Paragon Acquisitions Consider Whether Controversial Adverting Helps or Hinders Sales Figures

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In the cut throat world of marketing businesses are always on the lookout for a way to stand out from the crowd. Southampton-based event marketing firm Paragon Acquisitions have called upon their experience in the direct marketing world, to question the effectiveness of controversial marketing campaigns on consumer buying behaviour.

Creating a positive impact on consumers in business is really important, however controversial marketing campaigns can sometimes be a business' best friend. Many adverts used to promote services in certain industries rely heavily on the shock factor to highlight a serious issue. These businesses sometimes require a far more unsettling campaign in order to open the public's eyes to something they may have otherwise overlooked. Take the NHS's '*get unhooked*' stop smoking campaign which featured a young lady with a fishing hook caught in her cheek. Although unpleasant, it successfully highlighted the dangers of smoking and many people were encouraged to quit through that campaign.

Other than being used for serious issues, controversial marketing can help even everyday brands pass through the awareness stage of the marketing tunnel by making the brand a talking point among potential consumers. For example, mobile network 3's dancing pony advert was a fantastic talking point online, gaining over 9 million views on YouTube. By using humorous or suggestive material brands can also gain notoriety among those who haven't even seen the campaign, as news and media channels will quickly pick up on the public's response to controversy.

Paragon Acquisitions believe controversy is also a highly effective method of targeting a specific customer base, edgy and youthful brands often use controversial campaigns in order to attract a consumer with a similar mind set. However, is alienating the more sensitive consumer really a good approach to marketing? In business all potential customers are of equal importance, so making certain consumers feel left out of the 'club' could pose detrimental to a brands overall reputation.

By leading with a controversial campaign businesses may also run the risk of the marketing overshadowing the product it's supposed to advertise. Many people can probably describe an advert that they found entertaining or risqué, however it may be more difficult to recall what exactly the campaign was for.

In a recent television campaign, popular food brand Marmite caused controversy by depicting neglected jars of the spread being rescued in RSPCA animal cruelty style raids. Many complaints claimed the ad was making light of animal cruelty issues despite not featuring a single animal. The campaign is still well remembered and the brand was referenced throughout so in terms of marketing it was a great success, so the obvious question is, are people just being too sensitive?

Experts equate a large number of complaints about marketing to the 'third person effect', which questions how people asses others ability to handle controversial material. Many complainers aren't actually affected by a campaign themselves; instead the root of their complaint lies in how they think others will react to the material. This low opinion of the tolerance of others can cause brands a great deal of backlash and can lead to the media picking up on the controversy.

There's no definitive conclusion as to whether controversial marketing campaigns are good or bad for a brand, in some cases a backlash to a campaign can have a negative effect on a brands sales, whist other brands thrive on the extra publicity. Many firmly believe that all publicity is good publicity; however the most important thing for businesses to remember is to simply create a marketing campaign that innovatively and successfully represents their product or services.

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