



METHODOLOGY FOR PRINT ADVERTISEMENT QUALITY ASSESSMENT

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Abstract

For the purpose of detecting faults in print advertisements, the author has developed a methodology for print advertisement assessment. This will help perform analysis of print advertisements in order to detect more precisely the mistakes present in the message and thus allow marketing specialists to improve communication with the target audience and increase the return from advertisement. The author has established five criteria that influence the efficiency of an advertisement and are most important components of practically every print advertisement. These are headline, main text, design, slogan and logo. To assess print advertisements, the author proposes creation of an expert group. Each expert must be highly qualified in his field; therefore, this paper also includes methodology for evaluation and selection of experts. The selected experts assess print advertisements according to the established criteria. After the assessment, the advertisement quality is calculated and areas (criteria) of errors are detected. The author has proved by a particular example the practical importance of the methodology developed in this paper.

The necessity to develop a methodology for print advertisement quality assessment arose from researches performed by the author on mistakes occurring in the advertisements of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) [1; 8]. The author intended to perform these researches in order to help entrepreneurs detect drawbacks in their advertisements so that they may improve the advertisement quality, as well as increase the effectiveness and return thereof.

SMEs often pay unreasonably little attention to the quality of advertisement development regardless of limitations that SMEs face in their activity: shortage of resources, lack of advertising experience, business size, tactical and strategic client-oriented problems [2; 3; 6]. SMEs owners lack the required knowledge and experience for development of effective advertisements; they do not believe in the impact that marketing communication can provide. SMEs put greater emphasis on other marketing activities, thus undervaluing the contribution of advertising in product promotion [4; 5; 7]. To demonstrate the main areas of mistakes in advertising message, the author has developed the abovementioned methodology in order to perform a research – the assessment of advertisement quality.



For the purposes of this research, the author has used the method of expertise. An expert is a qualified specialist who expresses his opinion in the process of research. There are two approaches to organization of an expertise: using a specialist opinion (evaluation) on the research object, namely individual expertise or an opinion (evaluation) expressed by a group of experts, namely collective expertise. Having regard of the research aims and objectives, as well as the character of the research object and given situation, the author has made a decision to use the method of individual expert evaluation.

The assessment can be given in the form of an interview or an inquiry. Considering the aims and objectives of this analysis, as well as all technical conditions, the author decided to offer each expert a questionnaire to be filled individually. The experts had to give their responses during a month after receiving the material.

In practice, an inquiry form distance was performed without the direct presence of the author. In the selection of experts, the author was guided by their competency depending on their field of activity, professional knowledge, and work experience. Moreover, it must be considered that a specialist who is highly qualified in a narrow field may not always be able to evaluate general problems; therefore, among the experts, specialists of different profile were included. In author's opinion, the results of an expertise are more valid if the experts can express imagination and unconventional thinking.

Guided by the abovementioned criteria, the author first nominated 15 experts who were asked to answer questions about the problem to be examined in the expertise. Specialists evaluated their level of competency in each question on a five-grade scale, i.e. using the highest score for the question they are the most competent in. Thereafter, the author compared the individual evaluation of each specialist with the average self-assessment rate of potential experts in all questions.

The level of expert competency was evaluated according to the following formula:

$$K_i = \frac{\sum_{l=1}^v V_{il} \beta_l}{\sum_{l=1}^v V \max_i \beta_l} \quad l = \overline{1, v} \quad (1)$$

where:

- K_i – level of expert competency;
- V_1 – expert's self-assessment score in question 1;
- V_{\max} – maximal score in question 1;
- β_1 – weight factor for question 1.

The quality of expertise results is greatly affected not only by the competency of each expert, but also by the number of experts in the group. Overly high number of experts may often decrease the average competency of the group, while in case of a small expert group preconditions form due to the significant influence on the outcome by each person.

Guided by the level of competency of the potential experts, the author decided to involve five experts in the process of this research. The author has invited five highly qualified experts



to evaluate the selected advertisements: two experts represented science and three experts were representatives of the leading advertising agencies *Euro RSCG*, *JWT* and *Inorek&Grey*.

Using the Formula 1, the following 5 experts were selected from 15 candidates (Table 1).

Table 1

Experts selected for assessment of advertisement quality

Company, position	Name, surname	Level of competency
1. Director of EURO RSCG	G.Ozoliņš	0.82
2. Director of advertising agency JWT	M.Krumiņa	0.78
3. Director of advertising agency Inorek&Grey	J.Grasis	0.83
4. Head of the Chair of marketing of University of Latvia	V.Praude	0.79
5. Lecturer of the Chair of marketing of University of Latvia	J.Šalkovska	0.75

The aim of the research was to assess and analyze the quality of marketing communications of Latvian SMEs. The experts evaluated advertisements printed in Latvian press during year 2010. The author of the paper has assumed that SMEs make substantial mistakes in their advertisements. In order to check this statement the author of the paper has investigated 824 advertisements created by SMEs. The author of the paper has also invited five highly qualified experts to evaluate the selected advertisements: two experts represented science and three experts were representatives of the leading advertising agencies: *Euro RSCG*, *JWT* and *Inorek&Grey*.

