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The Role of Corporate Marketing Communications Management in Implementing Advertising Ethics and Standards

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ABSTRACT

Australia's advertising industry has dramatically improved during the last ten years, including the quality of ethical code, number of associations as advertising watchdog, creative ideas and the executions as well. Advertising agencies become vital as brands or companies start using their services not only to execute the advertising, but also to develop the whole campaign, such as using Public Relations approach. That's what integrated marketing communication is all about: to elaborate advertising, Public Relations, sales promotion and direct marketing approach into a whole, integrated campaign. However, the implementation of the campaign is not as simple as it looks due to the complexity of the process. In this case, Smarties and its brand umbrella, Nestle Australia, has developed a massive national campaign called "Eight Colors of Fun". It turns into a disaster when local communities and watchdog associations have complained its TV commercial

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1. Introduction

Television advertising aimed at children is one of the controlled issues strictly and carefully in Australia. Based on research conducted by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (2007), as many as 78% of young people in Australia are active television viewers, where the total hours spent watching more than young people in the United States. The availability of media is the main supporter of the trend of television consumption, especially with the digital television system implemented in Australia since 2001. This indicates that television viewers will get better picture and sound quality than analog TV, more television channels and variety, including a wide selection of programs for children. Digital television systems are also increasingly opening up advertising opportunities on television for commercial companies.

Several studies have shown that television is an important medium for children to obtain information about various products on the market (Ward, Wackman, Wartella, 1979, in Belch et al, 2009). A study on child development found that children between the ages of seven and eleven are able to distinguish between advertisements and television programs, then understand and retain the information conveyed through the advertisements, although they still need further guidance (Young, 2003). Children have limited ability to see and interpret the meaning of advertisements on television, therefore they need to be protected in order to get the right message.

Some community groups concerned with the advertising industry in Australia argue that advertising has a negative impact on children. Academics and health practitioners who joined the Childhood Obesity Summit conference said that "advertising had a role to play in the obesity debate and called for action" (advertising has a role in the debate about obesity and can influence behavior) (Spence & Heekeren, 2005, p. 30). Another claim came from the Stop Commercial Exploitation child care coalition which said that exposure to marketing and advertising by food product companies had the biggest impact on childhood obesity (ibid). On the other hand, according to Brown (2004), the behavior of children to ask their parents for certain foods is not caused by the influence of advertising, but because of their natural character as children. This is called the

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pester power, where parents actually have the power to control their children, including their food consumption. This statement is in line with the results of research by the Australian research company SCAN which showed 64% of respondents agreed that parents are the most responsible for children's eating habits (Ligerakis, 2002, in Spence & Heekeren, 2007). The results of this study are in accordance with regulations in Australia issued by the Responsible Children's Marketing Initiative (RCMI), where advertisements for unhealthy food products (unhealthy dietary products) must be displayed during adult hours, not events for children.

There are several other associations that also care about the issue of children's advertising, including The Australian Association of National Advertisers/AANA. AANA is an association of people working in the advertising industry in Australia. AANA establishes ethics and standards for the implementation of advertising carried out by business companies in Australia (Belch et al, 2009). AANA has advertising and marketing communications guidelines for children as part of the general advertising rules and marketing regulations for each Australian advertising agency. The aim of the guidelines is to ensure that all advertising agencies and advertising companies in Australia establish and maintain their social responsibility in the issue of advertising to children.

The ethics on the other hand can also motivate the company to be responsible for carrying out all advertising activities, including taking ethical actions, from the point of view of the target consumer and its competitors. This is seen as having a positive impact, namely raising the trust of consumers, shareholders, and other parties around the company, such as the media and non-governmental organizations.

2. Research Method

This research is a descriptive qualitative literature research, among others, by collecting data sources in the form of journals, online articles, and books. The focus of this research is the implementation of the Smarties Australia campaign with the theme "Eight Colors of Fun" specifically (through TV advertisements) and in general (through an integrated marketing communication/IMC approach), including investigations of cases of withdrawal of Smarties TV advertisements on Australian TV stations.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Australian Samrties Campaign “Eight Colors of Fun”

Smarties is a confectionery product under the brand flag Australian Nestle. Smarties products have a flat round shape like M&M's chocolate grains, and have eight different colors in one package. In 2010, Smarties was sued by a coalition concerned with obesity for showing Smarties commercials on the sidelines of the X-Factor television program watched by more than 70 thousand children in Australia (Advertising Standards Bureau, 2010). The Smarties advertisement with the theme “Eight Colors of Fun” also appeared during the screening of the children's film Robots and Shaggy Dog on Australian television stations.

