Ethical aspects of gender stereotypes in Romanian advertising

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Abstract: In this paper we aim at arguing that the advertising agencies – as significant organizations in the field of public communication – should follow the example of business corporations that are voluntarily using ethical practices to increase the trust of customers. One area where this can be done safely and constructively is the area of gender stereotypes in advertisement. By removing gender stereotypes and promoting non-stereotypical, creative images of gender relations, ads can simultaneously promote their brands as open-minded, creative and modern and inspire building the trust of their customers.

Keywords: postmodern ethics, advertisements, business ethics, responsibility, gender stereotypes

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Aspects éthiques des stéréotypes de genre dans les publicités roumaines

Résumé: Dans cet article, nous voulons montrer que les agences de publicité devraient inscrire leurs démarches de comunication dans la même logique que les sociétés commerciales qui fondent leurs actions de communication sur des pratiques éthiques afin d'augmenter la confiance des clients. Un domaine où cela peut être fait en toute sécurité et de manière constructive est le domaine des stéréotypes de genre dans la publicité. En supprimant les stéréotypes de genre et en promouvant des images non-stéréotypés, voire créatives, des relations entre les sexes, les publicités

construiront ainsi la promotion des marques dans une vision basée sur des valeurs telles l'esprit ouvert, créatif, moderne, inspirant la confiance à leurs clients.

Mots-clés : éthique postmoderne, publicité, éthique des affaires, responsabilité, stéréotypes de genre

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This paper thesis is that the advertising agencies should live up to their role as major organizations in the field of public communication and increase their usage of ethical practices by removing the negative gender stereotypes and by promoting non-stereotypical, creative images of gender relations. In doing so, the advertising agencies will follow the golden example of business corporations that are voluntarily using ethical practices to increase the trust of customers. By giving up to the use of negative gender stereotypes and promoting non-stereotypical images of gender relations, ads can simultaneously promote their brands as open-minded, creative and modern and inspire building the trust of their customers.

1. Why ethics matters? Ethics, advertising, and negative gender stereotypes

In contemporary society, everything is or can be understood through the lenses of ethics. As Gilles Lipovetsky famously put it, "The XXIst century will either be ethical or not be at all" (Lipovetsky 1993). What Lipovetsky had in mind was a sort of post-modern, "every day" ethics that has given up the moral ideal of "duty" of the Kantian modern ethics and found a place close to the postmodern individual. As any Google search might prove, today everything - from food to clothes, from means of transportation to mere waste (Joergens, 2006: 360-371, Chen, Xiao-feng, 2010; Hawkins, 2006) - can be considered and evaluated from ethical lenses. This might seem to a superficial view as a comminution of ethics, but, more carefully considered, it enables ethicists to expand their influence over all aspects of society.

Nowadays, an increasing number of authors talk about the need of adopting and following ethical requirements in the making of ads. However, ethics and advertising do not represent an easy mix. For all those in the field of professional ethics, it can only turn out paradoxical that "the general public rated marketers and advertising executives below politicians and lawyers in terms of their value to society" (Kendrick, Fullerton, Kim, 2013: 141). This under-evaluation of professionals from the economic and commercial communication takes place under an ethical background. It is based on stereotypes consolidated in time either to say that advertising ethics/ business ethics is an oxymoron, or that the profit is the sole purpose of commercial/ advertising activities, and therefore ethics can only be fortuitous, without any direct connection with the development of those activities.

Highly suggestive in this respect is the research performed by C.B. Pratt. He investigates to what extent rigid moral standards are applied by the members of the American Advertising Federation. His research emphasizes, on the one hand, professionals' tendency to diminish the absolute power of moral concepts and to introduce relativity in their application and, as a consequence, on the other hand, the mistrust of the public in both the messages from the industry and in the ethical stan-

dards that are practiced in the advertising industry. Pratt recommends a more proper application of the moral principles and standards that are included in the professional codes of the communicators (Pratt, 1995). In another study, Pratt and James emphasize this idea, stating that neglecting deontological ethics by advertisers brings the negative image of the industry and the lack of trust of the public towards advertising, advertising becoming thus even more vulnerable in front of ethical dilemmas. (Pratt, James, 1994: 457)