Each advertisement consists of several components performing certain functions. The key components of an advertisement are as follows: a headline, basic text, slogan, logo and visual layout. The author has analysed all the aforementioned components in this paper.

All the components were evaluated by experts according to a five-grade scale (see Figure 1) except the logo, for which the evaluation “present/not present” was made.



Figure 1. The scale of advertisement assessment

Source: the author of the paper



New Challenges of Economic and Business Development – 2012

May 10 - 12, 2012, Riga, University of Latvia

A headline performs an important function in the advertisement. Several studies have proved that while turning over the pages, a person initially spends only 2-3 seconds for reading an advertisement. During this time the advertiser must attract the reader's attention, as well as motivate to read the content of the advertisement. In other words, the amount of people willing to acquaint themselves with the content of the advertisement greatly depends on the headline. By reading the headline a person quickly determines whether the particular advertisement is interesting for him/her at that moment or not. If there is no headline, a person is not able to make a decision whether it is worth to acquaint him/herself with an advertisement. A headline must be simple and easily understandable. If it is not possible to understand a headline, a great possibility exists that a person will not pay any attention to the advertisement. One should avoid "blind" headlines when they are made with the only purpose to attract people's attention. In such a case a lot of people can acquaint themselves with an advertisement, except the target audience of an advertiser [10; 14; 15].

In the framework of this research, the experts were offered to evaluate the headline from 0 to 5 grades, where 0 meant that, in the expert's opinion, the advertisement did not have a headline at all, 1 – that the headline was totally unsatisfactory (did not express the essence of the content of an advertisement, nor encouraged to read the advertisement further) and 5 meant that the headline of the advertisement was completely satisfactory and encouraged to read the advertisement thoroughly. The analysis of the results showed that the evaluation made by each expert is below the average, namely, below 3 grades. The higher average evaluation is made by expert No. 3 (JWT) and it is 2.71 grades. The lowest evaluation is made by expert No. 1 which is 2.51 (University of Latvia). A mode or the most frequently used evaluation is 2. Regardless of the critical importance of the headline, in 10.7% of the cases on average there was no headline in SMEs advertisements at all. Figure 1 demonstrates how each expert individually evaluated the headlines.

A basic text – it is a logical continuation of the headline. Its basic task is to turn the readers' attracted attention into the interest about the advertised product, as well as motivate to perform an action. In order to do that it is necessary not only to specify the needs of the potential customer, but also the way how to satisfy them. The text should contain the arguments which would convince to purchase the product. Every word in the basic text is important and therefore banalities should be avoided, the language should be precise, and, as far as possible, facts should be mentioned. To rouse the reader's interest and motivate him/her to an action the basic text should include answers to six questions (5 W's and one H):

- what – what is advertised,
- who – who is the advertiser,
- when – the period within which it is possible to purchase the product,
- where – the place where it is possible to purchase the product,
- how – product purchase conditions,
- why – benefits received by the customer upon buying the product [5; 14; 16].

In the framework of our research, experts evaluated the basic text of an advertisement according to the 5 grade scale from 1 to 5, where "1" meant that the basic text is totally unsatisfactory (does not motivate, convince, nor rouses interest) and "5" meant that the basic text is very satisfactory. "0" in experts' evaluations indicates that there was no basic text in the advertisement. The evaluation results showed that each expert evaluated the basic text below 3



New Challenges of Economic and Business Development – 2012

May 10 - 12, 2012, Riga, University of Latvia

grades. That means that the quality of the basic text, as well as quality of the headline is below the average. The lowest evaluation is made by expert No. 1 (University of Latvia) and it is 2.71 grades of the five possible grades. The highest evaluation of the basic text is made by expert No. 5 (Inorek&Grey) and it is 2.93 grades. A mode or the most frequently used evaluation is 3. In 5.4% of the cases on average there was no basic text in the advertisement.

A slogan – it is a laconic, easily recognizable phrase providing the essence of the advertisement. A slogan formulates the essence of the offer briefly and concisely and it plays an important role in the advertisement. A slogan should demonstrate a benefit of the customer. Slogans are often used to show a position of the company. In general, slogans may be divided in three groups:

- related. Include a name of the product. The name and slogan of the product are not separable.
- attracted. Related to the name of the product both by rhythm, and phonetics. Namely, a slogan may be used without the name of the product but in such a case, a slogan will not be so understandable.
- independent. These slogans are created without the name of the product. The drawback of these slogans is the fact that it is often complicated to connect or associate them with the product [12; 14].

In the framework of this research, the experts evaluated slogans according to a 5-grade Likert scale, where “1” meant that a slogan was totally unsatisfactory (did not express the essence of the offer, did not specify the benefit of the customer, nor showed the position) and “5” – very satisfactory. “0” meant that there was no slogan in the advertisement. The analysis of slogan evaluations shows that all experts evaluated them a little above the average, namely, above 3 grades. The lowest evaluation is made by expert No. 5 (Inorek&Grey) and it is 3.07 grades. The highest evaluation is made by expert No. 3 (JWT) and it is 3.74 grades. However, Figure 6 shows the proportion of the advertisements without a slogan pursuant to the experts’ evaluations. On average, 87.4% of SMEs neither take the advantages of a slogan nor try to show the position of the company or benefit of the customer briefly and concisely. Undoubtedly, it is a great mistake.

