The Role of Manipulative Technologies in Commercial Advertising

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The aim of the article is to study the role of manipulative technologies of commercial advertising in motivating the individual to mass consumption, simplifying the perception of social reality and the formation of sustainable uncritical consumer behavior. This problem is becoming increasingly important due to the uncontrolled spread of methods of manipulative influences in modern society, which according to the author is due to intensive digitization and acts as a destructive factor that disrupts key socialization processes. The author analyzed the key scientific paradigms for the development and implementation of manipulative technologies in commercial advertising, as well as the role of mass media, social and Internet networks. The types and channels of distribution of commercial advertising are covered separately, the scheme of imposing the opinion on the consumer on making a final decision to make a purchase is described. Particular attention is paid to the study of key principles of manipulative technologies, in particular, possible strategies and tactics of advertising influences, and the role of virtual interaction in the recruitment process.

Advertising market research today is unsystematic, fragmentary and comparative, and therefore, monitoring the situation does not give scientists a complete picture of the level of implementation of manipulative technologies in the digital society, which makes it impossible to predict possible prospects for social transformations in consumer behavior and, consequently, future social practices may develop with abnormalities. The development of information technology and the change in the basic principles of social communication, associated with the transfer of large amounts of information to global virtual networks, requires sociologists to conduct thorough research into consumer behavior technologies that differ from previously used.

Key words: advertising, consumer behavior, manipulative technologies, mass consumption.

Петерсонс Андріс. Роль маніпулятивних технологій у комерційній рекламі. Мета статті – вивчення ролі маніпулятивних технологій комерційної реклами в спонуканні особистості до масового споживання, спрощенні сприйняття соціальної реальності та формуванні сталої некритичної споживацької поведінки. Зазначена проблема набуває все більшої актуальності через неконтрольоване поширення методів маніпулятивних впливів у сучасному суспільстві, що, на нашу думку, відбувається завдяки інтенсивній цифровізації й виступає в ролі деструктивного чинника, який порушує ключові процеси соціалізації. Оскільки ця проблема недостатньо досліджена, ми зробили спробу аналізу ключових наукових парадигм щодо розробки та впровадження маніпулятивних технологій у комерційній рекламі, а також ролі в цьому ЗМІ, соціальних та інтернет-мереж. Окремо висвітлено види й канали розповсюдження комерційної реклами, описано схему нав'язування споживачу думки щодо прийняття остаточного рішення про здійснення покупки.

Особливу увагу приділено вивченню ключових засад маніпулятивних технологій, зокрема можливі стратегії та тактики рекламних впливів.

Ключові слова: реклама, споживча поведінка, маніпулятивні технології, масове споживання.

INTRODUCTION

The active development of advertising technologies marked the beginning of the 21st century. Currently, 45 % of the advertising market belongs to the USA, about 25 % – to Western Europe, and 20 % –

to Asian countries, which contributes to the increase in influence on the audience on the part of producers of goods and services and is also a prerequisite for the creation of new methods of manipulation, marketing technologies and psychological effects (Theobald, 2020).

Advertising in the information society acquired more aggressive forms since its task began to include the provision of a practical and efficient influence on the formation of mass unconscious consumer practices. It not only encourages the purchase of new unknown goods but also influences the consumer behavior of specific population groups, as it plays a primary role in forming the buyer's attitude to the act of consumption. In modern conditions of digitalization, advertising expands its impact on the life of society and goes beyond the everyday formation of consumer behavior. It began to penetrate the sphere of social protection, appealing to current social problems, which provoked the emergence of a specific direction – "social advertising" (environmental protection, popularization of a healthy lifestyle).

Modern advertising technologies can have a destructive effect on the consumer, disrupting the critical processes of socialization by distorting consumer practices and cultivating a culture of mindless mass consumption. Thus, in the conditions of active digitization of all spheres of life in modern society, the issue of the negative influence of advertising on personality has become even more relevant. Its problematic field has been concentrated in the sphere of the global spread of manipulation methods, the influence of which, for the most part, is uncontrollable. Today, research in manipulating social action, carried out with the help of specially developed methods, is of particular interest.

1. ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN RESEARCH ISSUES

Analyzing the development and formation of commercial advertising activities, we can conditionally distinguish two methodological traditions in the sociology of advertising – *German* and *American*. The *German* scientific school of the sociology of advertising arose in the beginning of the 20th century; the ideas of the physiologist and psychologist Wilhelm Wundt became the basis for its development. Adherents of this research tradition studied the phenomenon of advertising as a way of psychological influence on buyers, which allows them to control their desires and will to inspire specific desires regarding the purchase of an advertising service or product. The primary research method of this school is an experiment, with the help of which scientists get the opportunity to study the mental characteristics of a potential consumer in practice. According to G. Munsterberg, the most effective methods of collecting information about the mechanisms of influence on the consumer are emotional impact, when someone manipulates a person's feelings or mood, as well as provoking the spontaneous appearance of certain feelings (fear, love, vanity), which together makes it easy to control a person when the help of techniques of suggestion or imitation (Münsterberg, 1922).

The *American* school of advertising sociology dates back to the late 1950s. Moreover, it is a scientific direction that comprehensively studies the influence of marketing technologies on the formation of consumer behavior. The methodology of this tradition is based on mass surveys, focus groups, and in-depth interviews, which allow scientists to diagnose consumers' real needs and tastes.

Scientific experience in advertising analysis stimulated the generalization of information and the classification of advertising studies according to the principle of choosing methods for studying its impact on society and its individuals. Thus, sociological, psychological, economic, and interdisciplinary approaches were identified (Nielsen, 2015).

Within the framework of the psychological approach, such scientists as C. Sandage, W. Freiburger, A. Maslow, and D. Schwartz studied advertising by conducting experimental studies of the characteristics of people's perception of specific information as a reaction to manipulation and influence on the psyche Battery Technology Human (Theobald, 2020).

So, Erich Fromm, in his work «The Fear of Freedom», wrote: «Advertising appeals not to reason, but to feel; like any hypnotic suggestion, it does not attempt to influence its subjects intellectually. Advertising has an element of a dream or a castle in the air, and thus, it gives a certain pleasure to a person – just like a movie – but at the same time reinforces the feeling of being insignificant and powerless. Nevertheless, this is only a way to lull the individual's suspicions and help him deceive himself about his "independence" of decision-making» (Fromm, 1941).

Social interaction can occur not only under the psychological influence but also under economic, political, cultural, or religious influence. Analyzing advertising as a mechanism for influencing the subconscious,

E. Fromm considers it exclusively as a psychological technology, depriving sociality and removing the role of social interaction. Also, in his research, the processes of socialization and adaptation of a person in specific living conditions, which cannot be ignored when creating manipulative technologies, were ignored.

In this regard, special attention should be paid to the works of Roland Barthes, in particular «Myth Today», in which he put forward several assumptions about myth as a component of social life (Barthes, 2020). In his works, R. Barth considers sign systems (cultural codes) that carry advertising messages through myth-making. Revealing specific mechanisms for creating myths, the German researcher notes that they can perform various functions: to notify, inspire, induce, and influence a person. According to the scientist, the myth imposes its plan on a person, directing the mental activity of the recipient to a specific object. An advertising message, according to the theory of R. Barth, should be based on a complex of already existing cultural codes, which, as a result of certain distortions, can affect the buyer's behavior by reproducing the stereotypes existing in society. According to the scientist, the ideal is advertising that forms a stereotype. Since advertising communication does not arise from random judgments, then, therefore, it is created from enduring legends. R. Barthes points out that "any objects can become messages if they mean something" (Barthes, 2020). Advertising as a social phenomenon can exert a mythological pressure emphasizing the original origins. Any advertising product includes a cultural code that has a peculiar effect on society since it reproduces traditional forms of social interaction.

Sociologists J. Rossiter and L. Percy, in their book «Advertising and Promotion of Goods», consider advertising as a form of marketing communication, and by this, they define advertising communications as a kind of "form of persuasion, which is based on an informational or emotional description of the benefits of a product" (Rossiter, & Percy, 1997).

