Impact of Advertising on the Formation of the Value Orientations of Young People

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Abstract: A relatively new direction in sociology of culture is the study of the influence of advertising on the formation of value orientation. In order to reveal main aspects of the influence of advertising on the formation of value orientation of the youth the author conducted the sociological survey in which young people at the age of 14 to 30 took part. The survey was carried out in two stages in 2006 and in 2012. The results of the survey allowed among all the rest to reveal the primary resources of the formation of value orientation of the youth: family, mass media and advertising. Respondents consider that advertising fulfills not only information and commercial function but also aesthetic, cognitive and developing which, in turn, orientate towards moral values and definite behavior acquiring more and more significant position in life activity of young people, determine common outlook of the youth. On the example of the sociological survey it was concluded that the role of advertising in life activity of the youth is growing.

Key words: Advertising - Value orientations - Young people

INTRODUCTION

The study of the impact of advertising on the formation of value orientations is a relatively new strand in the sociology of culture. Russian advertising has received a mixed reaction across Russian society [1-3]. On one hand, advertising appeals to the values of consumption, which is laid down in the very nature of advertising communication, but, on the other hand, as one of the elements of mass culture, it no doubt impacts the formation of value orientations. There are multiple contradictory views concerning the impact of advertising on the system of value orientations. Some maintain that advertising affects the system of values negatively, since it shows only those people happy who possess some kind of a product [4; 5]. Others are inclined to deny that advertising has a negative effect on the system of social values [6; 7]. Currently, developers of advertising not just often ignore the values of spiritual development but replace them with the values of consumption as well. This is, above all, associated with the economic effect of advertising activity for both specific advertisers and public production. This effect overrides the negative perception of advertising, while the social effect of the impact of advertising on the system of values is disregarded altogether.

The author believes that advertising can negatively affect the value orientations of the young generation due to the incompleteness of the process of formation of young people’s worldview. Making youth into a separate group is, above all, associated with their social immaturity and their unformed value criteria, on one hand and their creative activity and power, on the other [8; 9]. Hence, we have to attach particular significance to the study of the effect of factors of impact on the value orientations of youth, to which advertising belongs as well.

With a view to identifying the major aspects of advertising’s impact on the formation of the value orientations of youth, the author conducted a sociological study which featured young people aged 14 to 30. The study was conducted in the city of Tyumen (Russia) in two stages. In 2006, 1000 respondents were surveyed in the first stage using the questionnaire method. A repeat survey was conducted in 2012 using the same method. 289 respondents were surveyed.

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The general population was 166.1 thousand people. The sample population of respondents was 1000 people (the sampling error was less than 4%) [10, p. 119]. The study conducted quota multi-stage sampling of the general population. The selection strategy at each stage implied non-repeated sampling using the typical representatives method.

**Main Part:** The first questionnaire block contained questions aimed at identifying the respondents’ attitude towards common human values and value statements characterizing youth’s worldview values, which are about one’s understanding of the essence of society’s development and one’s own place in it. The issue of investigating into the structure of man’s value orientations is becoming topical today. Marking out priority values in value orientations helps reveal the degree of significance of a given area of human activity. It should be noted that Russia’s modern young generation is more than before exposed to the impact of the social-economic situation we have in the country at the moment.

The study conducted helped identify youth’s priority life values: a solid family, self-respect, an interesting job, confidence of the future and respect by those around us (one was allowed to pick several variants of the response). All the respondents picked having a solid family and nice children as the top priority: 42% of the girls and 30% of the guys chose this value as the most important. Of about the same weight to the respondents are such values as confidence of the future, self-esteem, an interesting job and respect by others. But if we look at it from the standpoint of gender identity, females give the higher preference to stability, an interesting job and self-respect, while males prioritize respect by others and self-esteem. Note that males give equal preference to the values of power, career, interesting work and wealth. The survey revealed that females do not consider career, power and wealth to be priority values (although these are significant, as about twenty percent of the respondents gave them preference).

Six years later, the study revealed certain changes in the way people see their priority life values. Just like in 2006, in 2012 the respondents said their core value was having a solid family and children. However, in 2012 young people now place a different value in second place—the value of stability, which is “confidence of the future”. The leading positions are still held by the values of career, power, interesting work and self-respect. Note that guys’ and girls’ responses are approximately identical.

The analysis of the respondents’ assessment statements helped reveal not just their declared values but also personally formed socially significant values in youth’s value orientations, which are “life’s success” (material values, power), interesting work, competitiveness, material well-being and self-sufficiency. Note that over the study period (2006-2012), there was observed a drive towards being careful (a decrease in the value of risk) and a certain decrease in the value of interesting work with an increase in the value of material well-being. Note that there was an increase in the drive towards social equality and humaneness.

