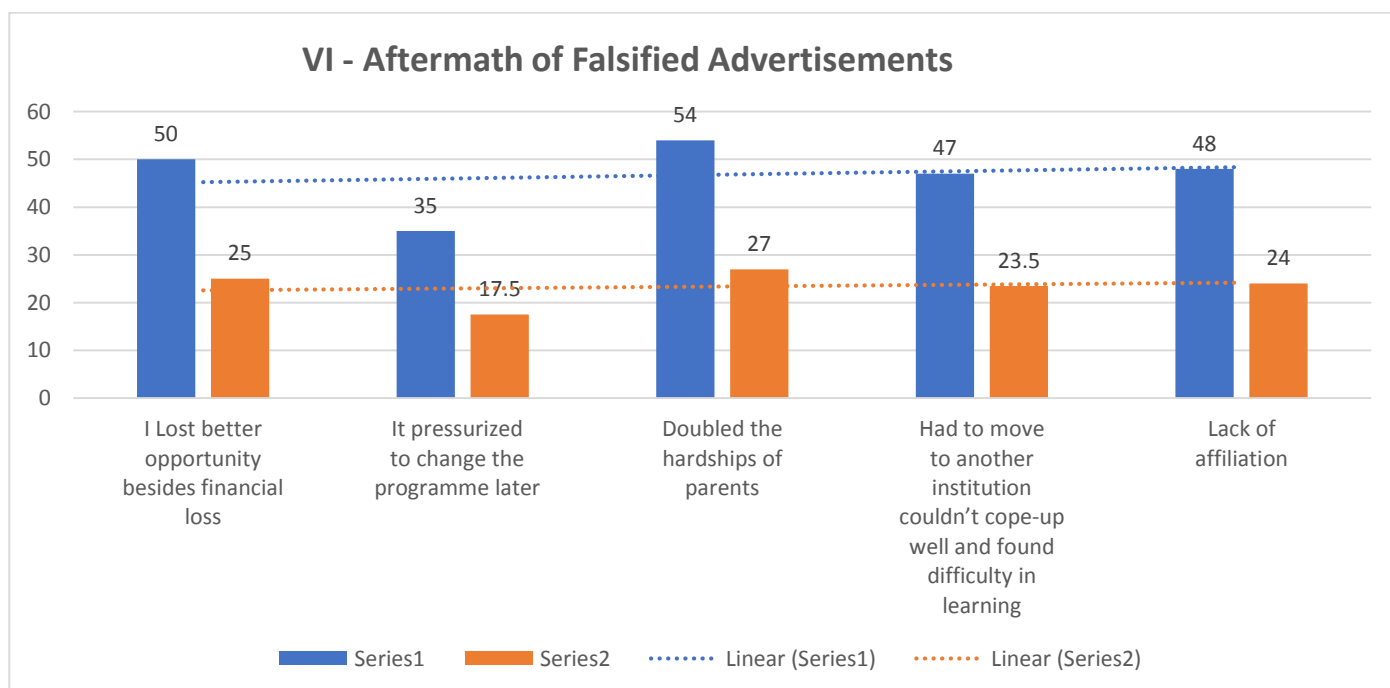
[Table V - Falsified Fee Structure]

### Data Analysis & Interpretations

Unethical Advertising - Marketing for Education - Negative Impact on Students and Parents (VI of VI)

Table VI - Aftermath of Falsified Advertisements

Variables (Samples Size: 200 Nos.)	Number of Respondents (favoured the view)	% of Respondents
<b>VI - Aftermath of Falsified Advertisement</b>		
1. I Lost better opportunity besides financial loss	50	25
2. It pressurized to change the programme later	35	17.5
3. Doubled the hardships of parents	54	27
4. Had to move to another institution couldn't cope-up well and 5. found difficulty in learning	47	23.5
5. Lack of affiliation	48	24



[Chart IV - Aftermath of Falsified Advertisements]



### **Data Interpretation**

The data analyzed shows that the Marketing Practices of advertising for education can be perverted to unethical practices and in such situations, its negative impacts on students and their Parents will be more grievous. Unethical practices, process and system as a whole in business is a heinous crime. The Conceptual frame work was structured on the basis of common issues pertaining to unethical advertising as the part of promotional activities of marketing for education.

