

# An Overview of International Advertising: A Review Article on Current Global Advertising

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**Abstract-** International advertising involves the distribution of a commercial message to target audiences in more than one country. It is the communication process that takes place in different cultures that differ in terms of values, rituals, consumption patterns and communication styles. Creation of commercial advertisements and buying media are the business activities involving in international advertising. Advertisers and the advertising agencies play a major role in advertising takes place in other countries. The target audiences in other countries or different geographical areas can be vary in terms of religion, language, how they perceive or interpret stimuli or symbols, most importantly culture the level of literacy as well as the way they respond to commercial appeals. Because of these differences in target audiences advertisers need to consider different degrees of two types of advertising strategies, standardization and adaptation. Even though the research in the field of international advertising produced numerous literatures, there is less attempts to assess the challenges in international advertising. This essay entails the difficulties the advertisers and the advertising agencies face in the international market.

**Index Terms-** Adaptation, International Advertising, Standardization, Target Audience

## I. INTRODUCTION

Due to the differences in target audiences such as consumer needs, culture, economic systems, government rules and regulations, it needs adopt different strategies in international advertising than domestic advertising. However after 1980's, many products started to be advertised in the same manner in every country despite of the differences in target audiences because of the influences of globalization. Since so many countries has begun to marketed in many countries the term international market has begun to associated with international advertising. The purpose of this study is to examine the factors which create challenges to advertisers. When it comes to international advertising or advertising conducted more than one country, the advertisers need to consider about different degrees of two types of advertising strategies, standardization and adaptation. This topic has produced a large volume of literature during the last several decades (Buzell, 1968; Levitt, 1983; Papavassilion and Stathakopoulos, 1997; Solberg, 2001).

Dissemination of the same advertising message across different countries without tailoring according to the customer group is called International advertising standardization. By using this strategy the same advertising message can be utilized in different countries or geographical areas. Because of the idea

of globalization today the world is viewed as a common market place. As a result of that the worldwide market has become increasingly homogeneous that makes enable the international firms can offer standardize products or services all over the world. Dissemination of the common advertising message in different countries or areas on an international basis is standardization of international strategy. Standardization of international advertising strategy in different countries or geographical areas has become possible because of the influences of internet, movies and television. Even though the people in different countries bear different cultures, religions, values, languages, rules and regulations their needs and wants are very similar. This is the rationale behind the standardization of international advertising strategies. Since consumers share same or very similar needs and wants, they can motivated by a standardized advertising appeals (Buzell, 1968; Falt, 1967; Killough, 1978; Levitt, 1983). This kind of universal advertising strategy can make huge production and advertising cost savings, because in standardized international advertising the multinational companies only need to create a universal advertising campaign in all over the countries.

Adaptation or Localization of an international advertising strategy considers the each and every market for the advertising campaigns as distinctly separate units because of the differences in cultures, languages, religions, rules and regulations and foreign media ( Pratt, 1956). For the success of a marketing campaign in different cultures adaptation is the most suitable approach. In 1998, Marieke de Mooij, a scholar studied the cultural paradoxes in international marketing has wrote her opinion regarding the standardization of international advertising strategies in her book *Global Marketing and Advertising*. This seems to be the strongest argument favor to adaptation approach here and there. It is in the bellow in following words.

"Markets are people, not products. There may be global products be global products, but there are no global people. There may be global brands but there are no global motivations for buying these brands (1998:3)"

## II. CHALLENGING FACTORS FOR INTERNATIONAL ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS

### A. *Laws and Regulations*

Within a country there are a variety of laws and regulations need to be obey relating to the advertising which are unique to each country. A full observation of the legal system of the country may be benefited for a advertiser to successfully plan his advertising campaign. The best advice is to consult expert legal consultants to gain competent legal knowledge about the

country's legal system before enters into the country. And also it is very essential to update the knowledge about the advertising of some products. In such cases it is very important to get to know the countries make prohibitions on advertising products. For an example pharmaceuticals advertisements are prohibited in many countries. Government of France doesn't allow advertisements on large food stores. In most of the Asian countries like Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and other countries like Germany cannot compare one product with the other competitive products. But in USA they can, because comparative advertising is a norm in USA. Since the laws regulating the comparative advertisements are differ from one country to another, only some of the countries use it to undermine the competitors.

In some countries there are limitations on the access to the media by foreign countries. This creates huge challenges to the international advertising. On the other hand in some countries there are specific number of times that the advertisement can be shown within a given time period. For an example 5% of the air time can be allocated on an advertisement in European Union. Therefore a deep observation may be needed on these complex set of rules of the legal system of a country in order to prevent unnecessary circumstances on advertising campaigns.

#### *B. Cultural Impacts*

International advertising is the process which brings a product to the international market. It should be a complex and well organized process which able to conceive and then convey an idea to different cultures.

Business firms should be very careful when going to international and they should never underestimate the impact of culture on their advertising campaigns. It needs to develop the understanding, tolerance and the acceptance of cultural differences in target audiences in different countries. Different market segments or target audiences may have their own set of needs, wants, desires and tastes; therefore all these should be considered or analyzed when advertising is being planned. Therefore addressing potential customers should be done by considering "Cultural Meaning Perspective" (Usunier & Lee, 2009), which means a specific approach to specific culture.

