

## **Is it ethical to use the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic for advertising purposes?**

The spread of the coronavirus causes panic all over the world now. It was like a meteor that fell from the sky. Now there is a huge demand for protective goods like medical masks and sanitizers as people want to save themselves and massively buy all kinds of protective equipment.

Nowadays, we can observe how marketers exploit fear of people in these harsh crisis times. They buy masks, hand sanitizers, toilet paper and other products and resell them at higher prices. In my view that it is completely unethical to exploit such horrible situation to make quick money.

To make things worse, we buy at higher prices not only masks and antiseptics but also food. Speculators make good money now as everything can be justified by panic. That is why lots of retail chains almost tripled the prices of some goods. They understand that people simply have no choice because, for example, outdoor markets are closed.

In fact, we can easily identify 2 types of advertising during this period: socially responsible advertisements which promote proper behaviours and abusive advertisements which reveal false information. On one hand, there are lots of social advertisements on TV and social media that urge us to stay home so as not to infect other people. But on the other hand, the Internet is buzzing with misleading information which subverts logical reasoning.

People think they can make money on useless goods which fight the virus. One can see advertisements of steam mops which are able to *destroy* the virus. But they can only refresh the air. If you “bring” the virus home, it will continue to live inside you body. Another striking example is that Russian pharmacies began to speculate on the topic of a new type of coronavirus sharing leaflets which offer drugs as a treatment for the virus while scientists have not yet invented a vaccine against the virus. In addition to pseudo-medicines, you can order courier services

on Avito that will not only unpack parcels from China for you, but also disinfect them for you. The cost of the service is from 200 to 400 rubles.

According to the BBC, the social network Facebook has announced that it introduces a ban on advertising hygienic masks and hand sanitizers in order to prevent excessive demand for them and speculating. In addition, the social network controls the appearance of misinformation about drugs that supposedly help to cure the virus.

In general, the society was divided into two parts - those who run into online stores to buy vitamin C in fear of being infected and those who exploit human naivety. I believe that people should be socially responsible to cope with panic and general difficulties. Marketers should not play on feelings of fear, or mention anything about the specific efficacy of a product to prevent or control the spread of the coronavirus. We all should be human, keep calm and stay home as we all desire an early end to the quarantine.