An advertisement is not imaginable without a visual layout which includes an illustration, logo of the company, graphic headline and other parts of the text, as well as some other additional components (frames, bullets, etc.).

The key function of the visual layout is to attract the attention of readers. Moreover, there are also other functions, such as:

- **indicatory.** The existing visual objects tell about the content of the advertisement, specify the subject of the advertisement, its users, as well as various details related to the subject and users.
- **organizational.** Serves to provide a harmonic advertising composition, as well as manage the reader’s attention in the sequence required by the advertiser.
- **interpreting.** Helps to explain complicated information. Graphs and charts are mainly used for this purpose.
- **transforming.** Often specified figuratively.
- **decorative.** In this case decorative components are established to make an advertisement more attractive for the reader’s perception.



Visual components in the advertisement may perform several tasks among which there are also the following tasks:

- to attract attention of the potential customers,
- to maintain attention during perception of an advertisement,
- to interpret properties of the product declared in the text,
- to provide atmosphere of faithfulness,
- to arouse a wish to purchase the product [11; 12; 13].

In the framework of this research, the experts also evaluated the visual layout according to the Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 meant that the visual layout is totally unsatisfactory (low quality illustration, does not attract attention) and “5” – that the visual layout is very satisfactory. Only the average evaluation made by expert No. 2 (Euro RSCG) was a little above the average, namely, 3.02. The rest experts evaluated the visual layout below the average. The lowest average evaluation is made by expert No. 1 (University of Latvia).

A logo is the original image of a full or abbreviated name of the organization or product. A logo is one of the most important components of the corporate image of the enterprise. It serves in order to identify the enterprise in the market, as well as distinguish products of different enterprises. A correctly made logo must be:

- easily remaining in one's memory,
- original,
- associative,
- expressive,
- functional,
- laconic [9; 13].

In consumers' opinion, the existence of a logo serves as a quality guarantee of the product. The products without a logo are called as “noname”. Three types of logos are most often mentioned in the literature:

- an original graphic image of the name,
- a symbol of the enterprise. Type image,
- a block of the enterprise. Combination of the name and image.

A logo should perform the following 6 main functions:

- actual,
- expressive,
- referential,
- impressive,
- poetic,
- metalinguistic.

The experts of our research had to determine if there is a logo in the advertisement or not. It was disclosed that on average, in 21.7% of the cases SMEs do not place a logo in their advertisements.



The total evaluation of each marketing communication element by all experts is calculated according to the following formula:

$$\bar{x}_i = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^n \sum_{l=1}^v x_{il} \beta_l}{mn} \quad i = \overline{1, k} \quad (2)$$

where:

- \bar{x}_i – the average evaluation of a communication element;
- β_l – score (1–5) characterising the evaluation of a marketing communication element;
- l – the expert;
- m – the number of marketing communication elements.

The experts were asked to record their evaluation in the following tables.

Table 2

Table for assessment of advertisement heading

Advertisement No.	Evaluation					
	1	2	3	4	5	Not present
1						
2						
....						

Table 3

Table for assessment of advertisement basic text

Advertisement No.	Evaluation					
	1	2	3	4	5	Not present
1						
2						
....						

Table 4

Table for assessment of advertisement logo

Advertisement No.	Evaluation	
	Present	Not present
1		
2		
....		



Table 5

Table for assessment of advertisement slogan

Advertisement No.	Evaluation					Not present
	1	2	3	4	5	
1						
2						
....						

Table 6

Table for assessment of advertisement visual layout

Advertisement No.	Evaluation				
	1	2	3	4	5
1					
2					
....					

Using the methodology developed for advertisement quality assessment, the author has performed the analysis of 824 print advertisements. From the analysis of the results, the following **conclusions and suggestions** can be drawn. Experts evaluated the four key components of an advertisement – a headline, basic text, slogan and visual layout according to the five-degree scale. The evaluation “has/does not have” was made for the fifth component – a logo of an advertisement. The commission of experts consisted of 5 people among whom there were the leading specialists of the international advertising agencies *Euro RSCG*, *Inorek&Grey* and *JWT*, as well as two scientists of the University of Latvia. The implemented research allows to conclude that, in general, the quality of advertisements of SMEs is unsatisfactory.

Upon summarizing evaluations of each advertisement component it was established that, in general, all components are provided in low quality, namely, each component performs its functions in the advertisement rather satisfactorily. The main research results are as follows: the maximum average evaluation of the headline is 2.71 grades (expert No. 3, *JWT*), the maximum average evaluation of the basic text is 2.93 (expert No. 5, *Inorek&Grey*), the maximum average evaluation of the slogan is 3.74 (expert No. 3, *JWT*) and the maximum average evaluation of the visual layout – 3.02 grades (expert No. 2, *Euro RSCG*). On average, 87.4% of SMEs do not use a slogan in their advertisements.

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New Challenges of Economic and Business Development – 2012

May 10 - 12, 2012, Riga, University of Latvia

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