

The criteria and challenges of unethical advertising

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Abstract

Advertising is one of marketing tools to promote products and services as well as to increase reputation and image used by the company. In recent years, there are many ways of advertising to attract customer's attention including through billboard, television, radio, newspapers and latest trends of advertising is through Internet by using social website. It is such the best medium to promote product as these days are people more busy in daily life, hang with the latest gadgets and need advanced information. Advertising became more synonyms with the people as soon as after any product or services being introduced to the public. However, a lot of advertising brings worried by some of people that concerns towards inappropriate advertising show to the public and seen by all level of ages including children, teenagers, adults and old folks. Because of this concern, the issues raised up in questioning the inappropriate advertising may bring destructive thoughts to the next generation compared from the past (before the existence of Internet) and the present in Malaysia (Mohamad Noorizzuddin bin Nooh, 2014). This article will discuss the unethical advertising criteria that give impact to the next generation.

Keywords

Unethical, Advertising, Criteria, Impact

1. Introduction

Advertising is such an interesting business in the marketing industry. However, the advertising should be an attractive and creative to attract the customer. The development of advertising industry has been increased year by year with provide the latest information of product. Advertising is not only promoted the product but it is also can promote the services, entertainment, found and lost, land and more. Advertising can be channeled through media such as the internet, radio, television, pamphlets, banners, billboards, newspapers and so on according to the creativity of an advertising agency. However, at present, the fastest media attention, feedback, and the concern of many people is through the internet. Synonymous with slogan "borderless world" and "information at their fingertips,"

which in a matter of minutes, an advertising can get hundreds and even thousands of views of society and consumer.

Malaysian government has enacted a law that is monitored by the Advertising Standards Authority of Malaysia, Malaysia Advertising Codes of Practice. Each of advertising will be promoted and shown to the public shall be in accordance with the code of ethics contained in the code of advertising practice in Malaysia. Malaysia's code of advertising practice is an integral part of the control system through the Malaysian advertising regulates its activity. (n.a., 2008). However, there are some related issues on latest advertising trends.

Recently, the advertisers did not pay attention and aware

on their way of distributing messages to the people. As we learn that, advertising can bring positive and negative impact according to its words. Leo Burnet (1990) has stated that "if you don't get noticed, you don't have anything. You just have to be noticed, but the art is in getting noticed naturally, without screaming or without tricks. From his quotes, it shows that the advertising should be an interesting, creative and unique way to get attention from the public otherwise you will unnoticed by them. So, from here the advertisers start to produce an unethical message and content to gain some attention and fast popularity and it becomes more known idea among the advertisers.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Moral, Ethics and Advertising Ethics

Everything in this world should have a proper act for sake of goodness. That's we called as a morality. Once a person thinks before he or she acts, that person can be called as one of a person that practices the moral knowledge in life. However, in group of people, we tend to meet someone who are not practice his morality in his life. They are a group of unethical person that ignore dignity, manner, people's view, and selfish. Very often the term "Morality" and "Ethics" are used interchangeably and closely related, but it is essential to discern the distinctions between these two with respect to the study of ethical matters. The term "morals" come from the Latin "Moralis" which is concerned with principals of right or wrong behavior. Morality tends to be more general and prescriptive. Because of this the notion about manners, tastes, customs and even laws, may be considered ethical beliefs, but they are not always part of a moral code (Dr. Morteza Maleki, 2012).

The originally of the word Ethics comes back to the Greek word "Ethos" which are related to the philosophical science that deals with the rightness and wrongness of human actions. Ethics talks about most important beliefs and values of an individual and/or a society that help to shape the character of the people in that society. It is also considered as an area of study dealing with good or bad with moral duty and obligation. However, while "Ethics" generally refers to professional behavior, "morality" is about any aspect of human action very often. It is concerned with the fundamentals of right and wrong behavior. Immorality is different from not being ethicality. To behave unethically in events and certain circumstances, is not equal to be immortal. Immorality is to possess some fundamental, if not permanent character flaws, that render one untrustworthy in most of the occasions. (Dinesh, 2007).

Advertising ethics, thus, can be defined as:

"The priority of showing ethical advertising on mass media is essentially to organize the information content of advertising without harming the public right to know about commercial products. The information content of advertising is built upon the social value of society and

acceptable moral principles in terms of the commercial promotion in markets."(Nandan, 2010).

