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Article

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International Journal of Technology for Business (IJTB)



The Importance Of Realms Of Understanding In Marketing Communication

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Abstract

In this day and age there are mechanisms or mediums to pass messages for advertisers and this include traditional print media, online advertisement campaign, electronic media such as television and radio etc. However, a very critical feature a whether an advertisement is successful or not depends on the realms of understanding between the source and the receiver. This paper has examined the importance of realm of understanding in a communication model by analyzing Dove's phenomenally successful online advertisement campaign titled Dove Real Beauty Sketches.

Keywords: Marketing Communication, Realms of Understanding, Cognitive Theory, Advertising,

1. Introduction

In digital age that we live in product manufacturers and brands have figured different innovative ways to provide or pursue consumers to buy their product. In essence the ability to communicate product information is essential to brand development. Marketing communication is a process where the advertiser transmits product information to the target audience. One of the ways to communicate product information is through advertisements. In this day and age there are mechanisms or mediums to pass messages for advertisers and this include traditional print media, online advertisement campaign, electronic media such as television and radio etc. However, a very critical feature a whether an advertisement is successful or not depends on the realms of understanding between the source and the receiver (Burnett & Moriarty, 1998). In other words the advertiser and the consumer viewing the advertisement has to be on the same page or have some common understanding otherwise the advertisement will not be successful. This article will elaborate on how a good realm of

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understanding between advertisers and the consumers made an online advertisement campaign by Dove in 2013 an outstanding success.

2. Materials and Methods

The research is based on qualitative analysis of secondary data. The data gathered through secondary sources regarding online advertisement campaign by Dove in 2013 was tested against relevant theories to interpret the reason for the campaign's success. There are numerous examples of employing qualitative research methods in management studies and communication research, which include Meredith et al. (1989), Ellram (1996).

3. Communication Model

Communication makes marketing possible and Figure 1 provides a linear communication model based on Shannon and Weaver (1962).

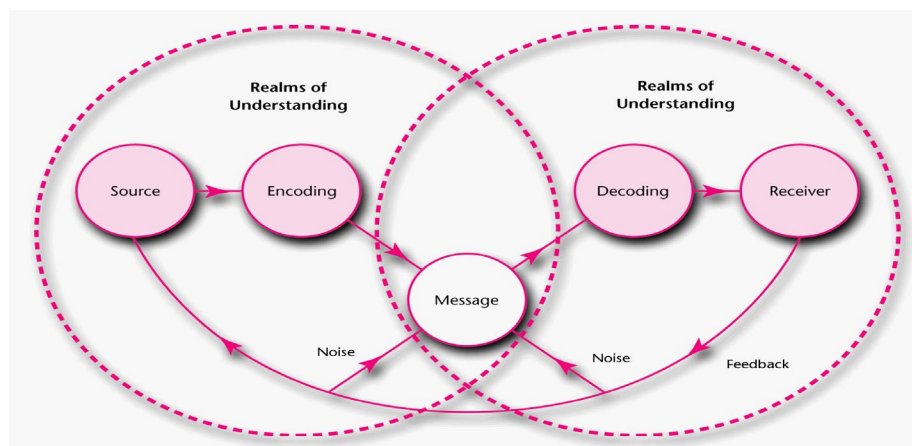


Figure 1. Communication model based on Shannon and Weaver (1962)

The article will refer to Figure 1 while discussing the relevant advertisement campaign. It is important to understand at this stage what is marketing. American Marketing Association (AMA) defines marketing as a process where conception, pricing, promotion, ideas regarding products and brands are distributed to make exchanges that satisfies the advertisers objectives (American Marketing Association, 2015).

Advertising can be thought of as the use of media to inform/ persuade consumers about something/ product/service and it's effect (Lane, 2001). In fact in the process, products/brands and consumers are brought together and the relationship modulated. The long term objectives of a communication program can be articulates as to create- brand image, identity and loyalty. In the short term the target is to increase traffic and sales. Figure 2 illustrates the Marketing Communication Mix.

