

A case study of benetton marketing essay



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Promotion techniques have developed greatly over the years, but nothing has had a greater impact on the tools, methods or ways of developing the promotion strategies than the influence of the new technologies and of new communication tools. We live in an age of speed; communication has become faster and faster especially using Internet tools like: email, online social networks, web banners, web page advertising etc.

In the digital age, the organizations should take advantage more and more of the power and the edge offered by the information technology, in order to inform the present or potential clients or consumers in a better and faster way. Marketers have been using electronic tools for many years, but the Internet and other new technologies created a flood of interesting and innovative ways to provide customer value. This new way of reaching the costumers has captured the imagination of marketing scholars and practitioners (Fuciu and Gorski, 2009).

In this time and age, companies must proceed with care in choosing the most appropriate methods of reaching their clients or consumers from a financial or ethical perspective. But that does not mean that they can not shock the clients / consumers or use tools and ways of communications that mostly unusual and different from the common methods of promoting products or services. One of these unusual promotion / advertising techniques is the concept of unconventional advertising. In our paper we present the concept of this tool, a brief history as well as several important advantages and disadvantages, and a case study of social marketing advertising campaigns that were developed by the Benetton group which are meant to shock.

2. THE CONCEPT OF UNCONVENTIONAL ADVERTISING

The idea of advertising is along as the history of mankind. Archeological finds have dated the early types of advertising, like inscription tablets, discovered in the basin of the Mediterranean Sea. There is evidence that the Romans would paint the announcements of gladiator combats on walls or stones at the crossroads (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008, p. 635)

Before we can start to discuss the concept of unconventional advertising we must underline the concept of classical advertising. Over the years this concept has greatly developed and evolved due to the usage and evolution of promotion techniques. One of the most important definitions for the classical advertising is offered by the American Marketing Association (AMA, 2012) which states that advertising is the placement of announcements and persuasive messages in time or space purchased in any of the mass media by business firms, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and individuals who seek to inform and/ or persuade members of a particular target market or audience about their products, services, organizations, or ideas.

According to Philip Kotler (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008, p. 1014), advertising is any type of paid presentation and non personal promotion of certain ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor. The advertising is considered to be any activity developed by an organization that has the role of preparing the general public to respond in an positive way to the organization's offer (Petrescu, 2008, p. 113). A group of authors (Balaure, 2002, p. 487) mentions that advertising is means by which the organization intents to offer

the a large array of information to the public with regard to its activity, products, services brand or company by any identifiable supporter (identified buyer).

Advertising (Zyman and Brott, 2008, pp. 11-12). is more than the TV commercials, it includes brand positioning, the package, choosing a certain celebrity as a product image, donations, customer relationship management, the way the organization treats its employees or even the way a secretary answers the telephone

As we can see from the above mentioned definitions, it is possible to underline several common aspects of these authors like: (1) the placement of information in a persuasive manner; (2) the need to inform the clients / consumers or the general public; (3) there is always an object (product, service, event etc.) of the communication between the organizations and the market; (4) advertising is always paid by a certain individual or organization.

Over the years the forms of advertising have evolved greatly. Probably the first recognized advertising forms that we can relate to were those of the 19th Century when in 1936 a French newspaper La Presse was the first daily paper that allowed to print inside its pages a paid advertising (Eskilson, 2007, p. 58). Due to the development of new communication techniques since the beginning of the 20th Century like: (1) radio, in the early '20's; (2) commercial television advertising in the middle of the last century; (3) cable TV advertising in the 1960's; (4) Internet advertising since the early '90. All these forms of advertising have had a large number of variations over the

years. Among these variations one is considered a bit different than the other ones: the concept of unconventional advertising.

In the past years, more and more companies have allocated a bigger part of their marketing budgets for the unconventional strategies. There are several factors that have contributed to the growth of the importance of the unconventional advertising: (1) the lack of credibility and the inefficiency of traditional advertising; (2) customer's reluctance to the advertising message; (3) the need to reduce the costs of promotion; (4) the need for differentiation of the products and brands; (5) consumer's better understanding of marketing and selling techniques which makes them immune to commercial messages; (6) the need for a better targeting of the audience which has become more and more fragmented (Jurca, 2010, pp. 323 – 333).

