



A CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON ETHICS IN ADVERTISING

MONIKA

Ph.D Scholar, GJUST

HISSAR

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to study the ethical issues that arise in print and television advertising and also analyzing the various types of unethical advertisement. To give an underlying perspective on the current scenario in the advertising industry. It covers the core issue of ethics in advertising ranging from the issue of unethical advertising, deceptions, advertisements targeting children, the exploitation of sex and gender, and also the issues of subliminal advertising. At the end of this article, the author presented a fresh look on the issue of advertising ethics through the theological interpretation. Nowday industry is expanding its business at expeditious rate. Advertising industry in very little time has carved a niche for itself and placed itself on a global map. But over the years advertising and marketing communication messages have created debatable ethical issues like surrogate advertising, puffery, unverified claims, women stereotype, comparative advertising, use of children in advertising etc. In today's competitive market, advertisers are sometimes following the unethical practices to fight the competitor.

KEYWORD

Ethics, Business Ethics, Advertising, Unethical Advertising

INTRODUCTION

Ethics are the guideline principles and values that govern the actions, behavior and decisions of an individual or group. Ethics is a choice between good and bad or between right and wrong. It is governed by a set of principles of morality at a given time and at a given place and in a given society. Advertising ethics refers to the moral principles applicable and business ethics apply in advertising. According to William J. Stanton, "Advertising includes all those activities which are involved in presenting a non-personal, sponsor –identified, paid message to an audience about a product or organization". In simple words advertisement is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services of an identified sponsor. Advertising exerts a significant impact on consumers' lives (Pollay 1986). Advertising is one of the most integral parts of a Business entity. Organizations all around the World spend billions of dollars every year to Promote their products and advertising is one of The tools to promote their product globally. A Businesses transcend across border, the role and Magnitude of advertising expenditure have Expanded thus require a close examination in Terms of its roles and functions (MN

Nooh, 2012). With the passage of time and due to increase in the demand of goods and services price competition exist in the market, the need for the ethics arise and popular in advertising. These ethical issues include women exploitation, subliminal perception, advertising to children, deceptive advertising, and other issues which can lead to moral deterioration of the society (Shabbir & Thwaites, 2007; Murphy, 1998; Blair, Stephenson, Hill, & Green, 2006). This review paper provides us the knowledge and basic understanding about ethics and the various types of ethics which is the part of advertising ethics. Unethical Advertising is harmful for society and opposite to our moral values

These are the main objectives of this paper

- The basis knowledge and study of the concept of Business Ethics and ethics.
- To Understand the various types of ethical and unethical advertising.
- The basic meaning of ethics and Advertising.
- To understand the relationship between Business Ethics and Advertising.

ETHICS

This is a branch of philosophy that concerned with what is morally right and wrong and good and bad. The word 'ethics' is derived from the Greek word ethikos meaning custom or character. The Oxford Dictionary defines Ethics as the treatment of moral questions. In general we can say That ethics means good and bad, right and wrong, Should and should not (Grace and Cohen 1998 pp.3). Ethics are the moral principles. These provide the logical reasons or justification For what is wrong and what is right. Ethics are part of normative science because it is Concerned with The norms of human conduct. Samson and Draft (2008) says that ethics are social standards which involves a conflict Between the needs of the part and the needs of the whole.

ETHICS APPROACH

These approach gives us the way of dealing with moral conducts. There are mainly 4 approaches which are applied generally namely Individualism approach , Utilitarian approach , Moral Rights approach , Justice approach , the Common good approach.

- 1 .Individualism approach: It says that acts are considered moral when they promote the Individual's long term Interests in best way.
2. Utilitarian approach: According to it , a decision is considered morally right when it brings the greatest amount of Good for the largest number of people.
- 3.Moral rights approach: As per it, moral decisions are those that best maintain the rights of people affected by decision Including free consent , life and safety , freedom of conscience, free speech etc. According to Immanuel kant: rights = Duties.
4. Justice approach: It says that all persons should be treated with equality , fairness , Impartiality and a decision will be ethical if there is justice.
5. The Common good approach: It is says that every person in the world is responsible to contribute and enrich the Life by taking the decisions which he think are good for him and others also.