One area of the advertising that would certainly benefit from the application of higher ethical standards is the one connected with the display and construction of gender. Even if disputed and contested at all levels, negative gender stereotypes (hyper-sexualisation, objectification, enforcing rigid gender roles) still tend to be used on a large scale in advertising, as they are in related fields, such as media in general (Tank, Prinzing, 2014; Roventa-Frumusani, 2014; Borza, Grunberg, Văcărescu, 2006; Frunză, 2015; Moraru, 2009). A philosophical explanation of how stereotypes work, transposed in the semiotic language, may be the following: "In the dialectics of media representations, the texts are transformed into images and images into icons" (Petrof, 2015: 207).

Elimination of gender stereotypes in advertising represents an area of concern not only for scientists, but also for European legislators. Thus, one recent directive of the EU Parliament (Resolution 2012/2116 (INI) /March 12, 2013) recommends using creativity in advertising to promote non-stereotypical gender images. In this paper, we defend the idea that the elimination of gender stereotypes in advertising will do even more for the advertising industry: not only will it help it become more ethical, but in the long run will increase the trust of consumers in the industry. However, gender stereotypes in advertising are not easy to eradicate, as they are entangled in a network of cultural significations. Moreover, as several theorists show, various approaches may be developed on the functions of gender stereotypes: "Stereotype and counter-stereotype are not the only alternatives for gender representation, the innovation lays here in the possible caricature, and in the denaturalization of the parades" (Marillonnet, 2014: 139). In the words of Sut Jhally, advertising represents an "all-pervasive propaganda system for commodities" (Jhally, 2002: 331). Apart from the tendentious term chosen by Sut Jhally, it is worth mentioning the four main areas he identifies as being deeply influenced by the commodity image system, beside the construction of the concept of satisfaction. The first one is gender identity: "What a better place to choose than an area of a social life that can be communicated at a glance and that reaches into the core of individual identity." (Jhally, 2002: 331) Another area is the electoral politics, through the predisposition to detour the attention from the serious problems to the focus on symbolic and emotional aspects. A third sphere considerably influenced by the commodity image system is the experience and the structure of children's play. "Play in fact has become highly ritualized- less an exploration and a solidification of personal experience and developing conceptual schema that a rearticulation of the fantasy world provided by market designers." (Klein in Jhally, 2002: 332) The last area is represented by the spheres that were defined mostly by the perception and the experience of the audience (good examples are the music videos). Out of the four areas identified by Sut Jhally, it is remarkable that two of them are gender-related (children's play in today's consumer society is heavily gender-coded).

Certainly, the idea that gender identity represents an important theme in the construction of advertising message is not new. Ervin Goffman's classic Gender Advertisements (1976) offers a reading of the way in which the image of women is outlined in advertising texts. His investigation, though it is not the starting point of this type of interpretation, provides the conceptual tools necessary for approaching advertising from this perspective.

Conceiving the social situation as "arenas of mutual monitoring", Goffman recognizes in the advertising text an important voice in the outlining of the gender displays which he defines as the conventionalized portrayals of the culturally establish correlates of sex (Goffman, 1976:1). He considers that "although the pictures shown here cannot be taken as representative of gender behaviour in real life, one can probably make a significant statement about them, namely, that *as pictures*, they are not perceived as peculiar and unnatural." (Goffman, 1976: 25)

Advertising succeeds this because it "is a major (…) institution for the circulation and distribution of ideological values."(Wernick, 1991: 25) But advertising is not just a neutral mechanism that gives to the public the values that already belong to it, but it can become "ideologically creative," due to its „functionally determined affinity for the middle of the road" which permits identifying the „lowest common ideological denominator" especially in the situations characterized by "an ideological tension", such as gender, sexuality, work/family roles, etc (Wernick, 1991: 42; Grad, 2014: 78).

