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ETHICS IN MARKETING

Marketing and psychology are extremely interconnected in modern world. It takes some knowledge of basic psychology and human behaviour to succeed in marketing. But using psychological methods is not only the single connection. There is also another side: morals and ethics. Morals direct people as they make decisions in their personal and professional lives. Ethics help create boundaries regarding what is acceptable and what is not, since these behaviours are related to moral feelings about right and wrong.

Over the years advertising and marketing communication messages have created a lot of debatable ethical issues, due to the public belief that advertisements nowadays deeply affect the way people perceive themselves and the world surrounding them, including crucial actions and behaviours. Ethics issues in marketing are important, given the fact that marketing is expected to identify, predict and satisfy customer requirements profitably.

There exist several controversial moments in marketing that could be offensive or which could cause unexpected negative influence on costumers.

Sex appeal can be defined as brand information in advertising contexts or as persuasive appeals in marketing contexts, which are integrated with sexual information, also as the degree of nudity or sexual explicitness in an advertisement. Decorative models are used to add a sexual stimulus to a product despite its irrelevance. Sex appeal is used to form some kind of brand awareness, using the shock technique. Such techniques are intentional and are meant to be controversial to grab more attention, increasing the viewer's interest to follow the advertisement, to eventually create the desired brand awareness and enhance persuasion. Sex appeal and nudity in advertising grab attention regardless of all the other different variables, such as age, gender or cultural background. "Sex Sells" is a very well known term in the advertising world, but now it is a much less powerful technique than before, due to the ethical dilemma surrounding it.

Sex appeal is one of the most controversial advertising approaches found that is although popular, faces a lot of criticism.

The emotional advertising is designed to stimulate one's emotions, rather than one's sense of the practical or impractical. Using of emotional appeal in advertising intended for the consumer's psychological, social, or emotional needs. The emotional advertisement is written to arouse fear, love, hate, greed, humor, or otherwise create psychological tension that can best be resolved by purchase of the product or service. Western union, for instance, used this technique to convey the concepts of trust and reliability. MasterCard has used this approach for one of its most successful advertisements with the slogan "there are some things money can't buy, for everything else there is MasterCard". Emotional advertisements are very popular and can be used creatively for almost anything. For that reason there is a great ethical debate about this appeal, since it can sometime exploit the audience's emotions, leading to the purchase of the product that they might have not needed, or a product that would eventually harm them.

As society changes, so do the images of the roles assumed by people, regardless of race, sex, or occupation. Women have been portrayed in a variety of ways over the years. Examples of demeaning stereotypes include those in which women are presented as less intelligent, obsessed with men, unable to assume leadership roles or make decisions, or skimpily dressed in order to appeal to the sexual interests of males. Harmful stereotypes include those portraying women as obsessed with their appearance or conforming to some ideal of size, weight, or beauty.

Children are an important marketing target for certain products. Because their knowledge about products, the media, and selling strategies is usually not as well developed as that of adults, children are likely to be more vulnerable to psychological appeals and strong images. Thus, ethical questions sometimes arise when they are exposed to questionable marketing tactics and messages. The danger for children is that the marketers pander to kids' desire to imitate adult behaviour. For instance, candies are made in shape of cigarettes and fruit drinks in bottles that look like wine coolers and small liquor flasks.

All things considered, marketing decisions often require specialized knowledge, ethical issues are often more complicated than those faced in personal life - and effective decision making requires consistency. Because each business situation is different, and not all decisions are simple, many

organizations have embraced ethical codes of conduct and rules of professional ethics to guide managers and employees. However, sometimes self-regulation proves insufficient to protect the interest of customers, organizations, or society.

References:

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