GUIDELINES FOR ADVERTISEMENTS FOR CHARITABLE CAUSES

Preamble:

In recent years, charities have been active advertisers, particularly on digital media, and especially for the purpose of seeking funds and crowdfunding on behalf of their beneficiaries. It may be noted that many such beneficiaries may not have an active social network to reach and tap donors. Charities, including crowdfunding platforms, provide this reach through sponsored ads and organic posts, which tap potential donors.

However, there have been some concerns about ads that create donor distress through the use of images that may be too graphic. While the intent of such posts is undoubtedly to nudge donors to contribute, such posts may cause undue distress to ordinary consumers who may be surfing through their news feeds.

Charities can have a challenging job explaining the nature of the important, and often sensitive, work they do in a way that educates, but doesn't distress, their audience. While many people may feel a powerful and sometimes negative reaction to these types of ads, conversely, many could feel that the worthwhile nature of the charities means that greater scope should be afforded to them to use hard-hitting themes and images.

It's perfectly understandable that charitable organisations want to do everything possible to raise awareness and funds for their causes. However, they must take care not to overstep the mark by misleading consumers or causing unjustified distress. ASCI's Chapter 1 requires ads to be honest and truthful, and Chapter 2 requires them not to cause grave or widespread harm or offence. In order for ads to be compliant with the ASCI code, advertisements related to charitable causes must adhere to the following guidelines.

1. An advertisement for a charitable organization or crowdsourcing platform for charity shall not overtly or pointedly suggest that anyone who doesn't support the charity fails in their responsibility or should feel ashamed.

2. Advertisements must not disrespect the dignity of those on whose behalf an appeal is being made, by any means, including showing graphic images of victims in distress, particularly children and minors. An advertiser must be able to produce evidence of express consent for the use of images of beneficiaries if asked to do so.
3. In digital advertising, any image shown in the ad that could cause unjustified distress to an ordinary consumer, must be blurred and made visible only to those interested in clicking and knowing more.
4. When an appeal is made for a specific case or a specific beneficiary, the ad must disclose if the funds could potentially be used for other purposes or other beneficiaries. Ads must not mislead consumers about where or to whom their donations are going.
5. If a crowdsourcing platform collects a percentage or fee for managing or raising donor funds, it must be made clear what such amounts are in the advertisement itself.

Chairman
Board of Governors, ASCI
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