The manner in which advertising texts reflect this "ideological tension" when gender is at stake, is captured by Douglas Kellner's analyses of the advertisements for Malboro and Virginia Slims cigarettes. Kellner speaks of a "pedagogy" of advertising which teaches individuals a worldview, values and behavior models. (Kellner, 1991: 66). Stating that "all ads are social texts which respond to key developments during the period in which they appear" (Kellner, 1991: 68), Kellner asserts the necessity of developing the public's competences in critically reading media images, and particularly advertising images. Thus, giving the advertising characteristics, it is one of the most advanced areas of the images production, where is invested money and talent, its impact on the education and formation of the public is important.

By underlying these deep connections between advertising and gender, we are not trying to find an excuse for those ad creators that distribute the female actors into rigid, stereotypical gender roles. We just take note how deeply intricate are those stereotypes into the fabric of advertisement and how solid one's arguments must be to determine the professionals in those fields to give up on them and replace them with more creative ways of portraying genders. Especially since contemporary consumers are no longer willing to tolerate what they perceive as "offensive advertisement" and seem to require themselves for companies that are getting involved into social responsibility practices (Bae, Rudd, Bilgihan: 2015).

Here, consumers have every right to demand higher standards from the part of advertising agencies, and we firmly believe that one area that is easily covered is that of negative gender stereotypes. Giving up to the use of negative stereotypes, no matter how hard might seem at first sight, can be done following the example of the

code of ethical practices adopted by the business corporations, as we will explore more at large in the third section of the paper.

2. Romanian students' views on stereotypical ads

In Romania, advertising and ethics are found in close correlation in the regulatory documents concerning advertising. Both the laws and the Code of Advertising Practice have clear provisions concerning the necessity of an efficient ethical communication. According to Article 6 on social responsibility: "6.1 – The communication mustn't contain any form of discrimination or defamation based on social or political criteria, race, nationality, sex, age, religion, origin, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation etc. 6.2 – The communication must respect human dignity in all aspects. 6.3 – The communication mustn't contain statements or representations that incite to verbal, mental or physical violence. 6.4 – The communication must avoid exploitation of fear, suffering and superstition, unless this is justified. 6.5. – The communication mustn't incite or seem to support or encourage the violation of law or decent behavior" (*The Code of Advertising Practice*, 2014). Moreover, these provisions are rooted in the sphere of social responsibility, and therefore relating them to the business ethics model of social responsibility is a straightforward step.

At the same time, in the educational system, in the curriculum for students in Marketing, Commercial Communication, PR and Advertising, the place of courses in ethics is becoming more prominent. This aspect was emphasized in many publications: "After a long period of neglect, ethics is making a comeback in economic education and research, and the theoreticians are now turning their attention to antic and pre-capitalist writings dedicated to this subject, as a fundamental element of social health and cohesion, as well as of viable open economic systems." (Petcu, Dinu, 2014: 921). It might be that the most noticeable way to integrate ethics is by introducing ethical communication in the format of courses on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). This includes both an education in the spirit of the social responsibility of organizations, and the cultivation of a social responsibility for everyone who is involved in public communication, including the advertising communication. One can note a general tendency that: "Ethics and social responsibility are promoted as distinct subjects as part of the higher education institutions' mission to ensure the transfer of knowledge, professional abilities, and career competences in order to support sustainable development. Therefore, the orientation of business education towards the perspective of ethics was included in the school curriculum, and the field is meant to reach the improvement of professional skills through the adoption of ethical values" (Petcu, Dinu, 2014: 921).

One can also note a tendency to integrate social responsibility in all the forms of academic training. This concern for ethics in the personal development of professional must embrace all the fields: the economical, social, and political one. Of utmost importance is cultivating it in advertising because advertising is being increasingly present in every aspect of one's individual life and thus it becomes an essential factor for social development.

In the Code of Advertising Practice, the topic of gender is included in the article on social responsibility. In order to understand why the development of such a res-

ponsibility is mandatory, we will present several findings of an empirical research carried out among students from several university centres of Romania[1].

