

Online advertising: guiding or misguiding customers?

OUTLINE

1) Introduction

Thesis Statement: Online advertising can guide as well as misguide the customers. Though it helps the customers to know about the things they are interested in but it also misleads them by giving false information or leaving out important detail.

2) Why online advertising guiding or misguiding customers

3) How online advertising misguides the customers

a) By leaving no platform where people can get rid of it

b) Misrepresentation of facts about a product

c) By promoting harmful products

d) Customers' profiles are used for targeted ads

e) Consumers face emotional and financial loss

4) It provides ease to customers to stay away from deceptive advertising

a) Helps customers know about the product easily

b) Customers have to research about the products

c) Consumers have to avoid such kind of advertisement

d) It has positive aspect as it shows the products related to their interest

e) Laws are made against the false advertisement

5) Though there are accurate advertising but inaccurate

advertising overweight the accurate ones

- a) Makes customers buy things which they do not need
- b) People with lack of knowledge can be trapped easily
- c) Illiterate people can be misguided
- d) Customers' privacy is not safe
- e) Still the deceptive advertisements are misleading the consumers

6) Conclusion

5

"The only time a lazy man ever succeeds is when he tries to do nothing." (Evan Esar)

Once there was a time when people used to go out and had to search for goods which they needed. Meanwhile, the company employees had to go door to door to advertise the company's products. Gradually the advertisement started getting published. Afterwards, the companies used to advertise through radio transmission and then television and finally reached to online advertising which made the consumers lazy, to sit at home and come to know about the products. However, people have to remember that laziness not only brings ease but also the adversities. For instance, online advertising can guide us well as misguides

the customers. Though it helps the customers to know about the things they are interested in but also misleads them by giving false information or leaving out important detail. It misguides the customer by using every platform to get access to the people and also misrepresents and promotes harmful products. Not only this but also uses customer's profile without permission and cause emotional and financial loss to the customers. On the other hand, it helps the customers to keep away themselves from deceptive advertisement. It also helps them to come to know about the product of their interest. People have to research and avoid the false advertising to not to bear the loss.

Though it helps the people to make right use of it but the inaccurate advertising overweigh the accurate ones as the people with lack of knowledge are not able to practice the safety steps. (268)

Companies use advertisement to sell out their products, even if they need to misguide the customers, they do as their end is earning profit. Advertisements are of two kinds: one is accurate and other is inaccurate.

The former is for running the business and guiding customers and the latter is for selling defective products by misguiding the customers. According to Statista figures, 55% of advertising is online in America, out of which 18% stands as false advertising. This percentage of

false advertising causes millions of losses to the consumers. Therefore, companies use advertisements as a tool for financial gain on the expense of consumers losses.

Online advertising misguides the consumers by leaving no platform where people can get rid of it. It uses every possible platform to reach the people, like google, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and many more. Meanwhile, people using these accounts, are compelled to see the advertisements and get attracted to the products even though the products are not the same as advertised. According to Statista figures, Facebook has the largest reach of all social media advertising platforms in the U.S., with 188,050,000 users and over 200 million businesses use Instagram's

advertising platform. Therefore, the misleading advertisements get access to the people through their most used social media accounts. (104)

Not only this, it also misrepresents the facts about the products to misguide customers. To exemplify, the seller makes false and untrue statement about the capabilities or characteristics of the products. Likewise, the seller advertises the products by exaggerating and overstating or by expressing unrealistic attributes of the products. An Olay's advertisement showed the model Twiggy wrinkle-free and the advertisements were retouched. Hyundai and KIA - These companies overstated the horsepower of their vehicles, as much as 9.6 percent. Gibson - It claimed to ward

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10

off germs to prevent the flu and colds, but no studies backed it up. Therefore, customers get misled easily by such kind of unrealistic advertisements. (106)

