

Misleading Advertising and Its Impact on Consumers

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Charakterizujte pojem reklama – druhy reklam, jejich nástroje a úlohu ve společnosti.
Popište problematiku zavádějící reklamy.
Analyzujte vliv zavádějící reklamy na různé typy spotřebitelů.
Vytvořte průzkum k dané problematice.
Analyzujte výsledky průzkumu.
Vyvodte závěry.

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá zavádějící reklamou a jejím vlivem na spotřebitele. První část práce objasňuje základní teoretické principy. Definuje důležité pojmy z oblasti marketingu spolu s jinými užitečnými termíny a analyzuje zavádějící praktiky používané v oblasti reklamy. Tyto teoretické principy jsou následně využité v praktické části. Hlavním cílem této bakalářské práce je definovat problematiku zavádějící reklamy a poté analyzovat, zda zavádějící techniky použité ve vybraných reklamách ovlivňují univerzitní studenty.

Klíčová slova: reklama, zavádějící reklama, vliv, spotřebitelé, spotřebitelské chování

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis deals with the misleading advertising and its impact on consumers. The first part of the thesis clarifies the basic theoretical principles. It defines necessary marketing terms along with the useful definitions concerning this topic and analyzes the misleading practices in advertising. The theoretical principles are then used in the practical part. The main objective of this bachelor thesis is to determine the issue of misleading advertising and later to analyze whether the specific misleading practices used in the selected advertisements have a certain impact on the university students who participated in the qualitative research.

Keywords: advertisement, misleading advertising, impact, consumers, consumer behaviour

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INTRODUCTION

Consumers come into the contact with advertisement almost daily and at many different places. Marketers try to reach them through advertising in order to encourage a response on advertised products or services from consumers. Markets try to provide consumers with as much choice of products as possible. Advertisers play a crucial role in the process of delivering company's goods and services to the customers. The advertisers should understand the consumers' needs and wants but they are also required to be creative in order to construct new ones. Sometimes the advertisers use misleading or deceptive practices to manipulate consumer behaviour. These practices are based on providing the information which is misleading, not complete or untrue. They can be very well covered, which can make them unrecognizable for some consumers

Each consumer has a specific personality, which is shaped by the age, gender, culture, family or friends and by the individual attitudes, lifestyle and values. The consumer behaviour is influenced by internal and external factors. These factors play a certain role in the perception of misleading advertisements as well. Some consumers are influenced by misleading elements used in promotion of the goods and services but some consumers are careful when perceiving advertisement messages. Therefore an impact of misleading advertising is individual according to several factors shaping a consumer's personality.

This bachelor thesis is divided into two parts. The first part of the thesis deals with important marketing terminology and defines the misleading practices along with the persuasive elements used to manipulate the consumers. This part also determines consumer behaviour and clarifies factors which influence it. Last chapter of the theoretical part deals with marketing research and its tools. The theoretical part characterizes the consumer behaviour and the factors which influence it. The basic theoretical principles described in the first part helped with the analysis of an impact of the selected misleading advertisements on university students in the second part. Through qualitative research were obtained information which indicates the impact.

I.

THEORY

1 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

The marketing communications is a complex subject which is quickly developing and its practices are still changing according to current trends. Each organization needs and uses the marketing communications. It does not matter if they are big, small or in which field they operate. All of them need to communicate with their stakeholders: customers, managers, owners, suppliers and employees (Fill 2011, 19). Marketing communications can be intentional by advertising and sales promotion or unintentional through the product features, the price and the package (Shimp and Andrews 2013, 7). This chapter discusses the tasks and the primary tools of marketing communication.

1.1 Tasks of marketing communications

According to the author, marketing communications should be an audience-centred activity. It serves to achieve many objectives but the main goal is to provoke a response from the audience. There is always a target audience which a company tries to reach and meet its goals and needs. Response from an audience is the key point which helps a company to review its results and to improve. Marketing communications can help accomplish one or more key tasks. One of the tasks is that the marketing communications help to differentiate products or brands. Another task consists of reminding people a need to buy a product or to highlight benefits which they can have from it. The third task is to inform about company's current offering and next task is sometimes considered as the crucial one. It is the process of persuasion and creation of a desire which cannot be resisted by the consumers (Fill 2011, 5-11).

1.2 The primary tools of marketing communications

The marketing communications use different ways and tools to communicate with consumers. As the primary tools of marketing communications are considered (Shimp and Andrews 2013, 10):

1. Media Advertising: it is advertising through TV, radio, magazines and newspapers.
2. Direct Response Advertising: products or services are advertised by direct mail, telephone solicitation or online advertising.
3. Place Advertising: into this category belong for example billboards or posters.
4. Trade- and Consumer-oriented Promotions: trade deals, display allowances, samples, bonus packs or price-off deals.

5. Event Marketing and Sponsorships: companies communicate by the sponsoring of sport events, art or festivals.
6. Personal Selling: it is a selling through the personal contact with a consumer.
7. Social Media: it is a process of communicating through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social media.
8. Online Marketing: mobile advertising or search engine marketing.

2 ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

Advertising is a tool of marketing communications. It serves not only to sell products and services but also to promote certain social issues. The consumers are daily influenced by advertisements and find difficult to avoid it (Belch and Belch 2012, VII). There are so many possibilities to advertise that the consumers become more easily persuaded to buy a product or service. The advertising is considered as the most widely spread way of promotion (Belch and Belch 2012, 18). This chapter deals with the definition of advertising, advertisement content and describes main advertisement objectives. The second part of this chapter clarifies the relationship between advertising and society.