An online questionnaire for students was distributed in the timeframe 23.04.2014-07.05.2014 to 220 students from three main university centers from Romania (from Cluj, Bucharest, and Iasi). The questionnaire was distributed via several professors who contacted their students. Administration of the questionnaire was anonymously and voluntary. Apart from several questions related to demographical features, the questionnaire investigated students' opinion on six ads (Uber Nuts – Uber Reclama, Lays – Fii pe fază, Eugenia – Emoții originale, CrazyDomains.co.uk TV Ad, Don't risk dudeness – Morning, Sleep – with Neil Patrick Harris), out of which three have been banned by the Romanian National Broadcasting Council (CNA) (Uber Nuts – Uber Reclama, Lays – Fii pe fază, Eugenia – Emoții originale)[2]. The questionnaire was multiple-choice; for each ad they were offered three questions asking about their opinion on a 5 range Likert-type scale – whether they found the ads "funny", "offensive towards women/men", and "creative". The three choices were ones that emerged and were tested in two focus groups with MA students from the Department of Philosophy and respectively the Department of Advertising, organized in the weeks before the questionnaire. Afterwards, students were asked whether they agreed to two sentences: "I would like to see more often this type of ads" and respectively "I believe this ad should be banned".

Concerning the demographic characteristic of the students' sample, 77% of the respondents were women and 23% men; 80% of respondents indicated urban domicile – proportions that resemble the proportion of gender and domicile distribution in the programs of humanities and social sciences in Romania. For 90% of the students, the Internet represented the main source of information, and 61% spent more than three hours online/day – figures that are convergent with the statistics for the digital natives[3] from Romania.

In this paper, we will focus on the three ads that were, at the date of their viewing, banned to be displayed in the audio-visual space from Romania, following the decisions of the Romanian Council of Broadcasting (CNA).

In the banned Über Nuts ad a young attractive woman speaks about the characteristics of a huge yellow bulldozer that is allegedly offered as a prize for the consumers of a peanuts brand (Über Nuts). Her outfit consists of unbuttoned jeans overalls over a tight T-shirt; she caresses the blade of the bulldozer and she mimics the movements of a pole dance over the piston. She announces the viewers that those

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[1] This is a part of the research performed by Mihaela Frunza. The initial research included also semi-structured interviews with professionals/experts and several focus groups with students.

[2] Their Youtube links are the following: Uber Nuts – Uber Reclama
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxeeNp43Ofs; Lays – Fii pe faza
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7mNiR9K3pM; Eugenia – Emotii originale:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nYODiHpNq4.

[3] The term "digital natives" refer to generations born after the 1990s.

who place a "firm order" for the bulldozer at her phone number (displayed on screen) may win a bag of Über Nuts peanuts.

The ad was banned by the CNA, after three months of deliberations, during which the ad was still running: "The members of the CNA noted that the way of presentation of the spot is equivocal, that does not offer a correct information of the audience in what concerns the promoted product, and it can create the false impression that the "great price" offered could be won at "each firm command" of the bulldozer whose characteristics are described in the spot" (CNA Decision 306/20.06.2013).

The members of the CNA asked the support of the Romanian Council for Advertising (RAC) in formulating their final decision: "The Romanian Council for Advertising established that the ad… violated the provision of article 1.3 from the Code of Practice in Advertising… according to which all communication must avoid any affirmation or representation that may deceive the consumers, as well as through omission, suggestion, ambiguity or exaggeration" (CNA Decision 306/20.06.2013). Despite the fact that both the Law of Audiovisual and the Code of Practice in Advertising had articles that prohibited hurting the dignity of persons and gender discrimination[4] and, arguably, the display of unnecessary exaggerated sexualized behaviour (the girl from the ad is dressed and behaves like a porn actress), and the said behaviour is depicted in the presentation of the decision, the final decision did not use those articles and was focused only on possibly deceiving communication.

The students showed mixed attitudes regarding this ad. Thus, 35% of respondents found it offensive, and 19% of them found it creative. Slightly more than a third of them (35%) believed the ad should be banned. This ad was considered the least funny of all (only 17.8% considering it amusing) and less than a tenth of respondents were willing to see similar commercials.

In the Lays advertisement a young woman is warned that another attractive female character, dressed more provocatively, is going to "steal" her boyfriend, in the event she will win a promotion for the Lays potato chips, and will perform breast augmentation through aesthetic surgery. The first woman from the clip follows the advice of the voice over (male) narrator, hurries to buy the potato chips ahead of her alleged rival and to prevent that "the money falls into the wrong pocket".

