

The business ethics in advertising outline media essay



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The importance of advertising has been on a steady rise in the past few decades with a strong social impact in modern world. Advertising through social media forums is a pervasive, strong force that defines the attitudes and behaviors of a majority of the population who are impacted by it (Berger, 2007: 178). In the 21st century, advertising has a profound impact in the way people view life, the entire world and even how they perceive themselves. Usually, advertising is twofold because it impacts people in both positive and negative ways. This creates ethical dilemmas which will be later discussed in this study.

This study will analyze business ethics in advertising as the study of organization's situations, decisions and advertising activities in matters relating to what is right or wrong. The definition of what is right or wrong primarily relates to what is morally right or wrong as opposed to what the organization may deem commercially, strategically or financially right or wrong. In addition, this study will not only be exclusive to commercial enterprises but also governmental agencies, pressure groups, non governmental organizations, non profit organizations, charities and other institutions.

Benefits of Advertising

Economic

Advertising can be potentially useful in any society that abides by moral principles and caters to the authenticity of humanity (Fernando, 2009: 335).

Modern market economies are practically difficult to operate without advertising; which in developed economies is more developed as compared to developing economies (Fernando, 2009). Currently advertising is <https://assignbuster.com/the-business-ethics-in-advertising-outline-media-essay/>

perceived as the most cost efficient way of utilizing an organization's resources while at the same time responding to the socio-economic needs of the society, provided they conform to moral standard set upon the goodwill of human development and moral good (Hackley, 2010b). In this context, advertising is an effective tool in fostering moral, healthy competition within organizations and at the same time, help in contributing to human development (Hackley, 2010b).

Hackley (2010a) looks at this aspect in the context of the fulfillment and growth of the consumer's ability to be effectively productive and at the same time, on the increasingly large relationship network existing between people or different social groups. In this regard, he is in support of advertisement as a wholesome and efficient tool in helping consumers and the general public.

Advertising is able to accomplish this goal through information by making consumers and the general public aware of existing goods and services and any new product improvements (Hackley, 2010a: 244). This then aids consumers in making informed and prudent decisions that will eventually add up to the realization of efficiency and reduced costs. In the same regard, economic progress is likely stimulated in this manner through the increase of business and general trade (Hackley, 2010b: 225). Advertisements therefore have the potential of covering the costs of publication, programming and production of any type of organization; including provision of entertainment, availability of information and the inspiration of people around the globe (Jeurissen, 2007: 150).

Cultural

Advertisements have a strong impact on social media because of its strong ability to generate revenue (Jeurissen, 2007). In the same regard, advertising has the potential to instill media discipline in social media and create a positive impact on crucial decisions regarding the content of media (Malachowski, 2001). Advertising is able to achieve this through the support of materials that have a high intellectual, aesthetic and moral content which is focused on the consideration of public interests. This is especially true when adverts are tailored towards possible media presentation and with consideration to the need of the minorities which may otherwise go unnoticed (Malachowski, 2001).

Advertising can also aid in the general betterment of the society by inspiring and uplifting both consumers and the general population through the inducement of behaviors that benefit advertising companies and other stakeholders (Malachowski, 2001). Simply, by witty advertisement campaigns, advertising has the potential to be tasteful and entertaining at the same time. Advertisement campaigns also contain some elements or creative artistry through the uniqueness of their vivacity (Marlin, 2002: 175).

Moral

Social institutions like churches and other benevolent organizations incorporate advertising in passing messages to their members (Marlin, 2002). Advertising can be used to communicate messages of tolerance, compassion or encouragement of neighbourly elements of humanity. Most nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations have been clear examples of positive moral advertising because they have undertaken advertisement <https://assignbuster.com/the-business-ethics-in-advertising-outline-media-essay/>

campaigns which are tailored towards sensitizing charity for the needy; with a focus on health and education needs. Most of the adverts have the ability to educate the general public through constructive and helpful contents that motivate people in a number of ways, beneficial towards the common cause of humanity (Marlin, 2002: 175).

Though much still needs to be done, many such initiatives of this nature are already in progress. In direct reference to advertising, the Catholic Church established that institutions and organizations should follow with careful understanding the development of modern techniques in order to take advantage of existing opportunities to spread messages of goodwill in ways that seek to answer questions that plague the needs of the contemporary person (Wilkins, 2005: 115).

Introduction Abuse of Advertising

Intrinsically, there is no beneficial or damaging element to advertising (Wilkins, 2005). Advertising is nothing more than a tool or simply an instrument which can either be used beneficially or destructively (Phillips, 1997). If goods or services of a harmful nature are touted to the general public; this is a clear abuse of advertising (Phillips, 1997). In the same way, if goods or services are not clearly asserted in the advertisement campaigns; it is a clear violation of advertising. Advertising companies responsible for such misdemeanors usually forfeit their credibility or their good brand names in light of these developments (Phillips, 1997).

Moreover, unremitting pressures from advertising companies can drive up the need to purchase goods or services which one doesn't necessarily need.

