Advertising Journalism: Benefits, Challenges and Ethical Concerns

Matias Wang*

Department of Cyber Security for Society, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK

Abstract

Advertising journalism is a form of journalism that is designed to promote a product or service, rather than to provide objective news reporting. It is a type of marketing communication that aims to influence the audience's perception of a brand or product. Advertising journalism can take many forms, from sponsored content to native advertising, and is often used by companies to reach new customers and build their brand. However, this type of journalism has been the subject of much criticism, with some arguing that it blurs the line between editorial content and advertising, and can mislead consumers.

Keywords: Advertising journalism • News reporting • Marketing communication

Introduction

Advertising journalism has been around for centuries, in various forms. In the 17th century, newspapers in Europe and North America began publishing advertisements for goods and services alongside their news stories. These advertisements were often written in a news style, with the aim of attracting readers' attention and persuading them to purchase the advertised products. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, advertising journalism became more sophisticated, with companies employing journalists to create promotional content. One of the most famous examples of this was the "advertorial", which was a feature article that appeared in a newspaper or magazine, but was written and paid for by a company. Advertorials were designed to look like regular news stories, but were actually advertisements in disguise [1].

Literature Review

Advertising journalism has evolved further, with the rise of digital media and social networks. Companies can now create content in a variety of formats, from blog posts and videos to podcasts and social media posts. This content can be sponsored, meaning that the company pays to have it featured on a website or social network, or it can be native, meaning that it is created by the company but looks like regular editorial content.

There are many different types of advertising journalism, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. Some of the most common types include: Sponsored content is content that is created by a company and paid for by that company to be featured on a website or social network. The content is often written by professional journalists, but it is designed to promote the company's products or services. Sponsored content is sometimes labeled as such, but it can also be difficult to distinguish from regular editorial content. Native advertising is content that is created by a company, but is designed to look like regular editorial content. Native ads are often featured on websites

***Address for Correspondence:** Matias Wang, Department of Cyber Security for Society, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK, E-mail: matias@yahoo.com*

or social networks, and can be difficult to distinguish from regular content. Native advertising can be effective because it is less intrusive than traditional advertising, but it can also be misleading if it is not clearly labeled as an advertisement [2].

Discussion

Influencer marketing is a type of advertising journalism that involves partnering with social media influencers to promote a product or service. Influencers are people with large social media followings, who are seen as authoritative or influential in a particular niche. Companies pay influencers to create content that promotes their products, such as sponsored posts or videos. Branded content is content that is created by a company, but is not directly promotional. Branded content can take many forms, from blog posts and videos to podcasts and social media posts. The goal of branded content is to build brand awareness and engage with customers, rather than to sell a specific product. Product placement is a type of advertising journalism that involves featuring a product or service in a TV show, movie, or other type of media. Product placement can be effective because it reaches a large audience and can make the product seem more desirable. However, it can also be seen as intrusive or manipulative [3,4].

Advertising journalism has been the subject of much criticism, with some arguing that it blurs the line between editorial content. Advertising journalism is a type of journalism that is focused on promoting products or services, rather than providing objective news reporting. This type of journalism has been criticized by many for its potential to mislead consumers, erode journalistic integrity, and blur the lines between advertising and editorial content. In this article, we will explore some of the key criticisms of advertising journalism, and their implications for the media industry and society as a whole. Misleading Content is one of the main criticisms of advertising journalism is that it can be misleading to consumers. Sponsored content and native advertising are often designed to look like regular editorial content, making it difficult for readers to distinguish between the two. This can lead to consumers believing that the content is unbiased and objective, when in fact it is promoting a particular product or service. This can be particularly problematic when it comes to health and wellness content, as misleading information can have serious consequences for people's health [5].

Another criticism of advertising journalism is that it can erode journalistic integrity and raise ethical concerns. Journalists are expected to report the news objectively, without bias or the influence of outside interests. However, when journalists are paid to create content that promotes a particular product or service, it can undermine their credibility and independence. This can also be seen as a conflict of interest, as journalists may be more likely to report

favorably on companies that they have a financial relationship with. Advertising journalism can also undermine trust in the media as a whole. When readers are unable to distinguish between editorial content and advertising, it can lead to a lack of trust in the media and the information it provides. This is particularly problematic at a time when trust in the media is already low, with many people turning to alternative sources of information such as social media [6].

