STREET ADVERTISING – A PRAGMATIC FORM OF COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: *This paper focuses on street/ outdoor advertising, due to the fact that this is the oldest form of advertising in the world. It follows the history and evolution of such advertising starting with the first civilizations: Egyptian, Greek, Roman, up to the contemporary world. It takes into account the forms of outdoor advertising, image and message. For this purpose, we shall make use of illustrations from everyday life. The analyses in this domain may be performed from different perspectives. We hope to render this article interesting by pointing out the strong impact outdoor advertising has on the individual and as a consequence, it is a really pragmatic form of communication.*

Key words: *communication, street advertising, message.*

Advertising is a concept which has been promoted for hundreds, even thousands of years, being defined as "the fact of informing the public about a certain thing; dissemination of information in public; the nature of what is public" (DEX, 1996:868). The first form of advertising was commonly a sign, drawn or engraved on a wall. Babylon, Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome and Pompeii were human settlements where the signs on the representative constructions or those in the forum carried a certain symbolism. Later on, around the mid-1st millennium B.C., the signs were replaced by messages whose role was to inform the citizens. The best illustration for the Roman society is the famous *Lex duodecim tabularum (The Law of the Twelve Tables)* – the first attested Roman law, adopted in 449 B.C. Its publicity was ensured by its presentation in the Roman forum, so in the public market. Its text, engraved on twelve bronze tables, which gave its name, comprised provisions of public and private law, being a genuine juridical code overall. The public presentation ensured the observance of the principle of the publicity of the law, a fundamental principle even nowadays. Thus, the Roman citizens had direct access to the provisions of the law and were able to totally follow the juridical principle *nemo censetur ignorare legem,* which remains equally important today, although the publicity of the law is not accomplished in the outdoor form any more, but by means of a specialized publication, in our case, by *Monitorul Oficial* (*the Official Journal of Romania*).

Along the same line, one has to mention that after the stage of the engraved or written/ painted signs and messages, in the Middle Ages advertising was carried out by the so called "street callers" or "town criers". They were citizens hired by tradesmen, who used to praise the qualities of the products. However simple these forms of advertising may seem, they are not obsolete in a certain way. Once the printing press was invented in 1453, advertising forms increased in number. The messages were printed on small pieces of paper called "flyers" and handed out to the passers-by or posted on walls. The first advertisement is considered to have appeared in 1472, in English, and was a small piece of paper, passed from hand to hand, which announced the sale of a prayer book. Two hundred years later, the first advertisement was published in an American newspaper. As a matter of fact, street advertising was first promoted by the American society, an important role being played by Benjamin Franklin. In the mid-19th century, in the USA, more precisely in Philadelphia, Volney B. Palmer opened the first shop of advertising, a shop considered the forefather of

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advertising agencies (POPA, 2005:10). In Romania, David Adania founded the first advertising agency in 1880. This domain has evolved along with the discovery of the radio in the 20's and of the television in the 40's. The last quarter of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century were characterized by an explosion of advertising, favoured by modern technologies (for instance, digital technology). Between 1990 and 2002, 198 specialized publications came out in Romania, of which 63 with national impact and distribution. In 1999, advertising was on the third position, with a share of 9% of the total time of radio broadcasting at national level and the same position with a share of 11.1% of the total time of TV broadcasting. World Wide Web (www) was invented by Tim Berners-Lee in 1990. On-line advertising became significant starting with 1995, so that at present the internet is the main means of communication at distance.

Specialized research has identified different types of advertising:

1. According to the object of the campaign:
   a) Product/service advertising;
   b) Brand advertising;
   c) Advertising for organization.
2. According to the customer:
   a) Institutional advertising;
   b) Corporation advertising;
   c) Product/service advertising.
3. According to the geographical criterion:
   a) Local advertising;
   b) Regional advertising;
   c) National advertising;
   d) International advertising.
4. According to the nature of the market:
   a) Advertising aimed at the final consumer;
   b) Advertising aimed at the intermediate consumer (networks, retailers);
   c) Advertising aimed at the institutional consumer (companies).
5. According to the type of message:
   a) Rational, factual advertising;
   b) Emotional advertising.
6. According to the intended effect:
   a) Advertising with direct effect;
   b) Advertising with late effect.
7. According to the channel:
   a) Advertising of the ATL type (Above The Line) designating the advertising services using the five conventional media channels: printed media, TV, radio, cinema and outdoor posting. It is also called media advertising. The ATL advertising uses typical formats for all the above mentioned media:
      - The advertising spot - for TV, cinema, radio;
      - The press layout – for printed media;
      - The advertising poster – for outdoor advertising.
   b) Advertising of the BTL type (Below The Line) is that form of advertising which uses supports other than the conventional ones or uses them in an atypical way. The BTL advertising has two main ways of action:

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- By means of events;
- By means of supports/ objects.

