

MASS MEDIA AND PUBLICITY

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Abstract

Advertising as used for the promotion of products - is a gift from God. It is mainly used to contribute towards the development of the human person. Advertising is used to promote what properly promotes the good of the human person. Advertising makes people know about what the human person is and what the human person can become. It is used to promote the longings of the human person and what they are. Advertising looked at from this point of view means letting people know about what would help the human person to be what God created it to be. Advertising looked at as the 'letting of people' - cannot only be used to increase the purchasing of the product, but it can also be used to promote the good of being person. Advertising can be used to promote the principles of moral living. One could use the means of communication - advertising - publicity as a way of letting people know about personhood. In this context, personhood promoted through advertising and publicity can help in the development of the person. The person develops through good living, acquiring what properly promotes his personhood and through the promotion of those principles that uphold personhood.

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Advertising, publicity and communication in general promote the well-being of the society. But these can also promote the development of the society. A society can develop because people are able to know the principles that can promote them. The society can also develop when good politicians are able to step up and promote the good of the society and the good of the human person.

Politics has been able to promote the good of the human person. Politics has also been able to destroy the good of the human person. All this happens because the ideas that are promoted can influence people in various ways. Politicians have been able to change and influence people towards a good way, but some have also been able to influence people in the wrong the way. All this happens because of the effect of publicity, communication and advertising in general.

The Church on its part views advertising positively as a gift from God. However, the Church constantly stresses the importance of advertising to contribute to the development of the persons and also to foster the well-being of the society.

Despite the many good things that advertising can bring, the Church noted with sadness the negative influence of advertising, namely the compromise of the moral principles. The Church wrote this document to enter into dialogue with communicators in order to suggest certain steps that should be taken into consideration by the professionals involved in advertising (RASMUSSEN et al., 2011).

The aims of advertising are to inform and persuade. There are some difference between advertising and marketing, and these differences have already been explained above. In addition, there is a difference between advertising and public relations, a difference which we have already given in the preceding sections. There are different modes of advertising, namely local advertising that involves a lot of research and this advertising can be directed towards commercial advertising for products and services and political campaigns. The importance of advertising is that it is a mirror of the society, but most importantly, advertising shapes the reality in the society and the problem is that at times, it even gives a distorted view of reality.

Nevertheless, as Pope Paul VI noted, we cannot run away from advertising. Even when one decides not to be exposed to certain forms of advertising, the truth is that he or she will still come into contact with other people who are affected by it. In fact, others even hate advertising and think of it as a waste of time and money. But advertising has a potential for good (PALAKEEL, 2003).

Advertising has some economic benefits, such as contributing towards the economic growth of the society. Advertising does this by informing people of the availability of a product on a particular market. The second advantage is that it helps in political advertising. Through this process, citizens participate in making political choices and are able to contribute to their democracy. Thirdly, the advertising of cultural benefits is important. Through advertising, good intellectual, aesthetic and moral quality materials can be presented to the public for the promotion of culture. There are also some moral and religious benefits of advertising. This is important for a good pastoral strategy in which the pastoral activities are presented to all people.

Furthermore, advertising has its own challenges to the society. It is not evil in itself, but it becomes unhelpful if it promotes harmful products or if false statements are made about a product. In addition, materials that exploit people's sexual instincts are not good and represent a big challenge to the society.

Additionally, people should try to avoid buying things that they do not need and in the process ignoring what they really need. Advertising has the potential of misplacing people's priorities. They could go to a shop and buy one thing but because of the power of advertising, they may end up buying what is only accessorial. Advertising can be economically harmful if it misrepresents and hides relevant information about something, thereby not helping people to make the right choices in their lives. Politically, advertising can offer an advantage to the candidates who are not good while, at the same time, putting at a disadvantage the leaders who have the capacity to become good ones. This may be the case because it mainly appeals to emotions and instinctual judgements. The harm of advertising on the culture of the people is that it can corrupt the culture and its values. Morally and religiously, advertising can promote things that are morally degrading such as pornography, sarcastic videos, nude pictures and many other items.

