

Impact of Technological Advertisement in Today's Business Communication

Lakshmi pathi S

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Commerce & Management AMC College Bengaluru, Karnataka

Abstract:

Ethics play an integral role in the development and sustenance of any personal or business relationship. Ethics determine the acceptable behaviours within a society and the overall behaviours of a business. Marketers must understand the impact ethics have on marketing communications and develop strategies accordingly.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing Communication, organization.

INTRODUCTION

The practice of ethics within an organization is an important but difficult concept to understand and practice. The reason why ethics are difficult to manage is that the concept is so subjective. Ethical values differ between societies and individual relationships, therefore a company must decide on an ethical communication strategy.

This paper will discuss the unethical advertisements by marketer today and using surrogate advertising as a strategy for IMC.

Surrogate advertisement: Is it the strategy for integrated marketing communication?

"Let's gear our advertising to sell goods, but let's recognize also that advertising has a broad social responsibility." - Leo Burnett

It is, indeed, an undisputed fact that advertisements play a very important role in today's modern life. They influence our day to day life in drastic ways. Today, people are keen to watch a new advertisement than before, as they provide awareness as well as information about new products that enter the markets. The significance of advertisements in the current corporate world cannot be underestimated. But as all of us can see, the amount of ads which tend to mislead the general public is increasing day-by-day.

As a matter of fact, the advertisements that fail to prove their message are often discarded by the public. Most of those advertisements are of cigarettes and alcoholic drinks. Advertisements of these products are not very much accepted by majority public. As a result of increasing opposition from the public, the government in 2002 had imposed a ban on advertisement of certain products through the media.

These regulations led to a new phenomenon where certain major tobacco and liquor companies started to advertise their products by adopting alternate ways to endorse their products overlooking the prohibition imposed by the government. This alternate way of advertising will be continuously reminding the general public about their prohibited brands, e.g.: liquor or tobacco. The new products they advertise shall possess the same brand name as the prohibited products. These products easily remind us of the prohibited products. The technique of using common brand name for advertising products, which is

otherwise known as "brand extension," are used for advertising related or unrelated products, for example, Tata Salt and Tata Coffee, or Tata Coffee and Tata Steel.

The main concern here is that they advertise these products in such a way that the customers will always remember those "prohibited products" irrespective of the fact that whether it is an advertisement of prohibited product or a useful commodity under the same brand. This is done with a single objective, i.e., to keep the public reminding their tobacco or liquor brands. This innovative method of advertising of prohibited product is termed as "Surrogate Advertisements."

Advertisements like Wills lifestyle, Kingfisher mineral water are examples of surrogate advertisements. This is a kind of escape mechanism adopted by the big brand companies. In fact, they are challenging the government regulations by a new method of prohibited advertisement. As a result, surrogate advertisements have defeated the very purpose of banning advertisements of liquor or other items which are harmful to general public health.

REGULATORY MEASURES:

The Cigarettes & Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of advertisement and regulation of trade and commerce, production, supply and distribution) Act, 2003 reads as follows:

"An Act to prohibit the advertisement of tobacco products, and to provide for the regulation of trade and commerce in, and production, supply and distribution of, cigarettes and other tobacco products and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto."

The above Act was enacted to achieve better public health and to ensure that effectual methods are adopted to protect people from unintentional exposure to smoking and to safeguard children and youngsters from being obsessed to the use of tobacco.

Section 5 of the act read as follows:

Section (5) No person shall, directly or indirectly, produce, supply or distribute cigarettes or any other tobacco products unless every package of cigarettes or any other tobacco products produced, supplied or distributed by him indicates thereon, or on its label, the nicotine and tar contents on each cigarette or as the case may be on other tobacco products along with the maximum permissible limits thereof: Provided that the nicotine and tar contents shall not exceed the maximum permissible quantity thereof as may be prescribed by rules made under this Act.

Section 21 (2) an offense under this section shall be compoundable and shall be tried summarily in accordance with the procedure provided for summary trials in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (2 of 1974).

Punishment for advertisement of cigarettes and tobacco products

Section 22: Punishment for advertisement of cigarettes and tobacco products.-Whoever contravenes the provision of section 5 shall, on conviction, be punishable-

- a. in the case of first conviction, with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees or with both, and
- b. In the case of second or subsequent conviction with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years and with fine which may extend to five thousand rupees.

The section clearly prohibits such advertisements in India and had laid down the punishments imposed for infringing the same. Surrogate advertisements attained its present stimulus with the enactment of Cable TV Network Regulation Act. The Act prohibits liquor and tobacco advertisements through TV programs, which is one of the most influential media of advertisements today.