2.1 Definition of advertisement

An advertisement is defined as any paid form of non-personal or mass-mediated communication about an organization, product, service or idea by an identified sponsor with the attempt to persuade. The word “paid” means that the space or time for advertising must be bought. The “non-personal” reflects that it is communications through mass media that provide the message from marketers to target audience. The purpose is to deliver a message to as many people as possible. Besides that, the sign of non-personal contact is that there is no immediate feedback from the side of the consumers (Belch and Belch 2012, 18).

2.1.1 The advertisement content

Analyzing the content of the advertisements includes considering the verbal as well as the visual aspects of an advertising text. The pictures are sometimes more important than a written or spoken material of the text. They are often more effective because they can provide consumers with emotions, they can influence their mood and work with their imagination. The consumers should be aware that pictures used in advertisements are constructed and used to manipulate them (Dyer 1990, 69).

2.1.2 Goals of advertising

The goals of an advertisement and sales support are divided into tactical, strategic and final. To the tactical goals belongs the aim to attract attention, to inform, to remind, to increase popularity and to persuade. These goals are immediate or for a short-term period. The strategic goals are focused on intensity of a purchase and the market. These goals are rather long-term. The goals are, for example, to ensure a continuous purchase, to motivate

to try a certain product or service, to attract the customers of competition, to increase frequency of purchasing and to increase the level of consumption. The final goals are rise of sales, prices and a growth of the profit (Belch and Belch 2012, 18).

Marketers have to consider how will recipients interpret and react on received message. Even though marketers claim that the main objective is to inform, the purpose to persuade is still in the core position. If the consumers react according to advertiser's intention, the advertisement is considered to be effective (Belch and Belch 2012, 18).

2.2 Advertising and society

Creating a demand is one of the ways how advertising influences the society. It often creates a desire for products which consumers do not really need. As a good example can be used product such as deodorant. Deodorants were not used until 1919 but then an advertisement introduced the new product, deodorant Odorono, for women as the target audience. The advertisements were successful and sales were rapidly growing, they rose 112%. If the advertisement did not occur, women would probably not have the desire, want or need to buy it (Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells 2009, 112-113).

Advertisements can have also impact on consumer's mind and perception of some issues. Few critics claim that advertising has a strong impact on children and teenagers. According to them to portray ultra-thin models in advertisement as an ideal of beauty can lead to eating disorders. On the other hand, advertisements might be helpful in spreading awareness of some social issues as to help fight AIDS and HIV in Africa. Advertisement can shape mirror values of individuals (Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells 2009, 114). According to some critics advertising is the creator of materialistic society. The advertised products are often portrayed as the only solution for some situations. It can be seen in the case of medical products. When people have headaches they might have tendency to take a pill because they were advertised as the best solution. The products often represent solutions what might result in more buyers (Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells 2009, 115).

Advertisements can be also perceived as full of prejudices and stereotypes which are usually obvious. Blond hair women are portrayed as dumb, older adults as sick, attractive Italians represent what is sexy, Asians are usually perceived as smart and beauty ideal is represented by skinny top models. Common stereotypes which can be observed are sex stereotypes, gender stereotypes, racial and ethnic stereotypes or age-related stereotypes (Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells 2009, 115-119).

As the society is still moving forward the advertisers adapt their style of advertising to it. In the past women were usually portrayed as housewives or they were represented as sex objects. In presence, a lot of women build their career and work at very high job positions. Advertising agencies try to respect it and some of them retain feminist consultants to discuss what might be in the advertisements offending for the women or considered as sexist (Arens, Schaefer and Weigold 2012, 37).

3 MISLEADING ADVERTISING

Misleading advertising, also called false or deceptive advertising is the practice of providing misleading or confusing information about a certain product with an aim to mislead the consumer. The misleading claims are created by the special choice of words or by omitting some information, what evokes a meaning which is in conflict with the true facts (Tellis 2000, 64).

3.1 Unfair and deceptive practices in advertising

There are several practices which are considered to be unfair or deceptive. These are (Arens, Weigold and Arens 2011, 71):

- False Promises – advertisements make often promises which are not possible to be kept. Claims about products which are supposed to „restore youth” or „prevent cancer” are considered misleading.
- Incomplete Description – it is a practise of providing non-complete information about a product such as advertising a „solid oak” desk without acknowledgement that only the top is made from solid oak and the rest is made from pine.
- False and Misleading Comparison – it is a process of making false comparisons. Either by comparing a product to the same product of a different brand by naming the brand or by an implication.
- Bait-and-Switch Offers – it is a practise of advertising a product at a surprisingly low price to bring customers into the store. However, after people come into the store they do not find the product but its higher-priced subsidiary.
- Visual Distortions and False Demonstrations – this practise is based on a computer manipulation or using a trick photography to create visually an irresistible product..
- False Testimonials – it is a practise when celebrities or other famous people advertise some products. This practice is called endorsement. They claim that they use it and recommend it to you as well. These products might, due to this practise, seem more trustworthy or effective.
- Partial Disclosure: it is an unfair practise when an advertisement does not provide all the important facts about the product, usually only the positive ones. Kraft’s Singles is a processed cheese product. In advertisement was claimed that those cheese slices are made from five ounces of milk. This claim is supposed to make them better than the competitors. However it is misleading because while

processing it loses two ounces of the milk. So at the end the slices consist of only three ounces of milk.

- Small-Print Qualifications – it is a way of providing important information about offered products or services in small letters at the bottom. When something is claimed to be „for free“, but the small-print qualification indicates some payment, it is considered deceptive practise.