The ad was equally banned by CNA, with the following motivation: "Following the ad analysis, the Council members have noted that the message transmitted will affect human dignity and may cause moral or mental harms, by exploiting the [customers'] lack of experience and their credulity, facts that contravene to the provisions of Article 29 from the Law of the Audiovisual… Thus, the Council considered that the human dignity is affected by the fact the audience is induced the idea that, regardless the moral, intellectual or educational qualities of a person, the physical

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[4] Article 29 from the Law of the Audiovisual, No. 504/11. 07. 2002. Prohibits the prejudicing of human dignity, http://www.cna.ro/IMG/pdf/LEGEA_AUDIOVIZUALULUI_CU_MODIFICARI_SI_COMP LETARI_DIN_2014.pdf. Article 6.1 from The Code of Practice prohibits discrimination, while Article 11 prohibits the denigration of persons https://www.rac.ro/cod

aspect is the only aspect that matters or is influencing personal choice, either for men or for women".

This motivation, although does not use the terminology of stereotypes or discrimination, is actually describing the way a stereotype works: by reducing the qualities of a person to a single trait (in this case, the physical aspect) and by classifying persons according to their perceived ability to fulfill that unique quality. However, by using a purposeful gender-neutral framework ("either for men or for women" – aiming at the fact that both the woman and the man could equally be fooled by the prospect of breast increase acquired via the prize) the decision overlooks the fact that only the women were actually judged according to the physical aspect, not the man from the clip.

Another matter that was also used was that the prospective target audience (youngsters) may lack the experience and the ability to discern the campaign message "The Council members have appreciated that the clip message is, equally, one that may influence in a dangerous way the kids and teenagers, because it transmits the idea that the money offered as prize encourages the product to sell, money that could be used for improving the physical aspect, would enable a durable or successful relation" (Decision no. 202/26.01.2010).

Although students who found the ad "offensive" towards women were almost half of the respondents (43.6% - the highest proportion of students in comparison with the other ads), still more than a quarter of them (26%) found the ad "funny", and only a third (29%) thought it should be banned. Actually, almost half of the respondents (49.5%) believed that the ad should *not* be banned.

In the Eugenia ad, one is exposed to a series of images taking place in the corridor of a primary school, while the characters are primary school students. A girl displaying a more mature attitude and behavior than her real age takes a bite of the product ("Eugenia" – a cream biscuit) which is placed in the mouth of a primary school boy, to the surprise of the entire class. She displays the attitude of a grown up woman and her gestures suggest implicit eroticism. Later, four boys are shown trying their luck, each of them with a biscuit in his mouth, but the girl ignores them as she passes by.

This time, the reason for banning the ad regards the display of kids in ads: "According to the legal dispositions, it is forbidden to broadcast programs whose purpose is to exploit the physical aspect of a minor, or the exposure of them in circumstances that are age-inappropriate. Thus, following the clip analysis, the Council members noted that the message transmitted is harming the minors, because it places the kid characters in situations and circumstances that are inappropriate for their age, through imitation of behaviors that are more appropriate for adults" (Decision no. 692/29.11.2011).

The Council once again appealed to the misuse of the "good-looking woman/girl" stereotype as a grounding decision in banning the ad, as well as the audience's lack of experience and credulity which may lure them into imitating the girl from the ad's behaviour and attitude: "the clip message is equally one that dangerously influences kids and teenagers, because it gives credit to the idea that such a

behavior or attitude is capable of enabling originality and therefore success" (Decision no. 692/29.11.2011).

The reaction of the students to this ad is the most disturbing one. Thus, almost half (46%) of the respondents found the ad "funny" and "very funny", more than a third (35%) found it "creative" and only 17% found it "offensive". As a result, only a quarter of respondents thought the ad should be banned, the lowest percentage among the discussed ads. Quite revealing is also that a quarter of the respondents found the ad to be inspirational enough that they said they wish to see more ads similar to this one. We can assume that, among those almost 40% students who were against banning the ad, they were not intrigued or upset by the hidden eroticism and sensuality displayed by minors in this ad.