Thus, the critical task of advertising is to create a positive attitude towards the product, product, and service among consumers to attract as many loyal customers as possible who agree to consume the presented product. That is why most marketers rely on persuasion technology when creating advertising, which helps to stimulate consumption and forms a false idea of the need to purchase a particular product or service.

Separately, analyzing the scientific schools involved in studying consumer behavior is necessary. In this context, the most interesting for us are the works of P. Bourdieu and J. Baudrillard, who, relying on the concept of symbolic interactionism, describe the advertising act as a cultural identification. It was thanks to the theory of P. Bourdieu that a methodological basis appeared for interpreting advertising as a social technology that can be manipulative in nature (Bourdieu, 2014). The scientist considered advertising through the prism of a symbolic field, the existence which does not depend on the individual consciousness and will of a person but is formed under the influence of stereotypes existing in society. Resources in this field can change the perception and attitude of the social world. Therefore, they can influence the organization of the latter and the choice of the type of social action by an individual.

Thus, sociological approaches that study advertising are based on studies of the buyer's behavior due to the influence of external and internal life factors in society.

2. EMPIRICAL DATA

The empirical base of the article includes quantitative and qualitative systematization of data and secondary analysis of sociological studies conducted in the EU countries by other researchers who are freely available on the Internet. In particular, the results of sociological research are used:

1. Monitoring analysis of the data «Social media – statistics on the use by enterprises» – statistical studies of the advertising and communication market of the EU countries for the period 2017–2021 in order to study social networks as part of digital technologies that businesses use to expand their presence on the Internet and improve marketing opportunities (Social media…, 2021).

2. The author's sociological study was conducted by the Faculty of Communications of Turiba University in the Baltic States for the period from April to May 2021 on the Internet, using the online interview method by randomly filling out a Google form by respondents and was like the probability of deciding to answer questions, the survey covered 1128 people aged 16–59 years old, of which 52 % were women, and 48 % were men.

That is why our article **aim** to study the role of manipulative technologies of commercial advertising in inducing a person to mass consumption by using specific methods of influencing a person to simplify the perception of social reality and the formation of sustainable non-critical consumer behavior.

3. RESULTS OF THIS DISCUSSION

3.1. Strategies and Tactics of Advertising Influences

Since the primary goal of advertising is to push a person to purchase an advertising offer by shaping his consumer behavior, in order to achieve their goals, marketers are forced to resort to manipulative technologies, thanks to which they can predict the level of traditional behavior and make advertising effective for both men and women, except specific gender products.

The first step in forming a manipulative technology is obtaining information about a potential consumer. This knowledge will allow in the future to form the type of social action necessary for consumption. The next integral part of management is the choice of points of influence, which are based on previously obtained information about a person as a social unit. The targets of manipulative influence, as a rule, are universal stimuli, the desire for success, and the desire for satisfaction or material gain, as well as human instincts (self-preservation, nutrition, and reproduction) (Petersons, & Matkeviciene, 2017).

Such features characterize manipulation as closeness and illusions, which, in turn, shape a person's tastes, attitudes, and preferences when choosing a consumer product (goods, services). Manipulative techniques are a social action consisting of two stages – primary and secondary manipulation. In direct manipulation, there is always a customer who knows the goal and a performer who uses manipulative techniques and technologies (Nowacki, 2006). The victims of such manipulation are a crucial link in the consumption of goods, products, and services because, under the influence of social technology, they launch the second stage – secondary manipulation, which is formed as a result of the indirect transfer of imposed consumer behavior already developed in society by individuals who fell under the first manipulative influence.

The effectiveness of the influence of advertising information arises at the stage of creating an advertising message and depends on some factors: the social group with which communication takes place and the social conditions in which this group is located; trust of the consumer as a person and society to the source of advertising; cultural level and range of interests of the consumer; the needs of the addresser, his age, the social and financial situation.

A prerequisite for advertising communication, including advertising manipulation, is the mass character, which implies that an advertising message is not created for one person, but must act at least on a group of people and, therefore, is designed for a specific "target audience" of the product.