The second block of questions offered in the questionnaire included the aspects of youth’s interaction with society, which help determine the extent of the impact of various factors on the formation of the respondents’ value orientations. Above all, it was important to find out what place is held by advertising compared with other sources of the formation of youth’s value orientation. The conducted study revealed that among the sources of the formation of youth’s value orientations we could mark out the following priority sources: the family, the mass media (electronic media holding a special place) and advertising. Note that institutions of culture and religion cannot be considered such sources in the formation of the value orientations of over half of the respondents. In the first stage of the study, over sixty percent of the respondents were convinced that advertising is necessary, while about sixty percent of youth believe that advertising is presented in a more showy way than any culture-related or personality developing programs. Six years later, the standings of the sources of the formation of respondent value orientations remained virtually unchanged. Therefore, there is reason to believe in the significance of such a factor of youth’s value orientation formation as advertising.

Young people also demonstrated differences in the frequency of accessing information channels. Over 99% of the respondents watch TV every day, while over half of the respondents listen to the radio on a daily basis, but reading newspapers is not as popular. Young people read newspapers “several times per week” or “very rarely”. Note that the 6-year period is characterized by a gradual decrease in youth’s interest towards print publications. The first stage of the study revealed that over half of the respondents use the Internet as an information channel, but not on a daily basis (from time to time, several times per week). Six years later, we can call the Internet youth’s leading channel for getting information: just 2.8% of the respondents never use this channel. Note that girls use the Internet more rarely than
guys. Along with an increase in the consumption of electronic media, increases the impact of advertising on youth due to the compulsory consumption of the latter, for advertising is “woven” into the context of TV and radio broadcasting and is an element of the architecture of modern cities.

However, youth takes advertising quite critically: 46.9% of the respondents believe that advertising does not satisfy aesthetic needs, 41.2% do not find value standards in advertising and 32.1% reject the developing function of advertising in shaping people’s worldview. The period of six years sees a gradual decrease in the criticalness of youth’s perception of advertising. Note that only a third of the respondents believe that advertising shatters traditional norms and values established in society and over 60% agree to the assertion that advertising deceives people. Almost half of the respondents believe that advertising deprives people of their individuality.

In the second stage of the study, we detect a trend towards a gradual mitigation of the negativity of the perception of advertising: now only 54.3% of the respondents accuse advertising of deception. However, even if youth realize that advertising deceives people making them buy products they do not need, it, nevertheless, is perceived positively and defines the stereotypes of behavior. According to the results of the study, the respondents believe that advertising fulfills the information function, develops people’s tastes, helps in choosing the right products and … influences lifestyles in society, facilitating the creation of trendy currents. That is, one can conclude there is an increase in advertising’s impact on society.

Youth also have a mixed attitude towards advertising carriers. Young people exhibit the more positive attitude towards advertising on the Internet, transit advertising, advertising boards and advertising in magazines and advertising newspapers, than that on TV and in advertising leaflets. Youth’s attitude towards advertising carriers did not change tangibly over the six-year period.

When there is an advertising break on TV, just 4% of the respondents watch the entire block of commercials, while the rest change the channels or take care of their personal stuff. Almost 17% of those who listen to the radio prefer listening to the entire block of commercials, while half of the respondents take care of other things at the time. The attitude of the majority of the respondents towards advertising booklets, advertising in non-advertising newspapers and advertising on the radio can be characterized as neutral. Note that about 60% of the respondents read advertisements in the press if they are in need of some specific information, while over a third of the respondents enjoy watching well-designed commercials on TV and like checking free (advertising) newspapers. Over the six-year period, youth’s attitude towards advertising in the press and advertising on TV remained virtually unchanged, but their interest in free advertising publications drastically diminished. This can be explained by a number of objective factors: changes in the supply of free advertising publications and a grown interest to such an information channel as the Internet. In accordance with the Russian traditions of the perception of advertising communication, over sixty percent of young people noted that they value humor in advertising, meaning they like “funny advertisements”. Consequently, it is advertising communication that implicitly influences the formation of society’s value orientations.

CONCLUSION

Young people residing in the city of Tyumen believe that advertising helps obtain information on how to behave in certain situations, on modes and styles of living-in other words, advertising can be said to shape youth’s everyday worldview. About 77% of the young people who participated in the study stated that advertising enables them to learn about new products. In the second stage of the study, this indicator even grew to 87.9%. Note that half of the respondents stated that advertising is detached from real life. Also, over a third of the respondents are irritated by advertising and this attitude becomes only stronger over the six-year period.

They find that advertising is silly and dispirits people. However, over half of the study’s young participants consider advertising to be effective and necessary, which indicates a positive perception of advertising as such.

Inferences: Thus, advertising, being one of the priority sources of the formation of youth’s value orientations, fulfills not only the information, commercial, but also aesthetic, developing, functions, which, in turn, orient one towards moral values and shape one’s behavior and thereby become increasingly significant in young people’s life activity.

REFERENCES