
INVESTIGACIÓN/RESEARCH

Recibido: 17/08/2015 ----- Aceptado: 21/10/2015 -----Publicado: 15/12/2015

5 REASON FOR AN ETHIC ADVERTISING

María Teresa Pellicer Jordá¹. University of Murcia. Spain
maite.pellicer@um.es

ABSTRACT:

In this article, we offer five big arguments that support the need of the ethical fulfillment in the advertising. This one will provide a major success to them, especially to the level of brand image, something very necessary if we bear in mind the bad image that the citizens of the advertising are used to have

KEY WORDS:

Advertising-Education-Society-Communication-Ethics-Values- Moral-Brand-Image

5 RAZONES PARA UNA PUBLICIDAD ÉTICA

RESUMEN:

En el artículo que presentamos a continuación, ofrecemos cinco grandes argumentos que avalan la necesidad del cumplimiento ético en la publicidad. Éste les proporcionará un mayor éxito, sobre todo a nivel de imagen de marca, algo muy necesario si tenemos en cuenta la mala imagen que suelen tener los ciudadanos de la publicidad

PALABRAS CLAVE: Publicidad-Educación-Sociedad-Comunicación-Ética-Valores-Moral-Marca-Imagen

1. INTRODUCTION

¹ **María Teresa Pellicer Jordá** The author is a professor at the Faculty of Communication and Information at the University of Murcia. She is the author of two books, entitled 'Ethics and advertising strategies' and 'Advertising as cultural industry', as well as several articles in professional journals in Communication.
maite.pellicer@um.es

Advertising has become the traveling companion of any citizen. Not only literally - with ads on bus shelters, billboards on highways, urban transport, etc. but also in the journey that is life. As an advertisement for the company P & G says, "*a clean shirt can become a superhero or an amazing hair can make you believe more in you.*" It is true. The publicity accompanying citizens and determines much of their actions. Following what this ad says "*every day, doing small things, we write the story of our life, our children and our planet*" and those little things are conditioned by the brands we choose. Is not the same sensation to wash with Ariel detergent than any other? It is not the same to use Fairy than another dishwasher and so much more. As Vives says, "*advertising will continue to monitor the life with different eyes and will reflect it on people. It is like telling through different forms and narrative languages: Have you noticed what is happening in the world? (2005: 169)*" Thus, advertising is more than advertising. Diaz Soloaga speaks of "*other functions derived from its core business, which is selling. Since we were small we assume that advertising is part of the daily scenery that surrounds and accompanies our existence (2006: 46).*" Thus, it is who determines much of the values present in society, creates and strengthens social habits and has a great influence on the lives of people. Ultimately, as Costa says, "*advertising can be considered as a determining part of the acts of individuals, linked to consumption and its ritual (1992: 11).*"

This social function of which we speak has come almost to overshadow the economic function of advertising, origin of its birth. But not only it has eclipsed it, but the social aspect has become the protagonist of its ads and the criterion to judge or comment on advertising. Hence the birth of a campaign, issued in 2013, under the slogan 'Advertising yes. Because with it you grow, we all grow', in which professionals in this discipline broke into ads of a brand to which they did not belong to list some of its economic advantages, which are unknown to most consumers. Some of the advantages that highlight these ads is that "*advertising guarantees affordable, free and quality media,*" "*advertising encourages new talents and new business ideas*" or "*advertising generates 2% of GDP and more than 100,000 jobs.*"

Thus, the opinion of citizens about advertising stems from its social function and ethics becomes the main tool to judge. It is no wonder then that ethical breaches that can be seen in many commercials are the cause of the negative view of advertising that many citizens have.

To all this adds that the ethics is fashionable, due to the crisis in the country. More and more companies boast an ethical attitude as bait. For example, a much maligned sector as the banking ethics is being used as a way to differentiate them from

competitors. In the case of Triodos Bank, whose slogan is *"The European referent in ethical and sustainable banking."*

2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Hence the need for this article arises, in which five arguments are offered for the implementation and enforcement of advertising ethics, as a guarantee of social success of the profession. Only then it will get to change the negative image that the profession has.