What then are the ethical considerations that we can make with regard to advertising? We would say that if the media practitioners are to correctly use the means of communications, then

it is important to obey and apply the natural law which is written in people's hearts (Rom. 2:15). The media ought to help people grow in the knowledge of what is good and truthful. All those involved in the advertising process are responsible for the direction to which they lead people. If people make mistakes because of bad advertising then the advertisers, publishers, broadcasting executives and all those involved in the advertising process should be able to shoulder the blame. As such, it is imperative that one refrains from using manipulating, exploiting and use of persuasion in seeking consent from people on things that are morally wrong. At times, advertising can deliberately choose to be untrue. Advertisers, at times, deliberately distort information in order to sell their products. As a principle, the content of communication must be true and should always be within the limits set by justice and charity. This content however must be communicated properly and honestly (KEITH, 2007).

Advertising must also respect the dignity of the human person and this includes respecting the capacity of a human being to reflect and decide. The dignity of the person can be violated in advertising through its content, what is advertised, the manner of advertising and the impact that is sought in the audience. This is done by many advertisers who direct their advertising to children to exploit their suggestibility in the hope that they will pressurise their parents into buying the product. This type of advertising offends parents as well as children. Good advertising must not lead to the destruction of the environment through the promotion of lavish life styles. In addition, advertising must not give a false idea that human progress is reduced only to the acquisition of material goods, but that it should be understood as based on authentic and integral human development. Advertisers must promote an authentic vision of the human person, which is cultural, material and spiritual. As a conclusion, in order to improve and make sure that advertising meets good standards, advertisers must serve the common good, the good of the human person and should not only be interested in their own interests. There is need for external structures to help the people who work in advertising institutions. Most of these people may have a good sense of judgement about right and

wrong, but once inserted into the actual decision-making process of advertising, they find it hard and difficult to translate their convictions into practice, due to market competition and the internal dynamics of their profession. Another way is by having external codes that are used to check the performance of the advertisers. It is the role of the government to have a policy in the advertising industry that can help curb the problem of the quantity of advertising, especially in broadcast media, as well as the content of advertising directed at groups that are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, such as children and old people. The government on its part ought to control political advertising to determine how much can be spent, and how and from whom one may solicit money for advertising. The Church should begin to use the media for the spread of the gospel. It is necessary to use the media for evangelization. The Church ought to be involved in media education; the use of media in pastoral planning, the role of advertising in the world and this education should prepare people to approach advertising with caution (O'COLLINS & FARRUGIA, 1991).

We can add here that, in cases in which advertising and misinformation caused harm, the media and the information producers must be encouraged and constrained by law to repair the harm and damage, either through compensation, retraction or in extreme cases through imprisonment. If anonymously done, and the culprits of such anonymous and false messages, images or pictures are apprehended, then the civil courts ought to be empowered to give the right custodial sentences or to assess the extent of the damage and the compensation to be paid. If the retraction names those who wilfully published false messages, images and pictures, then the retraction would be accepted if it includes the names of the offenders, but the civil courts would still be competent to value the damage caused and the compensation to be paid. All this is important because of the amount of damage and suffering that published misinformation causes to the victims of such messages. The last example offered is that of persuasion or rhetoric. We have used one example of Barack Obama in his speech that he delivered at the Democratic Party convention in

2004. We here indicate how managed to build a public opinion of himself by using rhetoric and different styles of persuasion.

The various tools use in communication are usually radio, TV, print, billboards, internet and many other. These means of communication and business communication in general are used because of what they can be and achieve. They are means of communication that can reach out to so many people at the same time. It is worth reflecting on the wide coverage of so many topical issues in the present era – recently we have had a wide coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic and the political front has seen both back and front pages of the dairies covering issues that are following from a distance by so many people. There have been so many wars that have been fought and have been widely covered – like the Syrian problems and so many Mideast difficulties. All these issues are tackled and carried on the different means and tools of communication. Advertising and business communication in general also find themselves carried out by the different communication means (HORWITZ, 2001).

However, the issues are carried out in a way that is not the same. People would communicate about these same issues, but they would communicate them in a different way. This means that there is a substantial language difference in the way people communicate not only in general social communication issues as such, but there is also a difference in the way people express and articulate them in business communication. People would be communicating about a product that is on the market – and they would communicate about it in different ways. This means that the ways of communicating about things are different – even if the things in question are the same.

