

The influence of advertising in the modern life



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It is hard to overestimate the influence of advertising in the modern life (Munusamy & Hoo 2007). The advertising industry has been rapidly growing in recent years (Shavitt, Lowrey, and Haefner, 1998). Advertising can be done in the state of the art fashion and conforming to high moral standards, sometimes even morally uplifting (Ethics in advertising). But frequently it deliberately chooses to shock by using motives such as fear, envy and lust (Ethics in advertising). As a result it became more and more obvious in need of improving tarnished public image that the industry has created by unsuccessful campaigns (Mittal, 1994). There have been taken considerable steps in extensively researching attitude towards advertising (O'Donohoe, 1995) from initial published academic work written by Bauer and Greyser (1968). Scholars, researchers and practitioners from advertising industry not surprisingly have been and still are interested in consequences and results attitude towards advertising (Bauer and Greyser, 1968) has on the effectiveness of the advertising campaign (Greyser, 1971), and brand attitude (Lutz, 1985; MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989; Muehling, 1987; Shimp, 1981; Thorson, 1981). The researchers in their relevant works came to the conclusion that consumer purchasing behavior is in direct dependency on its attitude towards advertising (Bush, Smith, and Martin, 1999). Lutz (1985) observed that general attitude towards advertising affected the way consumers observed individual advertisements. This is a very crucial observation as knowledge of the link between general perception of advertisements and its effect towards single advertisements gives clue in understanding general advertising effects and advertising evaluation.

The other aspect of interest for researches, besides the knowledge of how individual audiences will reflect on a particular advertisement with the general attitude towards advertising, is the information of implications of public policy initiatives in relation to public attitude towards advertising (Calfee and Rngold, 1988; Pollay and Mittal, 1993; Rotzoll, Haefner, and Sandage, 1986; Wills and Ryans, 1982). Close attention of policy makers has been paid to negative effects of advertising on society (Pollay and Mittal, 1993; Rotzoll, Haefner, and Sandage, 1986; Wills and Ryans, 1982). Major complains towards advertising include presentation of misleading information, persuasion to buy unnecessary things and promotion of undesirable and harmful values (Katona, 1964; Pollay, 1986; Pollay and Mittal, 1993). As a result there is a direct connection between public opinion about advertising and subsequent advertising-related regulatory policies (Wills and Ryans; 1982). This connection is important for relevant field related scholars to follow.

Attitude toward advertising has been researched extensively (Chan, Li, Diehl & Terlutter, 2007; Dahl et al, 2003 Yang, C. C., 2000; Ramaprasad and Thurwanger, 1998; Pollay and Mittal, 1993; Bauer & Greyser, 1968). Bauer and Greyser (1968) stated that attitude towards advertising is affected by consumer behavior toward advertising. Moreover, factors such as consumer benefits, good for economy, values corruption, environmental friendliness, product information had strong relationship with attitude toward advertising (Munusamy and Hoo, 2007; Fam, Waller & Erdogan, 2005; Fam; Tsang and Tse, 2005; Waller & Erdogan, 2004; Yang, C. C., 2000; Ramaprasad and Thurwanger, 1998; Pollay and Mittal, 1993; Bauer & Greyser, 1968).

The major researches have been undertaken with regard to attitude toward advertising within adult population (Waller, Fam, and Yang, 2008; Chan, Li, Diehl & Terlutter, 2007; Munusamy and Hoo, 2007; Fam, Waller & Erdogan, 2005; Fam, Waller & Erdogan, 2004; Shavitt, Lowrey, and Haefner, 1998; Mittal, 1994; Wills and Ryans, 1982; Anderson, Engledow, and Becker, 1978; Bauer and Greyser, 1968; Greyse and Bauer, 1966). There has been solid attitude towards advertising before the 50's with transformation to negative public opinion among the youth in the 70's (Zanot, 1981). The positive attitude resurged in 90's (Shavitt, Lowrey, and Haefner 1998). Students were also one of the group researched (Larkin, 1977; Sandage and Leckenby, 1980; Dubinsky and Hensel, 1984; Petroshias, 1986; Muehling, 1987; Yssel et al., 1993; Ramaprasad and Thurwanger, 1998). Certain studies have been taken towards controversial and offensive advertising in Western countries (Croizer and Erdogan, 2001), but none has focused on Estonia with its USSR-European influenced nation.

