

MA MANAGEMENT AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

MARKETING ASSIGNMENT

In the modern business world, the role of advertisements is extremely important. Advertisement is a means of informing the consumers and potential consumers about the various goods and services available to them. It is an essential instrument of communication between the consumers and the sellers. "Advertising both informs and transforms the product by creating an image that goes beyond straightforward facts." (Wells et al, 2003, pg14). Advertising promotes competition. It is also used as a technique to enter the markets by small businesses. It also generates competitive pressures that tend to drive the prices in the market. "Advertising has important social roles to play as well. It informs us about new and improved products which helps us to compare products features and make informed consumer decisions." (Wells et al, 2003, pg14).

Advertisements have the ability to attract more customers to a particular item, lower the price of certain commodities because of increased demand etc. There has occurred an evident change in the kind of advertisements and the importance of advertisements. "The most dramatic change affecting advertising has undoubtedly been the growth in importance in promotions, both consumer and trade. Advertisements leave a long lasting impact in the minds of the consumers. Advertisements are highly creative and enjoyable." (Jones, 1998, pg16).

"Advertising may be defined as a paid non personal communication from an identified sponsor using mass media to persuade an audience. Today, advertisers can provide customisation through interactive media such as the Internet. Traditionally a one- to- one approach or personal selling was adopted. This kind of interactive advertising helps to reach a larger audience." (Wells et al, 2003, pg10).

"Ethics can be simply defined as a set of prescriptive rules, principles, values and virtues of character that inform and guide interpersonal and intrapersonal conduct: that is, the conduct of people towards each other and the conduct of people towards themselves." (Spence and Heekeren, 2004, pg2). What seems to be ethical to one may not always be ethical to another. Ethical decisions are influenced by the cultural background, values, and religion, legal aspects etc. of a person. Therefore the ethical standards differ from person to person.

"There is nothing morally wrong with the practice of advertising in itself. But how managers advertise may generate moral problems. These problems usually centre around the use of persuasion and the creation of consumer demands. Moral questions may arise, sometimes; because of the way advertisers go about trying to convince people that they should buy their product. Advertising ethics affects the practice of our lives and also the practice of business in subtle and prominent ways." (www.questia.com). Unethical advertising can contribute to the worsening of poverty.

Advertisements have several economic, political, cultural and moral benefits and disadvantages. (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia). Advertising can be a useful tool for sustaining honest and ethically responsible competition that

contributes to economic growth in the service of authentic human development. Advertising is economically beneficial as it informs people about the availability of rationally desirable new products and services and improvements in existing ones, helping them to make informed, prudent consumer decisions, contributing to efficiency and the lowering of prices, and stimulating economic progress through the expansion of business and trade. This helps in the creation of new jobs, higher incomes and a more decent and humane way of life for all. Advertising helps developing countries to improve their standard of living. "Twenty to forty percent of the price consumers pay for the products they buy goes into the production costs and for commercials. The manufacturers first convince the consumers to buy their products, which might not ordinarily be required. Then they charge the consumers for the cost of advertising them." (Consumers Association of Penang, 1990, pg98)

Serious harm can be done them if advertising and commercial pressure become so irresponsible that communities seeking to rise from poverty to a reasonable standard of living are persuaded to seek this progress by satisfying wants that have been artificially created. The result of this is that they waste their resources and neglect their real needs, and genuine development falls behind.

Political advertising can make its contribution by informing people about the ideas and policy proposals of parties and candidates, including new candidates not previously known to the public. This helps to a void monopolization of power. Political advertising is particularly beneficial to democracy. But sometimes-political advertising can obstruct the proper working of democracy. Many a times political advertisements are used to distort the ideas and views of the opponents instead of providing full and honest information about themselves. It is used as a tool to damage the opponent's reputation.

Advertising has cultural benefits too. It can contribute to the betterment of society by uplifting and inspiring people and motivating them to act in ways that benefit themselves and others. Advertising can brighten lives simply by being witty, tasteful and entertaining. Many of the tourism advertisements help gain awareness about other cultures and different kinds of people around the world. At the same time it can also have a corrupting influence upon culture and cultural values. Advertisements do great injury to the cultural values especially to the developing and underdeveloped countries. They convey messages that might be acceptable in the well-developed countries. It is the younger generation that get easily influenced by such advertisements. For instance, the advertisement of Benetton where a nun and a monk kiss is unethical. Such kind of advertisements

Advertisements have certain moral benefits too. They help to convey messages of faith, of patriotism, of tolerance, compassion and neighbourly service, of charity toward the needy, messages concerning health and education, constructive and helpful messages that educate and motivate people in a variety of beneficial ways. But sometimes advertisements can be vulgar and morally degrading. Today, too, some advertisers consciously seek to shock and titillate by exploiting content of a morbid, perverse, pornographic nature. This is not an ethical practice. Advertising sometimes is used to promote products and inculcate attitudes and forms of behaviour contrary to moral norms. That is the case, for instance, with the advertising of contraceptives, products harmful to health, and with government-sponsored advertising campaigns for artificial birth control, so -

called "safe sex", and similar practices. Such kinds of advertisements do greater harm to the moral values of people especially in the developing countries.