3.1.1 Misleading practices in pricing

The misleading techniques concerning prices of products and services are (Tellis 2000, 80-82):

- Former or usual price: if a seller wants to provide a customer with a discount it should be the discount from the former or usual price. Sometimes sellers make the usual price higher to pretend an offer with a discount.
- Comparable market price: in some cases sellers compare their price of a certain product with its equivalent in the market. To ensure that this is not a misleading practise, the compared price for a product should be the most common in the market.
- Recommended retail price: this practise might be misleading when the price recommended by a producer is different from the price offered by a retailer who claims that it is the producer's recommendation.
- Wholesale price: sometimes retailers claim that the price for which they sell a certain product is the same as the one from wholesalers. This technique might be misleading because of a discount retailers usually get when they buy something from wholesalers.
- Limited period of the time: it is deceptive to claim that the offered price lasts for a limited period of time even though the price is the same as usually.
- Bargain at the price: sellers sometimes offer a “good deal” with a discount like “buy one and get second one for free”. This might be deceptive in the case if the price of the first item is the same as usually sold.
- Economic size: this refers to the usage of such claims as “economical package” or other claims which implicate savings due to an offer of a bigger amount.
- Bonuses: to provide a consumer with some sort of premium might be considered deceptive in the case when a seller overestimates the value of a present or does not accurately inform about the conditions of gaining the present.

- Competitions and lotteries: when merchants invite consumers to some competition or lottery they should provide the consumers with clear information. What are the conditions to participate, what are the prizes, how many people can truly win and the duration of the competition. Otherwise the merchants mislead the consumer.

3.1.2 Persuasive devices used in advertisements

The persuasive devices are supposed to influence consumers in order to persuade them to purchase a certain product or to encourage the interest. According to the some authors the persuasive devices are:

- Personalization: it is a usage of a direct address, questions or commands. This device makes the consumer feel involved. When the target audience consists of women with the weight problems and there are sentences as “Do you want to fight those kilos?” and similar ones, these women might feel encouraged to do so (Trčková 2015).
- Arguments and information: providing customers with information and giving them arguments why to buy might lead to the purchase of a certain product or a service. There are several types of arguments: comparative arguments are used to compare one brand with another, there are also arguments (one-sided reasoning) which highlight the positives of one brand and point out the negatives of the other or arguments which support a brand without any comparison or other strategies (Tellis 2000, 200-210).
- Emotions: emotions do not only form our unconscious reactions on an advertisement but they also shape our perception of the advertised brand, products or services (Plessis 2007, 104). Advertisers can evoke in people emotions such as compassion or sympathy, excitement, comfort, curiosity, laugh, fear or anger and due to them is advertisement more effective. The emotions can lead consumers’ attention away from the fact that advertisement tries to persuade them to do something. They are more interesting than arguments, easier to remember and might more spontaneously change consumer’s behaviour. One of the disadvantages is that emotions are time-consuming. Emotions can take the space for arguments or mentioning the benefits of a product. Negative emotions such as fear or sadness might be so uncomfortable for consumers that they do not accept them in their minds (Tellis 2000, 220-222).

- Animism: it is a manipulative trick based on the usage of animals in advertisements (Pospíšil and Závodná, 67).
- The usage of so called “expert” who claims that he or she tested a certain product and recommends it to a consumer evokes the impression of a trustworthy person and the quality of a product. Similar to this practice is giving to products a quality mark which was not obtained with authorisation. If this information is not true, it is considered to be deceptive (Pospíšil and Závodná 2012, 68).

3.1.3 Creativity in advertising

According to David Ogilvy an advertisement needs to be creative in order to sell a certain product. The elements of advertisements which enquire the creativity are (Horňák 2010, 268-284):

- Headlines: it should be short and understandable. A headline is usually the first element which grabs the attention of consumers therefore it should be original, clear and memorisable. It should include the main idea, brand and provide consumers with the benefits of an advertised product.
- Slogans: it is a phrase which is connected to a product or a brand. It is something what clearly and originally characterizes a product or a brand (sometimes it becomes the part of the corporate identity). It should be unique, clear and catchy. It should have the original idea and can be shocking to attract the attention and to be memorized.
- Humour: the humour is popular among consumers. It should be in the context with promoted product and with the target group in order to be understandable.

3.2 The impact of misleading advertising on different types of consumers

This part deals with the impact of misleading advertising on consumer buying behaviour and whether there is some connection between consumers' age and their perception of the misleading advertisements. The perception differs from one group to another, so as the interpretation of advertisements. According to one research, misleading advertisements have a high impact on consumer buying decisions and it is a drive for the purchase. The author said that consumers are likely to consider commercials as truthful. An important

aspect which influences consumers' perception is the gender and age. According to this research, women are more likely to inform before the purchase but the sources they use are mostly the advertisements or recommendations from the others. One of the conclusions of this study was also that the younger generation is more susceptible to the misleading commercials and this group was also determined as the impulsive shoppers (Sayed 2014).

3.2.1 The impact on children and teenagers

Children and young adults: the misleading advertising of food and beverages has the biggest influence on children. These young consumers do not have enough information and capacity to understand the consequences which result from impulsive decisions (Berkeley Media Studies Group 2011).

According to the book, children are reachable mostly through the television and demand what they saw on there. Therefore children affect the family's spending in such way that their desires are not under the control. Due to the globalization of children's markets and the wide use of advertising, children nowadays have a greater offer of products and therefore demand more. In the case of the food and beverage industry there is a big issue that the marketers should inform children about the nutritional value of those products. Due to the lack of information and knowledge about the health, children make decisions according to their actual desires. When marketers advertise cereals they add to the advertisement some facts about nutritional values but those are usually weak arguments or misleading claims which do not inform about the real value. These claims state, for example, that the cereals are a part of balanced breakfast or that they contain the vitamin C (Gunter, Oates and Blades 2004, 3-5).