Marketing Communication Mix



Figure 2. Marketing Communication Mix

4. Advertisement Campaign: Dove Real Beauty Sketches

The online advertisement campaign was launched by the renowned beauty care product brand Dove in 2013. Since then the advertisement has been a phenomenal success and became viral with more than 114 million total views within a month (Business Insider, 2013). The narrative of the advertisement is as follows. The tagline of the advertisement is “You are more beautiful than you think.” The advertisement articulates a social experiment conducted by Dove. In the advertisement several women were asked to describe themselves with particular emphasis on facial features. An FBI trained forensic artist drew sketches of women without actually seeing them. The artist then drew sketches of the same subjects (women) but the description of features was provided by a stranger who has seen the subjects. The sketches were then shown to subjects who were flattered to see that the sketch drawn from the description of strangers were in all cases more flattering than the one described by the subject themselves. The reaction of the women seeing the sketches were recorded and the experiment was made into an online video. The video was extremely emotional and touched the heart of a lot people. The video is available in the Dove real beauty sketch website (Dove Real Beauty Sketch, 2013). Figure 3 and 4 provides two illustrations of the experiment.



Figure 3. Dove real beauty sketches



Figure 4. A subject looking at her sketches

Advertisement such as the Dove “You are more beautiful than you think.” uses a pull strategy. The strategy directly targets the end customer for promotions (Varadarajan, & Jayachandran, 1999). This is done to stimulate the customer so that it creates a demand for the advertised product (in this case increase or create brand loyalty).

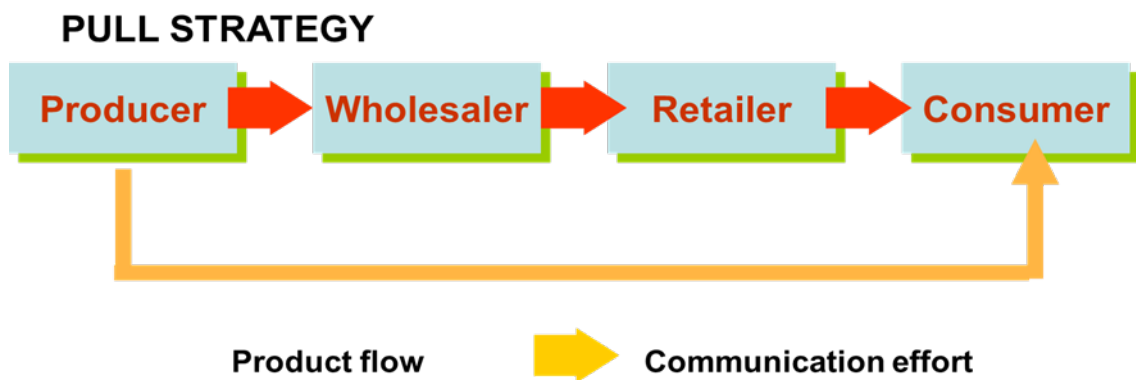


Figure 5. Pull strategy

Advertisement like the one conducted by Dove falls within one of the Ps (Promotion) of the marketing mix (Grönroos, 1997). The advertisement targets women of all age group. It is important to cast one's eyes to Figure 1 which illustrates the communication model at this point. Let us relate the Dove “real beauty” advertisement with communication model in Figure 1.

- Source: In this case the source is the advertiser Dove who wants to broadcast their message.
- Encoding: Dove which is the source here encodes what they want to convey to the viewers into an advertisement which is a short documentary. Therefore, encoding here is the social experiment and the audio visual production that the advertisement agency on behalf of Dove has produced.
- Message: The message is an advertisement with audio and visual features. However, unlike most of the broadcasted advertisement the source (advertiser) has made a social experiment and then recorded

it to make their message or point. The uniqueness of the message here is that Dove do not directly argues in favour of it's product. However, the message it gives is that everybody is beautiful in there way and one should be proud of it. The inherent message is that this novel idea is associated with Dove and hence the viewer should have soft corner for Dove in the process creating a brand loyalty.

- Decoding: The viewer while seeing the advertisement will relate what is shown with her own experience and thus interpret a meaning.
- Noise: There may be much distraction for the viewer while watching the advertisement. However, the intense nature of the social message means that the viewer watches the advertisement over and over again thus negating the noise. In addition, noise can be in the form of criticism of the advertisement in social platforms that Dove is actually promoting "beauty" and that it's intention is not that novel since they are trying to sell their product. This may distract some viewers from the message of Dove.
- Receiver: The receiver in this case is the viewers who watched the advertisement.
- Feedback: Although feedback in the case of advertisement is delayed and not very accurate. However, the massive number of viewing and discussion in the social circle means that the Dove's received quality of feedback was good regarding the advertisement.