SEXUALITY AND ETHICS IN ADVERTISING

“Historically, the trend in advertising has been to eroticise women more often than men. However, in recent years we have begun to see young men portrayed in a similar manner, though you are still more likely to see women sexualised in advertisements.” (<http://www.media-awareness.ca>). The presence of sexual appeals in advertising is very pervasive in much of the world. The use of such appeals is constantly in terms of ethics and morality. “The issue of sexuality in advertising is what Boddewyn has called a ‘soft- issue’ based in complex subjective and socially/ culturally constructed roots and values. It is too complicated to be addressed merely by controlling or regulating the frequency of sexual appeals used.” (Gould, 1994). “Sometimes when sexuality is used in advertising, certain values and attitudes towards sex are being 'sold' to consumers along with the products.”(<http://www.media-awareness.ca>). Many a times it may be noticed that there is use of sexuality where it is not necessary. This is seen as unethical in most places. The use of such unethical advertisements can have a serious influence on the customers purchasing attitude. Objectification of women is very commonly found these days. Even women’s body language is used to convey certain ideas. Sometimes the message conveyed is wrong and misleading.

ADVERTISEMENTS TARGETTED AT CHILDREN

“Children are a legitimate and powerful consumer group, particularly in the areas of toys, back-to-school products, candy and snacks, apparel, and to some degree, health and beauty care items.”(<http://www.antiessays.com>). Children are considered as one of the most vulnerable of all media audiences. Children are not mature enough to evaluate advertising messages and make purchase decisions. They are easy to influence. Advertisers should make sure that they do not convey wrong messages or inculcate bad habits in children as a result of wrong advertisements. “Much advertising directed at children apparently tries to exploit their credulity and suggestibility, in the hope that they will put pressure on their parents to buy products of no real benefit to them. Advertising like this offends against the dignity and rights of both children and parents; it intrudes upon the parent-child relationship and seeks to manipulate it to its own base ends.” (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia).

It has also been observed that advertisements of tobacco and alcohol result in a rise in its consumption. Sometimes these advertisements have a negative impact on children especially youngsters. “Each year 1 million young people take up smoking and the figures continues to grow.” (Wells et al, 2003, pg40). But it can be argued that there is no evidence that people have started smoking or consumption of alcohol because of advertisements. Advertisements may cause consumers to switch brands. It may also make them aware of the variety of

products available in the market. Most people are found to have started smoking or consuming alcohol as a result of peer pressure.

Advertisements can betray its role as a source of information by misrepresentation and by withholding relevant facts. Deliberate misrepresentation of facts or even concealing of facts is unethical. This might help to increase sales in the short run. But once the commodities do not achieve the perceived expectations, the consumers turn to other options. This will drastically affect the company in the long run. Concealing information by advertisements is also unethical. Advertisements are required to provide full and honest information to the consumers. Concealing information is as good as giving away false information. “Advertisements can distort the truth by implying things that are not so or withholding relevant facts.”(http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia). Sometimes we may also find exaggeration of advertisements. This may give wrong expectations to the consumers. When results are not achieved as expected it causes frustration. This is very true with regards to cosmetic products. For example, pimple cure creams, slimming tablets, shampoos for hair loss etc. Many of these products promise quick results. When these expectations are not met, the company will lose their customers. Therefore exaggeration of advertisements may also be treated as being unethical. One another unethical practice is oversize packing of small products to make it look like the customer are getting a lot for his/ her money. Advertisements sometimes, deliberately manipulate by playing on the anxieties or feelings of inadequacy of some people. This may not be considered unethical as long as the advertisement simply presents the attractiveness of the products.

There are some organisations, which are formed to deal with such unethical advertisements. “The Advertising Standards Bureau (ASB) provides a free public service in complaint resolution. It provides determinations on complaints about most forms of advertising in relation to issues including the use of language, the discriminatory portrayal of people, concern for children, portrayals of violence, sex, sexuality and nudity, and health and safety. The Advertising Standards Board is made up of members of the public invited to reflect current community attitudes in serving as Board members. The Board considers written complaints about advertisements in the mainstream media, using the Advertiser Code of Ethics as the basis of its determinations. It considers advertisements which people find offensive on the basis of:

- Discrimination (race, nationality, sex, age, sexual preference, religion, disability, political belief)
- Violence
- Language
- Portrayal of sex, sexuality or nudity
- Health and safety
- Alarm or distress to children.

The Advertising Standards Board is one way in which the advertising industry is seeking to maintain high standards in all forms of advertising.”(<http://www.advertisingstandardsbureau.com>).

“Advertising industry must adopt a harm- minimisation policy by which bad and harmful consequences from various advertising practices and strategies shall be, if not eliminated, at least minimised. Only this will help to develop ethical advertising. For this purpose, proper ethical policies that include adequate ethical training for practitioners, codes of ethics and adequate self- regulative ethical controls by way of rewards and penalties should be adopted by the advertising industries as a whole. Ethical advertising helps to create a cultural environment, which is not only responsive to ethical advertising but also has individual who are pro- active in enhancing the ethical possibilities of advertising that meet the challenges of its hybrid and paradoxical nature.” (Spence and Heekeren, 2004, pg119).

“Advertising is morally neutral in itself and as long as advertiser’s respect people’s freedom to make choices without pressure about goods and services advertisers are perfectly justified in telling people, even persuasively, what they have to sell.” (Williams, 1992). Advertisers must be vigilant about what they are advertising, how they advertise etc. in today’s society, advertising has a profound impact on how people understand life, the world and to a great extent themselves, especially in regard to their values and their ways of behaving. “Advertising can be conceived and conducted not merely in an ethically neutral manner, a category in which a lot of advertisements fall, but in appositively ethical manner.” (Spence and Heekeren, 2004, pg122).

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