To do this, we will offer arguments and data that demonstrate the importance of the issue, through bibliographic review of numerous expert authors in the fields of education and publicity.

3. DISCUSSION

When we talk about an ethical advertising we refer it to comply with the basic principles present in the first articles of any deontological code and explains very well Self control on your ads on television, when it speaks of *"a truthful, legal, honest and loyal advertising"*. In short, a responsible advertising. These principles *"must be assumed (1999: 31)"* by their professionals", which should not only pay attention to the content of the ads, as Benavides says, but also have to *"think inevitably in the market structure, objectives and its possibilities towards achieving a more balanced, equitable and just society (2012: 85)."*

3.1. Because it gives morality and social responsibility to the profession

The first reason because of which advertising must respect ethical principles is because these provide moral and social responsibility to the profession. Thus, as Sanchez Guzman says, they are *"the deep appreciation of the responsibility that their activity has to society (1993: 514)"*, something with which also Bonete agrees when he says *"they come to express the moral awareness that the professional group has, the ability to take social responsibility and the sensitivity to the defense of fundamental human rights (1999:31)"*

In fact, in almost all codes of ethics of the profession, the fact that compliance with a series of ethical principles is recognized and assumes the recognition of the social responsibility of the profession.

3.2. Because it is supposed to respect the consumers

The second argument for the need for ethical advertising is that it is supposed to respect consumers. An advertising which complies with ethical principles would end the widespread view that the advertising misleads and confuses the consumer, because as Eguizábal says, his role is not that *"against what some believe, only bad advertising of bad products plays the ceremony of confusion (2007: 75)."*

Advertising is *"the activity consisting in making look different what is alike. A name or a container are no longer sufficient. An egg is like another egg even if we call them differently (Eguizábal, 2007: 75)"* and that is its main task. There is no deception in it, but the malpractice leads to the mistaken idea that we talked about. Examples of bad practices we do, for example, in an advertisement for Rox, introducing the *"secret of millions of women around the world to be kept young and feel good. Bags under the eyes of Eva disappeared in less than a minute and Dayan saw wrinkles vanish as if by magic"*. All this can be achieved but with Photoshop and not with that product. But there are many other examples of malpractice, such as the Nokia Lumia announcement, announcing sensor capturing high definition images even when the photographer is in motion. It was discovered that the real images that appear in the ad were taken by a professional camera and not with a mobile phone, as they wanted us to believe. So we can list others as controversial ads of the Artichoke of Laon or Reebok sneakers that with their use toned up the muscles of the buttocks. These are all examples of false promises, that the only thing they get is the distrust of the brand and strong dissatisfaction of consumers themselves, who see that their rights are violated. As Pastor says:

Even the most captivating advertising claims, transmit images and messages whose contents, falsified or not, complete or biased, are processed by recipient people quite able to unmask a lie and reject, by audiences perhaps reluctant to accept (1999: 173). Consumers know to detect cheating and that, as we mentioned, brings nothing but negative consequences for the brand. "The truth always generates benefits (Alcat, 2009: 42).

Especially when we consider that *"generally, the truth matters to us because it has a survival value and allows us to develop in our world" (Lakoff 1995: 202)*. The truth is basic for the welfare of the person and to break it means disrespect to the person.

Thus, if the advertising professionals are committed to ethics, in which are met what was promised, it will lead to satisfied-customers as *"the fulfillment of a desire causes a positive feeling, accompanied by peace (Lopez and Marina 1999: 425)"*- and a little more cheerful, because *"the fulfillment of our expectations, desires and projects*

brings a positive feeling, accompanied by the impression of lightness, and broadening of the spirits (Lopez and Marina, 1999: 425) ". That is, it will lead to a series of positive feelings in the consumer, which will be reverted in profits for the brand and product or service advertised.