BUSINESS ETHICS

Business Ethics referes to the professional ethics and principles applied and arise in the business world. Due to globalisation and liberalisation there is less control of government over business Organisations which emphasis on more and more need of ethics in business activities. The Principle objective of ethics has always been to produce morally upright leaders with good

and acceptable behaviour (Abu-Tapanjeh 2008). In context of business organisation, ethics involves the application of moral principles, code of conduct, standards in business Decisions to provide value to all stakeholders. It covers all the aspects of management Functions such as finance, accounting, marketing, human resource etc. By applying business Ethics a firm can improve its performance, expand opportunities for future growth and also Contribute to the economic development of the country and realize specific benefits like Enhanced goodwill, stronger competitive position in the market, more and easy access to the Credit facilities and most importantly sustainable long term growth. In crux, business ethics are art and discipline of applying principles to examine and solve Complex moral dilemmas in business organisations.

ADVERTISING AND ETHICS IN ADVERTISING

Ethics in advertising is defined as a set of well stated principles which rule the ways of communication take place between the seller and the buyer. In today's global market ethics has become one of the most important attribute of the advertising world. Since there are lot of benefits of advertising but as the coin has two sides, there are some things which don't match or satisfies the ethical criterion of advertising. It refers to the marketing tool that aims to sell and promote the product and service to target audience. It is non personal and paid form of communication. Due to the technological development in the world competition pertains in its peak. Due the competition advertising is very popular for substaining in market. These are the various forms of Ethical Advertising

- Children protection

The company has to take proper care that advertising does not mislead children as to the true size, value, nature, durability, features, etc. Advertisement of the product should not contain any activity that has the effect of harming children, affect them mentally, morally, etc. It does not include any activity that encourages children to do things that can hurt.

- Safety of customer information

When you purchase any product from a brand they collect your data to use it for future use like making aware of new products, new offers available, the opening of a new outlet, events, etc. In the same case when you make an online purchase or visit any website they ask your personal information for sign up purposes. It's the Company duty that when they store your data it should not be shared with anyone.

- Exploitation of goodwill

The advertisement should not make use of the name, logo, and trademark of other companies. Some companies use another companies name or logo to grow fast in the market. Companies with goodwill have a strong customer base, companies that use another name or logo do not have to make an effort to create their customer base.

- Honesty

Honesty in advertising means gives fair information about product and services of the company. Marketing should be so framed as not to abuse the trust of the customers or consumers or exploit their lack of experience or knowledge of the brand or product being advertised. Relevant factors likely to affect consumers decision should be communicated in such a way and at such a time the consumer or customer would take them into consideration. Advertisement should be truthful and not misleading. Advertisement should not contain any statement, claim or audio which directly or by implication, and exaggeration mislead the consumer into making purchase and at the end the product doesn't offer what it claims to offer.

- Comparison

Advertisements that are making a comparison of the product should comply with the principles of fair competition. Product comparison allows the customers to differentiate the two products and chooses the one which they like. Example – If you are comparing your mobile with other brands and says that your product will provide Quick charging and good battery backup if it goes fail then it will be unethical.

- Social responsibility

Truthfulness is the first requirement for ethics and social responsibility in advertising. However, this requirement is not as straightforward as it may appear. Factual information can be presented in such a way as to deceive the viewer, while an image can be manipulated yet still create an accurate final impression. For example, if an advertisement says a certain product is inexpensive without revealing that it will wear out very quickly, then the information is factually accurate yet deceptive. Any customer buying the product would be likely to end up spending more money rather than saving, because it would have to be replaced so soon.

- Unsolicited product

Unsolicited goods are those goods that are sent to someone without being asked to the receiver. Sending Unsolicited goods is an offense.

Advertising should not be used to support the unethical activity where unsolicited products are sent who required it. If any customer gives his consent that he likes the product, no company can forcefully send the product to its doorstep and can ask for the money.

- Health

Advertisement does not include those products that create a problem for customer health. It is the company's duty that if there is any product that can create risk for customer health, then the company has to aware of the customer about the same. Example – Insecticide killing spray also dangerous for human, so proper awareness is also provided that, how to use, how far you have to keep it while doing spray.