Although it is impossible to calculate the effectiveness of advertising accurately, it is thanks to the assessment of the level of effectiveness of advertising and manipulative means in it that the advertiser can obtain information about the appropriateness of an advertising campaign or a specific message, understand the effectiveness of individual means of distribution, analyze and determine the conditions for the most effective impact on advertising. Particular attention deserves the identification of cultural codes and the establishment of social stereotypes that underlie the mechanism of manipulating social behavior by strengthening the "traditional" action.

It is worth noting that any manipulative technology is unconditionally a social interaction, which is based on the economic benefit that the manufacturer of the goods expects to receive by influencing the cultural codes of consumers and the formation of irrational behavior. An individual becomes a victim of manipulative influence only if the cultural codes used in advertising coincide with the stereotypes developed during socialization. In other words, manipulative technology can be successful if the addressee, under pressure from the signals sent to him, changes his consumer behavior in favor of the addresser.

Advertising messages directly or indirectly affect the consumer through various manipulative influences. If we consider the mechanisms of manipulative influence themselves, then it is necessary to take into account in which socio-cultural space the advertising producer will broadcast it. Since the choice of manipulative technologies directly depends on the social standards of society and its perception of different levels of social interaction. The very fact of manipulation arises at the moment when a person sees a familiar situation or a particular fact of social life, about the experience of which he has a specific experience at different stages of socialization.

Thus, when creating advertising, the manufacturer must reproduce the social practices of the average consumer of his product. The key mechanism for inducing consumption is the reproduction of samples of cultural codes that are traditional for a particular socio-cultural space.

3.2. Manipulative Technologies Most Commonly Used in Advertising

Commercial advertising today has become a technology for manipulating the motivations and needs of potential buyers, which influences the formation of consumer behavior and consumer practices. The technologies of modern advertising can form and change opinions exceptionally quickly. A negative consequence of this kind of influence is the stereotyping of thinking, which includes specific behavior patterns and standards of life, namely following fashion trends. In our opinion, it would be appropriate to single out and describe the most common methods of manipulation used in advertising.

1. Persuasion – a method of influence based on logical methods and reasonably changing the judgment, attitude, perception, or decision of the recipient of information. This method works better in persuading a group than an individual. Because it affects the level of the herd instinct – no one wants to be different from his environment.

Persuasion is a reasoned influence, aimed primarily at the logical component of human thinking, aimed at achieving the integrity of views. Feelings and emotions for this method are of secondary importance. Accordingly, the persuasion process constitutes a direct or hidden discussion, during which socio-psychological pressure of different levels is carried out. Such pressure can be authoritative sources, group persuasion, or appeal to traditional values.

In our opinion, conviction underlies the rational type of social action. We depicted either a familiar problem, proposed its solution, or demonstrated that the product or service is in demand by the majority, so it is urgently necessary to purchase it to not differ from the average member of society. The critical component of this manipulation is the lack of influence on the emotional sphere.

2. One of the effective methods of manipulation, directly related to persuasion, is the so-called "Van with an orchestra". It is a kind of factory for the formation of public opinion. These "vans" that candidates often use during election campaigns as a form of political struggle. However, it should be noted that this manipulation method obtains public support during elections and social cataclysms and influences society daily. When using this technique, the selection of judgments, statements, and phrases that require uniformity in behavior is carried out. The message, for example, may begin with the words: "All normal people understand that…" or "no sane person would deny that…" (Sorokina, 2014).

Advertising developed based on the Band Van technology is most often used to enhance the effect of manipulative pressure when the consumer is faced with a choice – to buy or not to buy a product, product, or service, and before choosing – to act adequately or inadequately within the framework of rules and norms, existing in a particular society.

3. Suggestion – a method of influencing the consumer, thanks to which the seller tries to persuade the individual to irrational behavior, forming it as a result of a specific positive emotion. At the heart of these influences lies the artificial creation of a particular idea of the immediate need for social interaction of the level necessary for the seller (often cultural). When suggesting, the main component of social manipulation is a message to supposedly historically established patterns of traditional behavior. In fact, what is happening is the stereotyping of the component of social life necessary for the advertiser (excessive food, excessive fun, excessive alcohol consumption).