The indirect but powerful influence exerted by advertising upon the media of social communications that depend on revenues from this source points to another sort of cultural concern. In the competition to attract ever larger audiences and deliver them to advertisers, communicators can find themselves tempted in fact pressured, subtly or not so subtly to set aside high artistic and moral standards and lapse into superficiality, tawdriness and moral squalor. (Yesodha Devi N., 2010)

There are three main orientations in unethical advertising. First the content of the advertising, second the ways that advertisers try to push advertising into the customers' mind and third the methods of tracking individuals' special experiencing over the net with the purpose of promoting companies' products and services. (Dr. Morteza Maleki, 2012).

Contents of the advertising explained the customer whether it is bad or good view according to its interpretation of the products. It plays an important role to attract customer. This is also can be included in this related issue on the advertising portrays the sexualized images and religious images to promote the product which is inappropriate for all people in this world especially the children.

2.1.1. Sexualized Images and Content

The development of technology brings an idea to the advertiser to create some of unique advertising by using a woman. We know that women are one of beautiful creature given by God that every part of their bodies could be found as inspiration and attraction. That's why the advertisers tend to use them as a model and an ambassador to promote the product and services. However, the advertisers use them in a wrong way to market their product with displaying a sexy image of modelwearing top t-shirt and short pant, reveal the skin, bikini, using a sexual word in promoting a product such as viagra and sexual act by model such as pose on the bed, hugging tight with male model which not appropriate viewing by the children and old folks because it will give bad impacts to the children's mind development. According to Nada Torlak (2011) in her article of "Use or Abuse of Female Sexuality in Marketing" stated that, "a bit more formally viewed, sexual content in advertising refers to media-transmitted message (print and television ads) that contains sexual information with a persuasive purpose to sell products." (Torlak, 2011).

Meanwhile, for RenataBongiorno, Paul G. Bain, Nick Haslam found that in their research of "When Sex Doesn't Sell: Using Sexualized Images of Women Reduces Support for Ethical Campaigns" stated that the first to demonstrate that sexualized images that dehumanize women reduce concern for ethical behavior in a domain unrelated to gender relations and sex. This extends research showing that women's dehumanization is associated with increased tolerance for unethical behavior towards women –

specifically men's attitudes towards sexual harassment and rape. These findings open the way for further research to explore whether similarly negative effects would occur if sexualized images of women were used to sell ethical causes other than the treatment of animals, for instance, in promoting action to address poverty (Renata Bongiorno, 2013). Different types of sexual appeals are used in advertisements and they consist of a variety of elements (Job Dubihlela, 2011). More awareness is to be created and the board has to function effectively and ban advertisements which do not follow the ethics. (Yesodha Devi N., 2010) According to Rubiyah Haron, Vice-President of the Association of Malaysian Muslim Brotherhood (Salimah) National stated that "an advertising that exploit women rude violation of the code of ethics should be an important feature that should be preserved." (Sulaini, 2012).

She also said, "Entertain all ages of the female body is an insult even if done voluntarily. We reject any attempt to commercialize women if government is serious about putting the status of women to be more respected". Society drives people crazy with lust and calls it advertising (Lahr, 1993).

2.1.2. Religious Images and Beliefs

Religious beliefs play a significant part in sculpting social behavior. Differences in religious affiliations tend to influence the way people live, the choices they make, what they eat and whom they associate with. (Kim Shyan Fam, 2004). In cases of the first sort, commercial advertisers sometimes include religious themes or use religious images or person ages to sell products. It is possible to do this in tasteful, acceptable ways, but the practice is obnoxious and offensive when it involves exploiting religion or treating it flippantly. In cases of the second sort, advertising sometimes is used to promote products and inculcate attitudes and forms of behavior contrary to moral norms. That is the case, for instance, with the advertising of contraceptives, abortifacients. (Yesodha Devi N., 2010).