UNETHICAL ADVERTISING

It refers to the advertising which has lack of ethics and moral values. Unethical Advertising has three content Material, Method and Motive. Material of Unethical Advertising means the contents that is shown to the public and the method means the way of communication to the public. Motive of Unethical Advertising means the message that is want to convey to the public. There are several types of advertisement which led to unethical advertisement

- Religious images and beliefs

Religious beliefs play a significant part in sculpting social behavior. Differences in religious affiliations tend to influence the way people live, the choices they make, what they eat and whom they associate with. (Kim Shyan Farm, 2004). In cases of the first sort, commercial advertisers sometimes include religious themes or use religious images or person ages to sell products. It is possible to do this in tasteful, acceptable ways, but the practice is obnoxious and offensive when it involves exploiting religion or treating it flippantly. In cases of the second sort, advertising sometimes is used to promote products and inculcate attitudes and forms of behavior contrary to moral norms. That is the case, for instance, with the advertising of contraceptives, abortifacients. (Yesodha Devi N., 2010).

- Sex and gender stereotype

Television remains of the most predominant mediums that promote stereotypical about the gender roles with the help of advertisement. "Media has become an important source of creating stereotypes because they are sometimes the only source of information we have about other groups and they often represent a distorted view of those groups". NO matter what type of life a women lives, the society will create some sort of stereotype about the women's. Generally the entire household product such as soap, washing powder etc. mainly uses women in order to advertise it which generate or add to the stereotype in the society about the women's that they are limited within the boundaries of their house only.

- Subliminal Advertising

One of the areas that interest researchers the most is the area of subliminal advertising. Caccavale, Wanty III, and Edell (1982) found out that there is no significant relationship to prove that sexual implants would be likely to favorably affect attitudes and purchase intentions when used in conjunction with sexually suggestive copy. In fact another study done to review 50 years of research on subliminal advertising proves that no research has shown an effect that changed attitudes or impacted purchasing behavior (Broyles, 2006). Basically some scholars argue the subliminal advertising communication can be produced through briefly flashing a visual stimulus too quickly for individuals to be consciously aware of its existence, using sub-audible messages, and through the use of embedded stimuli, words and pictures (Lantos, 1996). A survey by Rogers and Seiler (1994) shows that the nearly all their samples² deny the use of subliminal advertising and those who admit using subliminal avertising did not understand the true meaning of subliminal advertising. Some scholars argue that subliminal advertising can come in the forms of product placement in which the products are seen as being a part of the movie or a TV program without being specifically referred to (Tasi, Liang, & Liu, 2007).

- Deception advertising

These are those kind of advertisement in which the company who is advertising its particular product makkes a false statement or commitment about its product. The unverified claims are generally seen in energy drinks which commit to increase your stamina, foods that increase your child brain or a breakfast that makes you fit. But as the consumer use them, they see that there stamina is still the same, there child is just as regular as he was, and there figure hasn't changed an inch. Advertisements like these convey information that's false, scientifically wrong and misleading. (Roshani Dhamala , 2014)

- Advertising to children

Nowadays market is very highly influenced with children's entering into advertisement. Marketers are using children in their commercial advertisements to push their sales. This is done because Indian children are allowed to watch each & every advertisement in the television, so marketers are taking advantages of it. As in the present time there is a rapid increase of use of children in advertisement. This leads to influence our Indian culture as well as Indian children's to push their parent for particular products. Some of the advertisements are very relevant to children where marketers should use children to promote their products in the market otherwise they can't.

- Exaggeration in Advertisement or Puffery

Puffery is an exaggerated statements made by the companies for the purpose of attracting buyers to a particular product or service. Puffery advertisement is basically used by the business in order to rise up the image of their product. Statements made in puffery are usually of subjective opinions rather than objective representations of facts. It is assumed that puffery act as an opinion for the consumers that cannot be verified. Asensible person would not take puffery literally. The difference between puffery and factual representations is the degree of specify their claim towards the product.

- Moral degradation

Moral degradation means lower the cultural value of our society in various print and television advertising. Unethical advertising is the main cause of moral degradation in our society. Various sexual appeal, nudity, promotion of alholic and smoking products degrade our moral values. India is a religious country, Unethical advertising is a hazardous cause of our cultural moral values.