This can be openly illustrated in the rampant purchase of luxury goods or services by most households at the expense of basic goods and services for the families. Some advertisement campaigns have been noted to explore sexual instincts from commercial reasons or to tap into the subconscious mind of an individual, thereby compromising his/her independence in making a conscious decision (Vatican online Ethics in advertising 1997).

Economic Effects

Some companies can abuse the important role of advertising in the provision of information by withholding crucial information which could be material in the decision making of a consumer (Reichert, 2003). As a deviation from the informative function of advertising, advertisers have now adopted the tendency to persuade or motivate customers to adopt certain spending habits (Marlin, 2002). This is the major platform to which advertising is deemed unethical. The use of brand advertising is also not easy because it may create many legal problems for companies. This is clearly evident in Tobacco companies, Alcohol pops companies trying to motivate more users to get addicted to there products. To curb this problem, governmental authorities should be vigilant in persecuting offenders who disregard copyrights or other intellectual properties attributed to specific companies.

It is an eminent fact that many brands are closely interlinked and often look similar. Advertising can therefore motivate people to make irrational decisions in the purchase of goods and services based on these misconceptions as opposed to brand or price differentiations (which are the rational ways of going about it). Consumers should beware of such

malpractices in advertising through sensitization by government and the <https://assignbuster.com/the-business-ethics-in-advertising-outline-media-essay/>

media. In this manner, if such acts are noted, such companies and advertising agencies engaged such activities are likely to face public rejection. A large number of companies use sporting event to advertise their products even though this is deemed unethical sporting organization agree to sponsorship deals as the money being offered is in such large amounts.

Culture

Corruption of culture or general cultural effects can be partially attributed to advertising. More specifically, such damages are observed in developing countries because developed countries have been on a war path against traditional or indigenous cultural practices (Reichert, 2003: 105). This is some sort of domination over the target population and a manipulation of the cultural heritage of various population groups.

This happens because of the high capability of adverts to impact on the revenues of social media companies. Communicators then find themselves in these ethical dilemmas because there is a rush to attract large audiences and deliver them to advertising agencies.

In this regard, communicators are also observed to ignore the social and educational needs of the specific segments of the general public such as different age groups who don't conform to the demographic patterns of the advertisers. The establishment of a written code of ethics would go a long way in ensuring communicators are not faced with such dilemmas. However, Reichert (2003) is of the opinion that these codes should be formulated by every stakeholder because their effectiveness depends on the ability of every stakeholder to abide by them.

Advertisers have also contributed to the development of certain social stereotypes which pit others as more superior or inferior to others. The blatant abuse of women in or by advertising campaigns is a clear deplorable abuse on gender affiliation (Reichert, 2003). Advertising campaigns have been known to portray women as objects for satisfaction of the desire for pleasure or power (Reichert, 2003).

Not much can be done by either government or other stakeholders in controlling such perceptions in the society, though governments can moderately regulate such advertisements; but advertisers should be majorly sensitized from perpetrating such social segregations in society. In addition, consumer sensitization through social forums like churches would also help the general population understand that such ideologies depicted in adverts are not necessarily the ideal situation.

Moral

Though advertising can conform to moral principles and is sometimes inspiring, it can be vulgar and immoral (Crane & Matten, 2007). Often, the appeal to such motives stems from attributes such as envy, lust or status symbol (Vatican online Ethics in advertising 1997). Advertisers still use pornographic materials and other inappropriate materials to date (Reichert, 2003). The media has also helped in facilitating this cause by making such advertising campaigns accessible to the general population, including children. Such activities were majorly observed to be common in developed countries but the same trend has been observed to pick in developing countries. The best approach to cover such kind of unethical practices would be the regulation of media content by governments.

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Conclusion

Guarantors of ethical, moral behavior are the conscious advertising professionals who are not only focused on their duty to please those who commission or bankroll their work but also uphold the rights and interests of the general population in fulfillment of a common human good. Many people who have been engaged in advertising normally have a high ethical conscious but the nature of the competitive work and companies who bankroll them often exert irresistible pressure on them, compromising on their ethical standards. Advertising companies have also been noted to pursue commercial objectives at the expense of ethical practices without any regard to societal values or the impact of their advertising campaigns on the general population. This therefore necessitates a number of measures that need to be religiously followed and implemented to ensure such unethical practices are prevented. Some of the measures to cover this menace rest in the advertising agencies while some rests on the government, media and society in general.

A lot needs to be done to ensure ethical practices are observed in advertising. One such structure to ensure this is achieved is through the establishment of ethical codes. The effectiveness of this approach however depends on the willingness to abide by such codes. Public authorities also have a major role to play in regulating social media, such that they don't air materials that are unethical or morally incorrect. Their involvement should however be moderate. The public should also be sensitized against the negative effects of advertising to reduce the negative impact of advertising

on the population. Nonetheless, observance of ethical advertising needs to be observed by advertising agencies themselves.