The new and innovative manners of the advertising companies and marketing specialists of gaining the attention of the clients has developed and evolved greatly in the last decades. In order to reach the clients differently than their competitors, companies have created new, inventive and unconventional tactics, strategies used for the promotion activities of products, services or events.

The concept of unconventional advertising is not very different from the definition that was offered by the American Marketing Association but it is difficult to pin down because it is strictly related to the perception of the people and the frequency of use. The unconventional advertising is permanently changing that is why is virtually impossible to give a comprehensive definition of it. Nevertheless, it can be stated that

unconventional advertising comprises all those unusual, non-traditional, innovative and inventive means, methods and strategies of promoting a product, service or brand (Jurca, 2010, pp. 323 – 333)

Several important types of unconventional advertising have developed and it is important to underline certain aspects: (1) Viral marketing – refer to marketing techniques that use pre-existing social networks to produce increases in brand awareness or to achieve other marketing objectives (such as product sales) through self-replicating viral processes, analogous to the spread of pathological and computer viruses. Viral marketing is spreading as a popular, efficient marketing tool, as consumers increasingly pick and choose what ads they watch and when. Viral is today's electronic equivalent of old-fashioned word of mouth. It's a marketing strategy that involves creating an online message that's novel or entertaining enough to prompt consumers to pass it on to others – spreading the message across the Web like a virus at no cost to the advertiser (Howard, 2005); (2) Marketing in video games – corporate marketers have for decades vied to embed their respective brands in movies and television shows, some are beginning to focus on subtler efforts by embedding brands and logos in electronic games. The “advergaming” industry allows corporate sponsors to connect with young consumers' lifestyles (Kaikati and Kaikati, 2004, pp. 6-22). (3) Bait-and-Tease Marketing – to the situation where a celebrity uses or talks about a product or a brand without it appearing conspicuous (Kaikati and Kaikati, 2004, pp. 6-22); (4) Bait-and-tease marketing – is the strategy of getting people interested in something that later is revealed to be something quite different (Huba, 2005, in Jurca, 2010, pp. 323 – 333); (5) Ambient advertising

- is one of the most important forms of unconventional advertising. It is an outdoor form of promotion that uses alternative and unconventional media, called ambient media (Pavel and CĂftoiu, 2009) in order to transmit the message; (6) Elevator advertising is another form of unconventional advertising that has been frequently used in the past years. The walls and even the floors of the elevator units can be used to promote products, services and brands either by placing stickers, posters or even products inside the units or by running commercial movies and ads if the elevators are equipped with screen displays (Pavel, CĂftoiu, 2009); (7) Aerial advertising is a form of outdoor advertising, but it is not included in the above-the-line category and in this category includes airplanes pulled banners, skywriting, and blimps (Jurca, 2010, pp. 323 – 333) etc.

As we can see there are several important and interesting methods of developing unconventional advertising, however there are several other elements that can be mentioned and are worth studying in a future paper like: body advertising; graffiti advertising; transit advertising; affiliate marketing; bathroom advertising etc.

3. FIGURES AND TABLES

As an introduction to this case study it is necessary to explain, in a few words, what represents the Benetton Group to all of us.

Benetton Group was established for the first time in a small Italian town in 1955 by the Benetton family. During the years, Luciano Benetton (one of the three brothers and a sister of the family) developed the company, engaging it in the manufacturing and distribution of clothing, shoes, cosmetics and

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accessories. The group's principal brands include United Colors of Benetton, Sisley, PlayLife, Nordica, Prince, Rollerblade and Killer Loop.

In the advertising field, the genius who's name stand for himself in the branch is Oliviero Toscani, Benetton Art Director and Photographer – hired by Luciano Benetton in 1982. He is the man who developed the idea that the products must be separate from advertisement. He is well-know around the world for his unusual advertising techniques and themes.

