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Creative Advertising; What is it and can it Create Positive Brand Images and Purchasing Possibilities?

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Abstract- This paper studies the meaning of creative advertising and can it create positive brand images and purchasing possibility. It discusses about how an advertisement qualifies as creative according to past researches, the elements involved in the qualifications, how it works and if it works. This paper also looked into the barriers of creative advertising which involves consumers' persuasion knowledge and the limitation of advertisements. This paper studied through various journal articles. Findings show that among the qualifications in past researches, originality would be the main aspect in creativity although the other three elements discussed; attractiveness, persuasion and strategy are equally important in an advertisement. Past researches showed that advertisements have limits, whether creative or not due to consumers' own chain of thoughts and knowledge. Although it is limited, advertisers still have a higher chance to boost up their purchasing possibility by creating a positive brand image through creative advertisements.

Keywords: *creative advertising, purchasing power, originality, limitation.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Advertising as we know is an important element in the marketing segment in business. According to Merriam Webster online dictionary, the definition of advertising is "the action of calling something to the attention of the public, especially by paid announcements".

Advertisements come in many different forms. They come in newspaper columns, billboards, television, online social media, and mobile applications, events, campaigns and even during movies. Advertisement is a form of announcing a product by a company to the public. Creativity is an added ingredient to advertising. Dominic Twase said in his Milward Brown Point of View column that "Creativity can grab attention" (Twase, n.d). Every day, people are showered tons of advertisements wherever they walked or are at. It is very common to miss an advertisement unless is it something special, something that could grab the attention of the people. 'Creativity can allow an advertisement to get past the normal filtering process. Creativity makes people stop

what they are doing and pay attention, even when they know they are looking at an ad' (Twase, n.d)

Reinartz and Saffert (2013) in their article 'Advertising: When It Works and When It Doesn't' cited Stephan Vogel, Ogilvy & Mather Germany's chief creative officer: 'Nothing is more efficient than creative advertising. Creative advertising is more memorable, longer lasting, works with less media spending and builds a fan community... faster.' Creativity is the soul of advertising and branding. It is what brings a significant difference between each other and grabbing the attention of consumers to bring about the awareness of a product by that particular company.

But Reinartz and Saffert (2013) raised a question being is 'Are creative advertisements more effective in inspiring people to buy products than advertisement that simply catalogue products attributes or benefits?' In many researchs, creative messages only get attention and lead to positive attitudes about the products but it does not prove that they have the power to influence purchase behavior. (Reinarts & Saffert, 2013). The purpose of this study is to find out meaning of creative advertising and can it create positive brand images and purchasing possibility.

II. WHAT IS CREATIVITY?

Consumers are people who spends on items and offering each company has produced. Consumer comes in all ages and therefore, each company/organization has its target markets and goals. All are different and therefore all companies have different approaches to their creativity.

For example, Coca-Cola company advertisement targets younger people, especially those in their teens or in universities because these people are the center consumers. Older people may not appreciate the drink and therefore their advertisements, especially in their "Open Happiness Campaign" centers more towards universities. The recent Coke Friendly Twist product was launched centering its market in universities to help bond freshmen (Coca-Cola, 2014).

For insurance companies such as Prudential, they would center their sales on older people who are largely in the working world; middle aged or the older aged group. Prudential came up with campaigns such

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as “Ribbons” and “Stickers” to help people realized that they need to invest for an after retirement insurance (Prudential, 2013).

So what is creativity? How does one address an advertisement as creative? Many past researches came up with categories to define creativity. Indiana University Communication researchers, Robert Smith and his colleagues adjusted the definition “the extent to which advertisement contains brand or executional elements that are different, novel, unusual, original, unique, etc.” Along with other researchers (Reinarts & Saffet, 2013; Stuhlfaut, 2006), there are four categories in which this literature review will center on which are originality, attraction, strategy, and persuasiveness.

a) *Originality as an important creativity characteristic*

Originality is a characteristic respected by many. People won't buy what you are showing if it is some shared idea or something that has been done before. People like to be amused, surprised and like to see new things. In which leads us to this category of creativity. Originality is what concerns most when it comes to judging for an advertisement award (Tony, 2008). Similarly to Koslow (2003) on his research paper which discussed “What is Creative to Whom and Why”, in his literature review pages he wrote that ‘if creativity is both an original and appropriate solution to a problem, then for high agreement on what is creative, judges have to agree on what is original and appropriate. (Koslow, Sasser, Riordan, 2003)

Originality comes with uniqueness, innovation and newness (Stuhlfaut, 2008). Advertising agencies regard creativity, especially originality, as the mission of the entire advertising industry and believe that originality should not be constrained and must be rewarded (Koslow, Sasse, Riordan, 2003). Although originality is a highly important characteristics, advertisers take risks in whenever creative campaign is involve that includes media choice and strategy.

