

ADVERTISING AND PROMOTIONAL MEDIA

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Abstract: *The following study underlines the importance of publicity and advertising in business promotion. The interest of every business is directed to consumers' perception, imagination and loyalty. This article is improved with advertising criticism.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

No one questions that advertising and promotion are extremely powerful forces in the hospitality industry. They must be managed with care and used to the maximum advantage of the organization.

External advertising and promotion constitutes a major area of marketing effort for most hospitality organizations, as numerous media are employed in an effort to communicate with selected target markets.

The success of these advertising efforts rests to a large degree on the media and the manner in which they are used. Many times, advertisers spend large amounts of money without achieving the desired results. In other cases, advertisers spend only a relatively small amount, yet the results are dramatic. It is useful to remember that it is not how much is invested, but how it is invested.

The word *investment* is what advertising is an investment. Dollars allocated to advertising are expected to generate increased sales; a positive return on an investment is expected.

External advertising is important because it can make the difference between success and failure.

Management must ask three simple questions in initial advertising planning:

1. **To whom should the advertising be directed?** Specifically, what target markets have been identified as primary and secondary markets? Which individuals represent opinion leaders and reference group leaders?

2. **Where do these people live?** Once the target markets are identified, it is imperative to determine where these individuals live and work.

What are the best methods to reach them through advertising?

In many cases, this will be as easy as determining the leaders of the business community in a small town.

In other instances, determining where these individuals live and work will prove quite difficult. “Let’s take, for example, a tablecloth restaurant operating in the suburbs of a major city. Where should the restaurant advertise? How should the target markets be reached? Where do these people live and work? These questions may not have self-evident answers, and a considerable amount of research and discussion may be necessary before the answers are determined” (J.C.Dragan, 1995, p.22)

3. **What media should be used?** Would it be best to use print advertising? Perhaps radio or television should play a major role? What about outdoor, direct mail, or supplemental advertising? Should directories, such as the yellow pages, be considered?

2. MEDIA SELECTION

Selection of advertising media is one of the most critical decisions facing management. The product-service mix must be positioned in such a way that maximum effectiveness in each medium is achieved. Consideration must also be given to the types of media to be used and the allocation of resources among the selected media.

Finally, contracts must be arranged with each medium, a time-consuming process if managers do this themselves.

Factors Affecting Media Selection

First and foremost in media selection is the nature of the target market segments. A medium should be selected based on its ability to reach the maximum number of potential consumers, at the lowest cost per thousand consumers (C.P.M.).

Second, the objectives of the overall campaign must be considered. Is the advertiser seeking maximum impact, or is continuity with previous and future advertising more important?

For example, if a well-established restaurant had used a refined and sophisticated approach in newspaper and magazine advertising, it would not make sense for it to advertise using a high-volume, high-energy advertisement, for this would break up the continuity among advertisements in different media.

Third, consideration must be given to the amount of coverage desired. The relative costs of the various media must be weighed when decisions are made. The sizes and frequency of advertisements should be analyzed carefully.

Fourth, the activities of the direct competition should be reviewed and trends identified. This is not to say that media should be selected based on a “monkey see, monkey do” philosophy, but it is sound management to keep close tabs on the advertising efforts of major competitors.

Howard Heinsius, President of Needham and Grohmann, Inc., suggests several essentials in media selection:

Market focus. Carefully examine your market by product-service mix category or brand and by target market segment. How does your hotel or restaurant fit in? What are the specific attributes you want to advance?

Media focus. Keep an open mind and listen to all media sales representatives in your area. Make note of changes, events, new programs, and the opportunities they might offer. Media time and space is perishable; keep an alert eye for special purchase opportunities (Iulian Veghes and Bogdan Grigore, 2003, P. 43).

Periodic media update. Keep current information about rates and other important information such as cost per thousand and circulation. The situation can change rapidly. Be sure to stay on top of it.

Establish media effectiveness guidelines. Keep tangible guidelines in mind as you examine each of the media options. This will help you to make better media selections.

Advertising by objective. If specific advertising objectives have been established such as sales targets or consumer awareness levels this will aid in determining the best media combination.

Coordinate advertising with marketing campaigns. Advertising is but one part of the total marketing mix. Be sure that it is coordinated with the other efforts in the areas of personal selling, promotion, and public relations.

Develop a sound advertising budget. Start with an amount that is within your means and then allocate it by target markets. It is important to not try to do too much with very limited funds.

Plan around media pollution. All forms of media are oversaturated at times. Try to select the best times to get your message across and how to rise above the pollution of other advertisements.

Coordinate the local efforts to match the national advertising efforts. When a national campaign is being run, try to take advantage of this by running a local campaign that will follow.

Use a variety of media. Within the limits of budgets, try to use different combinations and levels of different media to determine which is most effective.

