

PRESS RELEASE

Call for Collective Action: Safeguarding the Future of the Legal Profession in the Age of Online Commercialization

Issued by Bhagnari & Co – Patent and Trademark Attorneys, India

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In recent times, several High Courts and State Bar Councils in India have taken serious note of advocates advertising their services through social media and other online platforms, reiterating that such acts amount to solicitation and are against the professional ethics governing the legal profession.

Simultaneously, the Intellectual Property Office has initiated action against non-legal entities and commercial websites that openly advertise and solicit trademark filing and related legal work. Despite these efforts, the problem persists and continues to grow.

While it is agreed that advocacy is a **noble profession** and must maintain its **dignity and independence**, it is equally necessary to confront the realities of the changing digital environment. The profession must evolve responsibly, ensuring that those who are **legally qualified and ethically bound** are not pushed out by unregulated commercial operators.

This situation is particularly acute in the field of trademark law where a number of internet marketing companies, often without any legal qualifications, have hijacked search engines and positioned themselves to capture the majority of trademark filing work in India. This has directly impacted genuine trademark advocates, many of whom now face severe hardship in sustaining their practices.

The **system of trademark agents** also deserves closer examination. Unlike advocates, trademark agents are not governed by the **Advocates Act** or regulated by Bar Councils. This allows them to freely advertise their services and, in many cases, mislead the public into believing they are qualified legal professionals.

At **Bhagnari & Co**, we believe the time has come for the legal community to engage in an open and constructive discussion on how to restore balance, fairness, and integrity to the profession, while addressing the need for visibility and accessibility in the digital era.

A Call for Reform and Reflection

As we confront these challenges, it becomes essential to revisit some foundational questions:

- Is it time to **re-examine the provisions of the Advocates Act, 1961** and similar regulatory frameworks in other countries to ensure they remain relevant in a digitally connected world?
- Should the **restrictions on advertising by advocates**, formulated in a pre-digital era, be **rationaly relaxed** to allow professionals to present their credentials and services transparently, without compromising ethics or dignity?
- How can we **legally restrain non-legal internet marketing companies** and unqualified entities from engaging in or promoting legal services, particularly in fields such as intellectual property and corporate compliance?

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These are not merely theoretical questions but pressing issues that directly affect the **survival, credibility, and future of the legal profession.**

Our collective effort should aim to develop **clear regulatory distinctions** between legitimate professional communication and unethical solicitation, while simultaneously strengthening mechanisms to prevent **unqualified intermediaries** from entering the legal domain.

Although this issue is most visible in **India** today, we may soon witness **similar trends emerging in other countries**, as legal services increasingly shift to online platforms. Therefore, we call upon **advocates and legal professionals from across the world** to join hands in exploring fair, ethical, and globally consistent solutions to this growing challenge. The protection of professional dignity and the integrity of legal practice is a matter of **international concern** that requires united thought and action.

We therefore invite **advocates, law firms, and members of the IP fraternity worldwide** to participate in a collaborative dialogue aimed at developing practical policy recommendations and awareness strategies that protect the profession's core values.

A dedicated discussion channel and social media platform have been created for this purpose:

Telegram Discussion Forum: <https://t.me/+mKPXeybUkmxlZjM1>

Twitter (X): [@LegalEthicsIntl](https://twitter.com/LegalEthicsIntl)

Let us collectively work towards a sustainable and dignified future for the legal profession, one that preserves its ethical foundations while embracing responsible modernization.

Link to this press release: <https://www.bhagnari.com/legal-ethics-press-release/>

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