In a journal article about Advertisers Risk Taking by four researchers Wang, Dou, Li and Zhou (2013) mentioned that there are two contextual factors that molds distinct creativity which are the product being advertised and the audience being targeted. Advertisements are known to be subjective about their messages. Many advertisers struggle with appropriateness with originality being the primary facet. Some advertisement may seem sensitive towards many issues such as religion, race, status quo and gender biasness.

b) *Attractiveness of the advertisement*

An advertisement's purpose is to grab the attention of the people. In order to attract attention, an advertisement has to stand out among many advertisements. So how does one company attract attention? Many advertisers seek ways to be creative to

attract people. Because the advertising world is not new, many ideas has been used and it is common to see some advertisements have the same elements and style. People want to see more new things. They want something that people normally don't see every day and that is the key to grab a person's attention. Stuhlfaut (2006) has conducted a survey in his research paper about creative categories. Under the “attraction” response, participants describe creativity ‘a visual uniqueness that invites the viewer and reader in, stirs thought or emotion, and engages the viewer or reader in an out of the ordinary way’ (Stuhlfaut, 2006).

Packaging and product design is also a form of advertising. To attract the attention of customers, the product itself must be interesting enough to be announced to the world. It adds to the visual effects on consumers. Quoting from Xiaoyan Deng (2009), ‘Good design uniquely differentiate (e.g., iPod vs otherMP3 players) a product. Companies mastering the art of design (Apple, Nike, and Target, just to name a few) have emerged as leaders in their respective markets’ (Deng, 2009).

During the Brazil World Cup 2014, Pepsi came up with a commercial advertisement, Unbelievable where they placed fake grass that contains springy characteristics and enables players to bounce and do unbelievable moves. It is the combination of Parkour, the sport of traversing environmental obstacles by running, climbing, or leaping rapidly and efficiently (Merriam-Webster, 2014) and football. It creates a positive feeling towards the Brazil World Cup frenzy and also amazes those who play both sports. Although it amazes and grabs the attention, would it promise purchasing power during the World Cup? It may trigger purchasing ability due to the season when people watch at home or especially people who are in the stadium.

There are some researchers who believe creative advertisements may attract younger children. Robert and Catherine Angell (2013) did a case study using a method ‘Draw, Write and Tell’ with younger children to find out their response to advertisements. Their conclusion is that visual elements are important to children. Children are an important segment and marketers should explore children's thought and opinions and suggest using their method, ‘Draw, Write and Tell’ in their advertising context.

c) *Strategies used in creative advertisements*

Without advertising, companies may lose opportunities to communicate with their customers and their sales eventually will drop (Moon, 2010). Marketers constantly strategize to advertise their products and need proper guidelines to make efficient advertising decisions. Advertising decisions are made based on products, media type used, where to advertise and different period of time. It is similar or is based on the “4P” marketing mix elements which are price, place,

promotion and product. Each company needs to outstand in order to make it work. All are essential to attract consumers.

Many companies have thought hard to advertise and gain awareness of the consumers that their product is essential to them. This is relatively subjective as consumers are different from each other and therefore, have different needs. It depends on the target market of the company. An example of a company that strategized to make consumers aware of their product significantly would be Prudential. There was a retirement campaign that they underwent in order to prove and to create awareness of retirement plans. They set up two challenges, "Stickers" and "Ribbons" in a family park where its target market, family, would be on a day off.

In the "Sticker" challenge, they created the awareness of the expectancy of old age, how long can you live in retirement and many discovered that people do live a long way after retirement age. In the "Ribbon" challenge, Prudential challenges the people on how much money they think they would need in their retirement age. A lot of people thought wrong. This is where Prudential manages to create the awareness it needs people to be aware of. It definitely creates a positive feeling for users who watched videos about it. The advertisement, instead of promoting how good the product is, its promotional strategy was to make consumer think of their future and look into their needs (Prudential, 2013).

A content analysis of Coca-Cola Advertisement on Six Countries done by Nick Bryant (2011) resulted that Coca-Cola advertisements caters to specific cultural values, displayed a common theme of festivity and happiness, something people of all cultures understand (Bryant, 2011). The Coca-Cola Company has been severely creative about how they advertise to pull in consumers, especially the breakthrough of sales in Australia where Coca-Cola noticed that their sales in that country weren't going very well. It was after the 'Share a Coke' campaign that broke the ice and sales shot up tremendously (Coca-Cola, 2013).

