Chapter 9

An Argumentative Study on Digital Advertising Literacy

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ABSTRACT

Developments in communication technologies have given rise to the fact that media will increasingly acquire more space in daily life. This increase in media access area causes the expansion of its effect domain. Studies on the problem of media and its effects have led to the understanding that media are considered as dangerous in the socialization process of children and young people. This tendency has also put academics working in the field of sociology, communication sciences, and pedagogy into a state of control orientation. This field, which is the product these tendencies and called media literacy, has expanded, and new literacy models have emerged depending on the media content. One of these new approaches in media literacy is advertising literacy. Studies done on advertising literacy so far are too little in quantity. However, on the qualitative aspect, these studies have shortcomings that stem from the fact that they overlook media digitization.

INTRODUCTION

Advertisements have become a part of everyday life, increasingly. Each individual who has been seen as a consumer or a potential consumer is in a situation surrounded with the advertisement messages. To gain the abilities such as understand, evaluate, comment and/or analyse these messages seem possible if and only with gaining the advertising literacy ability by the consumer/potential consumer. The importance of media literacy and the necessary of the education on this subject is undeniable. And there have been many studies about this subject. On the other hand, advertising literacy has seen as one of the relatively neglected area. In his article that he had wrote in 2010, Nando Malmelin had also pointed out to bewildering paucity of the studies about this subject, while he was defining of advertising literacy and drawing it’s frame. There are some studies, researches and modellings about advertising literacy, which accepting the advertising literacy as an integrative part of media literacy, of the scientists such as Silverblatt (1995), Potter (1998), Mattelart (1991), Ritson and Elliot (1999), O’donohoe and Tynan

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An Argumentative Study on Digital Advertising Literacy

(1998). These studies and modellings had been defined as early stage of developments by Malmelin and he emphasized the necessary of studies more comprehensive (Malmelin, 2010: p. 130). Also, in the mentioned time, it is observed that the these studies have been written about specific subjects such as relationship between advertising and obesity, ingame advertising and children’s consuming behaviours, etc. However, in recent years, the number and scope of the studies and publishings have increased, especially in the second decade of 2000’s. On the one hand, digital media has gained prevalence (with regard to usage rate and diversity); on the other hand, the point of view taking the children as the main target audience of advertising literacy education has changed.

The possibility of content production provided by Web 2.0 technology to ordinary internet users has changed many approaches in the media context. Thus, with a profile that can be created in a very short time, users have an identity in the virtual world. The change proceeds at an incredibly fast dimension. The structure of technologies such as Web 3.0, 4.0 and even recently discussed Web 5.0, including artificial intelligence; as well as applications carried out through wearable technologies, systems that bring human reality to a whole new dimension, such as AR (augmented reality) and VR (virtual reality), and similar applications have taken the interaction between the internet and human to a different dimension. This aspect of the Internet, which changed with the 2000s, has been an important transformation point not only for users but also for advertising producers. At this point, the effect-based hierarchical theoretical structure, which was formed from the triangle of perception, attitude and behavior, which is the subject of advertising in the traditional media, has been replaced by a theoretical structure of different concepts and phenomena.

Concepts such as interaction and reciprocity brought about by digital media make it possible to have almost direct contact with the target audience. On the other hand, the phenomenon of personalization and the self-propagation of the message also enables the consumer / potential consumer to be persuaded to buy and to be used as an advertising tool for advertising producers. At this point, it can be stated that new problematics are emerging. The lack of supervision in social media is an important advantage for advertising producers and advertisers, especially in the process of overcoming advertising constraints in traditional media, and is a serious problem when it comes to consumer impacts. One of the main problems is the presence of a much more vulnerable audience against the negative effects of advertising, despite the age limit for social media users, in which a significant proportion of users in social networks are widely used.

Marketing activities that have been going down to the age of 2-3 in the last few years are one of the main indicators of this situation. The new generation, which is called “digital natives” who are born into digital media, constitutes the target groups of marketing and advertising investments as potential consumers of the future with a focus on creating brand loyalty, even though the technology does not attract foreigners to an intense environment. For these reasons, advertising literacy as an integral field of media literacy education and digital advertising literacy as a specific field seem to be the only solution.

From this perspective in this study, advertising literacy, but especially in the light of developing technologies, digital advertising literacy is discussed. Since the 1990s to today’s world, some studies on advertising literacy have been evaluated. And the features required to become traditional or digital advertising literate are tried to be revealed. This study is derived from the author’s doctoral dissertation “Tüketme Dayalı Biliş Endüstrisi ve Reklam Bağlamında Bir Dijital Reklam Okuryazarlığı Eğitim Modeli Önerisi (A Digital Advertising Literacy Education Model Proposal in the Context of Consumption-Based Awareness Industry and Advertising). Undoubtedly, in the original study, the subject is examined in more detail and the arguments put forward are presented with a research. However, due to the format