According to a new study, the more food commercials young kids see on television, the more confused they become concerning what is actually healthy and what is not. The researcher Kristen Harrison said in a prepared statement, that children confuse claims such as "fat-free" or "diet" with what is actually nutritious. When some children were asked to choose between the "fat-free" ice cream versus cottage cheese and Diet Coke versus orange juice, they tended to pick up the wrong answer what in this case refers to the diet coke and "fat-free" yoghurt. Harrison also claimed that the increasing amount of food commercials result in the confusion of children's perception about what is healthy (Red Orbit 2005).

3.2.2 The impact on elderly people

Elderly people: even though adults are considered to be more responsible consumers, older adults or elderly people are seen as a vulnerable group or an easy target for marketers. On the other hand, the amount of fraud complaints from Americans over 60 has increased from 2008 to 2012 by 16%. This was reported by Federal Trade Commission. The products or services which are targeted to older people are connected with the problems of their age, what might be anti-aging products. These products claim to be effective in a very short time and promise to bring obvious changes (Truth in Advertising 2014).

According to the article, these products provide only little changes and not for everyone who uses them. Another type of the product targeted on elderly people is a sex pill. Such a sex pill can increase the sexual ability but this pill can contain substances which might put its user into the risk. The deceptive advertising intended to older people includes scams in social security. These advertisements claim that there is “one trick” how to get more out of their Social Security for money. It is misleading because these tricks or information how to maximize the income from Social Security are often available on the Internet for free. In addition, this trick might not work for everyone so some seniors pay for nothing actually. Due to their age, a lot of seniors think of the costs of their funeral. Therefore marketers try to sell them “funeral insurance” which is supposed to cover these costs. What might mislead older consumer is that the “funeral insurance” policy is sometimes the same as the life insurance policy but named differently. Lincoln Heritage’s marketing brought on the market Funeral Advantage plan in 2012. Virginia’s State Corporation Commission revealed some claims in this advertisement which might mislead the consumers. First of all, it is not clearly mentioned that they were selling a life insurance policy. They also claimed that their plan was “low-cost” and that they were able to process a claim in one day while other companies did so in 30-90 days (Truth in Advertising 2014).

So called “native advertisements” are those which are on the Internet and it is not recognizable whether it is a normal content of the website on the Internet. Seniors become users of the Internet and as they do not have a lot of skills, this advertising might mislead them. Advertisements offering the reverse of mortgages are targeted on seniors as well. It allows consumers to convert their equity into the cash without selling it or paying some monthly bills. The issue in this case is the lack of information provided, so it might happen that the lender will end up even without home (Truth in Advertising 2014).

4 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Consumer behaviour is a discipline which deals with the processes like selecting, purchasing and using products, services or ideas by individuals or groups. Many aspects have an impact on consumer behaviour and their decision making process. To understand why consumers behave in a particular way is necessary to understand the term of the consumer lifestyle. The lifestyle of consumers differs according to their gender, age, ethnic group or simply to their values. It depends on their social status and job position as well. They adapt to it and according to it they also behave. There are external and internal influences on the consumer lifestyle (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1989, 21).

4.1 External factors

The external influences which shape the consumer behaviour are (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1989, 25):

- Culture: it includes people's knowledge, beliefs, morals and basically a system of specific rules, values and habits. To the specific culture belongs food, a way of communication and manners as well.
- Values: the self-oriented values, environment-oriented and other-oriented values. Self-oriented values include approach to life. Whether the material wealth is important for some culture or not. Whether the culture prefers a hard-working lifestyle or believes in the leisure way of life. Some culture might be more serious or conservative and some prefer a liberal way of thinking. The environment-oriented values consider how people see the importance of nature, what are its hygienic habits. To the other-oriented values belong, for example, the position of women or men in the society and the position of old and young people.
- Social Status: it is a result of education, occupation, ownership and consumer's income.
- Reference Groups: a reference group is a group whose values influence the behaviour of a consumer. It is a kind of a guide of their behaviour and it influences their buying decisions.

4.2 Internal factors:

There are also internal factors which influence the consumer behaviour. These are (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1989, 26-28):

- Information Processing
 - The perception: it is a factor based on how individuals perceive the advertised product. It is a way of how they work with information, where they obtain them, what grabs their attention, why they remember it and what is their interpretation based on. Our perception is influenced by external stimuli or five sensors: vision, smell, sound, touch and taste. These external inputs connect with our internal sensory experience and that creates our total perception of the advertised product or service
 - Learning and Memory: learning can be conscious or unconscious. Consumer behaviour is learned from the culture, social class, family, friends, institutions, personal experience, advertising, mass media and others. What the consumer has learned influences his decisions. To understand human's memory is essential for marketers in order to create such an advertisement or to provide such information which consumers will store in their memory and remember it when it is needed. There are three memory systems: sensory memory, short-term memory, long-term memory (Solomon, Zaichkowsky and Polegato 1999, 94).
- Motives: Every single motive is determined by its intensity, a goal and the duration of it. The basic source of motivation is a need of a consumer. Emotions are important factors as well as consumer's values, ideals and interests. Motives direct our purchase behaviour (Vysekalová 2004, 28).
- Personality and lifestyles: a personality refers to the uniqueness of individual's psychological make-up. A lifestyle is reflected in our purchase choices. It refers to how much and for what we are willing to spend our money (Vysekalová 2004, 187).
- Attitudes: it is our opinion or evaluation of people and oneself, objects or issues. Therefore they influence our view of the products or services offered. (Vysekalová 2004, 223). There is also an attitude towards the advertisement. It is a predisposition of our reaction to it. It is the evaluation and perception of it (Vysekalová 2004, 224).

