Effects Of Advertising On Society Essay, Research Paper

Every time we open a newspaper or we turn on the TV, we see sellers of almost identical products spending huge amounts of money in order to convince us to buy their brands. Every year, each typical American watches 1550 hours of TV, listens 1160 hours on radio, and spends 290 hours reading newspapers and magazines. So every day, each American watches 100 TV advertisements, 100 to 300 ads through other mass media, and in one single year receives 216 pieces of direct mail advertising, and almost 50 phone calls from telemarketers (Pratkanis and Aronson 2). All these, because sellers of everything, from computers to detergents, believe that advertising is essential to the product. Ed Ney, ex-chairman of the Young and Rubicam American agency, refers to the mid seventies when many firms still had as a debatable issue if they should advertise or not. Those days have passed. As Ney says, that has happened, because it has been proved that advertising is beneficial to the firms (Clark 16). The critics state that advertising is really beneficial to the consumers: They believe that advertising “creates” consumers that are better informed about the characteristics of the commodities, and that it does not alter the way in which the companies evaluate their products. Also, they believe that advertising creates price sensitivity for the consumers that buy the best products for their value. Finally, they think that with advertisement, entries for new brands are much easier because of the communication with the potential consumers that commercials offer (Haefner and Rotzoll 87).

Advertising, collective term for public announcements designed to promote the sale of specific commodities or services. Advertising is a form of mass selling, employed when the use of direct, person-to-person selling is impractical, impossible, or simply inefficient. It is to be distinguished from other activities intended to persuade the public, such as propaganda, publicity, and public relations. Advertising techniques range in complexity from the publishing of simple, straightforward notices in the classified-advertising columns of newspapers to the concerted use of newspapers, magazines, television, radio, direct mail, and other communications media in the course of a single advertising campaign. From its unsophisticated beginnings in ancient times, advertising has burgeoned into a worldwide industry. In the U.S. alone in the late 1980s, approximately $120 billion was spent in a single year on advertising to influence the purchase of commodities and services.

Modern advertising is an integral segment of urban industrial civilization, mirroring contemporary life in its best and worst aspects. Having proven its force in the movement of economic goods and services, advertising since the early 1960s has been directed in increasing quantity toward matters of social concern. The continuing cancer and anti drug abuse campaigns are only two examples of the use of the advertising industry as a means to promote public welfare.

Advertising falls into two main categories: consumer advertising, directed to the ultimate purchaser, and trade advertising, in which the appeal is made to dealers through trade journals and other media. Both consumer and trade advertising employ many specialized types of commercial persuasion. A relatively minor, but important, form of advertising is institutional advertising, which is designed solely to build prestige and public respect for particular business concerns as important American institutions. Each year millions of dollars are spent on institutional advertising, which usually mentions products or services for sale only incidentally.

Another minor, but increasingly popular, form of advertising is cooperative advertising, in which the manufacturer shares the expense of local radio or newspaper advertising with the retailer who signs the advertisement. National advertisers occasionally share the same space in magazine advertising. For example, makers of pancake flour, of syrup, and of sausages sometimes jointly advertise this combination as an ideal cold-weather breakfast.

Advertising may be local, national, or international in scope. The rates charged for the three different levels of advertising vary sharply, particularly in newspapers; varying rates are set also by newspapers for amusement, legal, political, financial, religious, and charitable advertisements.

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It is suggested that advertising is not beneficial, but harmful to the consumers. First of all, it does not really inform the consumers, but persuades them. Persuasion is actually the step of advertising that induces purchase. This is managed by techniques that appeal to feelings, like love or hate (Rotzoll and Haefner 100). For example some advertisements say that the firms take care of the consumers by creating safest products. This venture is usually used in car advertisements. As Eric Clark puts it very well “advertising exists to inform – but even more so to persuade” (Clark 15). Also, as opposed to the promotion through personal contact, advertising does not involve pressure to the audience. For that reason, the last does not “fight” the message. So, it is easier for the advertiser to hand over the message (Dommermuth 44). Moreover, as McConnell and Brue put it, “material wants have a high reproduction rate. The rapid introduction of new products “whets our appetites”, and extensive advertising persuades us that we need items we might not otherwise buy” (McConnell and Brue 22).

