

# DIRECT RESPONSE ADVERTISING – A MODERN METHOD OF PROMOTION

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**Abstract:**

*The paper shows some basic features of direct response advertising, several aspects related to the emergence and quick development of this promotion method over the years, its role and the impact on marketing and promotion.*

**Key words:** *direct response advertising, marketing, promotion, communication.*

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Direct response advertising and direct marketing have progressed from minor segments within the sales plans of most companies, to the main means of promotion and sale of goods and services. In fact, the emergence of direct response advertising is one of the fundamental changes in marketing and promotion in the past 30 years. With only a few years ago, direct response advertising consisted, primarily, in advertising by mail and most national companies considered it a trivial way. Today, direct marketing is responsible for a large part of total expenditures on advertising and generate more than 7% of total sales.

Also, direct marketing has had some significant effects on all forms of advertising. Many direct marketing and advertising concepts such as audience segmentation, testing consumer response and creative placements and more individualized media were adopted in principle by all the companies involved in advertising, by media advertising agencies. Besides this, both the printed and audiovisual media discovered that direct advertising holds a significant percentage of their customers advertising.

Direct marketing is a general term that includes direct response advertising and direct mail advertising, as well as research and support related activities. This term is used when the sellers and / or customers are dealing directly with each other, rather than through a dealer or an agent. For example, direct advertising messages distinguish between direct response and those which use means of mass communication. Thus, we can define direct marketing as follows: *the sale of goods and services without using wholesalers or retailers. It includes advertising and direct response advertising, as well as salespeople and direct sales door to door. It uses several means of communication: direct mail advertising, publications, television, radio etc.*(Thomas J. Russel, Lane William, Manual de publicitate (Klepnner's Advertising Procedure), traducere de Dan Bălănescu, Editura Teora, București, 2002, p. 464)

In part, the development of direct advertising can be directly attributed to a changing market. We moved from an economy focused on producer to the one dominated by main retailers. As we go along in this century, consumers increasingly take on more leadership. Computers at home and fiber-optic based technology can induce consumers to avoid traditional means of communication and take purchasing decisions with vendors. Soon, consumers will no longer be separated from traditional market channels, but rather, whether they live in a big city or a remote village, will have immediate access to goods and services. This is the medium of direct marketing, in which direct advertising will continue to progress and prosper.

There are a number of factors contributing to the success of direct response advertising. Thus, the most important are:

1. It has specific consumers who are current or potential users of a particular product or service.
2. The text is written in a very personal style, like in a private conversation.
3. Usually, the products offered through direct response advertising techniques are not available in traditional retail advertising, or they differ in price, type, or certain advantages over competing brands.

The key to successful direct response advertising is mainly about the same as for any other advertising or promotional activity. So, start with clearly defined marketing objectives and determine how direct response advertising can meet the role that it has in the promotional plan.

For full impact, direct response advertising should be seen as part of the overall promotional plan. To be effective, it must make the most from the opportunities offered by databases.

Obviously, the media and creative functions will have to be coordinated to make communication as personal. More importantly, the company that advertises by this technique has to maintain a long term relationship with the consumers that it acquires through direct response advertising.

Further, traders who make use of direct response techniques must cope with a number of issues that traditional retailers can rarely resolve. Direct response offers a number of exciting alternatives to traditional advertising in the media. However, if not used properly, this technique can become an ineffective action, very costly, which requires more time.

Magazines gather over 50% of all direct response advertising done in the media. They provide advertisers with direct response, a number of features ideally combined. Many consumer magazines have special sections for smaller firms who do this kind of advertising.

Magazines have a number of advantages for companies wishing to advertise with direct response:

*Audience selection.* Magazines have the ability to attract readers with common features and interests. Specialized publications provide an environment compatible with publishing advertisements that contain them, ensuring that the reader has “the appropriate state” for an advertisement.