3.3. Because it benefits brands and advertisers, giving them positive connotations

The third argument supporting the need for a real ethical advertising is because it benefits the brand image. As Ramos Nicolas says:

Today we must consider a number of factors (...) which require from the companies to differentiate their offerings. In this context, an ethical approach of the vendors who represent the main reference of the company for the buyer, is not only a requirement imposed by morality, but a differentiation in marketing their goods and services (2008: 45).

As the author says, ethics can be a great opportunity to differentiate themselves from competitors, and also helps the "advertiser to manage their brand and make possible and viable a business model, giving it transparency and social legitimacy (Benavides, 2012: 85) "*But not only that, but that the recognition and enforcement of some ethical principles will provide the company, the brand and the product great credibility (Aznar, 1999: 78).*"

3. 4. Because it puts the profession of the advertisers in value

In the fourth place, ethical advertising puts the values of the profession of the advertisers, so reviled in society, they are often considered "selling smoke and tricksters (Vives, 2005: 15). Already in the 60s this was so (Duran, 1992: 85) and the situation did not change much in the following decades. But what is the reason for this? It's simple. When working with promises you must be careful (San Nicolas, 2003: 33), since, as Furones says, "*to buy is not a neutral act, but a social activity loaded with meaning (1980: 9)*" for the consumer. No longer is the product bought but also a set of values with which it is associated, which has turned the advertising into a large super sign that forms part of our culture and our learning (Martorell *quoted by Ferrer Rosello, 1990 1*). With so much social and cultural importance, the fulfilling of an advertising ethics becomes more important, because as Jarecki says, "*with the performance of professional duties we seek to do good, but not only with regard to the benefits to be derived from the profession (...) but also for all those who the professional activities affect them (2009: 147).* "

3.5. Because it benefits the values and behaviors of society

The influence of advertising on society is clear and from there follows the fifth reason for an ethical advertising: it benefits the values and behaviors of society.

Man cannot escape from society because this is a need of the person (Cortina, 2008: 38) as well as society cannot escape from advertising, because this is one of the creators of values and lifestyles and part of their means of support. Therefore, "*the advertising industry must work hard to maintain an adequate and healthy social order (Kogure quoted by Ferrer Rosello, 1992: 86).*"

"*Advertising tends to equalize tastes, criteria, ideals (Furones, 1980: 9)*" and although to us consumers it costs to admit this influence, as Diaz Soloaga says, "the reality shows that the long-term effects of advertising our lives are real and effective (2006: 46).

The publicist Sergio Rodriguez explained very well this influence when he talks about what it cost when I was small that he r parents buy him Nike sneakers and what it meant for him. As it explains in his book Search, compare and if you find a better book buy it, "*he was twelve and he had learned the meaning of what the publicists call an aspirational brand. He had acquired a true symbol of identity (2009: 14).*" Thus: "*the ad can be considered as a determining part of the acts of individuals, linked to consumption and its ritual. And through it, it is a vertiginous generator of the models that shape our social imaginary. (Costa, 1992: 11).* "*This is like this, up to the point that, as Eguizábal says, "no one can imagine our global culture, tailored by the multinationals, without symbols of Nike or Coca-Cola, Gucci or Yves Saint Laurent (2009: 27) "*

An ethical advertising will maintain that healthy social order about which Kogure spoke, but also healthy social values that improve the environment in which citizens live.