We always see through television that some advertising had sensitive issue regarding to the religion of different race. In Malaysia, there are several races that live in this country and the well-known races are Malays, Chinese and Indians. From the aspect of unity, communication technology has been adopted and foster unity among the races in Malaysia. This situation is reflected in the release plan concept of goodwill as RTM plan Salam East Coast that combines all of the entertainment content but always analyzing current issues happening in Malaysia. The advertising also plays a role in fostering a sense of unity as PETRONAS ads celebration, Independence Day and so on. This advertising is more positive value to society as advertising content and the message conveyed by very deep to understand. However, communication technology also have a negative impact on society as free internet use in raising issues of racism, rights of the Malays, customs,

religion and so forth to be seriously debated. This undermines the spirit of unity among the races in Malaysia are built centuries ago.

Meanwhile, on the religious aspect of communication technology into one platform or channel for disseminating information about the development of communication technologies evolve quickly seen to be a backup who can develop the whole community. The variety of communication technologies that exist today can be fully utilized for the benefit of all. Researching the use of communication technologies in context, the extent of communication technology available at the time now have been put in place to benefit the sustainability of unity, religious and cultural. However, the existence of the internet these days also can have a negative impact on religion. Negative issues that give misunderstandings can cause debatable as apostasy. Before, a hotly debated issues of apostasy the Christianization Zarina Gilani or Christian name Liena Joy. This issue has caused discord between religion where Islam forbids its adherents to change religion and religious beliefs, such as Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism regard to freedom of religion is a basic human right. Therefore, if the question of religion too debated over the internet in particular it is a profound effect on society today. Advertising exercises a significant influence on people and society in large, shaping their attitudes, behavior, and priorities (Nandan, 2010).

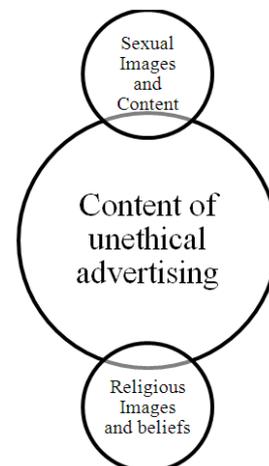


Diagram 1. Content of Unethical Advertising

2.2. The Risk of Advertising

Advertising agencies only offer jobs to almost 4000 people. Advertising agencies are also backed firms other related businesses such as printing companies, companies filmmaking, photography companies, research firms and other media production company. Even the advertising industry has given strong support to the media industry that is growing rapidly in Malaysia includes print media, electronic media and new media (Rahim, 2009). However, some ethical issues arise in advertising. Advertising is a highly visible business activity and any lapse in ethical standards can often be risky for the company. Some of the

common examples of ethical issues in advertising are given below(Amoako, 2012):

- Vulgar/Obscenity used to gain consumers’ attention
- Misleading information and deception
- Puffery
- Stereotypes
- Racial issues
- Controversial products (e.g. alcohol, gambling, tobacco etc)

In order to involve in advertising industry, (Williard, 2007) has identifies several risks of advertising to young people:

- The message advertising use for children and teens include fully developed information that have an impact on their social, emotional and physical well-being.
- Children often judge themselves and others based on the “cool” factor in advertising messages which factors on the insecurities of children and teens. This can hurt their self-esteem.
- Since most products advertised for children are fast foods, soft drinks, candy and junk food, advertising in this field can result in obesity in children.
- Advertising of entry to send this message to young people that they should describe what is right for them. This strategy hinders the ability of parents to grant and teach healthy attitudes and behavior to children.
- The underlying message of highly sexualized images of teens in advertising is that popularity and happiness are linked to being skinny and sexy and having these “cool” products. The result is inappropriate sexual behavior and low self-esteem.



Diagram 2. Risk of Advertising

Thus, this can bring negative effect to the children’s growth even though advertising also can give good impact to the children such as save energy of the earth, drink milk box advertising by Malaysian’s Ministry of Health. But we also need to concern about unethical advertising that can our generation becomes immorality that we need to avoid in the future.

2.3. Negative Effect

The group claims the ad is an inaccurate and unethical portrayal of those with autism and has demanded that the

charity consult with disability advocates before running future campaigns (Wiikerson, 2009).One of example is from the outside country is about a young boy, Dan, talking about his experiences of living with autism and how Action for Children helped him with behavioural problems, in particular, his tendency to lash out at those who insulted him. it uses an animation to portray him as trapped inside a rampaging monster until the charity intervenes, after which he emerges as a vulnerable young man.

