



Is Advertising Good for Society?

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Advertising is a very disputable issue in many societies. Some people say that it is a part of the business and because of it, advertising is good for society. It brings a lot of benefits and contributes to the development of society. Due to advertising, people get to know about new goods, services, and even ideas. They save their time and money because it is not necessary to look through dozens of online shops and real malls searching for some certain products. Besides, some advertisements can be simply creative, funny, and entertaining to watch. Despite the mentioned benefits, there are many opponents of advertising who say that it has more drawbacks than benefits because it makes people buy unnecessary services and goods. Some advertisements are based on social stereotypes, such as sexuality of women. While there is no agreement in the society concerning advertising, the analysis of recent publications in the media and scientific journals proves that this phenomenon is good for modern society because it performs informative, educational, and even entertainment roles.

Advertising as an Instrument of Business

Advertising is often defined as a form of marketing communication which with the help of audio or visual forms transmits a non-personal but sponsored message with the aim of boosting the sales of some product or service. The scholars have identified the main aim of advertising in the following way "Using public media like television, magazines, billboards, etc., advertising attempts to create a desire in the consumer for the possession of its product or use of its service by associating the product or service with goals seen as part of living the good life" (Morse, 2000, p. 49). It is clear that the main aim of advertising is to make various goods attractive to consumers. In this way, it performs its business function and serves as an engine of commerce. Still, alongside with being a business instrument, starting from the second half of the 20th century, advertising became a part of social life and began to perform many other roles and functions.

Informative Function of Advertising

Advertising has a long history, and it can be called an integral part of human civilization since it accompanied trade and commerce all over the planet. Starting from the first cities of Ancient Egypt and up to huge megalopolises of modernity, advertising has always been associated with progress and innovation. This claim was successfully proved by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who in his speech conducted in 1931 argued that advertising is a powerful tool for spreading knowledge. He said that "The general raising of the standards of modern civilization among all groups of people during the past half-century would have been impossible without the spreading of the knowledge of higher standards by means of advertising" (as cited in Pardun, 2014, p.2). The claim of Franklin Roosevelt emphasizes the importance of advertising for spreading knowledge.

Another example illustrating the informative function of advertising is the one of Thomas Edison's innovations. Edison is the inventor of such everyday objects as an electric bulb and an electric iron. At present, it is impossible to imagine people's lives without them, but in the early 1900s, the inventor had to try hard to persuade consumers to buy these objects which either doubted their usefulness or did not know about them at all (Joyce, 2007). Without advertising, it is very unlikely that they would have become an indispensable part of people's everyday lives. Besides, in the time when these things were invented, many people considered them to be unnecessary and to be objects of luxury; however, they greatly contributed to human progress in general. It is even possible to argue that electric bulb is one of the innovations that changed the world. It enabled people to spend more time outdoors and changed their habitual patterns of entertainment and communication. Due to the use of electric bulbs, people started to work longer and it considerably increased their productivity. This is just one example of dozens of useful innovations which became popular and widely used by people mainly because of the talent of their advertisers.

Besides, advertisements inform people about advantages of a certain product that helps them to make better bargains and to buy more technologically advanced goods. Without advertisements, people will remain unaware of sales, discounts, or special offers that enable them to save money. One more positive aspect of advertisement for the society is that it attracts people's attention to such important issues as environmental protection. For example, advertisements of electric cars, such as Nissan Leaf or Tesla, can be called environmentally friendly (Chappell, 2011). Alongside with providing information about the benefits of the cars for customers, such as speed or mobility, they also emphasize the idea that people should preserve natural resources, especially gas and oil. A similar message is transmitted in other advertising campaigns and being combined they help to inspire the idea that people should care about the environment. People should finally understand that such resources as land, air, and fresh water are priceless and if new technologies enable to use them more wisely, they definitely should be introduced into everyday life.

Entertainment Role

Rather often advertising plays an entertainment role and helps to get some relaxation from stressful information. Many advertisements employ humor and satire. They are funny, and people just like to watch them. Advertising campaigns of Ambi Pur, La Dispensa Soup's, Axe, and many other products are based on humor, and it makes them attractive for viewers (Gross, 2018). Actually, recent research prove that using humor can be an effective technique because such advertisements can be characterized as "the humorous ads – the clever, laugh out loud, rolling on the floor ads – that will not only connect with audiences, but also get them talking, sharing, and thinking positively about a brand" (Gross, 2018). And this is exactly what the advertisers expect from their campaigns. Also, they like to use humor because it can be considered a universal language and if a company operates in many regions, there is no need to translate a certain slogan or a message because people can understand it from the context. Besides, humor always creates a positive association with some product or brand. Even after a long time people recollect some humorous advertisements they saw once, and it can also motivate them to buy.

Educational Role of Advertising

Advertising has a positive influence on the society because it helps to initiate good changes and in this case, it is called "an agent of change" (Pardun, 2014, p.3). Advertising helps people to change their behavior by demonstrating a desirable one. In this way it educates them. For instance, many people began to go in for sports after watching advertisements of gyms and fitness programs demonstrating strong and healthy human bodies. It can be called an illustrative example of the educational role of advertising. According to Morse (2000), "the advertisers and marketers of business become part of the community that plays a role in forming one's conception of the good

life” (p. 49). This is probably one of the most important benefits of this commercial activity. In the conditions of global society when people all over the world have access to different channels of information, they can see some patterns of life which can differ radically from the ones they have in their native countries or cities.

Negative Influence of Advertising

While commenting on the role of advertisement in the society, people often state that it is not a positive phenomenon because it broadcasts wrong values. As the examples illustrating this statement, they refer to the increase of smokers among teenagers and young people. According to their point of view, young people become smokers mainly because of a dangerous influence of advertisement. In response to this claim many scholars, including Richard Pollay (1986), have argued that advertising serves as a mirror reflecting the most typical features of a certain community or group of people. It reflects the values governing a certain society. For instance, if the society has a high level of violence, it will be reflected in the advertisements. If people lead an unhealthy lifestyle and have harmful habits, the advertisements of cigarettes and alcohol will dominate media space. As a result, advertising has a negative influence on the society because it makes many harmful habits such as smoking or drinking alcohol popular.

One more problem connected with advertising is its concentration on gender stereotypes. For example, in many advertisements female sexuality is used as a selling mechanism. This tendency is harmful for society because due to the influence of advertisements women became treated only as sexual objects. In this way, the balance of gender roles is ruined. While it is difficult to deny that sometimes advertising plays a negative role, its positive influence on society is more important.

Conclusions

The analysis conducted in this paper demonstrates that advertising is an effective instrument of business that also performs several important roles in the society. It has an informative, educational, value reflecting, and entertainment functions. All of them improve the society in general and thus have a positive influence on it. Despite constant criticism of advertising and accusations of fostering harmful habits and unethical behavior, it is impossible to deny that advertising greatly contributed to the progress of human civilization by making people acquainted with various innovations. It is also obvious that advertising educates people and helps them to adopt new modes of behavior such as healthy lifestyle or being environmentally friendly. Finally, many of advertisements are just entertaining to watch. Thus, advertising generally positively influences the society even despite some negative impacts it can have.