4.3 Typology of consumers

For companies it is necessary to understand how people behave in order to focus on the right audience. There are five different types of customers who purchase in a specific way. These are (The Sales Hunter 2015):

- **Loyal Customers:** these customers symbolize 20% of a customer base. According to the author companies should focus on these ones. They represent more than 50% of sales. The author thinks that with these customers it is needed to create a good relationship by regular communications through an e-mail or telephone. The more they feel valued, the more they recommend the company's product or service to the others.
- **Discount Customers:** this type of customers shop frequently but their choice of a purchase depends on the size of discounts. These customers help to turn over of the goods in a store and therefore contribute to the cash flow. These shoppers are sensitive to prices and they are more selective.
- **Impulse Consumers:** their purchase decisions are impulsive and they buy goods or services spontaneously. This is for marketers a sort of a challenge in order to get the demanded response.
- **Need-Based Consumers:** they purchase with a specific intention. They have certain needs they want to meet and when entering the stores they go straight away for the goods they need. They can become the loyal customer if there is a good care taken of them. Need-based customers are likely to become online shoppers as well. Therefore sellers should create a good relationship with those consumers to keep them in the store.
- **Wandering Consumers:** they do not have a special need to be fulfilled. They search for a new experience.

5 MARKETING RESEARCH

A marketing research is based on the collecting of certain information. This information can help businesses to overcome certain problems. The marketing research is an effort to understand the customers, the company and the competition. There are different types of marketing surveys such as purchase analysis survey, a survey of customer's attitudes and expectations, a brand equity survey, advertising media and a message effectiveness survey and many others. This chapter deals mostly with the quantitative research and its methods. The end of this chapter deals with the measuring advertising effectiveness (Smith and Albaum 2012, 2-4).

5.1 Qualitative research

There are two types of researches concerning the data collection: a quantitative and qualitative research. While the qualitative research focuses more on words, narratives, images and concepts, the quantitative research focuses on numbers. In the qualitative research an analysis begins during the data collection and in the quantitative one the analysis begins after the data collection. Qualitative analysis is adapted to a certain project but the quantitative one is based on standard techniques. In the qualitative research there are used original ways to communicate the results but in the quantitative one standard ways are used (Bradley 2013, 15).

5.1.1 Depth interviews and focus groups

According to the author these interviews are one-to-one conversations. The structure of these conversations is not limited by questionnaires but it must follow the aims of the research. The advantages of this method are that the conversations can take place everywhere. The depth interviews refer to face-to-face communication but sometimes the researchers use a telephone, an e-mail or a video conference to interview the respondent. The focus groups consist of several people sitting and discussing a certain topic. One person has a role of a moderator and this person starts and leads the discussion. The participants share their opinions and reactions (Bradley 2013, 238).

5.2 Measuring advertising effectiveness

The aim of any advertisement is a change. An advertisement can change the consumer's psychological state, the perception of a company and its image or consumer's attitudes. The important question is what has been changed and if the change is the result of the

advertisement (Staňková 2011, 117). The key aspect of the advertisement success is the proper decoding of its message by consumers. The advertiser creates an advertisement according to his or her intention and assumes the different cultural conventions. The receivers of the advertisement message must use the same cultural conventions in order to interpret the message in the right way (de Mooij 2005, 8).

Advertisements are evaluated according to the accomplishment of four tasks (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1989, 296):

- Exposure: an advertisement needs to touch the consumer psychically
- Attention: the consumer must pay attention to it
- Interpretation: it must be interpreted by the consumer accurately
- Memory: an advertisement needs to be memorized in a sense that will allow restoration under the appropriate circumstances

Advertising is usually very expensive so it is necessary to evaluate its effectiveness. Therefore an indicator of the effectiveness is also return on the investment or in other words whether the money which has been invested is equal to the advertising effectiveness. This measurement is complicated due to some factors: an advertisement is developing in time and the effectiveness of the advertising campaign can be late. Due to the combination of marketing mix it is sometimes difficult to recognize which part of it (marketing mix consists of a product, a price, a place and promotion) has been the cause of success or the opposite. The consumer as an individual has a specific personality which influences his or her perception and interpretation of the advertisement (Staňková 2011, 120).

II. ANALYSIS

6 ANALYSIS

The consumers react to advertisement messages differently according to their age, race, culture, background knowledge, attitudes, lifestyle and other aspects which shape their personalities and purchasing decisions as well. The impact of misleading advertising or persuasive practices differs according to the various types of consumers. Some consumers are forced by misleading advertisements to behave in a particular way but some of them are still resistant. Admittedly, the perception and interpretation of advertisements messages depend on an education or general knowledge.

6.1 Qualitative investigation

The author chose the qualitative research method mainly because of the face-to-face communication which provides accurate and immediate feedback. The interpersonal communication helped to gain first and therefore the most honest reactions from the respondents. Due to the personal contact with the respondents the author obtained verbal answers which were accompanied by body-language and non-verbal communication. This made the answers very clear and understandable.

6.1.1 Formulation of the research objectives

The main objective of this research was to investigate whether selected misleading advertisements or commercials using the persuasive and unfair practices have a certain impact on interviewed respondents. The secondary objective was to obtain reactions on such commercials and afterward to analyze it. Due to the answers the author was able to recognize whether the advertisement was effective or not.

