

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

The coronavirus pandemic has completely transformed our daily lives. Its consequences have a huge impact on social and economic issues. It affected virtually every industry, often causing panic and sudden decisions about how the company should continue to operate and how it should be run during the current pandemic. It is not surprising that most of the businesses are trying to save their situation and despite the difficulties, they still create a chance to make money. There are some opportunities for the companies to survive the market paralysis - from the introduction of new products, adapted to the current situation, to the transfer of the business to the Internet or increasing brand recognition by showing commitment and taking care of the brand image. However, it should be noted that not all of these ways of promotion are ethical during the coronavirus pandemic.

One way for companies to avoid financial problems is taking advantage of people's fears of a coronavirus outbreak by means of media. Advertisements of products to protect users against infections, such as anti-bacterial products (e.g. Septon washing powder), masks, drugs and dietary supplements are frequently seen nowadays. In most of these cases, there is no solid evidence that the products can prevent us from the virus. Such kind of advertising is not only exploiting people's concerns about the current outbreak of a coronavirus, but it can also raise the fears and result in panic attacks or constant stress of people trying to find themselves in the new reality. Another way to promote products and services during the pandemic is announcing discounts and sales and giving out free protective masks when buying a product. Such actions motivate people to leave their homes and may cause large gatherings of people in one place, which goes against the idea of social distancing. For example, the "white night" in Biedronka supermarkets chain, which is an opportunity to buy products during one night for less money.

On the other hand, the current pandemic situation brought unique challenges for creative advertising agencies to make advertisements that can have positive effects. Although lockdown and social distancing may cause desolation and financial problems, marketers create inspiring advertising campaigns that give strength and faith in people during hard times. Powerful brands, such as Uber or Jeep used the virus outbreak for brand image marketing and they thank people for not using their products or services during the pandemic. The image-building advertisement was also employed by Dove, Google and Volkswagen that

launched ads to salute the healthcare workers. Another uplifting aspect of advertising during the pandemic is the promotion of local brands and products in order to support country's economy and the use of sales revenue to fight COVID-19. For example, Vistula - the Polish brand donates all money earned on pro-social collection to combat the virus.

In conclusion, supporting social distancing, security precautions in order to stay healthy are unquestionably better ways of brand advertising during current coronavirus pandemic. During the quarantine period, the primary task of marketers is to try to put themselves in the position of the consumer. It is important to show creativity and empathy in advertising and communication in the times of uncertainty when people need security. Unfortunately, the struggle is uneven and not all companies consider or can afford this kind of marketing. As a result, some marketers go to use unethical means of promotion, such as exploiting people's concerns about the virus in order not to go bankrupt.