Besides this, it also promotes harmful products which make the people face serious consequences. For instance, tobacco products, such as cigarettes, cigars, snuff, and chewing tobacco, which are associated with many types of illness, are advertised globally. One of the famous cigarette in Pakistan by the name of Gold Leaf used to be advertised openly but in the 2020, the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination issued new regulations that banned tobacco advertising,

promotion, sponsorship (TAPS), and tobacco products display at all points-of-sale (POS) in Pakistan (Tobacco Control Laws). Despite this, such kind of products are still advertised online and leading the children to view smoking in a favorable light. Therefore, online advertising is a source of promoting disadvantageous products. (118)

Despite other losses, Online advertising has negative effects on customers' privacy by exploiting their profiles without their consent. Like, by using cookies, unique tracking URLs, tracking pixels, and other methods, companies can collect data about how people interact with their advertisement campaigns across the internet. To exemplify, sellers through User Tracking gathers

data that reveals insight into various characteristics of the user, such as the user's demographics interests, brand preferences or purchase intentions. Publishers and advertisers can use such tracking of a user over time to generate a profile for the user to target him or her with unique advertising or content. In brief, it uses customers' information which is a threat to their privacy.

Eventually, it causes financial as well as emotional loss to the customers. As the customers get attracted towards deleterious products without knowing their hidden facts and then order these products. On receiving they come to know about the quality of the products when they find the difference between the products they received and

the ones were shown in the advertisement. Consequently, customers face emotional loss as there is a relation of trust between the customers and seller. Research shows that upto 90% of performance effectiveness is due to emotional savvy rather than technical knowledge or skills and 95% of purchasing decisions are motivated not by logic but by unconscious urges, the biggest of which is emotion.

(Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence)

In short, inaccurate advertisements make the people face emotional loss. (126)

On the other hand by using every platform, online advertising helps the customers to know about the products easily. People sitting anywhere and at any time can be informed about the products without

depending on any specific source. Furthermore, this facility saves their time and money. Going few years back, people had to go shop to shop in search of items they needed which also cost them more time and money but now they do not need to put more efforts, they can get anything at their doorstep. Therefore, by looking about its positive side, it does not irritate the customers but facilitates them. (103)

Without a doubt, online marketing contains misleading advertisements as well as but the customers have to research about the products before making any order. For instance, people have to put a little effort to reaffirm the advertiser's

efficiency by collecting complete data about the products.

Advertisers provide their customers the facility of examining their reliability, like the review option which contains the feedback of the customers, either positive or negative. The new customers can come to know about the accuracy of the products as the previous customers have shared their experiences there. However, any advertisement's platform having no review option, simply creates a sense of mistrust as review is like attracting trust of the customers. So, this simple step makes it easy for the customers to search about the products' quality. (128)

Though some advertisements promote harmful products but

customers can avoid such advertisements. There are many ways to keep away themselves from the effects of harmful advertisements. Likewise, for the safety of children, the parents should keep check and balance on their children to keep them away from such kind of detrimental products. As presently, people are skipping ads which they do not find beneficial. As Inter Public Group figures suggest that 65% of people skip online video ads according to an extensive study with 11000 U.S. and they do so as soon as they get the chance. (NBC, Feb, 2017). Therefore, people have to show rational-behavior by skipping such kind of harmful ads. (121)

Though using customers'

data without their concern might look unethical but it has positive side ~~by~~ as well. Advertisers use customers data for the sake of providing them information about the products of their interest. It helps the customer to get access to the products of their needs as sometimes they think about something and that thing appears in front of them. According to a survey, 57% say they would click on a general ad for a brand they know versus 70% if it's personalized. Most consumers 87% believe personalized advertising means unique content based on their previous purchases or shopping behaviour and delivered at a time when they are looking to buy a product. Therefore, using

customers data is not invasion of privacy but a kind of providing effective services to them. (130)

No doubt that customers face loss due to inaccurate ads but the law has been made against the deceptive ads to stop and penalize the advertisers. This law discourages the deceptive ads and also compensate the customers for their loss. There are the cases where the companies were penalized due to the false claim about their products, one of the example among them is the energy drink Red Bull.