Furthermore, advertisers do not tell all the truth. Because advertising is not journalism but salesmanship, is not obligated to tell the whole story (advantages and disadvantages of the products). For example, in car advertising, some advertisers often say that their cars are fast, safe, and luxurious, but they do not mention that these cars are the most expensive in their category. As a former director of promotion for the Time magazine, Nicholas Samstag puts it “the half truth is the essence of advertising” (Clark 15). That ‘s why advertising has devaluated some words like “real” or “natural” which mean whatever each advertiser wants them to mean. For example, there are chocolate chips with “all natural” ingredients, “all natural” cosmetics and so forth (Clark 18). So we see the advertisement of “Kinder” chocolate saying that has only natural ingredients, without mentioning the preservatives that it contains. In addition, advertisers trying to paste up more appealing images to the products, they give them an added vague value. Charles Revson, the founder of Revlon, often says that in the laboratory he makes cosmetics but in the store he “sells dreams”. Many products may be transformed into glamorous, full of colours and image products. A very good example is chocolate mints After Eight, which are mass produced and affordable for children to purchase with their own pocket money, and they have a luxury image (Clark 25).

Moreover, advertising has been dominated in the media in such a way that has the ability to be all-invasive. Professor of Advertising, Kim Rotzoll, has a good explanation. Advertisers, he says, are not in a position to enforce, but they have the power to dominate by transmitting us their messages through our television programmes, through our magazines etc (Clark 15). Besides, according to Eric Clark “advertising is far from impotent or harmless; it is a mere mirror image. Its power is real, and on the brink of a great increase. Not the power to brainwash overnight, but the power to create subtle and real change. The power to prevail” (Clark 20). So still in the postindustrial society, advertisers produce consumers by controlling their ideas and beliefs (O’Barr 203). That’s why the Times say that advertising works – without our knowing that it is working on us. Good advertising works – with still greater stealth (Clark 13).

Furthermore, advertising is harmful to the children, too. From the earliest years of children, advertisements shape the way of their lives, and what to consume. Many commercials showing boys playing with cars and girls playing with dolls create different tastes and preferences for each sex (O’Barr 205). Children see about 20.000 thirty-second commercials each year, which stands for three hours per day (Clark 188). Thus, every day companies sneakily draw children with complicated baiting techniques. Such a technique is found in some advertisements that show “cool” children consuming the products that companies advertise. So advertisement offering a parade of toys, games, and foodstuffs, impede on Saturday morning cartoons. Usually we do not know the image making and role modeling that such commercials transmit to the children. After all, we should remember that children simply want some products without being concerned about the quality of these goods (Bosch 21). An academic, Donald Roberts, in order to prove the influence of advertising to children shows an experiment. In this, a list of boys’ Christmas present requests created from two researchers, J.R.Rossiter and T.S.Robertson, in both early November and late December. They estimated the amount of exposure to commercials and the way children responded to these commercials. They concluded that children with stronger defences chose fewer television – promoted toys in November than did those with weaker defences. On the contrary, by late December, distinctions on defences made no difference. So a big advertising campaign was enough in order to change the tastes and preferences of even the most resistant children (Clark 201).

Finally, advertising prevents new entrances in the market: That, permits to inefficient large manufacturers to govern the scene because newer (and probably more efficient) producers cannot afford the large advertising budgets required in order to get into the market. So advertising becomes an entrance obstacle that discourages ethical competition and gives an impulse to conditions in which a few manufacturers have an unhealthy “oligopolistic” control of prices and supplies of commodities. For that reason, advertising leads to a significant deviation from the perfect market (Leiss and Kline 16).

Also, the supporters of the idea of advertisement believe that the last benefits the firms too. First of all, as a result of the better informed consumers, firms lower the prices and improve the quality of their products and second because there is better communication between the consumers and the firms (Haefner and Rotzoll 87). It is suggested that advertising benefits the advertisers in an unethical way. First of all, companies are forced to advertise in order to frustrate the invasion of brand enemies without extensive changes in quality or price of the products. Thus, advertising is an added cost to the consumers, without benefit to the last or the competitiveness of the market (Leiss and Kline 16). If there is any real and useful information in the commercials, it could be better provided on the labels of the products or by the salesmen in the stores (Leiss and Kline 15). Moreover advertising creates brand loyal consumers that do not pay much attention on the price of the products. Also, it affects the tastes and preferences of the consumers. All of the above give the ability to the firms to charge higher prices and to be uninterested in the quality of their products (Rotzoll and Haefner 87).

In addition, the reasoning process taught by the commercials deserves attention, because of a faulty logic that fosters conclusion without all the information that could probably be associated with. Although this problem is not very important in deciding which breakfast cereal to buy, it is very dangerous and sneaky in presidential elections, where the consequences are more conspicuous (O’Barr 205). That is because each candidate has created propaganda that might distort the beliefs of the voters. That is why advertising is appealing to the government. Making an advertising campaign against heroin use as the best way of spending money is debatable, but it enables the administration to be seen caring (Clark 31).

So, to sum up that advertisement exists only in order to return profits to the advertisers by many tricky ways. Some of these are the use of persuasion at the consumers, the faulty – logic messages, and the influence on children. All these acts, definitely, are not for the benefit of the consumers.

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