During the "suggestion", they actively use the demonstration of a ready-made model of social behavior by which the consumer should behave. The effectiveness of manipulative suggestion technology depends on the person's state when receiving advertising information. Therefore, if a person feels insecure, has low self-esteem or a weak ability for logical analysis, is characterized by a low level of awareness and competence, or social uncertainty, then emotional suggestion will be much more effective.

According to the scientific theory of the American scientist George Mead, the social attitudes of an individual are formed by accepting other people's attitudes. That is if the source of communication causes sympathy and trust, the person accepts and relies on the information presented; if the agent of communication causes antipathy, the content of his message will be regarded negatively or neutrally (Mead, 2017).

Therefore, imitation is possible under the following conditions:

– a feeling of admiration or a sense of respect for a person who is an object of imitation, because of which there is an identification and orientation of desires to resemble this object;

– insufficient amount of knowledge, ignorance, and inexperience of the individual make them turn to a person for whom these qualities are characteristic and take him as a model of behavior;

– the exemplary example should be clear, attractive, and accessible.

4. Imitation is a method of manipulation that forces the buyer to consciously or unconsciously repeat another subject's social behavior patterns, a model shown in advertising. Imitation is a mechanism for the assimilation of traditional forms of social action. Therefore, its impact is directly related to the agents of socialization, and therefore, the most vulnerable categories that fall under its influence are children and adolescents since they are only at the beginning of their socialization. Adult people have experience in all forms of social interaction. Therefore, they can set criteria for the correctness or incorrectness of social action and the rationality or irrationality of its manifestations since critical thinking allows you to choose the necessary social action at a particular moment.

In the modern information society, the manipulative technologies of commercial advertising have become more diverse, high-quality, and influential, which leaves almost no chance for buyers to avoid spontaneous mass consumption, and an independent purchase choice is becoming a rarity.

3.3. Commercial Advertising in the Context of Digitalization

Analyzing the data of statistical studies of the EU advertising and communication market during 2017–2021, we can conclude that commercial advertising has begun to develop more dynamically over the past five years since the demand for it has increased significantly, both from the manufacturer of the product and from the consumer side. The circumstances provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic probably became a prerequisite for forming such a trend – restrictions on free movement, a ban on visiting shopping centers and crowded places, and strict conditions for obtaining the right to visit public places.

It creates a precedent for social interaction within the processes of mass consumption, prompting advertisers to explore the attitude and trust of different groups of the population in advertising campaigns, as well as adapt technologies and methods of influencing consumer behavior to the realities of life in conditions of restrictions using the capabilities of the digital society.

Let us consider some data from a study conducted by the Faculty of Communications in the Baltic States in April–May 2021 using the method of an online interview, which covered 1128 people aged 16–59 years.

Analysis of answers to the question «In which social networks do you prefer to make purchases?» (Fig. 1) showed that social networks have turned from a communication channel into a sales platform. These processes provoked the loss of several functions and, consequently, the outflow of a specific segment of consumers who do not accept advertising content on such platforms, creating additional risks for profit.
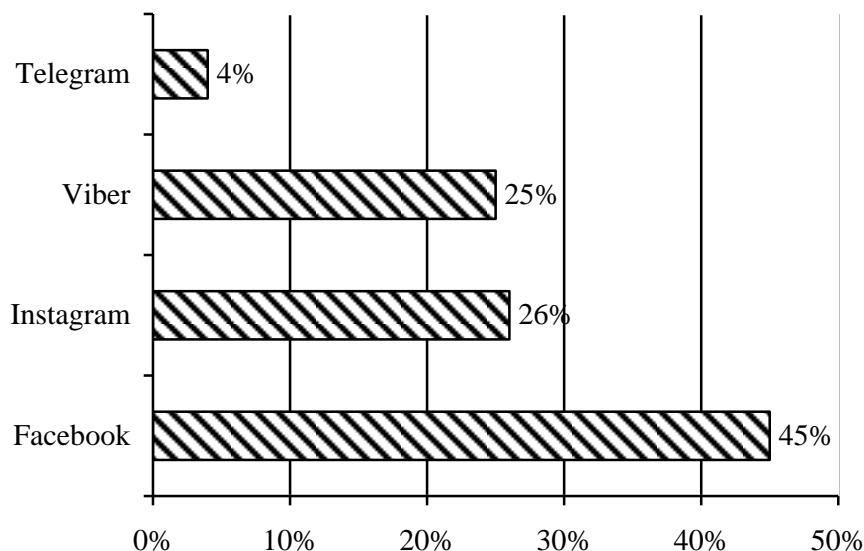

Fig. 1. *The popularity of viewing advertising content on social networks*
Source: Author's study.

