On the Reconstruction of Advertising Ethics in the New Media Era

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Abstract. The advent of the “new media era” has greatly promoted the reform and development of the advertising industry, while it has also made the entire advertising industry field face some new difficulties. Among them, the loss of advertising ethics is one of the core issues to be solved urgently. In the process of the development of new media advertising, there are endless ethical anomie phenomena. Therefore, how to propose countermeasures against problems and propose strategies for reconstructing advertising ethics from the above aspects in the new media era is a theoretical category that this article focuses on.

1. Introduction

From time immemorial, China has been regarded as an ethical society. “Ethics” has also been forged to maintain the basic principles of group social survival and healthy development in the long smelting of culture. “Advertising ethics is about the survival and healthy development of advertising communication activities, and the basic principles and values of maintaining the harmonious operation of the integrated social system ecological environment brought by advertising communication activities.”^[1] With the revitalization of digital and internet communication technologies, the inherent structure and distribution of rights in the traditional advertising industry have also been dissolved to some extent, even if the traditional positions of TV, radio, newspapers, and other traditional advertising seem unbreakable.

However, the fact is that new media advertising are also increasingly demonstrating the advancement of their commercial leadership and social influence. Instead, we must note that the new media era has also provided a breeding ground for the spread of decadent cultures and negative thoughts. The complex new situation has forced us to rethink the ethical anomalies behind the seemingly flashy nature of the advertising industry under the support of new media technology. Therefore, in this context, it seems that the advertising discourse has caused severe challenges to the traditional ethical framework.

2. The enhancement of quality education for advertising practitioners

The so-called “enhancement of the quality education for advertising professionals” is mainly to seek a balance strategy between profits and ethics. It is not possible to

adopt a “one size fits all” approach. Ultimately, as a commercial activity, the primary purpose of advertising is to make profits especially in the context of the new media era, where competition is fiercer and business survival becomes more urgent. As for how to put this measure into practice, it can be considered from the following aspects.

First of all, the National Advertising Association or the State Administration of Radio and TV regularly hold public lectures or competitions to conduct ethical and moral education for the advertising practitioners. Secondly, publicity and awards are given to the leading enterprises that have a better relationship between righteousness and benefit so that they can establish a good industry benchmark as soon as possible, which provides the right external motivation mechanism for those advertising practitioners who are at the two ends of morality and interests. Finally, it is adept at drawing on domestic and foreign classic marketing cases or advertising models. In this regard, the autonomy and principle highlighted by New York Times newspaper are very worthy of attention. For a long time, the newspaper of New York Times adhered to strict standards of adequacy for advertising, even if the hard threshold caused the company to lose tens of millions of dollars in advertising each year. However, it has won praise from the entire industry and society over time. At present, the newspaper of New York Times daily turnover has been as high as millions of dollars.

From this example, it is concluded that the so-called righteousness and benefit are not absolute opposites. As long as the right choice is taken and the vision is long-term, unexpected spiritual and material dual wealth will be obtained. Of course, all this is based on the good ethical quality, social responsibility, and wise business mindset of the advertising industry.

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3. Basic principles for building cross-cultural advertising ethics

The arrival of the “new media era” means that the exchanges between different cultures are more frequent. In this process, the ethical dilemmas of cross-cultural communication are gradually exposed, such as the imbalance of information dissemination, cultural misreading and transitional interpretation, and ethics conflict of ethics ideas and cultural hegemonism, which constitutes disharmony in heterogeneous cultural exchanges. In the ethical reflection of cross-cultural advertising, the author attempts to put forward general ethical principles for these ethical issues. The core elements of the ethical issues probably include the following aspects.

The first principle is tolerance and mutual trust. American scholar Fang Long once pointed out, “Tolerance allows others to have freedom of action and judgment, and tolerance of patience and justice different from their own views.” [2] In this regard, due to the multi-source generation of different cultures, it is no longer necessary to coercively demand the same. In addition, holding a tolerant heart and seeking unity in diversity can further promote world cultural prosperity, which just as a Chinese proverb says “Gentlemen seek harmony but not uniformity”.

The second principle is freedom and equality. For cross-cultural communication, “freedom” here is not absolute freedom. In fact, absolute freedom may not be possible. This article only refers to the elimination of situations in which certain cultural barriers are intentionally set or an elastic cultural circle between the local and the outside world is sealed. In other words, the development of cross-cultural advertising communication can be promoted only by mutual exchange and cooperation in an equal manner on the basis of freedom.

The third principle is self-respect and self-discipline. It should be said that this principle is a supplement to the second principle. Whether it is positive freedom or negative freedom, neither can it be “arbitrary” or “indulgent” in the spread of culture, especially in social context of “new media era”, thereby the third principle of self-respect and self-discipline are even more important.

