93376 - Ruling on establishing a newspaper for advertising

the question

What is the ruling on making a newspaper just for trade advertisements, such as seeking work, selling apartments, selling cars, advertising some companies etc, and publishing commercial adverts for some companies? If it is permissible, what are the shar'i guidelines that must be adhered to with regard to choosing companies and types of advertisement? And the guidelines on taking money from companies or from those who want to put ads in the paper?
Please note that I will be in charge of it along with some of my friends, so that we will be able to choose which adverts are put in the paper.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Things that go against sharee'ah are common in many newspapers and magazines, both daily and weekly. We have explained some of these haraam things, and the ruling on working for those newspapers, and the ruling on selling them in the answers to questions no. 89737 and 82704.

With regard to publishing a newspaper that is just for advertising, the basic principle is that publishing and distributing it is permissible, but there are conditions and guidelines attached to this permissibility which may be summed up as avoiding adverts that go against Islam. That includes:

1- Avoiding adverts for tourist resorts and immoral places

i.e., adverts for tourist resorts where there are haraam things such as alcohol, mixing and uncovering of 'awrahs in beaches and in amusement parks, all of which comes under the heading of cooperating in sin and transgression, and liking to spread immorality.

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Help you one another in Al-Birr and At-Taqwa (virtue, righteousness and piety); but do not help one another in sin and transgression”

[al-Maa’idah 5:2]

“Verily, those who like that (the crime of) illegal sexual intercourse should be propagated among those who believe, they will have a painful torment in this world and in the Hereafter. And Allaah knows and you know not”

[al-Noor 24:19]

2- Avoiding adverts for companies that deal in riba (usury), gambling and haraam earnings, such as adverts for riba-based banks, insurance companies and manufacturers and stores that sell haraam things.

3- Avoiding announcements of innovated festivals or those that imitate the kuffaar, such as announcements about celebrations of the Prophet’s birthday (Mawlid) or Laylat al-Nusf min Sha’baan (the 15th of Sha’baan) or announcements of people’s birthdays.

4- Avoiding using pictures of women or hand-drawn pictures of animate beings.

5- Avoiding advertisements for conferences where debates are that go against Islam or are opposed to it.

6- Avoiding announcements that praise the dead, especially if they were not Muslim.

There follow some fatwas about advertising some of these haraam things:

1 – The scholars of the Standing Committee were asked:

There are some people who distribute advertisements door-to-door, and in these adverts every store has its own page, so there are adverts for companies that sell shoes and furniture, but there are some adverts for stores that sell food, and these adverts show most of what they sell. So next to the sugar and rice they show alcohol, or they show beef, lamb and pork. What is the ruling on

delivering these adverts? Some people deliver the adverts that include food, but they throw away the ones that include alcohol and pork without the advertiser knowing about it, then they charge them for having delivered them. What is the ruling on that money? Some of the scholars in Europe say that alcohol and pork are permissible in those people's religion. Does that mean that we can work in stores selling alcohol and pork? What is your response to this idea?

They replied: It is haraam for the Muslims to sell alcohol and pork and it is not permissible for them to cooperate with others in distributing or marketing haraam things or promoting or advertising them, or delivering adverts for them, because that is cooperating in sin and transgression, which Allaah has forbidden in the verse in which He says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Help you one another in Al-Birr and At-Taqwa (virtue, righteousness and piety); but do not help one another in sin and transgression. And fear Allaah. Verily, Allaah is Severe in punishment"

[al-Maa'idah 5:2]

The money that a person gets in return for posting adverts for haraam things is not permissible, even if he throws the haraam adverts away and does not deliver them, the money is still not permissible for him, because that is consuming people's wealth unlawfully. End quote.

Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa'imah (14/429, 430)

2 – The Scholars of the Standing Committee were also asked:

There is a man who is working as a journalist in a newspaper in Egypt and he writes reports and he writes adverts, for which he is paid. The newspaper is full of material that opposes Allaah and His Messenger. With regard to the adverts, he plays the role of an intermediary between the newspaper and the public. He goes to people (such as businessmen) and encourages them to place ads, and they pay the fee for these ads without any pressure, so that the names of their businesses will be published in the newspaper. This is a kind of advertising, but they are supporting falsehood. The one who brings such business gets a set share of the advertising fee and gets money for it. Is this money halaal or haraam? If this money is haraam, is it permissible for

me and the rest of my siblings to eat from it as the son of this man? Please note that he has other income from a government job. And is the money that he gets from his government job permissible?

They replied:

Firstly: Working to serve those who oppose Allaah and His Messenger is not permissible, because it is cooperating with them in sin and transgression, which Allaah, may He be glorified and exalted, has forbidden to His slaves as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Help you one another in Al-Birr and At-Taqwa (virtue, righteousness and piety); but do not help one another in sin and transgression. And fear Allaah”

[al-Maa’idah 5:2]

Secondly: Whatever money he has earned from cooperating with them in their evil is haraam.

Thirdly: If your father’s wealth that he got from working with those who oppose Allaah and His Messenger is distinct from that which he has earned from other jobs or in other permissible ways, then it is not permissible for you and your siblings to eat from it. But if it is not distinct, then it is permissible for you to eat from it according to the correct scholarly view, but it is better to avoid doing so in order to be on the safe side, especially if the haraam portion is greater. End quote.

Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa’imah (15/102, 103)

3 –Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzaan (may Allaah preserve him) was asked:

With regard to condolences in the newspapers, notices of thanks for condolences and announcements of deaths, what is the Islamic view on these?

He replied:

If an announcement of a person’s death is made in the newspaper for a valid purpose, which is so that the people will know of his death so that they can attend the funeral prayer and accompany

the bier and say du’aa’ for him, and so that those who were owed anything by the deceased may ask for it or waive it, there is nothing wrong with announcements made for these purposes. But there should be no exaggeration in the manner in which the announcement is done, such as taking up an entire page of the newspaper, because that costs a lot of money and there is no need for that. It is also not permissible to write the verse which many people customarily write when announcing a death:

“(It will be said to the pious — believers of Islamic Monotheism): ‘O (you) the one in (complete) rest and satisfaction!

28. ‘Come back to your Lord, __ well-pleased (yourself) and well-pleasing (unto Him)!

29. ‘Enter you then among My (honoured) slaves,

30. ‘And enter you My Paradise!’”

[al-Fajr 89:27-30]

because this is praising the deceased and stating that he is one of the people of Paradise, and that is not permissible, because it is speaking about Allaah (without knowledge) and claiming to have knowledge of the unseen. It cannot be stated that any specific person is in Paradise without evidence from the Qur’aan or Sunnah. Rather we should hope for good for the believer but we cannot state that for certain. End quote.

Al-Muntaqa min Fataawa al-Shaykh al-Fawzaan (2/159).

Conclusion:

You should avoid advertisements for haraam things and anything that goes against sharee’ah. Everything else is permissible for you to advertise.

As for taking money from companies and individuals who want to advertise in your paper, there is nothing wrong with that, so long as the advert does not include anything haraam and the contract is done with mutual consent.

And Allaah knows best.