Keep accurate files. It is important to be able to review the results of each advertising campaign. Maintaining accurate records of budget, media schedules, and sales results is critical.

Developing Media Plans

The development of media plans involves planning the media to use, and determining when specific media will be used and how a specific combination of media will allow the organization to achieve its advertising objectives.

“Media plans must involve answers to these questions:

- 1) What specific target markets are to be reached?
- 2) When does management want to reach these target markets?
- 3) Where do these target markets live and work?
- 4) What ways are best to reach these target markets? and
- 5) Why?” (McFall, Liz, 2004, p.21)

It is important to clearly identify those individuals the advertising should reach. Demographics are perhaps the easiest way to define markets.

When is the best time to reach these target markets? Are there specific times of the year when management wants to concentrate advertising, such as the fall in preparation for Christmas banquet business or the

winter months, to increase business? What time of the day does management want to reach the target markets?

Where do these individuals live and work? If management truly wants to make maximum use of advertising expenditures, this information will prove useful. What is the best way to reach target markets? This is the question that separates successful advertising from the less than successful. Specifically, which media will be most effective?

Finally the question why: A solid rationale for each decision is essential. Decisions based on intuition or “gut feelings” may be huge successes, but in the long term, objective decisions are usually superior. Management must review the plan with some degree of scepticism, constantly questioning why a certain course of action is best for the organization.

Media Scheduling

Each hospitality organization must tailor the scheduling of media to fit its individual needs. Generally speaking, however, there are three approaches to scheduling.

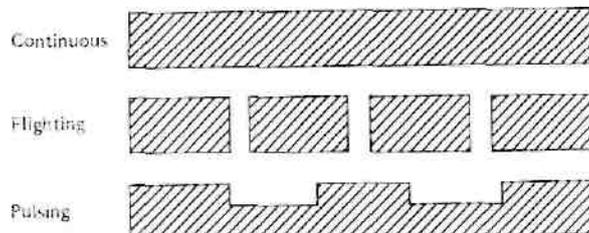
Continuous advertising involves keeping the amount of advertising relatively constant over time. This type is appropriate for those hospitality operations with very stable volumes.

Flighting media scheduling involves a schedule set up in spurts and stops. Periods of blitz advertising are used, with no advertising between blitzes.

Pulsing advertising balances the previous two approaches in that it provides a constant low-level flow of advertising with intermittent periods of blitz advertising. Ideally, high levels of continuous advertising are normally thought to be superior, but economic considerations may necessitate the adoption of either flighting or pulsing media scheduling.

3. PRINT ADVERTISING

Print advertising includes newspapers and magazines. Print advertising is used more frequently by hospitality advertisers than other media because it offers several advantages:



No. 1 Print advertising advantage

If a manager decides to run an advertisement on one day's notice, it can normally be scheduled in the next day's newspaper.

Relatively low cost.

A local advertisement in a newspaper is usually low-cost.

Flexibility of advertising copy.

Copy can easily be changed, allowing advertisements to be tailored to fit ever-changing market conditions.

Broad appeal.

Newspapers reach all demographic segments in a geographic area.

Coupons.

Newspapers allow for the use of coupons, which can increase volume and are also valuable in evaluating advertising effectiveness.

Newspaper advertising has its drawbacks:

Short life span of the advertisement.

Newspapers are read one day and put in the trash can the next day.

Difficulty of pinpointing the target market.

This causes a good deal of wasted circulation and raises the cost per thousand potential consumers.

Competition within the newspaper.

It is easy to have an advertisement buried amid other advertisements, decreasing readership and effectiveness.

Poor reproduction of photographs.

Newspaper production and printing does not reproduce photographs with clarity. Drawings are usually a better choice.

Magazines offer these advertising advantages:

“Superior reproduction of artwork and photographs.

Colour photographs reproduce particularly well.

Longer life span of advertisement.

Through pass-along readership, magazine advertisements are seen by more people and have a longer life span than that of newspapers and other media.

Audience selectivity.

Some magazines are aimed at the general population, but through the use of regional and metropolitan editions as well as selective market magazines, advertisers can pinpoint specific target markets. This is especially true of city magazines (Wikipedia - online advertising).

Drawbacks to magazine advertising include the following:

Lack of timeliness.

Magazine publishers require advertisers to adhere to closing dates far in advance of the distribution date. This does not allow for immediate changes of layout and copy if market conditions change rapidly.

High production costs.

Costs associated with magazine advertising are generally substantially higher than those for newspapers.

Magazines not suited for local market.

Magazines are generally either regional or national in scope and are often of limited value to local hospitality operators. Their maximum advantage is derived by regional and national chains. City magazines do, however, overcome this drawback. In addition, city magazines generally reach a more highly educated and higher-income reader than general interest magazines.

Techniques for Successful Print Advertising

As with all types of advertising, no hard and fast rules exist; only guidelines can aid in management decisions. The following guidelines, developed over time, are generally accepted within the advertising community.