4. The ethical principles of advocating “balance of righteousness and benefit”

The disputes and choices between righteousness and benefit have always been a major problem that has plagued human life. As mentioned above, the chaotic images presented by the advertising ethics of the “new media era” can track its origins on the issue of justice and benefit. Therefore, it is necessary to seek the idea of coordinating the contradiction between righteousness and benefit in traditional culture, so as to stipulate the current phenomenon of anomie in advertising ethics.

Judging from the history of ethical thought in ancient China, the “defense of righteousness and benefit” is not only a lush peak in Chinese language, but also a main

thread that runs through traditional Chinese ethics. For example, the Analects of Confucius says, “The mind of the superior man is conversant with righteousness; the mind of the mean man is conversant with gain.” Meanwhile, the diametrical opposition between the superior man and the mean man is used to show the different values of justice and profit. In fact, it also highlights the concept of raising moral values and denigrating private interests.

Mencius’s argument on righteousness and benefit inherited the view of Confucius and inspired Xun Qing’s viewpoint. Mencius. Kao Tzu (part one) says, “I like life, and I also like righteousness. If I cannot keep the two together, I will let life go, and choose righteousness.” This is a more systematic inheritance and exertion of Confucius’ thoughts because it puts death’s meaning above the benefits of life. Also, it emphasizes the pre-existence of righteousness in the height of the ontology of life and morality.

Xunzi, on the premise of a thorough investigation of human nature, confessed that everyone had a “desire heart”. On the other hand, he believed that the ruler’s cultivation through valued moralization and education could enable the people to insist on “moral righteousness” while observing material desire. In short, the righteousness and benefit view of Xunzi can be summed up as “The man, who in sight of gain remembers righteousness”.

New media advertising was developed under the background of reform and opening up and global awareness. Thus, it has a specific era connotation. However, we also gradually realized that the fast-paced life created by the “new media” has broken the accumulated long-standing balance of righteousness and benefit. Therefore, we cast our reflection horizon into traditional ideas of the harmony between righteousness and benefit in this dilemma, which is quite new in the era. Besides, this reflection not only enriches the ethical connotation of modern advertising, but also promotes the orderly development of new media advertising.

5. The perfection of new media advertising social norms system and operation mechanism of the industry

The new media advertising social norm system should consist of the following aspects. First, it is proposed to establish an ethical review system for new media advertising. For example, many hospitals have begun to establish medical ethics committees to deal with the ethical issues encountered in the medical process. New media advertising can also follow the example, and many Western countries have such precedents. For example, Australia has a national commercial television association, which includes advertising approval and advertising review committees; the United Kingdom also has independent television committee, whose main duty is to supervise television advertising and examine the ethical implications of television advertising. Therefore, the institutions such as the Internet Advertising Ethics

Review Committee can be established in the social norm system of new media advertising in China.

Secondly, the ethical laws and regulations for new media advertising have been further improved, that is, and the reconstruction of advertising ethics has been incorporated into the scope of the legal system, thereby making advertising ethics legal. It is worth mentioning that the 14th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 12th (China) NPC Standing Committee passed the revised Advertising Law. The new Internet advertising regulation is a major highlight. "The Internet is a brand-new thing. There are no existing chapters on Internet advertising law. This time, Internet advertising is stipulated. For example, Internet advertising should be closed with a single key and e-mails cannot be sent without consent." [3] In any case, if there were no laws and regulations in the standardization of advertising ethics, the standardization of advertising ethics would become unfounded. As a new media, its features of hidden and anonymity bring more variables. Since the law is a state-enforced social security system, it is even more necessary for the government to participate in this situation. The current ethical reconstruction of new media advertising should focus on the existing Advertising Law and formulate more perfect laws and regulations. Finally, effective social supervision systems and industry self-regulatory mechanisms should be established.

Social supervision is another supervision system besides administrative management. The ethical regulation of new media advertising must involve the participation of the entire society to make great achievement. At this point, many online advertising companies and consumer associations can be combined to establish supervision methods such as toll-free hotlines and public emails; In addition, organizations or individuals who actively report the phenomena of advertising ethics anomie should be rewarded or punished. In contrast, those who involved in the protection of bad phenomena should be punished, and serious cases are subject to legal sanctions. Through the

above-mentioned measures, it is believed that we would make changes to the current the phenomena of the new media advertising ethics anomie in China to some extent.

6. Conclusion

Nowadays, no matter if it is TV commercials, outdoor advertising or online advertising; it is full of illusory images, rhetorical words, and the ideological connotations of various corrupt and extravagant endorsements. Even if the revolutionary tide of the new media era brings unprecedented opportunities to the advertising industry, we must admit that the impact of moral disorientation on the advertising industry will eventually become stronger with the passage of time while it is not so obvious. Therefore, the alternative of "integration" or "dispersion" should be the primary issue for us to face the rationality and inevitability of advertising ethics.

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