Similar to Bryant (2011), Sara Edith Svendsen (2013) did an analysis on Coca-Cola's latest campaign, 'Open Happiness'. Her study seeks to find out if Coca-Cola Company lives out their company's mission statement, values and vision has been implemented in the new found guerilla marketing strategy used by the company. 'The result indicates that The Coca-Cola Company, through their "Open Happiness" campaign, have truly lived out who they claimed to be as a company by implementing themes, ideas and portrayals that clearly mirror what is stated in their mission statement, company vision and values' (Svendsen, 2013).

d) *Persuasiveness in a creative advertisement*

An advertisement without persuasive power is no advertisement. An advertisement's purpose is to persuade consumers and make them believe that they need and must purchase that product that is offered by many companies and manufacturers. Many different companies have different target market. Therefore, each advertisement are different in persuading.

As mentioned under "attraction" subtopic, children are significant targets in advertising. Milo advertisements involve children actor and actresses to pull in their target market, which are children. Milo showed how drinking their product would earn extra strength to play more after school and that parents would love to buy them the drink because it is healthy and gives strength to little children. Daniel Bargh, Anna R. McAlister and T. Bettina Cornwell (2013) wrote a research paper on "Paths to Persuasion when Advertising to Children. In their findings, children appear to feel favorably about an advertisement when they are highly involved and weak arguments are present (Bargh, McAlister & Cornwell, 2013).

Although it is known to be bad for health, advertisers will always find a way to make products look good in order to persuade customers to purchase. Take Dunhill, the cigarette advertisement in 2013. Advertisers want to advertise their latest Dunhill Mild which they claimed to have finer taste. Instead of showing the cigarette on the screen which has negative impact, it showed elements such as fire, fine taste and popularity to lure consumers in because of the popularity concept. Advertisements and promotions may influence never smokers to experience and perhaps even persuade experimenters to become establish smokers, especially young adolescence (Gilpin, White & Messer, 2007).

'Advertising is the foremost communication tool used by marketers to persuade customers to buy or try the products and services (Kishari & Jain, 2014). Alexandra Aguirre-Rodriguez (2013) from Florida International University, Miami wrote in her paper 'The Effects of Consumer Persuasion Knowledge' that scarcity appeals is a persuasive pattern used by marketers. Some companies offer or advertise limited edition products to draw the people in to purchase. This strategy stretches from limited product offered to products that are only available for a limited amount of time. Advertisers often tout consumers that product will only be available for a limited time and it may cause popular demand.

Depending on the target market, only certain industries can pull off scarcity appeals. An example of scarcity appeals would be McDonalds in Malaysia. During the banana season, McDonalds have come out with a range of banana series of food which included the Banana Pie and Banana Ice Cream. McDonalds spread

out their advertisements on billboards, newspaper and magazine. McDonalds does not only promote the desserts but also the main course. Over time, McDonalds has come up with many range of different burger flavors that will only stay for a limited period of time. Some succeeded in making to the official menu due to large demand but some products would not. In a higher class of purchase power, branded items such as Prada and Polo may have limited collector's editions.

III. BARRIERS OF CREATIVE ADVERTISING

Many advertisers can maximize their profit, brand name and any aspect of business if their advertisements are creative enough to draw people in. In the past, simple advertisements are enough to convince people to buy products and not know the strategy behind it. Now in the 21st century, people have access of knowledge through the internet, courses and graduates of business classes. Advertisements don't work as they should now due to many reasons and they are the barriers in advertising. There are now more barriers in advertising and advertisers seek to know the barriers. Some researchers such as Aguirre-Rodriguez (2013) wrote papers regarding barriers of advertisements.

Common reasons that advertisements don't work is because of consumers' awareness of the persuasion and strategy methods used in advertisements. Consumers are harder to please these days because they got used to the advertisement methods and they are predictable. This is why advertisements must be creative enough to be different to make a difference. Another reason is that advertisements have limited effects on consumers.

a) *Consumer awareness/consumer persuasion knowledge*

Advertisements are marketers' way of persuading consumers to purchase more products. At times, advertisements are claimed to manipulate consumers' thought processes and influence consumer behaviors (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2013). Not all tactics or creative advertisements would work on consumers. Customers now are aware and skeptical about the products that are being advertised. Consumers now are able to identify exaggeration points and that affects the emotion and flow of the advertisement. The phenomenon is called consumer persuasion knowledge. They lose effectiveness once the advertisement triggers consumers' suspicion of the advertiser's motives, awareness of persuasion tactic increases and persuasiveness decreases.

Consumers are now no longer ignorant although not all advertisement would fail to capture consumers' attention. The knowledge allows consumers to undergo filtration process. Therefore, advertisers now must be more creative and design their messages to

minimize the skeptics with maximized positive impression (Shu & Carlson, 2014). Suzanne B. Shu & Kurt A. Carlson (2014) attempts to identify number of positive claims should a firm used to produce the most positive impression. The conclusion of their extensive experiments of conducting surveys was three claims as maximum that should be done in order for an advertisement to fall to the good graces of consumers and no more or else, it would trigger suspicion of consumers.

