



RESEARCH

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LA PUBLICIDAD COMO VENDEDORA DE SUEÑOS. UNA REFLEXIÓN DESDE LA ÉTICA

ADVERTISING AS A SELLER OF DREAMS. A REFLECTION FROM ETHICS

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ABSTRACT

Advertising no longer only sells products, it sells much more. Sell dreams, values, models of life and, ultimately, a symbolic universe associated with that product or service advertised. The truth is that this sale of 'intangible' issues causes a series of effects on consumers, who often do not see their expectations satisfied after acquiring the product or service in question. This gives rise to an ethical reflection, since, that symbolic universe that promises the publicity is not justiciable or in any other way, since it is an implicit and difficultly verifiable promise. That is why in this article we intend to reflect on this issue and review the mechanisms through which advertising sells those dreams and life models. For this, we will make a theoretical review with the reflections and thoughts of different experts in advertising, ethics and communication.

KEYWORDS: Advertising; culture; values; society; dreams

RESUMEN

La publicidad ya no sólo vende productos, vende mucho más. Vende sueños, valores, modelos de vida y, en definitiva, un universo simbólico asociado a ese producto o servicio anunciado. Lo cierto es que esa venta de cuestiones 'inmateriales' provoca una serie de efectos en los consumidores, que muchas veces no ven satisfechos su expectativa tras adquirir el producto o servicio en cuestión. Esto da lugar a una reflexión ética, ya que, ese universo simbólico que promete la publicidad no es reclamable judicialmente ni de ningún otro modo, ya que es una promesa implícita y difícilmente comprobable. Es por esto que en este artículo pretendemos hacer una reflexión sobre esta cuestión y hacer un repaso por los mecanismos a través de los cuáles la publicidad vende esos sueños y modelos de vida. Para ello, haremos una revisión teórica con las reflexiones y pensamientos de distintos autores expertos en publicidad, ética y comunicación.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Publicidad; cultura; valores; sociedad; sueños

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A PUBLICIDADE COMO VENDEDORA DE SONHOS. UMA REFLEXÃO DESDE A ÉTICA

RESUME

A publicidade já não vende somente produtos, vende uma serie de valores, um universo simbólico associado a esses produtos ou serviço anunciado. A questão é: até que ponto é ético? Como se vendem esses sonhos? E, como afeta isso ao consumidor? Estas são algumas das questões que tratamos neste artigo.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Publicidade; cultura; valores; sociedade; sonhos

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Advertising has changed a lot since its inception. Little remains today of that incipient advertising, with informative advertisements, which focused on the attributes of the product (Eguizábal, 1998, p. 48). We can find some glimpse of this type of ads in food advertising, but little else. So, what does advertising sell us now? The answer is simple, advertising sells us dreams. Yes, dreams associated with products that will allow us to fulfill those desires and wishes that we all have and that advertising promises us. Of course, it is not easy to sell those dreams and more today. Excessive competition, both in the commercial world and in advertising, makes it necessary to constantly renew sales techniques and resort to psychology to reach the mind of the consumer more quickly and effectively (Hernández Marín, 2001, p. 191). Added to that are increasingly agile consumers when it comes to avoiding advertising and also increasingly disenchanted with a world that they see complicated at times (Hellín, 2006, p. 25).

Eguizábal explains very well how the process of selling dreams - associated with products and services - is carried out by advertising (2009: 21). First dissatisfaction is created in the consumer and, later, he is shown the solution in the form of the advertised product or service. This mechanism, also cited by Hass (Bassat, 1998, p.51), is well known in advertising and, in fact, it is the basis of its strategies. Fears and longings are activated (Madrid, 2006, p.108) in consumers increasingly eager for easy happiness. The philosophy of Plato or Aristotle and his virtue poses a great difficulty for most mortals. Current philosophers like Powell also speak of happiness as something internal (1996: 16). But advertising presents us with an easier path, in which money becomes the instrument to achieve it and, in the same way, fulfill our dreams. As Eguizábal explains, "why should we strive to be when it is so easy, so comfortable to represent at every moment the leading role of an imaginary scene of triumph? It is enough to acquire the respective miraculous potion, the soda, the lotion, the cleanser, the footwear, the Gadget, capable of taking us to that

miraculous scene (Eguizábal, 2009, p. 17)". Advertising, as already explained, knows that "the individual remains attached to the object by the existence of desire (Hellín, 2006, p. 122)". As Bergson said, "the way of our life is bordered by the ruins of what we could have been and we were not (Zubiri, 2005, p. 10)". In Pío Baroja's 'The Tree of Science, "the town was considered defrauded. By indications, instinctively, people acquired the conviction that Uncle Garrota, although capable of killing his wife, had not killed her (1990, p. 89)." The same happens in today's society. The consumer acquires the conviction that he will achieve happiness and success through the consumption of the products advertised by advertising, even knowing that even that is not possible to be achieved in such a simple way.