- Advertising Unhealthy product or surrogate Advertising

Surrogate advertising is advertising which involves a brand or product message inside an advertisement which is telecasted for another brand or product. Surrogate advertising came into existence after the Government look initiative to ban advertisements of products that are injurious to health or body. After implementation of it the major companies of liquor & tobacco were badly affected so they found other ways of advertise their products. They have found an alternative path of advertising which helped them to keep on reminding the people of their liquor/tobacco brands: they have introduced various other products with the same brand name in their product line.

CONCLUSION

The world of advertising has come a long way from a small industry to a large scale industry. For some people it is an important source of getting information while for other describes it as an untrue, misleading and obscene. the current research on advertising ethics are focused on issues such as deceptive advertising, subliminal advertising, sex, age and gender manipulation,celebrity endorsement, industry regulation and self-regulation, advertising to children and a few studies on practitioners and advertising stakeholders. There are relatively few studies focusing on the theological aspect of advertising ethics such as the Christianity views on advertising ethics which is evident through the article written by Foley that focuses only on benefits and harms of advertising. The author believes that the area of theological approaches to advertising ethics is a new area to venture into and in need of a thorough study advertising a lot of criticism in the recent times as the advertising practices have not always been ethical. In today's competitive market, due to free allowances, the advertisers are sometimes following the unethical practices to fight the competition. The ethical aspect of Indian advertisement is extremely important for restoration of our Indian culture and heritage. Indian culture is getting diluted by the western culture which influences our country to a great extent. To save our culture, norms and ethics regulations of such unethical advertisements are extremely essential. But today the numbers of unethical and obscene advertisements are increasing in numbers instead of decreasing.

REFERENCE

- Sharma, k.&Monika.(2022). The Bhagavad_Gita and Business Ethics, International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts, 10(7), 395-401.
- Nooh,, M. N..(2012). Advertising Ethics: A Review. The Journal of commerce, 4(3), 33-44.
- Davis, J.,J.(1994). Ethics in Advertising decision making: Implications for reducing the incidence of deceptive advertising, Journal of Consumer affairs, 28(2),380-402.
- Abdullah,M.M. Korean.S,Munipan. B,Radhakrishnan. Parasurama B.Adult, Participation in self directed learning programs, International education studies 66-72.
- Nooh, M.N.B.(2014). The criteria and challenges of Unethical Advertising, American Journal of Business, Economics and Management, 2(4), 88-93.
- Shimp,Terence A, "Advertising and Promotion", Cengage Learning, (2008), Pg No. 189-423.
- Shah, Kruti; Souza, Alan D, "Advertising and Promotions an IMC perspective", Tata Mc Graw Hill Education Private Limited, (2009), Pg No. 241-258.
- Ramaswamy, VS; Namakumuri, S, " Marketing Management", Mc Graw Hill Education(India) Private Limited, (2013), Pg No. 585-607.
- Clow, Kenneth E; Baack, Donald, "Integrated Advertising, Promotion and Marketing Communication, Pearson", (2012), Pg No.141-200.
- Caroll, A.B.(1990) Principles of business ethics: their role in decision making and Initial consensus, management decisions,28(8),20-24.
- Abu – Tapanjeh, M.A.(2008).Corporate Governace from Islamic Perspective: A Comparative analysis with OCED principles. Critical perspective on accounting, 20(5), 556-567.
- Grace, D, Cohen, S.(1998),Business ethics:Australian problems and cases.Oxford University press.
- Lane, J.C (1995),Ethics of business students: Some marketing perspectives.Journal of Business ethics,14(7),571-581.
- Shea, G.E (1998).Practical ethics. New York : American management association.
- Sharma G.D.(20001) . Management and Indian ethos. New Delhi : Rupa and Company.