2. 2 Controversial and offensive advertising

Issues of offensive advertising can be found in the marketing literature of the past 30 years where terms such as “ unmentionables” (Wilson and West, 1981), irritating/intrusive/offensive advertising (Aaker and Bruzzone, 1985; Bartos, 1981; Li et al., 1994), sex and decency issues (Boddewyn, 1991; Boddewyn and Kunz, 1991), advertising targeted at special groups (Wood, 1990; Zhang and Shavitt, 2003), shocking appeals (Dahl et al., 2003), feminism criticism (Kilbourne, 1990; Seger, 1990; White, 1990).

In early studies Wilson and West (1981) used the term “ unmentionables” (birth control, condoms, hygiene products, etc.) referring to products or

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services that are disgusting, offensive, outrageous or distasteful when shown to masses by media. A similar definition is given by Waller (2004) where controversial advertising is “ advertising that, by the type of product or execution, can elicit reactions of embarrassment, distaste, disgust, offence, or outrage from a segment of the population when presented”. From a consumer point of view Dahl et al. (2003) suggests that offensive advertising is a process and/an act violating public norm. As such, offensive advertising by communicating its message breaks laws and customs (human rights), social and moral codes (pornographic or vulgar), or steps beyond limits of moral or physical senses (disgusting and violent advertising). The latter definition includes broader spectrum than that of “ unmentionables” as content and form of the advertising and not only product or services.

Past studies have included several products when advertised as being controversial. Condoms and alcohol have been topics of several studies (Rehman and Brooks, 1987; Shao and Hill, 1994; Waller, 1999). While Wilson and West (1981) included birth control, Rehman and Brooks (1987) focused on pregnancy tests, contraceptives, alcohol, feminine hygiene products, medications, undergarments etc. Barnes and Dotson (1990) had similar list consisting of male/female underwear, condoms, and female hygiene products. Shao (1993) and Shao and Hill (1994) added male/female undergarments, sexual diseases and pharmaceutical goods to the common list used before. Grouping was made by Fahy et al. (1995) into three categories: a) products aimed at children, b) alcohol, c) health/sex-related products.

Previous studies have viewed at offensive advertising in several spectrums (Barnes and Dotson, 1990; Phau and Prendergast, 2001; Waller, 1999). Offensive advertising was studied through “ the matter” (products and services), “ the manner” (execution of advertising) and “ the media” (advertising vehicles/media). In other words consumers tend to look at advertising being offensive if advertisement should not be publicly discussed or displayed, execution is not consistent with social norms by being obscene, pornographic or vulgar, or the particular medium is not suitable for the advertising. In contrast to “ the matter”, “ the manner” is controllable by the advertiser and thus it is unacceptable if the execution of the advertisement is the cause of consumers being offended.

Being context sensitive offensive advertising is dependent on situational and relational factors (Ma, 1996). In other words it is the situation and relations between parties that make a particular word or image to become offensive. Moreover, offensiveness is also culture specific (Boddewyn, 1991). Different cultures have different levels and scales for offensiveness, where, for example, Chinese were offended by racist images, nudity, and indecent language (Waller and Fam, 2001).

