



## HEAD OFFICE

4 Carnavon Street  
Private Mail Bag  
GPO, Suva  
Phone - General Office: 3300792, 3305478  
Executive Secretary/CEO: 3305864  
Fax: 3300115 Email: [complaints@consumersfiji.org](mailto:complaints@consumersfiji.org)

## LAUTOKA/West

Suite 4 Popular Building  
Vidilo Street  
PO Box 5396, Lautoka  
Phone: 6664987  
Email: [consumerlwk@connect.com.fj](mailto:consumerlwk@connect.com.fj)

## LABASA/North

FNPF Building  
Rosawa Street  
PO Box 64, Labasa  
Phone: 8812559  
Email: [consumerlbs@connect.com.fj](mailto:consumerlbs@connect.com.fj)

30 May 2015

Feature

## Consumers and Advertisements

As consumers, we all are exposed to more than a dozen advertisements daily.

Be it in the daily newspapers, radio, television, mobile phone text messages or the social media sites, platforms, advertisements have now become so much part of our lives.

No doubt, advertisements are designed in a way that they have an effect on the consumers, leaving a strong appeal on many. An effective advertisement, like other forms of communication, works best when it strikes a chord in the needs and desires of the receiving consumer.

With the use of slogans, jingles and catch phrases, some advertisements end up becoming a household name. It draws the old and the young members of the family to buy those products and services which are advertised.

Consumers fall for brand names or crazy sale promotions and giveaways without asking for necessary disclosures to find out more about the products and the services.

This, however, could be detrimental for the consumers as they could be misled if they rely only on advertisements without finding out more about the deals.

A conscious consumer would analyse the details of the advertisements before falling for the inflated advertising claims.

The more exposure a consumer has to the motivation that lie behind questionable advertising methods, the less likely it will be that he/she will be fooled by such tactics.

It is sometimes difficult to obtain information on such issues that would be meaningful to the average consumer. Therefore, it is especially important that consumers be on guard against misleading or fraudulent advertisement.

Advertisements are made to persuade consumers to buy products, causing to exaggerate its benefits and give false claims. Thus, smart consumers can help themselves by analysing the advertisements by asking the following questions:

- Is the advertisement promoting attractive special offers on low quality products and services?
- Are they promoting a product or commodity with clear information regarding its origin, components, production date, expiry date?
- Are they offering a service with clear information regarding contracting terms, benefits, address location, usage warnings?
- What action is taking place in the advertisement and what significance does it have?

- What theme or themes do we find in the advertisement? What is it about?
- What about the language used? Does it essentially provide information or does it try to generate some kind of emotional response?
- What is the item being advertised and what role does it play in our culture and society?
- Using false claims or claims that entice the user with an improbable result (even if this result is possible) as the likely outcome that a user can expect.  
For example: "Miracle cures" for medical ailments, extreme weight loss products or programs, "get rich quick" schemes or promising large financial return for minimal effort or investment. Consumers need to ascertain how real are they?
- An unrealistically low price. This can make the advertisement appear near the top of results when sorted by price.

The Council has come across instances where supermarkets display "sale" prices on certain products, which in fact are normal prices. In other instances "sale" items show normal prices on cash registers at the checkout counter.

For instance, in a supermarket, a particular brand of 90g soap was 85c but reduced to 75c on sale. However, the sale price was not picked up by the cash register. Furthermore, another supermarket displayed \$1.50 for canned tuna, however, the cash register recorded \$1.80 for the same.

A crucial issue with some advertisements is the use of **fine prints**. The Council has over the years stressed on this issue. Some service providers when advertising have the terms and conditions in fine print that makes it difficult for a consumer to clearly read and understand the details.

On this note, the Council urges the traders to be mindful of the Commerce Commission Decree 2010, which prevents a person in trade or commerce from misleading consumers and/or making false representation of goods and services by promoting the same through published advertisements.

**Remember**, there is more to the advertising message than what meets the casual eye!