6.1.2 Selected research method

The selected research method was the personal depth interviews. The interview was done with each of the respondents individually except one couple and one small group of male respondents who preferred to make the interview together. The interviews were anonymous. Before the interview started every respondent had specified his or her gender and field of their study. They were shown few misleading commercials or advertisements which involve misleading claims, techniques or persuasive devices. A respondent was asked several open questions which resulted into a deep conversation between the interviewer and the respondent. Therefore the interview covered different aspects of perception of discussed advertisements. During the interview the interviewer could observe

a reason why the respondent reacted on the commercials in a particular way. Each reaction was analyzed. There are several advantages of this research method. First of all, the personal contact enables to get to know a respondent little bit more. Therefore is the interviewer able to understand reasons of a certain reaction. Due to the personal conversation it was possible fluently change the order of questions which were asked. The researcher thinks a disadvantage of this method is the time consumption in process of preparation and duration of the interviews.

6.1.3 Research sample

The research was done with 17 students. The research participants were from different faculties, of a different year of study and different gender. Overall there were 9 male participants and 8 female respondents. The participants are students of economics, multimedia communications, technology, computer sciences, humanities and philosophy. The age of the students is not relevant because most of them were in the same age. During the interviews were recognized other factors which influence the perception and interpretation of the analyzed advertisements.

6.1.4 Preparation and process of the research

In the preparation process author of the research had to decide who will be the participants and what research method will be used. According to it prepared samples of misleading commercials or commercials with misleading elements. The choice of commercials was based on the general interests of university students. The shown examples concerned the food, cosmetics, technology, clothes and other products which might be interesting or necessary for the students. After the selection of commercials the author prepared several questions.

This research was done personally. A place was flexible according to the time and possibilities of the researcher and participants. The process of research was usually always the same. Firstly an interviewed student watched a certain commercial and the author observed his or her behaviour during perceiving the message of commercial. Afterwards the student had answered several questions. Answers then turned into complex conversations. The respondents were always willing to discuss their answers into more details. The author had asked the prepared questions and then tried to analyze the reasons of certain reactions. The researcher was making notes to every commercial on a paper.

Each conversation took at least 30 minutes and in the case of small groups it was approximately 50 minutes.

6.1.5 Method of data processing

The answers of recipients were written down on papers. On each commercial had the recipients comment individually. The author had prepared questions on one paper and followed them when noting down the answers. To the answers were also added some reasons of the reactions, interests of the students, their preferences or their usual buying behaviour. This information was used to analyze whether a certain commercial has an impact on the purchase behaviour of a student or not. According to the theory determined in the first part of thesis, the researcher was able to evaluate an effectiveness of commercials. The collected answers were analyzed individually and author of this research tried to bring a correct interpretation of the whole research.

7 INTERPRETATION OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

7.1 Selected advertisement for qualitative research

The subjects analyzed in this research were misleading advertisements or misleading elements which are used in those advertisements. The examples were either audio visual advertisements or other forms of advertising. As the subject of analysis were used commercials of the company Axe, Taco Bell, Colgate, T-com and other advertisements with the usage of persuasive and misleading practices. Through discussions of these advertisements author wanted to find out whether they influence university students. Based on the answers, the author was able to determine the effectiveness of selected advertisements. The author analyzed individual misleading practices to determine their success.

7.1.1 The perception of misleading messages

As an example of providing the misleading messages were chosen commercials of the company Axe. For the selected commercials of this company are typical emotions and story-telling. These advertisements are obviously expensive and the attention is paid to originality. They try to grab attention of an audience by action, sophisticated visual effects, story, humour and emotions. The author selected these advertisements because of the obvious attempt to mentally touch the consumers. Promoted product, the Axe deodorant, is always mentioned at the end of the commercial.

In the first commercial (The Axe Peace) the message was “Make Love Not War”. This message evokes impression that by the purchase of this product a consumer helps to create peace in the world or to create love in this world. This message is misleading a consumer. The company pointed out a certain social issue and connected it with its product. The second advertisement brings the message that deodorant Axe has “the effect of irresistible attractiveness”. Through this advertisement company Axe tries to show consumers that due the usage of this deodorant a consumer will be incredibly attractive. It is misleading consumers as well.

The perception of these commercials differs according to the gender of respondents and their individual preferences of this kind of products. Some of the students have already an experience with this particular product. Most of the respondents positively reacted to the commercials in the sense of an entertainment. The music, visual effects, story and humour

were for the students the most impressive elements of these advertisements. Only three students perceived the commercial which promotes “the effect of irresistibility” as aggressive. One female respondent connected this commercial with a catastrophe after watching it what is the total opposite to the intended message. Therefore few respondents misinterpreted this commercial.

In case of The Axe Peace commercial was the message perceived positively. The story was interesting for students and they interpreted the message in the proper way. They agreed that the message of peace creates a positive approach to the brand Axe

In general, these advertisements were for respondents some form of entertainment and the advertisements themselves were interesting for them. On the question whether they would remember these advertisements all of the students responded positively. In case of psychological attachment to the product and its advertisements, women were more influenced by emotions than men. Nevertheless, only 4 of 17 respondents would consider the purchase of deodorant Axe after watching these commercials. Most of the respondents do not believe the side messages of peace, love or attractiveness.

7.1.2 The perception of Colgate and Sensodyne advertisements

This advertisement was chosen because of the misleading technique based on “the expert” who approves the advertised product. In this case, promoted product is the toothpaste which is claimed to be recommended by more than 80% of dentists. The advertisement of Sensodyne toothpaste uses the same practice of an expert recommending the toothpaste.