Communication has a psychological impact. The psychological approach to communication shows that while advertising communication tends to reinforce and exacerbate already pre-established emotional situations with the *joy* and *enthusiasm* marked by overstatement (exaggeration), social communication needs and desires to change ingrained behaviour or discourage bad and dangerous behaviours, but it was fascinated in the past by the use of moralistic language which easily stimulates feelings of guilt

which can easily be rejected. Hence it has the problem of language (PLUDE, 2011).

When we look at the Relational Perspective of Values, we discover that Social communication values public interest, through themes that look at the quality and respect of life. All this aimed at the strong link between individual well-being and collective welfare. This approach, unlike the hedonism of advertising communication exceeds the force of social communication. It is an approach that is called sublimated individualism.

Advertising is now in most situations and many places. There are adverts in the towns, in the villages, and in many other locations. Adverts are therefore a common phenomenon these days. The adverts are carried out in newspapers, in radios, in televisions and even in magazines. In all these situations – the adverts are usually different and have varying uses (NEW ADVENT, n.d.).

Adverts are usually used to give people information about the products. That is why companies that produce things usually advertise their products, so that people can buy from them. The products that are sold fetch prices on the market. Adverts are also given so that people can have information about something. It could be information about the availability of products. It could be information about the quality of the product and it could even be information about the use of the products. Adverts are also given so that people can be able to make profit. If a product does not fetch good prices on the market or if it does not make profit then adverts are used in order to highlight the availability and the usefulness of the product.

The products' availability and the selling points are equally given in adverts. Therefore, one is able to communicate and relay information about the products' quality and pricing as well as the benefit that one gets from using that particular product. Sometimes it is possible that one has product, but because it has not been able to promote and advertise it as much sales may drop and yet it could be a product that could make lots of money. It is thus not only about the quality of the product or about its availability, but it matters of whether the product is advertised or not (NEWCOMB, 1966).

Advertising helps in making people aware about the product. It makes people aware about the availability of the product, where it could be

found and how the product could be used. The idea is that information about the product will help in the right use of the product – so that bad usage does not become the reason why people shun away from the product. That is why it is possible that a good product is sometimes not well used – as a result there could be a drop in the sales of the product.

However, there are some issues that are attached to publicity and advertising. There is the psychological part of advertising. Advertising raises the emotional aspect of the human person. Advertising at times raises emotions. Through advertising one can either raise emotions about the product, but at times the product's message leads to a decline in the emotional element. There is sometimes an element of advertising which raises enthusiasm in the human person. Through advertising one can enthuse about the prospect of acquiring the product. Already before one acquires the product – one has the emotional part of the product's message. That is why people are able to buy the product because they believe that it is going to be good. Even if the product may not be – a tried product already – but they believe that it is going to be good and usable. Therefore, people proceed and acquire the product (MORRIS, 1981).

The product's information, circulation, marketing points and availability are all required in advertising. Of course, there has always been a problem with advertising when it comes to the emotional and psychological part of it, especially with regard to the exaggerations that, at times, takes place in the language that is used. Some exaggerations raise expectations that are not really available in the product. Such exaggerations stem from buyers' expectations, which unfortunately are sometimes unmet. The problem here is when the unmet expectations are about factual issues.

There is no use giving wrong information. Wrong information is nothing else but simply wrong. There is nothing profitable about spreading wrong information about a product – people buy it and end up refuting the information. At what point should advertising be a true semblance of what really is? At what point does advertising become unethical?

There is indeed no point in advertising using information that is sarcastic. There is now an

issue of nudity in advertising. Does nudity help in advertising? Does advertising have to be nude even when children are the ones looking at such nude pictures? What is really the ethics of advertising, especially when we have to show what is nude in order to raise money or to make more profit? At times, even the pictures that are used are hugely violent and do seem to promote dangerous behaviours (PALAKEEL, 2011).

We systematically deal with the problem of language. We deal with the difficult issue of profit and language, profit and ethics. All these topics are obviously worth analysing but, in this article, it is suffice to say that we cannot do without advertising. It is part of our day-to-day life, but advertising has to be ethical.

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