8. According to the tone of the communication:
   a) Aggressive advertising;
   b) Non-aggressive advertising.
9. According to the content:
   a) Connotative advertising;
   b) Denotative advertising.
10. Other forms of advertising:
   a) Sales promotion;
   b) Public relations;
   c) advertising by using the internet;
   d) advertising by direct mail (NICOLA, PETRE, 2001: 36-43).

To sum up, advertising can be carried out by different means, our paper attempting to discuss street/ outdoor advertising.

There are several types of recognized advertising:

a) information advertising is especially used when a new category of products or services is launched on the market. The target is to trigger primary demand;
b) persuasion advertising occurs in the competition environment, the aim being to create selective demand. Persuasion has partially transformed into comparative advertising, by which a firm compares, either directly or indirectly, its product or service with one or more products or services of other firms. (Examples: car industry, electronic and electric household industry, cosmetics industry, bank services and insurance industry, etc);
c) reminding advertising is important for the products and services which reached maturity, since it maintains the consumers' interest with regard to that product or service.

Street advertising is the easiest form of advertising in general, because people, irrespective of education and culture, have rapid access to it. If radio, TV or the internet imply a certain effort, in the street the individual comes across advertising everywhere: from the simplest form of advertising performed by sellers and petty traders, to the printed advertisements handed out to the passers-by or the sophisticated billboards.

We consider that street/ outdoor advertising is of two types:

1. hearing advertising – the announcement in a loud voice of a message, event, etc. either directly or by means of some technical elements: speaking trumpet, microphone, etc. Examples: the announcement of the programme occasioned by the Days of Craiova, the Concert of orchestra X or musical group Y, the performance of Circus Z.
2. visual advertising – is accomplished by means of "fliers", leaflets, banners, posters, billboards, firms etc. and from the inside of the private buildings or public institutions, means of transportation, stations, waiting rooms, shop windows etc.

Posting represents any form of communication by means of posters. Posting in the street (outdoor posting) can take the form of advertising billboards made by direct printing, computer assisted; simple or double lighted billboards of large dimension; big signs (roof-top and independent letters or large, illuminated billboards) (ASG, 2005:30-32).

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"Advertising is the result of experience and imagination. An advertisement consists of a series of elements: title, main text block, slogan, name of company, image. Their arrangement leads to the creation of a layout" (NICOLA, PETRE, 2001:117-119).

Example:

Title: *Profită că eşti tânăr (Enjoy yourself when you are young)/ Comunică dincolo de cuvinte (Communicate beyond words)/ Exprimă-te aşa cum simţi (Express yourself as you feel)/ Bobocool (Cool freshman)* .

Main text block: *200 minutes in the network for a credit of 4 Euros a month/ We bring you the most innovative means by which you can express what you feel. Wherever you are./ You speak extra with everybody./ The freshmen's ball is much cooler this year. Vodafone brings you live concerts and cool prizes. Visit us on www.Vodafone.ro/bobocool and find out how you can have fun with the cool type.*

Slogan: *Live every moment.*

Name of company: *Vodafone.*

Image: simple, red background.

Every element of the layout is important in the economy of a poster in general, and outdoor poster in particular. The title changes with the change of the main text block. The title aims at the emotional side, since it is meant to draw attention, to stir interest in a certain product or service, whereas the main text block aims at the rational side, including concrete information with respect to that product or service. The dynamics of the title and of the main text block marks the dynamics of the product, service, firm as a matter of fact. The constant elements of the layout are the slogan and the name of the company, which constitute the identification features of the product or service or firm on the market. The image is either preserved or modified, especially when it concerns billboards which are supposed to constantly keep alive the novelty character. Of all the components of the layout the title and especially the slogan must create a strong impact on the possible customer.

Examples:

- Millenium Bank – *Viaţa ne inspiră (Life is inspiring);* Raiffeissen Bank – *Reuşim împreună* (*We manage together);* BRD – *Oricine ai fi vei găsi sprijin pentru proiectele tale (Whoever you are, you will find support for your projects)* etc.
- Vodafone – *Trăieşte fiecare clipă (Live every moment);* Cosmote – *Alături de tine (Close to you);* Zapp – *Navighează liber (Free navigation)* etc.
- Audi – *Progres prin tehnologie (Progress by technology)*; Opel – *Discover Opel*; Chevrolet – *Un mare plus (A big plus)* etc.
- Doncafe – *Cafea cu suflet (Coffee with a soul)*; Jacobs – *Puterea Alintaromei (The power of caressing flavour)* etc.
- Avon – *Viitorul îţi surâde (The future smiles at you)*; L'Oreal – *Pentru că meritaţi (Because you're Worth it)*; Vichy – *Sănătatea e vitală. Începeţi cu pielea dumneavoastră (Health is vital. Start with your skin)* etc.
- Algocalmin – *Combate istoric durerea. Încă din 1968 (It historically heals pain. Since 1968)*; Modafen – *Învinge răceala şi gripa (It defeats cold and flu)* etc.