Overall, students' perceptions are mixed concerning the banned ads; many respondents find the banned ads "funny" and even "creative". The same goes for the other three ads which were not banned in Romania, but produced controversy in their countries of origin. None of the six ads – and especially none of the three ads that were banned in Romania – did not manage to mobilize a majority opinion (more than 50% of respondents) in favor of banning the respective ad. So, we can safely conclude that, if students were to judge those ads, they would have not recommended their removal. It is ironic that the overwhelming majority of girls covered in this study were little if at all disturbed by the display of negative stereotypical images of girls and women.

To a certain extent, the attitude towards an ad represents a matter of taste, and taste is notoriously un-regulated. However, tastes can be educated, and we can argue that many students have no, or little education regarding a critical understanding of mass-media products; they have not been trained in programs in media literacy, and are poorly equipped to recognize and analyze gender stereotypes in the media. The responsibility of the industry itself should be to sanction these problematic ads and to refrain from using negative gender stereotypes in their productions.

On the other hand, like the entire generation of "digital natives" (*** „Studiu. Cum se comporta pe internet trei generații de români"), this group of students is spending a lot of time on-line. For 90% of them, the Internet represents the main source of information; two thirds of them (61%) spend more than 3 hours online/day and almost a quarter (22%) spends more than ½ hours watching ads/day. By daily spending hours watching YouTube videos which often times are more aggressive or with more explicit sexual content, these students' tastes are altered and, in comparison, these three ads seem less problematic and may be deemed even creative or original.

Another issue that has to be pondered on when discussing students' responses regarding the ads is the proper jurisdiction of CNA decisions that seemingly excludes the online medium. Although the three ads were banned, the banned ads are still available on YouTube, they remain popular, even viral, among users and (in some cases) receive prizes at the industry festivals. The three ads we discuss have not received such prizes after being banned, but we can provide the famous example of the banned "Batman" commercial, that received a prize at an advertising festival (Cernat, 2014). From professionals' interviews (Pele, 2011), we can see that some-

times the industry's creatives make such controversial ads on purpose, knowing they will be banned, for the buzz that is created around them and for the notoriety that can later help them win prizes at various events.

We can also assume that the absence in the Romanian version of the Code of Advertising Practice of any paragraph specifically sanctioning gender stereotypes, the dangers of objectification for either genders, or any other form of reference to these issues may contribute to a general relaxed attitude concerning these matters among the creative directors. Such details are common in similar ethical codes for advertising and commercial communication from other countries, and are frequently included in business ethical codes. We therefore recommend introducing sanctions for negative gender stereotypes in the Code of Advertising Practice, using the model of business ethical codes.

3. Ethical practices, ethical codes and the trust of customers

For the development of the ethical education of students in the field of communication and especially advertising, we propose as a first step the development of a context similar to the existing one in business ethics. Studies show that incorporating ethics into business practices are not only beneficial for customers, but are also vital for increasing the stakeholders' trust. In the longer run, doing ethics in business represents an intrinsic part of increasing the profits of that particular business.

Ethics becomes a major component in the educational programs within various economical branches. An important aspect is represented by the ethical training in economical/ communication education. Thus, F.K. Beard claims that it is important to research the students' attitudes toward advertising's ethical, economic, and social consequence (Beard, 2003). In addition, Mladenovic Martinov-Bennie and Nonna Rosina study the impact on students of introducing ethics into the accounting curriculum. Their conclusion is that, although moral sensitivity is not improved, moral thinking, moral judgment and the skills for solving ethical dilemmas are obviously better. (Martinov-Bennie, Rosina, 2015).

Business ethics has been recently developing as a domain in which ethics intersects with business, where both are rapidly growing from within the field. As an example of the current growth in business ethics, Michael Davis provides some data from the professional ethics codes:

"This is the "boom" we are talking about; an increased interest in ethics spreading unevenly from one profession or occupation to another. What evidence is there that this boom is more than apparent? One feature of the ethics boom seems to be a growth in codes of ethics. What evidence do we have of this growth? In 1980, the Ethics Resource Center (ERC) surveyed 105 corporations they knew to have a code of ethics. Of those responding, fifty-eight percent indicated that their code was less than four years old. When the ERC repeated its survey in 1990, they identified 1,700 companies with a code of ethics. Clearly, there has been a boom in corporate codes of ethics" (Davis, 1999: 8).