The lawsuit was filed on the grounds that Smarties advertisements are directed directly at children, even though Smarties are not included in the type of healthy food consumption product in accordance with scientific standards set by the Australian government. In other words, the obesity care coalition stated that the Smarties advertisement had violated the established rules, namely that unhealthy food consumption products should not be shown on children's television shows.

Smarties' “Eight Colors of Fun” advertising campaign has a basic concept where eight small children are paired with eight adult artists, then they are tasked with creating artwork inspired by the colors of the Smarties grains they get. According to Nestle, as noted by the Australian Standards Bureau (2010), the “Eight Colors of Fun” TV commercial is actually aimed at parents and caregivers of children. Smarties TV advertisements are used to get the initial attention of the target audience, where the ultimate goal is to lead the target audience to online/internet media, namely to Smarties Australia's official Facebook account. That is, TV commercials ‘only’ is the initial stage of the overall campaign. This is the initial stage of the marketing strategy goal, which is to increase awareness of the target audience. Furthermore, marketing strategies aim to change the behavior of the target audience. This change in behavior can occur in several contexts. In the case of the Smarties campaign, the campaign through Facebook was carried out by sharing ways to interact with young children through fun art activities, be it through videos, tips, and discussion forums. It is hoped that this will inspire parents and caregivers to do art activities that are useful and fun. This

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is the first behavior change. In the end, through the formation of a positive image through this campaign, the target audience is expected to have more confidence in consuming the Smarties brand and become loyal consumers. This is a need to increase product sales and company profits.

Based on the basic concept of Smarties advertising which refers to the target audience of adults, Nestle stated that Smarties ads have been aired during the show's broadcast hours for adults, which is above half past eight in the evening (Mumbrella, 2010). Therefore, Nestle claims that it does not violate the rules when the advertisement is shown on the X-Factor program, a television program that is aired from 19.30 - 20.30 with the recommendation label of PG (Parental Guidance), which can be watched by children under the guidance of their parents labeled PG is not intended directly for children, so that in its implementation, parents are responsible for accompanying and providing explanations to children who watch the PG label show.

3.2 Case Investigation

The initial investigation process was carried out by observing that Smarties did not meet criteria set by the Responsible Children's Marketing Initiative (RCMI) institution as a healthy food product. Based on information from the official website, a 50 gram pack of Smarties contains 16% sugar, 18% saturated fat and 10% fat (Smarties Australia, n.d). The composition does not represent a healthy food product, so Smarties advertisements should not be shown during children's TV program hours.

The second consideration is the display of advertisements on the X-Factor TV program, where only 9% of children watch the program, so that the total number of viewers is not dominated by children. Because the percentage is less than 50%, it can be said that the X-Factor program is not aimed directly at child audience. However, the Australian Standard Bureau decided that the Smarties advertisement still violated the basic principles of RCMI because it was shown in other children's programs, namely the films “Robots” and “Shaggy Dog” (Australian Standard Bureau, 2010).

Nestle responded to this decision by withdrawing the Smarties “Eight Colors of Fun” advertisement from television and the internet. They stated that Nestle would carry out a more stringent selection process for advertisements, especially to ensure that products that fall into the unhealthy food category would not be shown in TV programs for children (Australian Standard Bureau, 2010).

The “Eight Colors of Fun” campaign itself is still ongoing through the social media network Facebook, although the TV ad has been withdrawn from circulation. Facebook itself is a social media site that requires users to be at least 13 years old. According to Dougherty (2010, in Young, 2010), in December 2009, there was an 86% increase from last year in the number of people worldwide who spent their time connecting with friends and family through social media sites. Smarties' official account on Facebook itself clearly shows that they are targeting the "Eight Colors of Fun" campaign to adults, especially parents and caregivers with children aged between 7-12 years old. All statements and language styles used in Smarties' Facebook account clearly represent that Smarties wants to convey a message to adults. An example of a question that Smarties wrote on their Facebook page is “What is the first word your child will say when they start talking?” (Facebook, 2011). It can be concluded that the question is addressed to parents who have small children. These questions encourage people to provide feedback and comments. As a result, communication is carried out in two directions with the ability to respond to each other in almost real time. From this it can be seen that Facebook is one of the social media sites that is able to make its users interact with each other, different from mass media. Facebook is also able to make its users interact personally with companies/brands.

3.3 Post Withdrawal

After the Smarties “Eight Colors of Fun” ad was removed from circulation, Nestle did action through research their Public Relations by formally apologizing for the investigation conducted by the Australian Standard Bureau (Mumbrella, 2010). Through this open act, Nestle proves to its consumers, as well as to other related parties, as a credible and trustworthy brand. In addition, the Smarties TV ad recall incident indirectly provided free publicity to the “Eight Colors of Fun” campaign. This is evidenced by the high access to Youtube and Facebook sites that contain news/Smarties campaigns due to the high curiosity of the public.