- Krohe, J. (1997). Ethics are nice but business is business. Across the board, April, 16-22.
- Amoako, G. K. (2012). Ethics in advertising – Challenges in Ghana. MJAE, Vol. 1, No. 1, 63-72.
- Bergstrom, A. M. (2011). Expanding the Third Person Effect: Parents' Perceptions Of Positive And Negative Media Effects On Their Own Children Compared To Other Children. United States: Proquest LLC.
- Christian Dianoux, Z. L. (2010). The effectiveness of female Nudity in advertising in three European countries. International Marketing Review, Vol. 27 No. 5, 562-578.
- Dinesh, B. S. (2007). Professional Ethics and Human Values. Firewell Media.
-] Dr. Morteza Maleki, M. A. (2012). Ethical Challenges: Customer's Rights. SCMS Journal of Indian Management, 10.
- Hawkins, D. B. (2004). Consumer Behavior. United States: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Job Dubihlela, D. D. (2011). Youth attitudes towards Advertisements depicting nudity and alcohol: ethical Dilemmas in advertising. In J. Kilbourne, Deadly Persuasion: Why Women and Girls Must Fight the Addictive Power of Advertising. New York: The Press.
- Johansson, J. (2004). In Your Face: How American Marketing Excess Fuels Anti-Americanism. Upper Saddle River: Financial Times.
- Kim Shyan Fam, D. S. (2004). The influence of religion on Attitudes towards the advertising of controversial products. European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 38 No. 5/6,, 537-555.
- Lahr, J. (1993). U.S. Literary and drama critic, quoted in Robert Andrews. In The Columbia Dictionary of Quotations (p. 19). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mohamad Noorizzuddin bin Nooh, D. A. (2014). A Review Of the Malaysian Advertising Industry . International journal of Science Commerce and Humanities Volume No 2 No 3, 211-217.
- n.a. (2008). Kod Amalan Periklanan Malaysia. Selangor: Lembaga Piawai Pengiklanan Malaysia.
- Nandan, V. S. (2010). A Study of Perceptions in Society Regarding Unethical Practices in Advertising. SOUTH ASIAN JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT, 62-69.
- O'Sullivan, T. (2005). "Advertising and Children: What Do The Kids Think?,". Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, Vol. 8, No. 4,, 371-384.
- Rahim, M. H. (2009). Pengiklanan Islami: Penjanaan Konsep dan Pelaksanaan. Jurnal Melayu (4), 59-72.
- Renata Bongiorno, P. G. (2013). When Sex Doesn't Sell: Using Sexualized Images of Women Reduces Support for Ethical Campaigns. PLOS ONE Vol.8 Issue 12.
- Sulaini, N. F. (2012, October 21). Iklan babitkan wanita Tidak patuh kod etika. Retrieved from Sinar Harian : <http://www.sinarharian.com.my/nasional/iklan-babitkan-W-tidak-patuh-kod-etika-1.96738>
- Torlak, N. (2011). USE/ABUSE OF FEMALE SEXUALITY IN MARKETING. Megatrend Review Vol. 8 (2) , 539-554.
- Pratt, C. B., & James, E. L. (1994). Advertising Ethics: A Contextual Response Based on Classical Ethical Theory. Journal of Business Ethics, 13, 455-468.
- Prendergast, G., & Hwa, H. C. (2003). An Asian Perspective of Offensive Advertising on The Web. International Journal of Advertising, 22, 393-411.
- Prendergast, G., Ho, B., & Phau, I. (2002). A Hong Kong View of Offensive Advertising. Journal of Marketing Communications, 8, 165-177.
- Preston, C. (2004, September). Children's Advertising: The Ethics of Economic Socialization. International Journal of Consumer Studies, 28(4), 364-370.
- Reed Business Information. (2006, October 13). Qantas Guilty of Misleading Advertising. Travel Weekly Australia, p.2
- Rice, G. (1999, February). Islamic Ethics and the implications for Business. Journal of Business Ethics, 18, 345-358.
- Rice, G., & al-Mossawi, M. (2002). The Implications of Islam for Advertising Messages: The Middle Eastern Context. Journal of Euromarketing, 11(3), 1-16.
- Richards, J. I. (1997). Catholic Church Handbook on Ethics in Advertising. Retrieved August 1, 2007, from Department of Advertising, The University of Texas Austin: <http://advertising.utexas.edu/research/law/catholic.html>
- Rogers, M. (1990). Advertising Self-Regulation in the 1980s: A Review. Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising, 13, 369-392.