"Red Bull gives you wings" had been the energy drink's slogan for nearly two decades. In 2014, the company agreed to pay out more than \$13 million

after settling a US class action lawsuit that accused Red Bull of making false and misleading advertising claims. (**Drinks Industry Publication BevNet**). In short, customers have the safety shield in the form of the laws made against inaccurate ads. (131)

All the arguments given by the supporters of online advertisements can not overweigh its negative aspects. Like it is said that by approaching several sources, ads create ease for customers to shop but in a real sense it compels them and trap them to buy things which they do not need. Before online ads people used to go market when they needed anything but now even they do not need, again they buy as advised by, the way the products

are represented. To add more, online ads have made the people more materialistic as the aim of various advertisements is to subtly entice society to purchase products, which could be done by making unreal needs for them. Thus, it shows that online ads trap the buyers to shop unnecessarily. (129)

No doubt, humans are rational being and have to show rationality to search about the products before buying, but this solution has less effects on people with lack of knowledge. People who have no experience of online purchasing are unaware of the false claims of the advertisers and get trapped easily. It shows that before becoming expert in online purchasing people have to bear loss through deceptive ads.

21
As according to a recent Consumer Reports study, 67% of consumers have felt deceived by an ads. at least once. Therefore, it shows that people will be experienced in online purchasing by bearing loss once. (103)

Certainly, there are advanced options of avoiding and skipping the false ads but these options can be used by educated people who have grip on technology and are aware of the harmful products. However, the illiterate people who have no knowledge of technology can be misguided easily. Like there are ads which have no option to be skipped and the consumers have to watch the ads completely and get trapped easily. The reason is that they believe in everything as shown in ads about the products. Like

the ads of non verified beauty soaps, weight loss medicines and many more which are mostly advertised by the celebrities make the people believe in their accuracy. Therefore, the advanced options of avoiding ads is not workable on all. (122)

Even though, the use of customers' data without their concern was justified easily by stating that it helps customers to get access to the things they need or are interested in. However, this reason is not enough to give protective shield to the ones who invade the privacy of the customers. To rephrase, perception of privacy risks outweigh the perception of its benefit as this data can be used by third party for various matters and also causes the

sense of mistrust about the sellers. Therefore, the act of using customers' data without their concern can not be justified by any reason. (102)

Although the law is made against the deceptive ads and has been applied in some cases but the misleading ads are not discouraged completely. Likewise, most of the time the customers do not sue against the loss, meanwhile, the cases which are filed, have not been fruitful as the companies have not been convicted or got relieved with a plenty amount of fine and these companies with new names start deceiving people again. Resultantly, people are still becoming the victims of false ads. As the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) reported a substantial increase

in complaints related to deceptive advertising over the past year. Deceptive advertising cases accounted for more than 35% of all consumer complaints received by the FTC. To conclude, the law is insufficient to prevent the deceptive ads. (125)

In a nutshell, online advertising misguides the people more than it guides which has negative effects on customers. Like - misrepresenting the facts about the products and by using - customers data for ~~data~~ targeted ads which ultimately cause the losses to the customers. However, there are positive aspects as well ~~as~~ regarding online ads which save the customers time and money. Moreover, the advanced options for avoiding deceptive ads are also present

and law is made to penalize the seller for the false claims. In spite of having safety precautions, these are not enough to prove that online ads are advantageous as these are not applicable anywhere and on everyone. The solution is, the people should act rationally while purchasing anything online. They should know about each and every features of the company from which they buy something. If they are not sure and have doubt upon the reliability of the sellers then they should avoid to buy from those sellers. In short, if man utilizes his wisdom, no one can deceive him.

**Godly Wisdom is our
weapon against deception".**