Parents and caregivers flock to Facebook and the official Smarties website, where they can watch all episodes of the “Eight Colors of Fun” advertising campaign (there are eight episodes in total, according to the number of colors in the Smarties packaging). Smarties' strategy of using social networking sites as the main media in reaching the target audience cannot be separated from this brand's foresight to see the development of public media use in Australia. According to a survey released by Nielsen (2009, in WARC, 2010), internet

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usage in Australia has increased from 16.1 hours per week in 2008 to 17.6 hours per week in 2008. 2009. This is inseparable from the development of internet connection speed in Australia which is increasing every year.

The internet connection speed in Australia allows Smarties' target audience to explore the features of the "Eight Colors of Fun" campaign available on Smarties' official website and Facebook according to their individual needs. The features provided are in the form of project/activity instructions, music videos, and digital books that can be used after downloading the material. The internet is able to make the target audience to choose and personalize the message, so that they can participate actively by downloading and using the features as they wish.

Facebook's concept that "the more open we are the better" has been adopted by many brands that want to make themselves transparent and open to consumers. As a result, consumers are able to give a positive response to the brand in question, because transparency is one proof that the brand can be trusted (Young, 2010). Through the "Eight Colors of Fun" campaign which provides ideas for art creation activities for parents and children, Smarties also shows that they are a brand that has social responsibility, especially high concern for children's development.

As a result, Smarties managed to become the second most popular brand for the confectionery product category on Facebook for 2010 (Youtube, 2011). This popularity is due to the large number of internet access on social networking sites which causes increased awareness of the target audience towards the Smarties brand. Smarties may fail in TV commercials, but they are able to maximize the use of social media as a means of publicity and advertising, so the failure of Smarties TV ads does not have much impact on the overall campaign.

One of the ways to measure the success of the "Eight Colors of Fun" campaign is by looking at the company's Return on Investment (ROI), which is measured by the percentage of investment costs and investment increments (Investopedia, 2011). Although the number of Smarties sales increased by 9% in 2011, further on whether Smarties can achieve a positive ROI needs to be done. However, if you look at the target objectives of the "Eight Colors of Fun" campaign, Smarties has succeeded in increasing awareness of its target audience, increasing participation and interactive communication between brands and consumers through social networking sites, and increasing product sales by 9%.

4. Conclusion

Nestle is a big brand with many products, not only in Australia but also around the world. Nestle has become a giant brand, one of which is because they have succeeded in gaining the trust of global consumers to continue using Nestle products. Nestle's move to establish internal advertising regulations for its own company demonstrates the brand's responsibility to conduct campaigns ethically. The application of strict controls on the implementation of these regulations will avoid or prevent errors in advertising, such as in the case of Smarties. Internal screening by company management for products with strict advertising regulations, such as confectionery products, can be Nestle's first step in gaining the trust of consumers, shareholders, competitors and other related parties. Internal advertising regulations applied by the company must also be adjusted to the company's advertising agency regulations, in this case Nestle employs Zenith Optimedia as the company's advertising agency. Employment contracts are important, but clear communication is also needed to create understanding between the two parties. Nestle must be able to communicate clearly and in detail about the Smarties "Eight" campaign Colors of Fun", among others, what is the product category, what is the purpose of the campaign, who is the target audience, and what code of ethics must be considered in advertising their products. In addition, regulations between Nestle and the relevant broadcasting institution or TV station must also be considered, considering that TV is the spearhead that conveys advertising messages to the target audience.

The TV station and the people who work in it must have an awareness of the advertising code of ethics, in addition to of course an understanding of the target audience and the campaign concept of each brand. This is important to know, especially those who are in charge of distributing advertisements for each program on a TV station. In the case of Smarties Australia, they must understand that Smarties is a confectionery product where advertisements cannot be shown during children's program hours. In addition, workers at Australian TV stations must understand that the target audience of Smarties advertisements is parents and carers. This is the basic reason for Nestle and Zenith Optimedia to block the application for advertising hours in the

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program's broadcast hours for adults, which is after 19.30 every weekday. The implementation of control and monitoring in the distribution and advertising process is very important for the brand concerned. This is because advertising has a series of processes that are not small, including the process of conceptualizing advertisements, the process of making advertisements, the process of editing advertisements, the process of purchasing media/show hours/advertising spots, and the ad serving process. Brands/companies, advertising agencies, and broadcasting media must be at the same point of understanding, especially about the advertising code of ethics and who is the target audience of the advertisement. An advertising campaign will be most effective if it is delivered through the right media, at the right time, and to the right audience.

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