5. Realm of understanding and consumer insight

The campaign has been really successful because the overlap between realm of understanding between the sender (Dove) and receiver (consumers) is significant (see Figure 1- linear communication model). The realm of understanding is an important element in the communication process. It is not possible to have a successful communication unless there is a realm of understanding. The level of understanding between the sender and receiver is regarding matters such as attitude, perception, behavior and experience (Shimp, & Andrews, 2013). Therefore, it is obvious that Dove was able achieve realm of understanding by understanding the psyche of the consumer effectively. In addition cognitive theory and semiotics can be used to explain realm of understanding in this case.

Dove was so successful with the particular advertisement because they have insight of women feels worldwide. Dove was able to understand that women in general are their worst critic in terms of beauty and only 4% of women think that they are actually beautiful (Independent, 2013). Therefore, Dove critically understood the social environment that women in general lives. The advertisement was something that the consumers could easily relate. The advertisement impacted the psyche of women that they are actually more beautiful than they think. It also embodied the belief in them that they are not less beautiful than average strangers. A lot of women found the advertisement empowering and had a feel good factor.

The advertisement also tap into the dormant believe in consumers that advertisement do not show real women with models being artificial and distantly different from the average women. Dove was very aware of the media habits of the audience. Hence they decided to make an online advertisement campaign. In addition they were very accurate of the audience's knowledge and belief. It should be mentioned that Dove has conducted a global study on beauty with the heading-The Real Truth about Beauty.

6. Cognitive theory to explain realm of understanding

In order to comprehend the realm of understanding in the marketing communication process, cognitive theory can be used (Bandura, 2002). Cognitive theory is based on- information processing; problem solving; and reasoning approach to human behavior. Consumer use information received from an advertisement and compare with owns prior knowledge and combine the two to form a judgement about the product. An individual consumer process information depending on personality, perception, learning, attitude and environmental influences.

- **Personality:** It is the personality of women in general that they think that they are less beautiful than the average stranger. In fact only 4% of the women worldwide think they are beautiful. Therefore, showing that women are in general more beautiful than they think is actually uplifting. Therefore, in essence the advertisement is actually refuting the average personality of women regarding their beauty; however in a positive way which pleasantly surprises the consumers / women.
- **Perception:** Perhaps the most significant effect that Dove has on consumers is that the brands use of common people in the advertisement. Since the advertisement was actually a documentary where ordinary people were portrayed to be positively emotionally overwhelmed creates a perception amongst the consumers that Dove's products can actually help stay beautiful and the consumer perceives that Dove's promises are true.
- **Learning:** It is also a very important reason why the advertisement can be considered successful. The advertisement pitched the idea that unrealistic beautification is not possible or justified. It has done so without uttering a single word in this regard. The average consumer can make a decision whether buying products which shows beautiful models is actually worth the value. It is most likely that one can't reach such level of prettiness using those products. However, one is actually beautiful anyway and hence use Dove which will keep one beautiful.
- **Attitude:** The attitude of Dove amongst its consumers has further enhanced through the advertisement. It should be mentioned that Dove was highly regarded amongst the general public and hence the message was easily conveyed. In addition, the advertisement could in fact work as a catalyst for industry transformation where unjustified personification is the norm.
- **Environment:** The environmental influence involves factors such as culture, social classes, situational influences, groups and communicational scenario. In the case of this advertisement there are obvious social influences; it can be argued that the way society perceives beauty is "wrong". In addition the advertisement works to form group opinion and creates a very emotional situation in the form of a social experiment. The whole message in the advertisement is communicated in a very gentle and subtle way which creates confidence, eagerness and believes amongst the viewers.

The advertisement connects with the consumer by combining the communicational, marketing and social functions. In particular the advertisement is designed to connect with the consumers in rhetorical level. Rhetorical level is one of the verbal modes of the message that is communicated (McQuarrie & Mick, 1999). The rhetorical level vividly highlights the characteristics, special features or functions. In this case the advertisement takes the form of a documentary and urges people to think that they are more beautiful than they think, using interpersonal experiences. Hence, the advertisement establishes and negotiates a social relationship with the viewers. It can be argued that the appeal of the campaign in turn will create a brand loyalty for Dove amongst the viewers. In addition the visual mode of the advertisement campaign is also very pleasant with appropriate colours and physical features.

7. Conclusion

This article has explained the importance of realm of understanding in a communication model by discussing Dove's phenomenally successful online advertisement campaign titled Dove Real Beauty Sketches. The article explained that Dove was able to connect with consumers because they understood the personality, attitude and environment that their target consumers (women) live. In this regard Dove conducted detailed case study globally and has been able to come up with a message and transmit it successfully to its consumers which challenges them to change their perception and in fact learn.

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