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- Pateu Ardealul – *Bine făcut (Well done)*; Hochland – *Bucuria gustului (The joy of taste)*; Danone Nutriday – *Nutriţie pentru un corp sănătos (Nutrition for a healthy body)*; Campofrio – *Alimente pentru o viaţă sănătoasă (Food for a healthy life)*; Matache Măcelaru – *Mezeluri meşteşugite (Artfully prepared salmi and sausages)*; Cris-Tim – *Îţi place să mănânci sănătos (You enjoy healthy food)*; Knorr – *Un strop de magie la tine în bucătărie (A drop of magic in your kitchen)*; Maggi – *Găteşti din toată inima (You cook with all your heart);* Milka – *Cea mai fină plăcere din lume (The finest pleasure in the world)*; Silvana – *Miez de bucurie (Joy filling)*; Kinder delice – *Echilibrul perfect între gustos şi hrănitor (The perfect balance between tasty and healthy)* ; Kinder bueno – *Savurează gustul bueno (Enjoy the bueno taste)*; Pepito – *Super gust de ciocolată! (Chocolate super taste)* etc.
- Coca-cola zero – *Acelaşi gust. Zero zahăr (Same taste with zero sugar)*; Giusto – *Pentru armonie în familie (For harmony in family)*; Frutti Fresh – *Mai tânăr. Mai efervescent (Younger. More effervescent)*; Borsec – *Izvor de energie (Energy source)*; Bergenbier – *Prietenii ştiu de ce (Friends know why)* etc.

As one can notice, the slogan is concise and conveys by its message the essential quality of the product or service. The nouns, adjectives and verbs are those parts of speech that are most frequently used in the construction of the outdoor poster. Accordingly, communication is easily performed, using terms that are sparse in number in order to express a comprehensive and inciting message, since in most situations the finality is an economic one. As a matter of fact, all is reduced to the capacity to persuade the potential customers as fast and effectively as possible.

The message must be projected, fanciful, catchy, and must offer motivation and satisfaction to the potential consumer. The message represents the idea that lies at the basis of communication. The companies can adopt for the advertising of a product or service one of the following creative strategies:

a) The message focuses on the placement of the brand;
b) The message draws attention to one or the other of the consumption motivations (a functional advantage, self-identity, an image, pleasure, admiration, loyalty etc.);
c) The message communicates the differences between the promoted product or service and the offer of the competition.

Whatever the adopted strategy, as mentioned before, the message mainly aims at the increase of sales and maximization of profit.

The advertising message must concurrently meet three requirements:

a) To have a meaning, emphasizing the advantages which render the product or service more interesting and attractive for consumers;
b) To be different, communicating to the consumer by what the product or service distinguishes itself before the competition;
c) To be credible, inspiring confidence in the qualities of the product or service.

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The impact of the message depends on both its content (what it tells) and its form (how it tells). Actually, the great challenge for the advertising message, including outdoor posting, is to capture the attention and stir the interest of the potential consumer. Verbal communication (words, sentences, intonation, voice, sound track etc) and non-verbal communication (eyes, mimics, gestures, chromatics, light, "scenography") are equally important.

The layout of the poster may also contain an image which transmits certain information. In this case eyes and attitude are important. Thus, when someone looks right in the eyes of the receiver of the advertisement, he/she conveys a feeling of security, challenge, curiosity; when the one in the advertisement looks directly at the object of the advertisement, the message is the attention paid to that object; when he/she looks stealthily, this may suggest sensuality; when looking up, he/she seems to be a person with high aspirations; when looking down – not so often in advertising – this might signify dominance, pride, arrogance, scorn (CHELCEA, 2004:158-164). The eyes, just like the other parts of the face, transmit a certain mood, in accordance with the slogan of the advertisement. All must be detailed and prepared, and this is why a whole industry of advertising has been developed. One image should concentrate everything: attention, interest, wish, action. The personal presence, clothes, hair style, objects, background, chromatics, light, letter characters and writing, puns etc must match and integrate into a concept, idea, message.

In the matter of street/ outdoor advertising, the ethics should take into account:

a) The protection of children against the harmful effects of advertising. Arguments: the advertisements undermine parents' authority, encouraging young people to dangerous or harmful actions (drinking, smoking, eating fast-food, sex in early age etc);
b) The protection of society against the effects of advertising upon the quality of life; pollution of the public space with street/ outdoor advertisements (certain restrictions are necessary so as to avoid aesthetic chaos); abusive access to the mental space of the individual; the manipulation of the public etc.

Advertising in general, and more precisely street/ outdoor advertising, has a strong psychological, economic and social impact on the individual, and therefore it is a really pragmatic form of communication.

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