According to the survey, 65 % of respondents make purchases through social networks, the most successful of which is Facebook (45 %), the second place is occupied by Instagram – 26 %, the third is the messenger Viber, which is chosen by 25 %, while Telegram is prevalent only among 4 % of respondents. Thus, the most favorable platform for advertisers is Facebook, which covers a significant number of audiences.

It indicates that social networks, particularly Facebook, are influential agents in shaping consumer practices, and advertising campaigns in instant messengers can be effective.

According to the survey analysis, 73 % of respondents recognized that advertising is "the best way to learn about a product". At the same time, the group of people who, under the influence of advertising, paid attention to the appearance of specific changes in their behavior is quite large. About 40 % of respondents admitted that thanks to advertising, they stumbled upon a brand that they began to buy regularly, which has been happening to them for a long time. In addition, 61 % of respondents believe that advertising increases competition, lowers product prices and forces manufacturers to improve the quality of goods and services. In general, it should be noted that the influence of advertising is perceived positively by European society. However, less than one-third were recorded as real fans of advertising products. The percentage of negative attitudes towards manipulative technologies used in advertising is significant. For example, 63 % of respondents' veracity of the information received remains in question, and 60 % do not believe they will be able to choose the brand they need without marketing notices.

The overall level of trust in advertising on the Internet is not high and amounts to 3 %. 10 % of respondents pay attention to advertisements in Internet search engines, 8 % when watching videos in the virtual space, and only 4 % of users notice advertising on websites. If we analyze mailing lists by e-mail, then according to the study results, the indicators look like this: 25 % pay attention to advertising content, but only 2 % trust it.

At the same time, as a result of the study, it was found that 32,5 % of respondents found that the presence of a considerable number of advertising messages on the Internet and social networks and mana-gers poses severe risks to the security of information networks. Among the reasons given by respondents who use ad-blocking programs, the main ones are the need for safe use and the avoidance of annoying and distracting advertising messages 73 %. In addition, 30 % of users believe that advertising messages affect their safety on the network, 29 % – advertising interrupts page browsing, and another 16 % believe that banner ads slow down page loading.

Consequently, commercial advertising is an integral part of the life of modern society, so only deep knowledge of technologies related to manipulative influence can prevent spontaneous consumer practices. However, it is not only about raising awareness of the dangers of advertising. In this regard, society needs to develop a critical attitude of consumers towards advertising content.

CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

Commercial advertising is a peculiar, specific means of influencing the consumer's choice and decision to purchase the proposed service, product, or product. In the modern world, in the conditions of active digitalization, which has deeply penetrated all social processes, advertising messages, for the most part, use manipulative technologies to accelerate and strengthen the impact on the consumer, covering the verbal and non-verbal components of human perception, and ultimately force them to perform an irrational action – spontaneous, unmotivated purchase.

Thus, consumers are forced to face an innumerable number of advertising messages daily, and therefore, they constantly feel the results of high-quality or low-quality advertising, sometimes massively consuming unnecessary goods. Even a random perception of advertising information affects a person and can subsequently lead to a decision to purchase the corresponding product, product, or service.

In the past two years, the advertising market has undergone radical changes associated with active digitalization that affected all areas of society during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, printed matter lost its advertising pressure – magazines and newspapers were replaced by the Internet and social networks. However, the active distribution of advertising in social networks and instant messengers, observed recently, has provoked the emergence of new manipulation methods more actively and aggressively. In this article, we analyzed only some of the manipulative technologies most commonly used

by marketers – persuasion, imitation, suggestion, and stereotyping. Affecting the consumer will need to be studied in detail by sociologists soon.

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