

Stealth marketing innovation and persuasion marketing essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Due to the fact that new generations of consumers are becoming less drawn to the conventional, in your face advertising, advertising industries have created a more ‘under the radar’ approach of advertising. This is done by making consumers believe that they are responding to a promotion, rather than an advertisement. This promotional advertising is a more subtle approach of communication, as much of the public does not want to be associated with the obvious advertisement of products. This way, consumers don’t feel like they are being sold something, rather they feel like they are discovering something.

This approach is called stealth or covert marketing, which employs marketing activities easily into consumer’s lives without awareness (Sprott, 2008). These campaigns stay away from traditional advertising, where consumers are continuously aware that they are being sold something. This new form of advertising is discreet when communicating messages to consumers, working best by “flying below the consumer’s radar” (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004). Since this new form of advertising is so hidden and is able to take on multiple forms of media and public communication, consumers stand to lose privacy, trust, freedom of choice, and control due to the fact that they are unaware that they are being persuaded, taking away their power of consent.

Stealth marketing presents new products and services by creating a “buzz” around it. By quietly letting a few individuals know of a product or service it gives it a sense of exclusivity and “cool” (Notarantonio & Quigley, 2009).

This relies heavily on consumers spreading the message to others in a unique way, making sure the product is talked about without appearing to be

<https://assignbuster.com/stealth-marketing-innovation-and-persuasion-marketing-essay/>

an advertisement or company-sponsored. The success of this is if the consumers believe that they “ stumbled” upon it or found it by themselves, making them feel in the know and special (Notarantonio & Quigley, 2009). This form of promotion is effective due to the fact that a consumer’s purchase is greatly affected by the opinions of peers as we tend to rely on the advice of others when making decisions. This “ buzz” can take on the form of the internet as it is the most efficient and cost effective way to engage and persuade a consumer while not being directly in their face as compared to traditional advertising (Castronovo & Lei, 2012). Social networking, viral marketing and guerilla campaigns are examples of this, due to the fact that they all capitalize on the fact that the internet can engage multiple masses of people all at once, having the ability to influence the values, behaviors and beliefs of consumers (Castronovo & Lei, 2012).

Brand pushers, who are hired actors approach people in real-life and promote products to them without actually saying that they are promoting a product or service. They do this by personally slipping out brands or products in conversation at bars, music stores and tourist attractions. These actors come off as being genuine and approachable to make it seem believable. By planting products under the consumers nose it creates a chain of influence from a few trendsetters to hundreds (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004). An example of this that created controversy was Stony Ericsson’s Stealth Campaign in 2002. This was when 60 actors were hired to pose at ten tourist cities in the United States. These actors would ask unsuspecting people to take pictures of them with the newly launched T68i camera phone near a tourist attraction like the Empire State Building. Once a person agreed the scripted actor

would demonstrate how to use the phone and would discuss the benefits and features of it. They would do all of this while never letting the other person know that they were representatives of Sony Ericsson.

Through this example it can be firstly shown that this form of stealth advertisement has the ability to deceive consumers (Martin & Smith, 2008). These unknowingly consumers were unaware that they were being sold a product because the marketing and commercial sponsor was not revealed to them. Secondly, it reflects a form of intrusion, as it reflects a violation of the consumer's privacy (Martin & Smith, 2008). Other tourists and passerby's were interrupted in their day and sightseeing, to assist another "tourist", providing the actors with the opportunity to demonstrate the product of the camera. Thirdly, it exploits consumers; as it reflects how stealth marketing plays takes advantage of a humans willingness help (Martin & Smith, 2008). This case of Sony Ericsson shows that they used the kindness of others into marketing a product.

Privacy and surveillance comes into play when retailers use stealth marketing through the use of a data-collection system. This is done through a retailer, where each customer is assigned a code number with their credit or debit card (Greengard, 2012). This code carries their personal purchase history which is then stored to be analyzed and tracked when purchasing other items (Greengard, 2012). Specific promotions are then given to consumers who fit the profile of the products being endorsed. The only way to avoid being tracked by this system is if the customer pays with cash and doesn't give out their phone number. Not only can their shopping be tracked but their web browsing, credit history and conversations on social

<https://assignbuster.com/stealth-marketing-innovation-and-persuasion-marketing-essay/>

networking sites can be tracked too without any knowledge that their personal information is being looked at. Much of this data-collection system is based on an opt-out program, which is very difficult to understand and carry through, due to the fact that it takes so long to decipher all of the privacy policies, which may not actually be practiced. These collection marketers rely on this so that a consumers attempt to control what they are tracking is stopped because of how difficult it is to do when personal data of you is already in the system. Only 27% of consumers believe that by opting-out it only stops tailored ads, where the rest believe that by opting out it means that it would stop all types of online tracking (Greengard, 2008). Many sites consumers browse on contain tracking tools and cookies which record any movements made online. This can be compared to video cameras and microphones being placed in a person's home without consent or knowledge of it occurring. This inability to control what personal activities others can see, through the use of tracking software, is a violation of not only privacy but trust of the consumer as well.

Even though this new form of advertising and marketing is innovative and gets products and services to stand out in a very much crowded market place, the line of art and advertisement seems to be becoming blurred in today's society. This can be seen with product placement in songs, TV, film and video games. This brings up issues of ethics, where stealth marketing can be seen to attempt to manipulate the consumer's mind, where it can be compared to subliminal advertising, as it aims for the consumer's subconscious level of awareness (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004). With traditional marketing, consumers where able to choose the messages they wanted to

engage with, while ignoring advertisements they were not interested in, giving the consumers control on their thoughts and decisions, not the marketers. Supporters on stealth marketing say that this form of advertisement is more credible than traditional advertising due to the fact that few consumers believe athletes and celebrities who endorse products and services actually use them (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004). As well advocates of stealth marketing say that since consumers today are media and technology savvy, that will “tune out commercials disguised as entertainment” (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004).

However, in traditional marketing, there is an exchange between consumer and the advertisement. The consumer has knowledge of the product, understands the persuasive tools used in the advertisement, and has knowledge of the marketing sponsor of the product or service (Martin & Smith, 2008). But, stealth marketing undermines the marketing sponsor and knowledge of persuasion, making it hidden from the consumer. This has the potential to deprive the consumer of any defense mechanisms, which help to make a conscious and informed decision when faced with advertisements or marketing communications (Martin & Smith, 2008). Unfortunately, this form of marketing is effective, as it fails to disclose full information of a product or service. It takes away consumers' tendencies to be suspicious or the belief that an advertisement has an ulterior motive (Spratt, 2008). Through this, the consumer's freedom of choice and decision is taken away with it.

Due to the fact that stealth marketing has become so effective in today's consumer world, it has the ability to threaten the choices of a broad demographic of consumers through a wide range of communication. As <https://assignbuster.com/stealth-marketing-innovation-and-persuasion-marketing-essay/>

many consumers are now realizing its ability to control and abuse their defense mechanisms of persuasion, stealth marketing could create distrust and doubt within the public, which may become irreversible. This causes serious effects for not only ‘under the radar’ advertising, but the already in danger traditional forms of advertising, asking the question: what is the future of advertisement if there is no market for it?