Additionally, place, time and demographics affect levels and offensiveness of and advertisement on consumers (Predergast et al., 2002). Time and geographical location has major impact on perception of offensiveness. Wilson and West (1995) had pointed out the way AIDS was not considered “ unmentionable” anymore. Also female hygiene napkin has undergone a major shift from being indecent to acceptable even on prime-time television. Demographics plays its role when it comes e. g. for the perception of nudity,
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where females are more offended by that type of advertising than men (Prendergast et al., 2002). Similar results have been portrayed in a study of sensitive products where 2000 people expressed their attitude towards certain products (Fahy et al., 1995). Categories of products included alcoholic beverages, products directed at children, and health/sex-related products. Ultimately, it appeared that women, in particular aged over fifty, had higher than the rest levels of offensiveness for such advertisings.

In spite of the fact that most of the researchers described controversial and offensive advertising being a negative and not desirable concept, advertisers still widely use these types of campaigns. This is mostly explained by the fact that controversial advertising might have both negative and positive consequences (Waller, 2003). The history shows that controversial advertising has been successful for several companies in the past (Evans and Sumandeeep, 1993; Hornery 1996; Waler, 1999; Irvine 2000; McIntyre 2000; Phau and Prendergast, 2001). These campaigns were primarily based on the products that were controversial themselves and not on the controversial execution of advertising (“ the manner”).

In the today’s world of increased competition and major segmentation of the market companies tend to use more controversial advertising in order to “ cut through the clutter” (Lyons, 1996). This has led to growth of interest amongst industry professionals and general press with regards to both controversial advertising and controversial products (Hornery, 1996; Lyons, 1996; Petty, 1997; Matthews, 1997; Waller, 1997). It should be remembered that nature of controversy may suddenly arise due to changed advertising

regulations, marketing environment or just shift of concept within society. Advertising agencies should be careful and diligent in following these trends.

Controversy and further possibility of becoming offensive can have major impact on the company as “ there is clear evidence, however, that dislike of ads correlates with negative attitudes towards the industry” (Bartos, 1981). Respondents criticized advertising for being “ insulting to intelligence”, “ poor tasted”, “ offensive”, “ distasteful” or “ too overtly sexual” (Bartos, 1981).

Although in many instances it is the subject that is a matter of offensiveness, in the past years advertisers intentionally use the manner of presentation to be offensive. For example, sexual appeal has a high attention catching capability (La Tour et al., 1990). But being two sided blade strong erotic stimuli used in advertisements by producing a physiological response can result in consequential negative cognitions (Belch et al., 1981; La Tour, 1990). This being true, it should be noted that there is different level of tolerance for offensive advertising in different type of media (Boddewyn, 1989), where, for example, Saint Laurent Opium perfume featuring model in only high-heeled shoes had no complaints when it appeared in magazines, in contrast to public prints (Phillips, 2001). Another tactic used by advertisers is the fear element in different dimensions such as fear of social rejection. This is mostly used in advertising campaigns for mouthwash, deodorants and shampoos (Belch and Balch, 1998). Other advertisers use “ shock” tactics. Some, such as Benetton, use them as a trademark. An example of such a campaign was where Benetton used condemned prisoners with the slogan “ sentenced to death”. As a result this campaign was extensively criticized by <https://assignbuster.com/the-influence-of-advertising-in-the-modern-life/>

causing “ unnecessary pain and distress to the families of the people killed by the men the campaign intends to “ humanize”” (Gwin, 2000).

Generally, it is the manner that brings about the extensive criticism and not the matter. This is explanatory as the manner is in the direct control of advertiser and thus intentional offensiveness easily leads to common consumer irritation (Sin and Cheng, 1984). Although major researches have been undertaken in Asian and Western countries, none has been done in Estonia on the general topic of offensiveness of advertisings.

2. 3 Brand loyalty

In 1923 the first attempt to define “ brand loyalty” was taken by consumers. The brand loyalty at that time was very simple: “ Brand loyal consumer is a person who buys the brand in 100% situations”. Other authors further defined loyalty as a behavioral pattern preferring one product over the other. In most occasions loyalty is associated with reoccurring purchases of the same brand.

