

Advertising and Public Relations in Changing Technological Times

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Editorial

Advertising as a marketing instrument continues to be interpreted in the very same way since its inception. Consumers state that advertising brings the product or service closer to them by creating awareness and informing them prior to purchasing it. Sceptics have broadly stated that advertising remains a lure to make consumers buy a product by vaunting either certain positive elements of it or simply forcing a want—not genuine need—onto them. Businesses argue that advertising develops greater awareness of what they might offer to their potential customers while also helping their brand identity to be better established in the market where the firm operates.

Such a challenge still remains popular in most business environments where perceptions of advertising keep to be nuanced. The fact that we are today moving to a more consumerist society might be a positive factor that confirms the presence and validity of advertising. Still to date, those who advertise claim that this marketing effort helps them stay a little clear of cut-throat competition while maintaining brand loyalty.

In today's business environment, advertising is undergoing changes and this has been already evidenced through the development of viral marketing that uses e-marketing to address customers online anywhere they could be in the world. The use of online technology has given a new dimension to advertising where it is cheaper and easier to administrate the advertising campaign and get closer to the customer who gets savvy in using information technology. In the form of teasers or fly outs, advertising gets a little more tempting with time but might be contrarily perceived as an eyesore that could be declined by potential consumers.

The power of advertising has not declined nor will it be so in the years to come. The 2016 US presidential campaign can be seen as an enticing experience of using advertising techniques to attract voters to choose one of the two candidates standing for this important election. It shows how advertising makes an impact on the minds of people who might still be undecided to choose their representative. If one boasts the power of advertising in this specific context, one can also recall the negative aspect of it where criticisms vociferated by each candidate standing for presidency shows how advertising could be a counter effective mechanism albeit a valuable marketing instrument.

In this era of modern communication that uses smarter technologies than ever before, the power of advertising should not be underestimated. Consumers are driven by its clout and they are fairly well influenced by the message that advertising sends. It is important that the ethical consideration should be duly considered when biased and subjective messages turn out as the antithesis of decent advertising. The negative influence of advertising might be seen as something temporal but its side effects might be viewed as prejudicial over the long term. From this point of view, marketing professionals are expected to develop their own perceptual parameters of ethical advertising standards and see how well they might use advertising in the most effective manner.

It is worth stating that advertising comes along with creativity. Can it be said that such creativity is renewed or unleashed? In fact, this might be the case today when online advertising that combines

animated images with sound and music offers a new possibility of enhancing advertising's effectiveness. Creators come with ideas in mind and expect developing the most astute tool and prowess to make it a fully-lived experienced. The impact on consumer's mind and response must surely be a prospective area of research both for academics and practitioners.

Aligned with advertising, public relations (PR) is considered as the individual and compelling unpaid effort that organizations tend to undertake as a means of developing their positive image in society. PR might be linked with the human resource function but is also a challenging exercise that combines a company's advertising effort with that of the pervasive influence that PR expects to have. Generally, this could be a means to counteract negative images or perceptions developed by consumers but, to a wider extent, society at large.

In contrast to advertising, PR has a greater societal impact because members the community claim to have their right to know about any activity that the firm undertakes and that needs their right to inquire. PR might be glamorous from the point of view that the organization aims at boasting its image in relation to an event. Hotel resorts use the PR strategy and couple it with advertising to show a better image of themselves. Banking organizations like Barclays PLC or HSBC currently link PR with advertising as a means of better portraying their image as servable businesses to society members.

The challenge for PR comes from the fact that the negative image developed by customers always remains a tough task to undertake. The illustration of PR regarding the MH 370 flight of Malaysian Airlines in 2014 puts to test the effort undertaken both by owners of the airline company and government. Knowing that little information still perspires from the mysterious disappearance of the airplane, PR has become fraught with uncertainty and apprehensions. So long as victims' parents are not satisfied with the problem linked with the flight, it is difficult to even find out partial solace. So what about harnessing the importance of PR with information and communications technology. In particular, this effort pays although it is usually difficult to gauge its effectiveness. Linking online communication through videos and audio services, PR has made some inroad by better providing information to those who need it and addressing certain communication that is of utmost interest in times of crisis.

It has been recently seen that information technology might be a

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challenge for PR as well. Since marketing professionals use PR to exert their company's influence over people, consumers have also gained greater opportunities to voice their opinion. Platforms like 'Facebook' and related social media developed in industry like direct reply and conversation have made it difficult to control the adverse effects of consumer interaction with PR. To this expense, an inability to develop the right communication strategy with aggrieved customers could become a weapon for them to easily thrash a company's reputation. In a nutshell, PR is still perceived as the persuasive tool that companies use to save their face when confronted to a dilemma while consumers believe that their interaction with the business allows them to see PR in a more subjective way. The problem that lies hereunder is how to ensure that PR is not essentially a face saving device for the company but rather as a potential means of maintaining the credibility of the business in a condition of threat or crisis.

To sum up, both advertising and PR are now travelling through an age where they are forced to rely on information technology

developments and make the best from them. It is evidenced that such improvements generally enhance their effectiveness as they allow a bulk of information and data to transit in this system to consumers who could be the end line of the process but surely its most vital counterpart. Since the firm benefits from such a seamless advantage, it should not underestimate the aptitude of consumers who, from the other end, are capable of reacting more promptly and effectively to these two important tools that marketing tends to rely upon. It's just like a samurai weapon that blends expert craftsmanship through an astutely developed skill to fend off a rival but, at the same time, could be counteractive if not well technically mastered. In today's environment the consumer remains informed and knowledgeable but crawls back if companies fail at delivering the right advertising and PR strategy in their favour. Information technology surely helps though it is not a panacea to the challenge but rather a marketing tool that partially addresses the upcoming tests for advertising and PR, either used in conjunction or separately, *au choix*. *Au choix*- to one's choice.

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