

RELATIONS BETWEEN NEWS, POLITICS AND ADVERTISING: DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF BENETTON COMMERCIALS

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Abstract

Provocative or shock advertising is one of the influential ways that enable the differentiation and promotion of products in the market and moving the product ahead of other products. In this kind of advertising, being extraordinary and ensuring a highlight within the advertising market is the main goal. But the risk is that the viewers may get irritated by the commercial and the products cannot be sold. At this point, Benetton omitted this risk when the brand decided to work with the artist Oliviero Toscani and developed an alternative advertising approach in the advertising market. Benetton commercials underlined the “political matters” that other brands did not mention or avoided from mentioning and targeted the varying opinions and values of the individuals within the same culture, treading on a tough road. As a brand, it brought forward political and social problems. In its commercial posters, Benetton highlighted the differences and analogies among the people, societies and cultures and stated that it is preparing its commercials with “social responsibility” approach. The question we need to ask is this: what is the “social responsibility” approach of Benetton? Using the dead people in Bosnia, or those dying of HIV? Or those massacred in battle grounds or those who die of hunger? With the claim of social responsibility, Benetton produced examples of shocking advertising with claim of social responsibility and acquired a considerable position in the market.

This study tries to explain the relation between provocation and awareness of political/social incidents in advertising through Benetton commercials. The core target of the study is to reveal and criticize the way capitalism’s hegemonic functioning objectifies/reifies the “bitter” realities. In this perspective, the commercials of Benetton brand, which takes up political and social matters and which are used as the sampling of this study and the way the news photographs were used in advertising copies were analyzed with textual analysis. This study consists of three sections. In the first section, the emergence of the brand was explained with a historical perspective. In the second section, the years when the brand produced the advertising copies that contain political and social matters, how these copies were discussed in the press and how the brand provided the use of news clippings and their recognition by the consumers especially through providing discussion in the media were also examined. To this end, the advertising copies that contain the topics of the agenda were analyzed. In the final section, the findings obtained were considered in the context of the relationship among the press, commercials and politics. This study tries to reveal the way capitalism puts into practice its own ideology by masking it out as “social responsibility” and by triggering the urge to consume among the viewers with the semiology and linguistic content of the copies.

Keywords: Politics, News, Benetton, Oliviero Toscani, Shock Advertising.