Although this is a barrier to advertising, advertisement is a source of information about the product and to persuade customers into purchasing the products. No matter how much of skeptical impression some may have on an advertisement, consumers would continue to purchase their needs. As mentioned before, there are some ways to persuade and pull in consumers. Prudential made the public aware by making them experience it themselves in campaigns and so did Coca-Cola.

b) *Limited effects of advertisements*

Advertisers believe that consumers that are exposed to advertisements changes their human cognition, emotion and behavior. Nyilasy & Reid (2009) I their research paper on "Agency Practitioners Theories of How Advertising Works" interviewed people who view the effects of advertising. In their discussion, the effect of advertising was said 'not seen as limitless'. Participants' view was that the power of advertising is especially moderated and determine by the consumers (Nyilasy & Reid, 2009).

Advertisements, no matter how creative, will have its limit as the purchase power is in the hands of consumers who make the decisions. 'Creativity is subjective. The interpretation of the advertisements varies from individual to individual' (Nyilasy & Reid, 2009). However, advertisers still believed in powerful advertisements would increase the probability of purchase power if they develop a positive attitude of the brand (Clow, Berry, Kranenberg & James, 2005). A study on the role of visual elements was carried out by Clow, Berry, Kranenberg and James (2005). 271 survey data was collected from different colleges. 'The result indicated that when creative use a generic creative message strategy, an emotional visual creates the strongest results, especially in terms of attitude towards the visual elements in the advertisement' (Clowe, Berry, Kranenberg & James, 2005).

Erik Modig, Micael Dahlen and Jonas Colliander (2014) investigated the roles of expense and effort of 'creative' versus 'efficient' advertising. Their studies indicated that excessive advertising creativity is one way of signaling effort' (Modig, Dahlen & Colliander, 2014). If a brand demonstrates superior creativity, consumers would perceive that the brand puts in more effort than the rest of other advertisements which is what makes it

creative. It may increase purchasing power but in the end, it is an individual evaluation.

IV. DISCUSSION

There are many ways to decide and judge if an advertisement is creative or not. In this paper, it has been found that a creative advertisement weighs highly on originality and attractiveness. Originality has a sense of newness and fresh ideas which people would stop and look because they have never seen such thing before. It creates a positive feeling about the brand. Attractiveness plays a huge role as well. If an advertisement is original but does not have any artistic value of attraction, not much of persuasion and strategy can be found in that advertisement.

Strategies are played by all advertisers in order to persuade consumers. As discussed in the subtopics, advertisements need to stand out in order to convince consumers. Based on the advertisement videos that were viewed during this study, one of the most impactful strategies are guerilla strategies. Events and campaigns designed by Coca-Cola and Prudential are very well thought. All elements play a part in an advertisement to make it work. Some studies in this paper showed that if an advertisement puts in effort, it would pay off.

Skeptics are always around to because consumers in the 21st century are far more armed and knowledgeable than their forefathers. As mentioned, companies have to find ways to persuade consumers and take away skeptical impressions by creating awareness, letting the public see for themselves about the product just like Prudential and Coca-Cola. Emotions, visual and feelings play a huge role in convincing consumers.

Although advertisements have limited effects on consumers due to filtration and consumers' own interpretations, powerful advertisements are still effective in increasing the probability of purchasing power as done in studies by researchers (Clow, Berry, Kranenberg & James, 2005; Modig, Dahlen & Colliander, 2014). As long as the advertisement creates a positive feeling and struck the emotional cord (Clow, Berry, Kranenberg & James, 2005), it would demonstrate creativity and perhaps increase purchasing power. In a way, advertisements must be able to be creative enough, different enough and attractive enough to gain the attention of consumers.

Further and deeper research or study can be done in form of survey to expand more on the knowledge of creative advertising, its barriers and effects on consumers and consumers' thoughts about creative advertisements. It would be a more extensive study to properly study and analyze the components of creative advertising. Perhaps cultural habits may play a

role in barrier in creative advertising therefore, further studies is encouraged.

V. CONCLUSION

Creative advertisements are judge based on some criteria but the similarity among all the research papers are originality and the potential to attract consumers into paying the advertisement an attention. However, not all advertisement which falls under the creative advertisement criteria would be successful.

This study reveals that advertisements have a limit. Factors due to it are the consumers' awareness of persuasion on advertisements and consumers' filtration process that limits the ability of an advertisement. Some creative advertisements are so unique that it draws the attention of the public but some may fall short in convincing consumers to purchase the product.

It is true that advertisers cannot make consumers purchase things but they could increase the possibilities of purchasing power through creating an advertisement interesting enough to pull their attention and give a sense of positive impression on the brand. These interesting advertisements must be creative enough to attract consumers and elements to decide if an advertisement is creative or not would be related to the four discussed elements which are originality, attractiveness, persuasion and strategy.

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