Ethical codes are just one example. A careful analysis of what takes place already in the field of business shows the close connection between business success and

the ethical behavior on the market, between the persuasive power of advertising and ethical communication. Thus, Patrick Maclagan shows that ethical rules are not difficult to be implemented in an organization, because the individuals with high moral standards have the natural tendency to act according to the ethical norms (Maclagan, 2015). All ethical trainings bring more awareness, and it is only beneficial for organizations to provide ethical trainings for the personal development of their employees. Cultivating personal values through the harmonization with those specific to the institutional context is an effort that needs to be done through special programs for professionalization. However, we must accept that, even in the situations when they are not familiarized with the theories they try to apply, the individuals endowed with moral values will act out of moral instinct, in order to accomplish the benefits that putting those theories into practice entails. The individuals deprived of moral values will need at least to get familiarized with those ethical theories; otherwise their actions will be thoroughly unethical.

There are multiple explanations for the negative image that accompanies the relation between ethics and advertising, or more generally between ethics and accomplishing profit in economical activities; however, these explanations are debunked at a closer look. One of the reasons why ethics is being rejected by businessmen or business students, as well as students in commercial communication, public communication or advertising has been revealed by Geert Demuijnck. He shows that one needs to explain a philosophical confusion people are tricked into. One needs to clarify as simple as possible the relation between universalism and relativism, because usually the rejection of morals from the field of business is made in the name of moral relativism brought by activities such as business, business communication or advertising. Or, particularly this orientation towards relativism is the one who makes possible the recovering, in specific conditions, of moral norms with a universal value (Demuijnck, 2015: 817-835). We must admit that business ethics is permeated by the cultural conditions of postmodernity. In this culture which became one of mass culture, or mediated culture, we note that ethics is rather a weak ethics (Bauman, 1993) or minimal ethics (Lipovetsky, 1993). The return to the individual experience is beneficial because the individual carrier of values can bring moral values into his professional environment, especially if the formal or informal leaders emphasize the importance of these factors in accomplishing efficiency and profit.

An ethical management will always find solutions for proper implementation of the rules and contents of professional ethics. It will mobilize the beneficial energies of each person from the organization, by channeling them towards an increased efficiency of the organization. In this regard, Şerban Alexandrescu claimed in an interview that, for an ethical attitude of the advertising professionals: "The solution is not one at the level of the industry. The solution is an individual one" (Spătaru, Alexandrescu, 2015). Moreover, managerial ethics offers us other tools. The most well-known and useful one is the Ethical code. Deontological codes are sometimes disputed from the perspective of at least three perspectives: "the code is not relevant, the code has shortcomings, and the code is an obstacle to the ethics" (Diochon, Nizet, 2015: 277-301). However, the codes are guidebooks for fashioning the ethical context, the ethical action and the solving of ethical dilemmas. They develop into resources of professional excellence and economical efficiency.

Apart from the possible critiques, the positive impact of ethical code is visible within the internal communication of an organization and the positive image that the code institutes concerning the building of trust in relations with those from outside. At the same time, although codes are important for establishing the general framework, sometimes they seem less efficient in providing concrete solutions in the professional lives of individuals. This is why the mere embracement of a code is not enough; the code needs to be integrated in a structure that attempts to institutionalize ethics and to back up the coherent action of the ethical management.

Ethics becomes more and more influential in business-related fields. One way to increase the importance of ethics is through managing the impact that social responsibility has on various aspects of economical activity. One example is the way corporate governance relates to taxation practices. Both taxation and tax-related behavior are re-signified through the perspective of social responsibility, and in this manner they are integrated into an essentially ethical activity (Hauptman, Belak, 2015: 183-189).