“ Using these images in this unconventional way is an effort by Benetton to break through the complacency that exists in our society (...). By removing these images from their familiar contexts and putting them in a new context they are more likely to be noticed and given the attention they deserve as the viewer becomes involved in the process of answering the questions: What does this image mean? Why does this image appear with a Benetton logo? How do I feel about the subject of the image? What can I do?”

– Luciano Benetton Before the “ Toscani Age”, the Benetton Group used a traditional way of advertising, focused on its products and logo – the Benetton word with a stylized knot of yarn above, contained within a dark green rectangle. Then, Luciano and Toscani realized that they have to stand apart from the rest of the competition and the standard practices of the advertising industry. So, they decided to use the idea of “ life style accessory” and not a clothing brand according to Benetton.

Disturbing, revolting, stunning, horrifying, shockingly graphic – those are the words that define the Benetton Group advertising campaign.

It's gritty, to real and so unglamorous – everything fashion is not. And yet it's an advertisement for a high end clothing company.

All this started with the first theme of Toscani: teenagers and kids from culturally diverse nations who, dressed very colorfull in Benetton attire, were engaged in a variety of playful acts. These is the picture that created the pathway of the Benetton advertising campaign: racial harmony and world peace.

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Fig. 1 – Benetton “ All the colors of the World” campaign – 1982 – 1984

In a year in witch Ronald Reagan is in the White House and Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie are writing “ We Are The World”, The Benetton Group launch “ United Colors of Benetton” – a phrase thrown into pop culture not only referencing the company's colorful clothing but also the idea that cultural diversity is good.

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Fig. 2 – “ All colors are equal, just as all men are equal” – Benetton 1985

Then, in 1988, the company started to mix the people, ideas, legends and culture. So was born the new advertisements featured Joan of Arc and Marilyn Monroe, Leonardo da Vinci and Julius Caesar or Adam and Eve.

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Fig. 3 – Mixing ideas – Benetton 1985

Those mixed ideas and, most of all, the presence of black and white people in the same photo received severe criticism because many thought that was reminding the time when, bought in UK and USA, the black women breast-fed white babies in the times of slavery. Despite all the negative points of view, Benetton maintained that such photos were only symbols of brotherhood and not exploitation of the particular race.

The next step for Luciano Benetton and Oliviero Toscani was discussing other issues: social problems, war deaths, AIDS crisis, environmental disaster, political violence, war exile, etc.

“ Unlike traditional adverts, our images usually have no copy and no product, only our logo. They do not show you a fictitious reality in which you will be irresistible if you make use of our products. They do not tell anyone to buy our clothes, they do not even imply it. All they attempt to do is promote a discussion about issues which people would normally glide over if they approached them from other channels, issues we feel should be more widely discussed.” – Luciano Benetton

So, by switching the focus of the viewer to relevant issues of the time which they believe need attention, Benetton support a cause. Their posters and all advertising ads show aspects of life, unadulterated and uncensored. That shouldn't impact people negatively unless those people want to close themselves off from the world. And, the most important aspect of all, when people have a reaction, whether positive or negative, to an advertisement, that advertisement stays in their minds for longer.

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Fig. 4 – Mixing ideas – Benetton 1992 and so

These advertising offended

Nearly every advertisement today is in some way promoting a certain lifestyle, or seems to include the message that without the product in question, happiness is unattainable. By choosing the skinniest and prettiest models to wear the clothes that they produce, many companies lead the viewer to believe that, by wearing those clothes, they can look just like the models. But when this doesn't happen, especially the young women are affected by depress because, despite the effort and money that they pay to buy the clothes advertised, the look will never be the same.

So, by switching the focus of the viewer to relevant issues of the time which they believe need attention, Benetton support a cause. Their posters and all advertising ads show aspects of life, unadulterated and uncensored. That shouldn't impact people negatively unless those people want to close themselves off from the world.

Benetton's policy of social responsibility

5. CONCLUSIONS

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