Advertising aims to solve these vital dissatisfactions and become a supersign that is part of our culture and our learning (Martorel, in Ferrer, 1990, p. 1). It has really achieved it. "Brands are the bearers of values and attributions, of conceptual and cultural importance", as explained by San Nicolás (2003, page 38). Not only does it create and 'fulfill' our dreams and desires, but it also has a lot to do with how our opinions are formed. Advertising thus corresponds to the third need established in the Maslow pyramid, which is social or belonging, referring to the "need to mix with other people, friends and family as well as professional colleagues (Vives, 2005, p. 19)." It also satisfies the fourth, which is the "need for esteem, self-esteem, respect and feeling good about oneself" (Vives, 2005, p.19). In this sense, Auger notes that "among the consequences perceived as positive and desirable, those that seem most interesting to the human being are the acceptance, approval and affection of their peers (1992, p. 17)".

This way, "advertising will continue to observe life with different eyes and reflect it on people. It will be like telling you through different narrative forms and languages: Have you noticed what is happening in the world? (Vives, 2005, p. 169). Indeed, advertising gives us a version of the world, which does not always agree with ours, but to which we all aspire. We all want to be like the boys and girls in the ads, triumphant, successful, handsome, with a good body and so on and so on. Returning to Maslow's pyramid, that need for belonging forces us to show a way of being that we want to be accepted by others. "Each person is a brand in itself," says Vives (2005, p.19). But also, staying out of that consumer market "stigmatizes, brands as rare individuals," adds Cardus (2001, p. 286).

Perhaps this aspiration has much to do with that notion of the bourgeoisie, which became the protagonist of the famous French Revolution and managed to change an until then stagnant society. As Eguizábal points out, "the bourgeois notion of happiness has, naturally, a lot to do with prosperity, well-being, security and fortune" (2009, p.19). That idea of money and, therefore, of consumption, as a distinctive element of the person, we pass on to the following generations. As López says, "also in the way we consume, we show the values that guide us. The quantity and quality of the objects that we consume transmit our children messages that are easily deciphered. Many times, without realizing it, we tell them that accumulating goods from the market is a sign of personal success, that objects can compensate for absences and disaffections, and that the ability to consume -a rather prosaic faculty

of all living beings- is the essence of contemporary man (López en Guaita, 2008, p.267)".

And what is the solution to this excessive consumerism, to this dream society? López believes that "ethical values" are the solution and adds that "with a trunk full of knowledge, man may sink (López en Guaita, 2008, p 274)". Society must be convinced at once that "happiness lies in ourselves" (Álava, 2011, p. 21) and that we only have to develop it. As the author adds, "when we believe that to feel good, to be happy, it is the others who have to do something concrete, we are on the wrong track! This fact is very dangerous because, this way, we are renouncing to direct our life. We are giving others the key to our happiness, even to our suffering (2011, p. 21)". As Huxley affirmed in 'Brave New World', "happiness is a tyrannical owner, especially the happiness of others. A much more tyrannical owner if it is not conditioned to accept unquestionably nothing, except the truth (1985, p.192)."

An ethical and internal attitude is, therefore, the only solution to this consumer trend, which causes so many social problems. "We are beings of desire," as Auger points out (1992, p.15), but those desires can only be achieved with good values and good habits. Man must be able to brand his own actions and get his dreams with them. No product can ever bring us that happiness and dream world that they promise us. An afternoon of shopping will not solve the problems with one's husband, family or work. Let us not be, then, like the inhabitants of the planet visited by The Little Prince, who said "What a strange planet! -he thought then-. It is dry, pointy and salty. And men have no imagination. They repeat what they are told. (1998, p.76)". Let us not be repeaters of what we are marked from advertising. Let us be the owners of our life.

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