These advertisements were chosen because the author of research was interested in whether the students tend to believe in such claims. The answers of respondents are quite contrary. According to the reactions, 9 of 17 students would be influenced by these recommendations and would probably choose one of these toothpastes in a shop. Only 2 of 8 female respondents would not believe. These two students study chemistry and as the reason of distrust stated an overview which they have in this field. In the case of male respondents is situation opposite. Only three of asked male students would consider the purchase. As they stated the use of numbers evokes reliability. Other male respondents stated that such claims have no influence on them and that the purchase of such product depends on their personal experience.

These advertisements might be considered effective. When respondents were asked whether they would remember them, all of them stated that they would. Most of the

students would connect these toothpastes with a certain quality or reliability when seeing it in a store. When they were asked if they would notice this advertisement on a billboard or in other form of commercial they reacted positively.

In the Colgate advertisement was attention grabbed by the statement of recommendation and colours. In the advertisement of the toothpaste Sensodyne is the most persuading element a doctor in the white coat and that there is given her name. The students were also asked which one of these brands they prefer. The answers were various but the strongest factor in decision making would be the price.

7.1.3 The perception of T-com advertisement

This advertisement promotes “the most secure network”. This claim can be considered misleading because the commercial does not state among which networks it is the most secure one. This network is promoted by the Czech actor Ivan Trojan and Slovak actress Kristína Svarinská. Visual effects used in this commercial remind of the FBI, CSI serials or the movies of James Bond. These elements probably serve to evoke a safety of the T-com network. The reactions of respondents are quite similar and the gender does not play such a significant role in the perception. However, the perception of respondents varies according to their personal interests and knowledge.

Some of the respondents did not even recognize the female actress. Author thinks it is because the actress from Slovakia and the respondents come from Czech Republic. In general, the actors do not make a good impression. The students consider it inappropriate that some actors are promoting “the most secure network”. Most of the respondents would not believe this claim due to this commercial. Some of the respondents stated that they would search for detailed information and would be interested why and whether it is true. Respondents who reacted in this way study informatics or are interested in technology. Female respondents focused more on the visual effects of the advertisement. The actors, story of this commercial and the elements used to evoke safety were in a centre of their attention. A lot of students considered the story ridiculous. Few respondents said that “It is too American”. Some of them also got the feeling of being controlled and being put under the microscope. In their case, this commercial was misinterpreted and had the opposite impact as it is intended.

The advertisement grabs the attention, it is easy to memorize, usually it is good interpreted and in some cases were respondents emotionally touched because it is their feeling of

security which the advertisement deals with. From this point of view, the author perceives this advertisement as effective in order to create an interest in this topic. However the message itself is not perceived as trustworthy and does not persuade the respondents immediately to use this service.

7.1.4 The perception of “Slim Express” commercial by female respondents

This advertisement was targeted on women who are trying to lose weight. The promoted product was gel Slim Express which is supposed to help to lose weight very fast. One of the misleading practices used in this advertisement is practice of providing false promises. For example, the commercial claims to help lose one dress size or decrease amount of fat in a body during the 24 hours only by usage of this gel. Visual distortions and false demonstrations are also used in this advertisement. To look reliable commercial uses a notary who made a test on the gel and recommends it. Typical features of this advertisement are personalization and repetition of phrases such as „highly effective” or “only 24 hours”. A lot of sentences include a hyperbole such as „amazing” or “radical weight loss”. The statements in commercial are supported by people who claim that this product helped them what might be untrue.

This commercial includes more misleading and persuasive signs. Therefore female respondents reacted on this commercial in a negative way. They perceive it as deceptive and untrustworthy. The visuals do not persuade them and too much of repetition strengthen the unreliability of this particular product. According to the reactions, the author of research considers this commercial ineffective. The female respondents agreed that they do not believe in this message. In addition, due to the length of the advertisement they did not pay attention till the end. Only few female respondents would remember this commercial but just because of the obvious lies.

In general, this commercial has no impact on the purchase behaviour of respondents and the misleading techniques used in this commercial do not work on them. The reason hidden behind these reactions is fact that the most of the asked female respondents do care about their figure and know how long it really takes to lose their weight.

7.1.5 The male respondents’ perception of “Taco Bell” commercial

This advertisement promotes a product of brand Taco Bell which operates in the fast food industry. Researcher selected this advertisement as an example of usage a misleading technique because it provides a message which abets a consumer to believe that the product

of the company Taco Bell is equal to protein shakes or some products which have a high level of proteins.

Male respondents were asked whether they would believe in this message and would purchase this product on the basis of watched advertisement. They would not believe this message, except two male respondents, but the advertisement encourages them to consider a purchase of it. The advertisement was for them entertaining and they would remember it. They appreciated the humour and story used in this commercial. Even though in this advertisement is often used the word “protein” the most of the male respondents do not connect it with the promoted product.

The visual effects which make the food looking delicious were impressive enough to create a desire for promoted meal. Showing the fresh meat, vegetable and the whole product at the end of this advertisement was for the students impressive. Of course, the efficiency of the product depends on actual physical needs of the consumer. Whether they are hungry at the moment or not may play the most important role.

Nevertheless, they were mentally touched, they paid attention during the whole advertisement and they would remember it. Therefore is the advertisement, according to the theory of measuring advertising effectiveness, successful. This confirmed the opinion stated in the theoretical part that pictures are sometimes more important than spoken or written language.

