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THE ROLE OF ADVERTISING FOR SOCIETY AND CONSUMERS

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Abstract

In this article we have highlighted the extremely important role that advertising plays for both society and consumers. Success depends, as we have shown, on timely execution and impeccable product quality. As a type of organisation, I have opted for the medical sector because it provides eloquent examples of the quality of the products to be purchased.

Keywords: advertising, society, consumers

Introduction

Advertising has both desirable and undesirable effects. Clearly, the desired outcome of any advertising action is to contribute to the profitable sale of (medical, pharmaceutical) products. In addition to its economic role, advertising revenue supports an independent and diverse press, protected from government and lobbyist control. As a key communication link in the marketing process, it is also a major incentive for stability and vigorous economic growth.

However, there is a growing awareness that advertising must go beyond fair and profitable interests. It is increasingly accepted that advertising must be designed in an atmosphere that considers a number of ethical vectors. For example, a recent study of advertising executives found that they face six fundamental ethical considerations in running their businesses:

- Treating customers fairly;
- Designing honest, truthful, socially desirable advertising;
- Representing unhealthy, unnecessary or immoral products;
- Representing customers whose products/services are unhealthy, unnecessary or immoral;
- Dealing fairly with suppliers, vendors and information media;
- Treating other agencies fairly (K. Hung and M. Rice).

It is to the benefit of advertising and society in general that ethical issues are at the heart of the debate about advertising practice.

One of the most important roles of advertising is to show people how to solve problems. Effective advertising must start from the premise "*Does my product help people?*" It must reflect how a product relates to contemporary concerns. "*What are they thinking about, what are they worried about, what are your product's customers fighting for?*" Certain concerns such as health, money, raising children and relationships with other people are always important. "*Once you've identified the most pressing contemporary concerns, you can ask yourself how your product relates to reducing them.*" (L.V. Strong). The literature shows that the main trend in modern advertising is to place the consumer at the centre of the marketing process. Companies believe that products are designed for the consumer, without the insistence of directing them (sometimes forcefully) to a pre-existing product that they cannot do without. Clearly, this process has led to fundamental, extremely positive changes in advertising.

Customer satisfaction and loyalty

A buyer forms their own opinion of value and acts on it. His satisfaction or dissatisfaction after purchase depends on the ratio in which the performance of the offer meets his expectations. We define consumer satisfaction as follows:

So, the level of satisfaction is a function determined by the difference between expectations and perceived performance. A buyer can experience one of two levels of satisfaction: if performance meets expectations, the consumer is satisfied; if performance exceeds expectations, he is fully satisfied.

There is a question that experts ask themselves: "*how do consumer expectations arise?*", and the answer is based on previous buying experience, statements made by various acquaintances, as well as information and promises from the selling firm and competitors. If a firm sets buyer expectations too high, they are likely to be disappointed in the end.

Some of today's successful firms strive to raise expectations and deliver performance that matches them. Their goal is what is called TCS-Total Customer Satisfaction.

Companies not only attach importance to improving relationships with supply chain partners, but also to establishing closer and more sustainable links with end consumers.

In the past, customers were treated with a certain amount of indifference for several reasons: either because suppliers were few and buyers had limited choice, or because other suppliers provided services that were as poor in quality as the original supplier, or because the market was developing so fast that firms were not concerned with fully satisfying consumers. If a firm was losing a hundred customers a week and gaining another hundred, its business was considered satisfactory. This reflected nothing more than a good "movement" of the mass of customers, the costs involved being much higher than if the firm had kept all its hundred customers without gaining any more.

Product execution, cycle and life stages

Success in advertising depends as much on timely execution as it does on flawless product quality. Timeliness is an argument for both product execution and advertising. For example, many products have failed miserably only to later witness success. For the same reason, it is often unprofitable for products that appear in a late market to compete with established competitors.

Timing is, to paraphrase an advertising slogan, *being a little ahead of the times*. Product innovations that address a new trend or a previously untapped need are those that are almost guaranteed to succeed. For more than two decades, companies have been striving to introduce interactive technology that will allow consumers to conduct a wide range of business from a personal computer. So far, these efforts have met with limited success, but the popularity of the Internet and the exploration of the Web offer realistic hope that the most ordinary consumers will go "online." A second element of the timeliness of advertising is determining the most appropriate opportunity to reach consumers for different products and services. The direct mail industry is skilled at gathering information about the right time to launch a campaign for specific products. Although no two companies have the same problem, a general idea of when shoppers are most likely to make a particular purchase is valuable information for initiating advertising planning.

We will continue to look at the product life cycle, which could be a point of interest for those in the medical field who are constantly faced with degraded equipment and outdated equipment. According to specialists, it comprises several distinct stages in the history of a product. To each stage corresponds specific opportunities and issues related to marketing strategy and profit potential. By identifying the stage, a product is in or is about to enter, companies can develop more effective marketing plans. To say that a product has a life cycle is to say that:

- It has a limited life;
- The sale of the product goes through different phases, each raising certain problems for the seller;
- Profits are higher or lower at certain stages of the product life cycle;
- It requires the application of different marketing, financial, production, purchasing and personnel strategies, depending on each stage of its life cycle;
- Introduction corresponds to a period of slow sales growth driven by product market entry. Profits are non-existent due to high launch costs;
- Growth: is a period of rapid market acceptance of the product and substantial increase in profits;
- Maturity: is a period of slowing sales growth, as the product is already accepted by most potential buyers. Profits stabilise or decline as a result of increasing marketing expenditure aimed at defending the product against competition;
- Decline: this is the period when sales and profits decline.

