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Comparative advertising and advertising wars

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A few recent decades have changed a lot in the world of advertising. Media and techniques involved are constantly getting more various and intricate; today's advertisements appear everywhere from public transport to the walls of buildings. The enormous amount of information flows into the consumer's mind. That is the reason why it is extremely difficult for advertising agents nowadays to achieve the most important goal – to come up with a truly memorable ad.

As the competition for consumer's attention is getting really fierce, no wonder the majority of the world biggest commercial enterprises try to find the most effective way to succeed in this struggle. Eventually they resort to comparative advertising, i. e. any form of paid promotion which compares one company's product or its specific characteristic to the one of another brand. This type of promotion, on the one hand, is considered to be more beneficial to the consumer than traditional advertising, as prices during «advertising wars» between companies tend to go down. However, such a technique can mislead people if it contains incomplete or outdated information, and the reaction of the society on these wicked comparisons can be in fact ambiguous.

It seems pretty obvious that comparative advertising leaves a poor mark on the image of the company and makes it look unattractive. Although McDonald's and Burger King are undoubtedly global companies with countless incomes, they offer nothing but junk food. That is the reason why their constant arguments on the question whose burger is bigger or contains more meat sound funny. Nevertheless, the method is widely used even by such influential producers as BMW, Audi, Bentley, Mercedes and Microsoft, and this fact arouses perplexity.

If we look deeper, it turns out that car producers' advertising strategy is rather aggressive. In 2003 appeared a poster showing a hungry cheetah (BMW X5) chasing Mercedes ML coloured as zebra. Then there was a real advertising war between old rivals – BMW and Audi – in 2006. It began with BMW saying from its poster: «Congratulations to Audi for winning South African Car of the Year 2006. From the Winner of World Car of the Year 2006». Audi's answer wasn't long in coming: «Congratulations to BMW for Winning World Car of the Year 2006. From the Winner of Six Consecutive Le Mans 24 Hour Races 2000–2006»,

when suddenly two more brands interfered in the dialog. Subaru noticed: «Well done to Audi and BMW for winning the beauty contest. From the winner of the 2006 International Engine of the Year», and Bentley's poster explained who was really ruling the roost without a word.

The fight was renewed in 2009, when in a Los Angeles billboard advertisement for its A4, Audi called out BMW by simply stating the words, «Your move, BMW». BMW quickly responded to the challenge by posting an ad on an adjacent billboard for its M3 with the word «Checkmate». Ironically, things didn't end there again. Audi came back with a billboard for its exotic R8 which stated «Your pawn is no match for our king». However, BMW was determined to get the last word, and tethered a zeppelin featuring its F1 sports car to Audi's R8 billboard declaring «Game over» [3].

Advertising wars are consequent result of making advertising comparisons; they occur extremely frequent nowadays and it's impossible to enumerate even the brightest ones. As a rule, they can be noticed on billboards outdoors or in commercials on TV.

Making comparisons in advertising is actually not new. However, considerable changes connected with the phenomenon began in 1972, when Federal Trade Commission issued a statement that allowed advertisers to name their competitor's brand instead of the mysterious «brand X» that was used in advertising comparisons earlier as a long-established practise. Furthermore, the major television networks were asked to accept such commercials in order to broaden the consumer's awareness of the competing companies and their products. That was the crucial point that increased the number of comparative ads greatly. It's nowadays allowed in EU by a Commission proposal for an EEC Council Directive to use comparative advertising in the case it objectively compares material, relevant, verifiable and fairly chosen features of competing goods or services and does not mislead, cause confusion or denigrate a competitor. Similar rules are used in the United States.

The effectiveness of comparative advertising is difficult to estimate, as there are plenty of suggestions and no reliable calculations concerning the changes in sales. It's a common tendency to believe that negative information is usually stored better, thus generating the impact that any advertisement is targeted at. On the other hand the unpleasant impression can be transferred directly to the brand itself. As long as the numbers proving the effectiveness of the phenomenon in comparison to other kinds of advertising are not announced, the only conclusion we can make is that the reputation is worth damaging, as the overwhelming majority of the biggest transnational corporations continue to build their advertising campaigns in such a way.

Литература

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Социально-экономическое становление суверенной Словакии: *perasperaadastra*

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В конце прошлого века страны Центральной и Восточной Европы разными способами добились своей независимости. Обретя право самостоятельно проводить внутреннюю и внешнюю политику, различными способами они начали свой путь становления. Некоторые использовали политику «шоковой терапии», некоторые – более спокойные виды рыночного реформирования. Если про Польшу, которая рассматривается как положительный пример применения «шоковой терапии», знают многие, то следует рассказать и про Словакию, которая выбрала путь спокойных рыночных реформ.

Словакия – это небольшое государство, находящееся в самом центре Европы. Площадь страны составляет довольно скромные 49 035 кв. км, а население страны на июль 2014-го составляло 5 443 583 человека. Сегодня Словакия – далеко не самая яркая, но вполне благополучная европейская страна. Она является членом таких крупных международных организаций, как Европейский союз и Всемирная торговая организация, а также членом еврозоны. Словакия имеет довольно высокие показатели ВВП: 149,9 млрд долл. США в 2014 г. и занимает 72-е место в мире; размер ВВП на душу населения в 2014 г. составил 27,700 долл. США, что позволило занять Словакии 61-е место в мировом рейтинге; темпы роста промышленности в 2014 г. составили 6,7 %, что соответствует 30-му месту в мировом рейтинге [1].

История Словакии как независимого государства началась 1 января 1993 г. после распада Чехословакии. Сразу же после распада страна оказалась в тяжелом экономическом положении, учитывая, что около 80 % чехословацкой промышленности досталось Чехии. Но реформы 1998–2006 гг. помогли Словакии вывести свою промышленность на новый уровень. Стали появляться крупные национальные предприятия, такие как U.S.Steel Košice (металлургия), Slovnaft (нефтяная промышленность). Однако важнейшим