The Act was amended in 2005 by The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare interpreting the word 'indirect advertisement' in Section 5(1) as follows:

The use of a name or brand of tobacco products for marketing, promotion or advertising other goods, services and events;

The marketing of tobacco products with the aid of a brand name or trademark which is known as, or in use as, a name or brand for other goods and service;

The use of particular colors and layout and/or presentation those are associated with particular tobacco products; and

The use of tobacco products and smoking situations when advertising other goods and services.

By this amendment, the Act was more precise and complete subject matter. Furthermore, the Advertising Standard Council of India [ASCI] has a Code for Self-Regulation in Advertising which covers the following principles:

To ensure the truthfulness and honesty of representations and claims made by advertisements and to safeguard against misleading advertisements.

To ensure that advertisements are not offensive to generally accepted standards of public decency. To safeguard against the indiscriminate use of advertising for the promotion of products which are regarded as hazardous to society or to individuals to a degree or of a type that is unacceptable to society at large.

To ensure that advertisements observe fairness in competition so that the consumer's needs to be informed on choices in the market-place and the canons of generally accepted competitive behaviour in business are both served.

The ASCI is not a body under the government. It is a voluntary, self-regulatory organization and is represented in every committee that is working on advertising content in all Ministries under the Government of India. The Council receives and processes 120-140 complaints against advertisements, from a cross section of consumers and the general public, and this covers individuals, practitioners in advertising, advertiser firms, media, ad agencies, and ancillary services connected with advertising. The complaints are decided by their Consumer Complaints Council (CCC) and the ASCI reports on complaints are decided by the CCC.

The Prohibition of Publication or Telecast of Vulgar, Obscene and Surrogate Advertisements and Re-mix songs by Print and Electronic Media Bill, 2004 is a bill still waiting to see the light. The Bill was put forward to provide for complete prohibition on the publication of surrogate advertisements featuring equivalent products, especially liquor and tobacco through mass communications and media, in order to safeguard our country's cultures and values. A market survey in 2001 revealed that advertising has a direct influence on the consumption habits of 431 million people in India and an indirect impact on 275 million aspirants' from the lower income group.

In addition, the term "surrogate advertisements" has been given a legal definition in the Bill that goes as follows: "An advertisement which shows a substitute product in the guise of the real one which otherwise cannot be legally advertised through the print and electronic media." The Bill also

recommends prohibition of the publication by print media and telecasting of surrogate advertisements and provides that violators of the said provisions shall be punished accordingly.

Meanwhile, the Indian Broadcasting Foundation, whose main objective is to promote, aid, help, encourage, develop protect and secure the interests of the Indian television industry and other related entities, took on the matter of surrogate advertisements and decided to impose approval of production of advertisements by liquor manufacturing units at the storyboard and post-production stage of an advertisement. IBF also restricts liquor companies promoting any products such as mineral water, juice, soda etc in an improper manner which projects them as clippings of liquor or any other prohibited category of advertisements.

Needless to say, these kinds of measures are appreciable, but the point lies in the enforcement of those steps. In our society, as producers have freedom to produce and market their products, as consumers, we have a legitimate right to get comprehensive information through advertisement regarding any new particular product launched in the market.

Surrogate advertisements are both misleading and dishonest in many ways. As this technique is pervasive with growing technology and media penetration, it is high time to take on the issue with due importance. Unless rigorous regulatory measures are put in place to tackle the issue like implementation of laws which ban surrogate advertisements, granting additional authority to ASCI to take legal actions against infringements, regulating media to adhere to the code of advertising, creating public awareness programs etc, this revolutionary method of prohibited advertisements is going to create a big challenge to our media savvy society.

“surrogate ads as a strategy for integrated marketing communication”

Basically surrogate marketing is used in two contexts: the first is when a company "farms out" the entire marketing function and the group providing the service is called a "surrogate marketing department."

The second is what is happening in India with respect to the ban on tobacco and alcohol advertising. Companies in banned industries are introducing brand extensions with products that are legal to advertise with the same brand name as the banned product.

To put it in layman's term, “using same brand name or similar looking brand names to promote other brands and deceiving people is surrogate marketing.”

One liquor company Kingfisher has introduced mineral water with the same brand name as the liquor. The idea is the companies can advertise freely the extension - thus keeping their banned-from-the- media products in the minds of the customers. So mineral water is the surrogate for Kingfisher liquorlear about the regulatory intentions behind the