Determining the beginning and end of each stage is somewhat arbitrary. In general, the demarcation of stages is done at the points where the increase or decrease in sales is more pronounced. R. Polli and V. Cook have produced an operational method of measurement based on the normal distribution of the evolution of real sales from one year to the next.

Planning that uses the concept of product life should consider the extent to which it corresponds to the past evolution of the product in the field. Specialists should check the usual sequence of steps and the average duration of each step. W. E. Cox concluded that prescription-only medicines have an introduction phase of one month, with the growth phase lasting six months, the maturity phase 15 months, and the decline phase very long, due to the reluctance of manufacturers to remove medicines from their catalogues. The size of each stage needs to be reviewed regularly, as increased competition is shortening the lifecycle of products, which means they need to generate profits in an ever shorter time.

Product differentiation and image differentiation

Product differentiation is essentially a process of giving the buyer a reason to buy a particular brand rather than the competitor's. The key to effective differentiation is to exploit those product advantages that are most important to consumers (in our case, patients). Improving products to meet the challenges of new competitors is a requirement for most companies (pharmaceutical, healthcare) if they are to survive. However, if product improvements are not effectively communicated to consumers, they are largely wasted as an effective marketing tactic.

The role of advertising in promoting product differentiation is to communicate these improvements in a way that benefits consumers. The key element in successful product differentiation is consumer perception.

Even when competing offers are similar, shoppers may react differently to the company or brand image. Thus, the success of "Pikovit" children's vitamins is primarily due to the image of the "little animals" in the advertisements, which has succeeded in raising the awareness of most consumers. Pikovit has thus created a "distinct personality".

Identity or image - e personality of a successful brand does not come by itself. It is the result of an identity *creation programme*. The tools used to create identity are names, emblems, symbols, atmosphere and events. At best, these will contribute to creating the desired brand image. But it is important to distinguish between identity and image. *Identity* refers to the ways in which a company seeks to identify itself to its customers, and *image* is how the consumer public perceives that company. The firm creates its own identity to shape the consumer public's image of itself, which is determined for each individual by a number of factors. In our case, the company is represented by the hospital (clinic, outpatient clinic, FMP) whose long-established identity, backed up by a high-quality medical act, shapes the perception of the consumer public (patients) who perceive it differently, depending on the yield and effectiveness of the treatments applied (complete, partial, or untreatable stages of treatment).

Everyone looks for certain characteristics in an image. It must carry a unique message, suggesting its main quality and position in the medical market. The message must be conveyed in a distinct way so as not to be confused with similar messages from competitors. The image must be emotionally powerful enough to arouse patients' desire and curiosity to seek treatment at a particular location.

Creating a strong image requires creativity, professionalism, and hard work. It cannot be implanted in the minds of patients overnight or by using a single type of mass media. The image must be conveyed continuously through the available media. If "MedLife means quality in healthcare at high standards", this message must be expressed in symbols, in the press and in the audio-visual media, through atmosphere and events.

Symbols - A strong image is based on one or more symbols that aim to make the company or brand recognisable to consumers. Emblems should help to instantly identify the company or brand.

Print and audio-visual media - The chosen symbols should be placed in advertisements that convey the personality of the company or brand. Advertisements should convey an emotion, a mood, a performance - something special. The message should appear in several publications, e.g. annual reports, brochures, catalogues. Company stationery and business cards (hospital, private clinic, laboratory) should reflect the same image the company wants to convey.

Atmosphere - The space in which the company produces or sells its products or provides its services is another powerful element in creating its image.

Events - A campaign can create its own identity by linking it to the type of events it supports financially. Other organisations identify themselves with the major interests of society: e.g. the *Heinz* company which donates to hospitals.

Developing effective public relations requires a variety of mechanisms, with often imprecise boundaries that can lead to confusion between such activities and other parts of an organisation's (health unit in this case) management. Frequently, public relations is identified with other areas (with marketing or human resources management) and an undifferentiated perception is created at the level of specific activities in the public communication sphere (such as advertising as *advertising* and advertising as *publicity*). We will briefly present other activities in the public relations sphere of interest to those in the health sector.

Public affairs

The phrase *public affairs* is commonly used by many government agencies, health care departments, military services, even some corporations. In the United States, this separate field of full-fledged corporate communications underwent significant development in the 1950s. Public affairs sections are intensely concerned with corporate citizenship and public policy, with a well-defined purpose: to design, build and maintain community and government relations. These include civic or volunteer service, various charitable endeavours, political education for health care employees, community involvement, etc.

To avoid possible confusion of terminology, public relations specialists resort to lexical stratagems and titles such as communication, constituent relations, public information, public affairs. In some hospitals, the latter is a specialised field within public relations. According to S.M. Cutlip, they would refer to a specialised form of public relations, whose mission is to create and maintain mutually beneficial links with government and community structures.

CONCLUSIONS

As we have shown, public relations also identifies with other fields (with marketing or human resources management), which is why we have shown, without exhausting the subject, the major impact that the effectiveness of a solid image has for an organisation (in our case, medical), which involves creativity, professionalism and a lot of dedication.

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