The responses analyzed are interpreted:-

1. **Reasons of Duplicitous Advertising:** 190 (95%) respondents out of total 200 opined that this happens because of the race for getting public image in the society besides popularity and brand image.
2. **Misleading Advertisement (Falsified Claim):** 190 respondents (95%) out of total 200 were of the opinion that the falsified claim about Science Laboratories having the capacity of accommodating 200 students at a time providing all required devices and apparatus and other things. Meanwhile, 185 (92.5%) were of the opinion that the confirmation given on ICT lab stating its facility of having round the clock WiFi Connection and updated systems.
3. **Endorsement by Alumni:** It is found that a few cases the Schools used to get hired personalities to play the role as its alumni, 70 (35%) respondents out 200 supported the prevalence of this practice.
4. **Magnified Affirmation:** 195 (97.5%) participants were of the opinion that the schools could influence them by stating that 100% success in getting admission for higher studies in premier educational institutions. 190 participants (95%) have supported the view stating that affirmation of 10% students on an average every year get admission in overseas institutions and universities with 100% scholarship. Meanwhile, 184 were of the opinion that the most influencing factor was of assured Visa to preferred country after successful completion of the course with prescribe marks or score.
5. **Falsified Fee Structure:** 180 (90%) respondents agree with the fact that the lowest fees compared to other schools in the city attracted them to get admission.
6. **Aftermath of Falsified Advertisement:** 50 respondents were of the opinion that these misleading advertisement urging to get admissions, they lost better opportunities besides financial losses to the parents.

### **7. Findings and Implications**

The schools, in the process of attracting students for admission use to offer many things so as to get the attention of the parents attracted. The schools, often play the role of a career counselor inducing a kind of emotional attachment pretending to be the well-wisher of the respective family in respect of the child's future. Parents will be happy to see all the achievements, credentials and accolades of other meritorious students of the schools in the recent past. The Schools take this in their own favour, as the parents, most often are unable to / fails to understand the intention of the schools and capabilities and potentials of their own wards. The findings vividly shows such practices are prevalent in educational institutions especially the students of private schools are vulnerable to them. The implications can have reaching effects on the career and future of the students.

### **SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY**

The given data analyzed for its validity and interpreted on the basis of the reliability as different variables were used. It is evident that there are number of cases which have been reporting from time to time. Someway or the other, the corruption in educational sector is rampant which has many forms and shapes - awarding degree, giving grace marks to get a grade much higher than the actual score, awarding the degree even without being enrolled and making the enrolment of pro-rata basis. Modification in the Grade and Percentage to make them eligible for further studies or getting a Public Sector Jobs. Many medical doctors and other health care professionals are working and earning without having formal qualification. On

background verification of such cases, it gets lime lighted that the certificates they are in possession of were neither issued by the University nor they ever have studied in. Such anomalies have become routines. The deceptive advertisements in the marketing practices for education have created lots of injustice towards the students and parents. Such practices should be nibbed in the bud by taking stringent legal action against the offenders as commitment under criminal law. It is highly recommended that a shoud be in place to adit the system, process and various practices prevalent in the educational institutions. It is suggested to have team of top ranking officials to get such grievances resolved and compensated by penalizing the offenders. Such offences must be rewarded with strict punishment with penalty. Our educational systems should be strengthner wherein the rudiments of Moral Values and Professional Ethics should be taught from primary grades onwards and continue till Postgraduation Level especially for professional courses including Education and Management. A unified syllabus and curriculam for Values and Ethics must be framed and enforced throught the country. Professional Orientations and training must be imparted to all the levels and functions in the educational institutions from time to time.

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