*Often, readers of magazines differ from the audience of other media.* Some readers of magazines tend to be sporadic users of other media. Therefore, direct response advertising in magazines may reach a category of readers that normally would be excluded by other means of communication.

*Sustainability.* Magazines have a longer life, allowing the coupons to be cut or responses to offers to be sent days or even weeks after the magazine has been received. Also, the long life of magazines makes possible for others to read them, too, thus extending the potential audience.

*Sizes and colors.* The typical advertisement in a magazine contains enough space for coupons and detailed information about the product. In addition, the reproduction of excellent quality describes the products in the most favorable light.

*Reputation.* Magazines provide many of the advantages of direct mail, but with an additional prestige to their advertising agency.

This is a typical example of direct response advertising in a magazine:

**Capital - Click and you're subscribed!**

The title is the most important element of an advertisement. It is the first thing read and has to generate interest so that the consumer may wish to continue to read and learn as much about the product or the service promoted. Thus, if we refer to this ad, the

title is imperative – Frank Jefkins, *Cum să stăpânești Reclama la perfecție*, revizuire de Daniel Yadin, Ediția a IV-a (traducere și note de Oana Popescu), Editura Rentrop&Straton - Grup de Editură și Consultanță în Afaceri, București, 2000, p.131 - ("Subscribe Now") and it calls for immediate action. Because it is located in the upper left corner and is written with large fonts and the word "now" is written in capitals and is much thickened, the reader will look exactly at it. Also, the title is positioned on a neutral background, grey, thus creating a contrast between the message and it, and because fonts are vermilion red, a vivid color, which has been used several times in advertisements.

The title appears as an invitation to key potential customers, so it is composed of short words, simple and clear, consisting of an action verb.

Besides the title, on the same line, but on the opposite side of the page, we find the Internet address and payment method by which the customer can order the magazine in a rapid and efficient way ("online payment").

The main text of the advertisement amplifies the promise of the title by offering product details, how it can be acquired, what advantages it offers and how easy it is to get possession of the "Capital" magazine.

The main text is enclosed in a rigid geometric shape (rectangle) and elongated, which reaches the border and supports the title. In addition, the text is revealed by a non-color (white) which is attached to the red background. These colors are representative, because, as noted in the bottom right corner, where the product is located, respectively the Capital magazine, are its main colors (red and white).

The entire ad is placed so that it creates the impression of a web page, highlighting the fact that you can subscribe online, to this aspect contributing the so called conclusion: 'Click and You're Subscribed' to which a small black arrow is attached, similar to the one indicated by the mouse on a computer monitor (the slogan is also represented by a non-color, opposite to white - black).

So, in an overview, advertising is well represented through the optimal mix of images, colors, text, and thus the message addressed to consumers.

In this technological era, subject to change and constant progress, direct marketing and advertising have come under the spotlight, have "been there" as a means able to reach a diverse universe of consumers. Thus, concerning the determined sales and necessary expenses, they mean more than all other forms of advertising put together. Companies have realized the need to use a combination between the posts with personal messages and selective audience segmentation, which confers advantages to direct response advertising, found only in just a few other means of communication.

Therefore, in the near future, interactive television, direct telephone marketing, direct advertising offers in publications and other means of home buying will be a significant threat to retail and as you look at the number of consumers who increasingly use home buying methods, as well as money spent, it appears that those who buy feel better in the attractive and different universe of direct advertising.

Regardless of future forms of direct response advertising, it is clear that it will continue to grow, probably at a faster pace than mass media advertising.

As a final conclusion, it can be stated that the future of advertising will be one of change and adaptation, in which the interests of the audience will be an important part of the agenda of modern advertising. It is more than obvious that advertising as a whole, has reached a level of maturity, in which inaccurate ads, misleading and deceptive will be the big exception, used only by those who want to earn money quickly. Current advertising must include the idea of social responsibility in the same way that it depends on a well-thought marketing plan for success.

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