First, every effort should be made to attract the consumer's attention with the headline. Many print advertisements are ineffective because a large percentage of consumers skim through the pages and never read the entire advertisement. The headline must therefore get the attention of the reader and deliver the message.

Second, print advertising is more effective if visual components, such as artwork and photographs, are used. Although photographs do not generally reproduce well in newspaper, simple drawings can be used very effectively to increase readership. Photographs and artwork are both effective in magazines.

“Third, every effort should be made to keep the layout and copy simple and straightforward. Print readers are less likely to read an advertisement that looks crowded and contains many ideas. Instead, the advertisement should have one or perhaps two points and no more. Print advertising is one place where “less is more,” and this means more effectiveness (Kaiser, Ulrich; Song, Minjae, 2009, p.41).

Fourth, print advertising lends itself to the use of coupons.

Coupons serve to increase volume and can be very valuable in assessing the effectiveness of print advertising media.

Coupons should be designed so that they are really mini advertisements that can be clipped out and will convey the message without the need for the consumer to save the rest of the advertisement.

Placement of coupons is important both within the advertisement and on the page on which the advertisement appears. They should be placed at the edge of the advertisement, and the advertisement at the edge of the page to make it easier to clip them out. Simple things like coupon placement can increase advertising effectiveness dramatically.

Finally, when a given print advertisement has been effective, management should not hesitate to repeat it. The advertisement may seem old hat to the management of the hospitality operation, but many potential consumers have not seen the advertisement or do not recall it. Therefore, what has proven successful in the past should be repeated.

4. ADVERTISING CRITICISM / IN STEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

Many critics of advertising raise questions about how the touristic activity should be advertised. More questions and answers follow.

Is it true that a great part of advertising contains false information?

It is true that advertising is a powerful force in the market economy and, occasionally, it may use a dishonest manager to cheat. But this logical should not be applied because it may have negative influences on the others too.

The government took actions to protect the consumer, measure aimed at limiting the quantity of fake advertising. Companies have also no interest in cheating customers.

Advertising tries to attract the first and the future customers with a specific variety of products and services. The failure of not offering what they have promised destroys the producers' credibility for advertising and sales.

Is it true that advertisement generates a vicious cycle of expenses between competitors?

Some believe that if two units with the same profile (A and B) are directly competing and unit A invests in advertisement, then, unit B will certainly invest more in advertisement, in order to counteract the first ones' efforts. Therefore, A will also increase its investment to gain advantage over B, and so on. This case is not usual. However, in the last few years, there was a significant increase of advertising investments in (hospitality) tourism, especially in the fast – food units.

Along the 80's advertising expenses increased annually at a rate of over 20%, and this was higher than the increase recorded by concerned units. This increase is the result of highlighting the competitiveness especially of fast – food units. The most important thing is not the value of the invested money, but the increased efficiency through advertising.

Why does the consumer have to pay for advertisement? Isn't it included in the prices paid by the companies?

Indeed, the customer pays the advertisement. Customers bear the overhead charges, the gross cost of materials and performed activity. The prices paid by the customers are not necessary higher because of the advertising investment. Very often, the specific feature of advertising generates lower prices in special forms, coupons or it combines more items at a lower price than when buying them separately.

Gradual economic development is also possible through advertising. All operators in hospitality industry certainly have overhead charges that must be paid regardless the number of customers. The more customers they have the lower the cost per person will be, therefore advertising may reduce the prices instead of raising them.

The increased volume of customers allows the manager to purchase the supplies in large quantities, and so, the future prices will drop.

Customers bear the costs of advertising, but they are not necessary higher.

Is it true that advertisement facilitates unfair advantage to great chain companies?

Indeed, the chain companies have a significant advantage against small firms, due to a larger financial base caused by their capital gains. This is a part of the business environment and it cannot be considered a monopoly, since there are many small and independent companies functioning in the trade. A few years ago, many people thought the McDonald's chain companies started to lay the foundations for a virtual monopoly over the fast – food industry; it was also thought that in this way, McDonald's would shut down many small companies, which is so untrue having chain companies such as Domino's Pizza and Hardee's.

It is true that great chain companies enjoy advertising advantages, but it is hard to believe that they can create a capital market monopoly.

Is it true that advertising determines the costumers to buy things they do not want or they cannot afford?

In some cases this is true. Advertising attempts to convince customers to buy specific products and

services from the one making the advertisement. But nobody can force the customer to buy these products or services. Many persons consider that an expensive dinner or a night at a luxury hotel is unnecessary when you can satisfy your demands in a cheaper, nicer and simpler way.

Customers would be the ones who take the final decision regarding the way they want to spend their savings. Advertisement only determines the consumers to be aware of the possibilities they have and tries to encourage the patronage.

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