Consumer follows the pattern of recurring brand purchase because the brand better than the other brands fulfills his needs or because s/he has personal emotional attachment toward the brand. J. Liesse and S. Schlueter expressed an opinion that brand attachment can be a result of emotional influence the brand has on the consumer or his/her self-esteem. Other authors add rationality to the emotional component of loyalty (Gamble, Stoun, Vudkok). As a result a consumer may be loyal to several competing brands.

Neither recurring purchase, nor rationality explains the nature of loyalty. Hofmeyr and Rice (p. 85) argue that consumers very often buy the brand
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that is presently available on the market or the brand that the consumer can afford to buy. In their view brand loyalty is a solid behavioral response towards certain brand that is a result of psychological evaluation process (p. 22). In other words, loyalty is a tendency of a consumer to buy a certain brand again and again because of personal preferences.

Aaker (1991) defines brand loyalty as a degree of an emotional attachment of a consumer towards the brand. In his view loyalty shows the degree of probability that the consumer is inclined to switch to another brand, especially when price and other factors change. With higher loyalty level decreases consumer responsiveness towards actions of brand competitors.

(7) One of the key factors according to Aaker (1991) is the fact that it is impossible to rebrand to another name or symbol without substantial decreasing of sales and profit.

Another definition of brand loyalty is given by Jacoby and Chestnut (1978): “The biased, behavioral response, expressed over time, by some decision-making unit, with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands, and is a function of psychological (decision-making, evaluative) processes.” Hence, loyalty is gained by fulfilling certain criteria where consumer has to:

have solid preference of the brand to all other brands;

have desire to repurchase and continue buying the brand in future;

have sense of satisfaction towards the brand;

have decreased level of responsiveness towards competitors;

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have emotional component prevailing over rationality in the loyalty behavior.

It is only logical that brands with strong consumer loyalty gain major competitive advantage in brand distribution and marketing (Griffin. J., 1996).

According to Oliver (1999) there are four categories of brand loyalty, where firstly, consumer processes information in order to form beliefs, secondly, bases his attitudes on those beliefs, and, thirdly, behaves in relation to attitude strengths. The fourth category steps in when behavioral intentions moves to a behavioral pattern that is hard to break.

Although the previous literature on brand loyalty were of the view that loyalty had to be exclusive to one particular brand, Yim and Kannan (1998) after analyzing the increased competition level in the markets and fragmentation level of markets, suggested that consumers are less inclined to buy brands exclusively. Hartley (1992) gave an example of major drop of exclusive drinking of Coca Cola from 18% to 12% from 1975 to 1984. Consumers are developing a basket of brand loyalty rather than one exclusive “ only” brand.

Offensive advertising can have negative impact on brands as well as products. This stems from finding that feelings of consumers received and generated by an advertisement eventually transform into attitude and brand evaluation (Burke and Edell, 1989). Negative attitude decreases the purchase intention of consumers. This is of course true where consumers had a similar alternative from a company that was not using offensive advertising (An and Kim, 2006).

The famous Benetton campaign that used offensive advertising by employing images of blood-covered dirty clothes, people with “ HIV positive” tattoos, death-row inmates has resulted in debates amongst advertising practitioners (Clemens and Stahlschmidt, 1994; Voigt, 1994; Happel, 1995). Although the Benetton campaign increased the brand awareness it led to major decrease in brand sympathy (Pirowsky, 1993).

Ironically, attraction to the brand through offensive sex appeal will increase its awareness among population but will not result in any positive results for brand and product (Alexander, 1983; Severn et al., 1990). This was further proved by Stewart and Furse (2000) confirming the increase of attention towards the advertisement through sex appeal but not the subsequent positive attitude towards the brand. The situation is quite opposite, where offensive use of sexual content might result in negative emotions towards the advertisement and the brand and as a result reduced brand loyalty (Bumler, 1999). This was further confirmed by finding that the more offensive the advertising is the more likely it is to lead to rejection of the brand (Kara Chan, 2007).