

Advertising

What is advertising?

The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA), the body which represents advertising agencies, defines advertising as:

"The means of providing the most persuasive possible selling message to the right prospects at the lowest possible cost".

In other words, having identified those customers whose needs and wants are best satisfied by your product or service, you evaluate the most cost effective method of communicating these benefits to them, thereby encouraging them to purchase from you.

Advertising is an important component of the promotion element of your marketing strategy, along with direct marketing, PR, exhibitions or a website. The aim of each of these is to promote your business and communicate the information you want to send to your intended audience, usually with a view to increasing sales.

Until a customer deals with you directly and actually buys your products or services, your advertising may help to form their first impressions of your business. While advertising can attract new customers, it can also turn potential customers away if it seems amateurish compared to your competitors.

How advertising can help your business

Advertising can:

- provide basic facts such as your website address and contact details
- increase ongoing sales by telling potential customers about your product or service
- tell customers about changes to your service, new product launches and improvements
- increase your short-term sales with a specific one-off message - informing people of a special offer or a particular benefit of your product
- prompt specific action - getting customers to visit your premises or website, or use a discount voucher by the end of the month
- remind existing customers about your business
- change people's attitudes and perceptions of your business
- help to create or develop a distinctive brand for your business to help you stand out from your competitors
- put your business at the front of people's minds, ahead of your competitors

Remember that advertising isn't solely about sales and marketing. You can also use it to:

- recruit staff - a recruitment advertisement can also say something about your business
- source suppliers and contractors - this also helps to market you as active and expanding