Diminished Quality of another criticism of advertising journalism is that it can lead to a decline in the quality of journalism. When journalists are paid to create content that promotes a particular product or service, it can distract from their core mission of providing objective news reporting. This can lead to a focus on clickbait headlines and sensationalist content, rather than in-depth reporting and analysis. Decline in Advertising Revenue, while advertising journalism can be profitable for media companies, it can also lead to a decline in traditional advertising revenue. As more companies shift their advertising dollars to sponsored content and native advertising, traditional forms of advertising such as banner ads and print ads may become less effective. This can lead to a decline in revenue for media companies, which may in turn lead to a decline in the quality of journalism they are able to provide [7].

Decrease in Editorial Independence, another concern of advertising journalism is that it can limit the independence of editorial content. Media companies may be more likely to report favorably on companies that advertise with them, or to avoid reporting on stories that may be controversial or damaging to advertisers. This can limit the range of viewpoints and perspectives that are presented in the media, and can lead to a homogenization of content. Finally, advertising journalism can be seen as a threat to democracy. A free and independent press is a cornerstone of democratic societies, providing citizens with the information they need to make informed decisions. However, when media companies prioritize advertising revenue over their core mission of providing objective news reporting, it can undermine this crucial role of the media in a democracy. This can have serious implications for the functioning of democratic societies, and for the ability of citizens to hold those in power accountable [8-10].

Conclusion

Advertising journalism is a complex and controversial aspect of the media landscape. While it has its benefits, such as providing new revenue streams for struggling news organizations, it also presents a number of challenges and ethical concerns that must be carefully considered. Critics argue that advertising journalism blurs the line between editorial and advertising content, undermines journalistic standards and credibility, and threatens the quality and independence of news coverage. These concerns must be taken seriously, and media organizations must work to ensure that their advertising practices are transparent, ethical, and in line with journalistic principles. At the same time, advertising journalism is a reality that cannot be ignored. As traditional revenue models for journalism continue to erode, media organizations must explore new ways to sustain their operations. By engaging in open and honest dialogue with audiences and stakeholders, media organizations can develop advertising strategies that support their journalism while maintaining their commitment to the public interest.

Acknowledgement

Conflict of Interest

None.

References

1. Schauster, Erin E, Patrick Ferrucci and Marlene S. Neill. "Native advertising is the new journalism: How deception affects social responsibility." *Am Behav Sci* 60(2016): 1408-1424.

2. Dens, Nathalie and Karolien Poels. "The rise, growth and future of branded content in the digital media landscape." *Int J Adv* (2022): 1-10.

3. Christensen, Lars Thøger, Mette Morsing and Ole Thyssen. "CSR as aspirational talk." *Org* 20 (2013): 372-393.

4. Deuze, Mark. "Media life." 33 (2011): 137-148.

5. McChesney, Robert W. "Digital disconnect: How capitalism is turning the Internet against democracy." *New Press*. (2013).

6. Chung, Myojung, Greg J. Munno and Brian Moritz. "Triggering participation: Exploring the effects of third-person and hostile media perceptions on online participation." *Comput Hum Behav* 53 (2015): 452-461.

7. Fernandes, Kelwin, Pedro Vinagre and Paulo Cortez. "A proactive intelligent decision support system for predicting the popularity of online news." 17 (2015) 535-546.

8. Fu, Xiangling, Jintae Lee, Chenwei Yan and Li Gao. "Mining newsworthy events in the traffic accident domain from Chinese microblog." *Int J Inf Technol Decis Mak* 18 (2019): 717-742.

9. García-Avilés and José Alberto. "Online newsrooms as communities of practice: Exploring digital journalists' applied ethics." *J Media Ethics* 29 (2014): 258-272.

10. Gil, Mateusz, Krzysztof Wróbel, Jakub Montewka and Floris Goerlandt. "A bibliometric analysis and systematic review of shipboard decision support systems for accident prevention." *Saf sci* 128 (2020): 104717.