Alice Kendrick, Jami A. Fullerton and Yeo Jung Kim think that one chance of bringing business ethics toward advertising is by connecting Corporate Social Responsibility to Advertising. Taking into consideration the role that the advertising industry played for imposing CSR-driven values and behavior, advertising industry itself should be evaluated through the lenses of social responsibility that it generates and disseminates. The same way the corporate social responsibility (CSR) became a major component of business ethics, advertising ethics could question the idea of the need for ethical behavior on the market (Kendrick, Fullerton, Kim, 2013). And the dimension of responsibility is more consistently valued from an ethical perspective.

Ethical questioning is so challenging, that J.C. Lane, in a study on business students, notes that the majority of students tend to neglect or even to break certain ethical principles if this leads to a personal advantage (Lane, 1995: 571-580). Although there are important differences in the perception of ethical topics, Lane notes that, in the case of business students, a positive correlation can be established between gender and age concerning the attitude towards ethics. He concluded that females and older students tend to respond more ethically. Gender differences were even more notable concerning the representation of women in advertising. Female respondents were more sensitive towards stereotypical, objectifying, instrumentalizing or even negative representations of women in advertising (Lane, 1995: 571-580). This is confirmed by other research emphasizing that undergraduate women and older students provide to a greater extent ethical answers to the dilemmas they are facing in their professional lives. Another aspect is that, although students in general are interested in business ethics, this is more often the case for female students than males (Fullerton, Kendrick, McKinnon, 2013: 36).

The ethicists should be glad that recent research shows there is a global trend of increasing the number of women in entrepreneurship. Given that studies show an extended ethical sensitivity of women in economical relations and advertising, one should be optimistic towards the development of ethics in advertising and business.

Despite students' propension towards compromise with breaking ethical norms, a study focusing on students from advertising programs showed that "More than

nine out of ten students agreed that working for a company with high ethical standards was important". One can even find students claiming that they cannot work for a company that would ask them to give up their ethical standards. These students are aware that breaking ethical norms is a component of the public image of advertisers and the advertising industry. While a contributing factor in developing the idea that advertising is un-ethical comes from the ethical sideslips of various professionals from the industry (Fullerton, Kendrick, McKinnon, 2013: 43), a solution for raising the importance of ethics in advertising industry is consolidating the position of professional ethics in the educational system. Thus, "Ideally, an entire course in advertising ethics would allow for significant discussion of not only the basis for ethical decision making but also the application of that process to the realities of the advertising workplace. ... Since literature suggests that proximity and recency of ethical reminders contribute to better ethical decisions, it is possible that the integration approach to teaching advertising ethics in all advertising classes is in fact an effective way to make an impact on student decision making" (Fullerton, Kendrick, McKinnon, 2013: 43).

Developing an ethical curriculum in university is a necessity that requires the combined efforts of many different factors. Therefore, we can claim that "The responsibility for intervention clearly involves the institution itself and the teachers and those involved in student counseling and guidance, who will need to facilitate the connection between learning, the university culture and the systems of preliminary access and admission" (Figuera, Torrado, 2015: 37).

Conclusions

We can note that in business, ethical practices build trust; this should be equally valid for advertising agencies. Being significant organizations for public communication, advertising agencies might and should take the example of economical institutions and their incorporation of business ethics into their (daily) practices. Ethical codes have become a regular part of the business; ethical codes do exist in professionals associations of advertising, but are often circumvented in daily practice.

As the awareness of the consequences of using negative gender stereotypes increases, adopting ethical practices generates a decreasing use of negative gender stereotypes. In the case of advertising agencies, the benefit of eliminating the use of negative gender stereotypes will mean an increase in using non-stereotypical, creative ways of depicting gender. For future generation of professionals in advertising industry to become better equipped to handle this issue, nowadays' students should be capable to critically analyze advertisements (via courses or trainings in media literacy), to pay attention to negative gender stereotypes, and to avoid using them in their work. Again, if students are provided with the basic elements of ethical education and ethical codes, they will more easily refrain from using such stereotypes and criticize their existing usage. The example of social responsibility practices in business ethics is a relevant one: while the consistent use of social responsibility in business not only increased the ethical side of business, but also translated into an increase of the business prestige and trustworthiness, similarly, the use of creative,

non-stereotypical images in advertising will not only mean more pleased costumers, but also more engaged ones.

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