On mature reflection, though, we may well come to the unsettling conclusion that bad apples have been good for marketing. The “bad apples” excuse has served us well. It enables us to explain away all manner of misdeeds that many associate with marketers, everything from advertising unhealthy products and selling sweatshop produced trinkets to encouraging the unsustainable overconsumption that’s destroying our planet (Johansson, 2004)

Advertising, thus, has the ability to influence our culture as well as to affect our attitudes and values regardingthe most fundamental issues in our lives, even when it does not affect our buying habits(Vibhava Srivastava, 1984). A popular example is deliberate persuasion of youths who may not understand that persuasive selling may reflect insufficient regard for the buyer’s interest. Advertising professionals need to be aware that behavioral attitudes are controversial and always changing. Consumers believe different things about ethics in advertising and these beliefs may change because different things offend different people(Job Dubihlela, 2011).

Such increasingly aggressive abuse of women in ads is a reflex of the socio-cultural environment and a consequence of unethical company conduct(Torlak, 2011). These varied results also suggest that recourse to nudity influences attitude toward the advertisement, but this influence depends on individual characteristics, such as age and the gender of both the viewer and the model(Christian Dianoux, 2010).

However, as Islam is the main religion in Malaysia, we should consider that we live in Islamic country, we need to behave and acts like a Muslim. Even though there is another race live in this country as well but no parents would like to educate their children with unethical behavior.

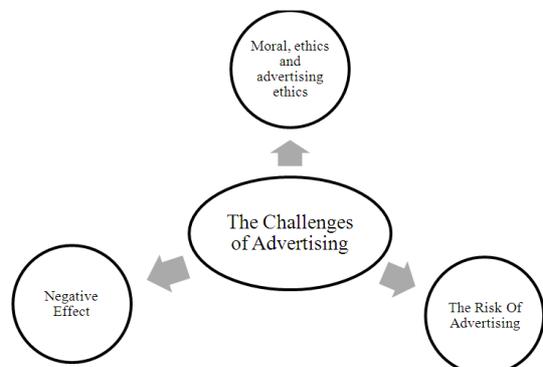


Diagram 3. Challenges of Advertising

3. Conclusion

Advertisers should consider the level of complexity, cultural sensitivities and sensibilities, knowledge and maturity of the people their message is directed and that they should not influence their evaluation of the product value or performance by using advertising in a way that children could not discriminate between the actual and the imaginary features of the products. Advertising can impact children's values, physical condition and security. Advertisers have a responsibility to convey truthful data in an understandable language. They should also confirm affirmative social behavior among children. The content of advertisements should be appropriate for children. Research has shown television advertising can negatively affect a child's purchasing decisions such as tobacco use (Hawkins, 2004) and companies are recommended to reconsider or avoid using explicit sexual appeals and other addictive material as the choice of the main theme in their advertising campaigns (Job Dubihlela, 2011).

Advertising to the young as a whole is a very heated, debatable issue; many advertisers defend their right of 'commercial free speech'. Others argue that children's understanding of advertisements is part of their development and growth, and it is unrealistic to make them live in ideal innocence when it is not the case in the real world, and that such isolation will eventually affect the child's wellbeing (O'Sullivan, 2005). Children increasingly have the world on their fingertips, and their role in commerce should not be dismissed for the lack of credit card. The behaviours and psychology of commerce are no different on the Internet (Dr. Morteza Maleki, 2012).

The problem for the realization of the country's Islamic advertising is the weakness of the Malay community in business and non-Malay share of the economy in general. When the ratio and the number of Malays in the economy are too small then the advertising sector itself leads to more Islamic advertising is not good in terms of form and content (Rahim, 2009). Those involved in the making of the advertising, very little of the Muslims, whether brought from their home countries or local manpower. It is difficult for non-Muslims to implement Islamic perspective workshops, creative advertising.

The recommendations are meant for advertising professionals and future studies on the use of controversial advertising, as well as observations on the effects of this use on corporate image and young consumers' behavior. It might be interesting to survey the influence of youth subcultures on their perception of advertisements. It is important for them to develop creative or use more creative media strategies that match the cultural context of the target market to the advertising message. The aim of any advertising campaign is to cause a favorable reaction in the market and induce customers to buy. Therefore the marketer must put all the means in place to ensure that he does not offend customers and the public at large. (Job Dubihlela, 2011).

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