4. CONCLUSIONS

As a conclusion to this article, we can say that there are many reasons that support the need for ethical advertising, which would benefit the four protagonists of the advertising process: advertisers, marketers, products and consumers. Advertising ethics would allow advertisers with more credibility, socially recognized advertisers, products that satisfy consumers and brand-loyal and satisfied customers. As the Little Prince says, "*and in all the planets there were good grasses and weeds. As a result of good seeds of good herbs and bad seeds of weeds (1985: 27) "* That can be

applied to advertising and its way of carrying it out. If we make an ethical advertising, we have many benefits and otherwise only damages. Then, if all are benefits, why not try it? As Huxley says in 'A Brave New World', "*anyway, would it not be better to wait and see how this new world is? (1985: 121).*"

5. REFERENCES

LIBROS, CAPÍTULOS DE LIBRO O ENTRADA DE UN LIBRO DE CONSULTA, INFORMES TÉCNICOS, TESIS

Alcat, E. (2009) *Y ahora ¿qué?* La actitud es la respuesta. Barcelona. Urano.

Aznar, H.(1999) Comunicación responsable. Ariel. Barcelona

Benavides Delgado, J. (2012). *Questiones Publicitarias*, Vol. I, N° 17, p. 71 – 93 ISSN 1988-8732

Bonete, E. (1999). *Ética de la comunicación audiovisual*. Madrid: Tecnos.

Cortina, A. y Martínez, E. (2008). *Ética*. Akal: Madrid

Costa, J. (1992). *Reinventar la publicidad. Reflexiones desde las Ciencias Sociales*. Madrid: Fundesco.

Durán, A. (1992). *Psicología de la publicidad y de la venta*. Barcelona: Ceac.

Eguizábal, R. (2007). *Teoría de la publicidad*. Madrid: Cátedra.

Eguizábal, R. (2009) Industrias de conciencia. Barcelona: Península.

Ferrer Roselló, C. (1990). *Los otros leones de la publicidad*. Madrid: Dossat.

Furones, M. A. (1980). *El mundo de la publicidad*. Barcelona: Salvat.

Hellín, P. A. (2006). *Publicidad y valores posmodernos*. Madrid: Miranda Comunicación.

Huxley, Aldous (1985). *Un mundo feliz*. Barcelona: Editores Mexicanos Unidos

Jareño, J. (2009). *Ética y periodismo*. Urduliz, País Vasco: Desclée.

Lakoff, G. y Jonson, M. (1995) *Metáforas de la vida cotidiana*. Madrid: Cátedra.

López, M. y Marina, J.A.(1999). Diccionario de los sentimientos. Barcelona: Círculo de lectores

Noguera, A. y Cristófol, C. (2006). *Falsedad y comunicación*. Valencia: Universidad de Málaga.

Pastor Ramos, G. (1999). *Autodeterminación personal frente a seducción mediática*. En Bonete, E. *Ética de la comunicación audiovisual*. Madrid: Tecnos.

Ramos Nicolás, S. (2008). *La venta personal y la dirección de ventas desde un prisma ético*. Murcia: Séneca.

Rodríguez, Sergio (2009). *Busque, compare y si encuentra un libro mejor, cómprelo*. Barcelona: Círculo de lectores

Saint-Exupéry, A. (1985). *El principito*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial

San Nicolás Romero, C.(2003) *Aspectos de comunicación y creatividad publicitarias*. Murcia:Fundación Universitaria San Antonio.

Sánchez Guzmán, J. R. (1993). *Teoría de la Publicidad*. Madrid: Tecnos.

Vives, A. (2005), *¡Maldita publicidad!* Edición Península. Barcelona: Portada.

Shor, J. (2006). *Nacidos para comprar. Los nuevos consumidores infantiles* Barcelona. Paidós Ibérica.

Tierno, B.y Giménez, M. (2004). *La educación y la escuela de 8 a 10 años*. Madrid: Santillana Familia.

AUTHOR:

María Teresa Pellicer Jordá

PhD from the School of Communication at the University of Murcia, where he works as a teacher of technical subjects of advertising research, Responsibility and Ethics Self-regulation of advertising and Audiovisual Communication. Degree in Journalism and Advertising and Public Relations. He has written two books, entitled 'Advertising as cultural industry' and 'Ethics and advertising strategies' as well as numerous articles in professional journals. It also has extensive experience in the field of communication, and that for several years he worked in media renowned Murcia.