

Moral Choices Hidden in Advertising: Grounded Theory

Gintarė Kriauciūnaitė-Lazauskienė

Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania

Abstract

The recent social change is influenced by the post-COVID-19 epidemics as well as the ongoing war in Ukraine. This political situation also affects advertising and the use of symbols in it by using various methods to try to determine the impact on the consumer's choice. Conventional marketing research has changed by using devices and studying the senses of the modern consumer not only in the physical environment (store), which is simply affected by words, music, and smells, but also by observing the change in the gaze and the brain. In recent times in society, advertising has become an integral part of our culture, which changes, transforms, and moves to other virtual spaces where buyers associate their identities and even moral choices by buying products with symbolic meaning or various symbols hidden in products. Moral values become choice-influenced individualization through an inseparable market relationship with the consumer. Marketing experts still have an unanswered question: how do they predict buying trends and what influences them? The presence of the war made us think about the moral values affected by specific brands we preferred or companies we supported through our choices. The shopping process is used as a medium between products and the real reason for shopping, where culture becomes the general programming of people's thinking, manifested not only in values but also in symbols: brands, heroes, and rituals in the shopping process (sometimes this necessity can even rise to a spiritual level like religious character usage). The product's symbolism demonstrates the dedication and achievements that it compromises to show more hellish and clearly interpreted consumer behavior patterns, resulting in a wider use of not only symbols but also the language of signs (semiotics). With the help of grounded theory (methodology), we are keen to find the hidden reason behind our moral choices shown in the advertised goods.

Keywords: advertising; brand; symbolism; moral values; consumer decision.