7.1.6 The perception of sales, special offers and limited time offers

The advertisements promoting sales and limited time offers were selected because the prices of products play essential role in students' buying behaviour. As the results have shown, students usually have a tendency to react on sales and limited time offers. When there is a sale or a special offer in some store they become interested. Five of seventeen students also admitted, that they intentionally search for sales in a store or on the Internet. After individual discussions of special offers, limited time offers or sales, author observed that students positively reacted on high numbers evoking an advantageous purchase.

Colours, big letters and other visual effects usually grab their attention to such offers. Due to these offers students tend to buy products without thinking whether it is advantageous or not. The sale offers are usually effective. On the other hand, students who work part-time analyze these offerings in more details. They are not impulsive concerning the sales and

special offers like students who do not work. This fact confirmed that the certain external factors shape the consumer behaviour.

7.1.7 The perception of brand and price comparison

Students were shown several advertisements which use the misleading practice of brands and prices comparison. Such techniques appear in many industries such as automobile industry, food industry and many others. According to respondents' reaction, these practices at least attract their interest and can cause a change in their buying behaviour.

In the case of brand comparison, students tended to have a certain leader among discussed brands. Students of Informatics admitted to prefer a certain brand when purchasing the technology products. Other students did not reveal any brand preferences.

Students' reactions toward price comparison in the food industry did not show such preferences. Usually, the price plays the key role for them. However, according to the answers, female students become more aware of the real quality and nutritional values which certain products consist of. They admitted to spend more money on healthy products.

Healthy life style or being fit is becoming very popular nowadays. Female students seem to be influenced by these trends. Male students do sport as well but as they stated, most of them do not pay attention to the nutritional values or to food composition. Therefore their answers approved that motives and attitudes play a certain role in buying decisions.

8 SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Author of the research obtained all necessary information and answers. Participants were willing to cooperate and discuss selected advertisements in more details therefore was the interpretation of answers uncomplicated. Researcher concluded that the gender, general knowledge and different interests influence an impact of misleading advertising on students.

Due to the certain reactions, author observed that female respondents are more influenced by emotions, visuals, music or colours than male respondents. Interviews revealed that male respondents think more about the context, possible benefits and do not attach themselves to an advertisement. They tend to search for information on their own.

Students were supposed to define themselves according to the typology of consumers. Those who considered themselves impulsive or wandering customers appeared to be more likely influenced by analyzed advertisements. The students' field of study plays a certain role in the perception of misleading advertisements only if a product is directly connected to field of their study. Students were able to recognize certain misleading practices and are not influenced so easily. Obvious lying and misleading do not have any impact on the students. Generally, the author found that the price of a product or a service plays the most important role in their buying decisions.

Disadvantage of this research might be limited amount of misleading advertisements discussed through the interviews as well as the limited number of participants. Nevertheless this research is able to provide the idea of how the university students perceive misleading advertisements and how much they are influenced by certain misleading practices.

CONCLUSION

The particular misleading practices have a certain impact on university students. Those practices are connected mostly with price of a product. Most of the interviewed students make buying decisions according to their monthly budget which is limited. Therefore the students are usually attracted to advantageous prices and can be considered as the discount customers. The visual distortions, misleading comparisons and bait-and-switch offers appeared to be effective as well. The students who work part-time do not react so intensively on such practices.

Nevertheless, there are more persuasive devices or practices influencing the students in a particular way. Emotions and humour might change the perception of a brand. The usage of music might help with remembering a commercial and the visual effects can create more intensive experience from an advertisement. These elements influence significantly the perception of the advertisement message delivered to consumers.

This research has shown that the students are not easily reachable by obviously misleading or deceptive advertisements. They are familiar with some of the unfair practices and due to this knowledge these techniques might be ineffective. Among the interviewed students were also impulsive shoppers and wandering shoppers. These students do not think a lot about the perceived messages and tend to make spontaneous decisions. Therefore are likely to be influenced by discussed misleading techniques more than students who considered themselves as the loyal or need-based customers.

If the target audience consists of students the advertisers should consider their knowledge, interests and the students' environment as well. The students are frequent Internet users and are able to find necessary information about a demanded product and therefore the advertisements oriented on students should create advertisements which provide important and true information in order to evoke an interest or a response.

Even though this research has shown that the misleading advertising has a certain impact on university students it is not possible to make a general conclusion. The research brings the idea of how the students react and perceive the misleading advertisements and shows its partial impact. To clarify the general impact, it is needed to make interviews with more respondents and discuss all misleading practices.

It is important to analyze an impact of misleading advertising in order to gain or retain customers who are essential for the company's profit. University students are interesting group of consumers due to their buying behaviour. The inappropriate way of

communication discourages them from potential purchase. To reach students as consumers, advertisers should produce trustworthy advertising messages. When the students trust advertised brand or a product they are more likely to react on it. Because of the right way of communication, students might become the loyal-customers who are the crucial source of company's profit.

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APPENDICES

P I..... *The list of the key questions for the qualitative research*

APPENDIX P I: THE LIST OF THE KEY QUESTIONS FOR THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

What is the field of your study?

What type of consumer are you according to the typology of consumers?

What is the most important aspect for you when you purchase a certain product?

How important is the price of a product for you?

How frequently do you shop?

What source of information do you use when making a buying decision?

Do you have any brand preferences?

Do you have a monthly budget?

Do you have a job?

What was the first thing in the advertisement which grabbed your attention?

How do you perceive the advertisement?

Do you believe in the advertisement message?

What did you like about the advertisement?

What did you dislike about the advertisement?

Would you remember the advertisement?

Does the advertisement evoke any emotions in you?

Would you consider purchasing the advertised product?

What persuades you to buy the advertised product?

What discourages you from buying this product?

Do you recognize any misleading practices in the advertisement?