There are some elements in a culture that every markets take into consideration when going to international markets. These elements include values, beliefs, religion, symbols, thought processes, traditions. In reality people are not born with a culture, but they are born into a society in which they can acquire & develop certain cultural traits, religion, beliefs. Culture makes a great impact on people's life from his born to the death. The perspective nature of a culture is very important to an advertiser and it should pay a close attention to it.

The advertiser should not assume that the people will not concern about their culture, just because of an advertisement of a product that makes their life easier. When we create an advertisement all the cultural aspects need to be concern, because sometimes it might convey an idea that we don't need to deliver. For an example, if one male and a female stand too closely together in an advertisement, unintentionally it might communicate something sexual to the society. The body language may have different meanings from country to country. As well as a specific colour might have different meanings that we are unaware. Therefore a native's appreciation of the message

is very crucial, otherwise unexpected results may arise. Advertising should be able to convince the customers that the qualities of a product or service fulfill consumer needs and wants. The message of the advertisement should be coincide with all cultural norms. Consulting marketing experts to formulate international advertising campaigns to ensure the achievement of the company goals but tailoring it according to the market place is very crucial. For a successful advertising strategy connecting all the cultures including local and national cultures, business, social and political cultures is very important and should not ever neglect any single factor resulting for cultural differences.

There might be arise collapses of the business due to a weak advertising strategy which ignores the cultural differences. One of the best example for a weak advertising strategy which went wrong is the marketing strategy of Nestle's breast milk substitution in Africa. Nestle was indeed a faultless product but this weak marketing strategy lead to decline the image of the company and it resulted in a negative response because in Africa these for the malnutrition in babies children as well as has highly criticized by the people. Nestle was unable to successfully plan their advertising campaign by considering cultural differences in Africa. The main reasons for this huge failure are not considering the illiteracy rate in Africa and the possibility of misuse substitution products.

#### *C. Language Barriers*

Language barriers need to be addressed effectively by the advertiser in order to avoid collapses in international marketing procedures. Language is the identity of a person. It helps people to express feelings, convey complex emotions, share knowledge and tell stories. It is the best mediator that allows us to relate and understand each other (Imberti, 2007). It is a system of symbols that people can use to communicate with each other. It provides a significant frame of reference and a rationale context to the people that helps them to sustain their identities (Imberti, 2007). The advertiser need to know the meanings of the idioms, jokes, related technological words, slang, innuendos for the purpose of designing the advertising in another country. The advertiser should be a native speaker of a country who is update with the above all. Sometimes even a native speaker also unable to understand the meanings of dialects which may have great differences from one geographical area to another or cast groups. There might be undesirable situations when encoding and decoding an idea between two people who talk two different languages. In some instances there might be some words which contains meanings not certainly imply. Therefore advertisers need to understand the unspoken meanings or understandings that certain words imply or do not imply. The literacy level of a country also can cause problems to advertisers. For an example around 50% of the population in India can reach to a paper advertisement. The purpose of the every marketing move or every advertisement made is to convince the customer to buy a product or service. This effect should be duplicated once the advertisement translated to convince new customers who speak another language to buy product again and again.

#### *D. Media Obstacles*

Today even though the global media exist all markets bear local media limitations which are unique to each and every

market. The media limitation problem can be simply viewed as no quality materials to print the advertising message or it can become more severe like not having printing presses or media stations. When there are media landscapes in international markets other forms of messaging can be tried, like public showing of movies. In some developed countries like America there are various free media available. So advertisers can try on them in order to disseminate his message to the ultimate target audience. An advertiser's creativity is certainly going to be challenged if a television commercial may have limitations on showing. As a result of that advertisers have to go through a very hard time once sending their messages to ultimate customers. For an example due to the reason of great media landscapes in some African countries advertisers run boats up and down rivers to broadcast their commercials to the public while playing popular music.

Since corporate competition really getting increased all the companies tends to influence customers' choice towards their own products and services. Therefore companies spend millions and billions of dollars on advertising to win their customers hearts. Due to these huge expenditures, companies too have the need for massive returns.

Media companies are highly depends on advertising since these media outlets can generate massive funds through advertising than licenses and public funding. Therefore the advertisers can put influences on media companies to expose good practices by the advertisers, otherwise the survival of the media companies being challenged.

In most of the countries all the medias are available on prohibitive costs. Therefore the creativity of the advertiser certainly required to win the heart and the mind of the customers. If one geographical territory contains various ethnic groups with multiple languages and religions, then the cost escalates since the advertisement should be tailored to the each group. Or else it should be universal that everyone can be relating to a same representation. Again that is difficult!

### III. CONCLUSION

Today the world is a global market. All the companies need to sell their products, services and ideas to as many customers as possible and many companies now heavily depends on foreign sales. And also the global market represent incredibly varied

target audiences, therefore nowadays companies are addressing target audiences varies in terms of language, religion and more importantly culture, laws and regulation. As well as today the customer is very sophisticated and demanding and bearing often conflicting needs and desires. Based on the differences in target audiences advertisers need to consider different degrees of two types of advertising strategies, standardization and adaptation.

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