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Public perceptions of ethical standards in television advertising: An analytical study

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Abstract
Consumer habits, social mores, and cultural mores are all profoundly impacted by television commercials. The public, authorities, and industry experts have been looking more closely at the ethical standards of television ads as the media environment changes. Issues of privacy and openness are among the many ethical problems surrounding television advertising. Other concerns include false claims, damaging stereotypes, and the exploitation of vulnerable populations. Using a mixed-methods strategy and a sample size of 120 people, this research investigates how the general public views the ethical norms shown in television commercials. Structured surveys were used to gather data on public sentiment, ethical issues, and advertising expectations. Ad agencies must improve their ethical standards and win back the public's confidence if these findings are to be embraced.

Keywords: Ethical Standards, Television Advertising, Public Perception, Misleading Claims, Advertising Ethics

Introduction
The persuasive and pervasive nature of television commercials has allowed them to shape consumer habits, social mores, and cultural mores for quite some time. Television, being one of the most popular types of media, has a special influence on people's tastes and beliefs. Advertising on television is controversial because it does more than just promote items and services; it also reflects and reinforces values, goals, and worldviews. Among the many problems with television ads, one of the most important is the ethical standards it follows (or doesn't follow). At a time when consumers are more skeptical than ever before, the ethical aspects of television ads reflect the values of honesty, equity, and community service that are expected in today's society. By looking at how people generally feel about these moral guidelines, our research hopes to provide light on the complex relationship between advertising and people's core beliefs and values. Truthfulness, equity, and decency are the cornerstones of television advertising's code of ethics. Commercials are required to tell the truth, not make false claims, and respect the many cultural backgrounds of their viewers. But these principles are seldom met by the advertising industry in practice. Many see the tactics used in the race to attract customers in an oversaturated market as unethical, dishonest, or manipulative. Some instances of ethical dilemmas that have generated public and scholarly controversy include the depiction of stereotypes, the use of provocative information to get attention, and the occasional advocacy of unhealthy lifestyles. The ethical evaluation of advertising has broadened to include concerns about invasion of privacy and deceptive emotional appeals due to the rise of digital technology and advanced psychological targeting techniques. The power of television remains immense, even with the growth of digital media. When it comes to ethical failings, viewers and advocacy organizations alike often react strongly.

Fig 1: Ethical Considerations in Advertising and Marketing

Many things influence how the general public views the morality of television commercials, including societal norms, personal views, and media experiences. Different demographics, educational levels, and socioeconomic statuses may lead to vastly different views on what makes advertising ethical or immoral. Certain advertising methods, including using comedy or shock value, may be considered acceptable or even beneficial in certain cultures, but improper or insulting in others. More and more, people are demanding that advertising adhere to greater ethical standards in response to the growth of social movements that promote diversity, environmental sustainability, and mental health awareness. There is a growing expectation that advertisers will act responsibly, support diversity, and improve society. Consequently, people's views of commercials on television are dynamic and vary over time in reaction to larger cultural and social movements. It is crucial to examine how people see advertisements on television in terms of ethical norms. Viewers are customers and the major targets of advertising. Their views greatly influence the credibility and efficacy of ads. Loss of confidence, harm to the image of the brand, and even financial consequences for businesses may result from unethical advertising practices. Conversely, commercials that speak to public ideals and are in line with ethical norms have the power to strengthen customer connections and increase brand loyalty. Advertisers, politicians, and media professionals may all benefit from knowing how the general public views the ethical standards of television ads. It encourages responsibility, helps pinpoint where ethics may need some work, and pushes for a media landscape that reflects popular ideals.

Since children and other vulnerable groups are often disproportionately impacted by immoral advertising tactics, this research also discusses the consequences of ethical advertising on these groups. Advertising targets children because they are less developed cognitively and more easily swayed by compelling arguments. Ads aimed at kids are often criticized for selling junk food, establishing harmful gender stereotypes, or setting unreasonable expectations. Equally susceptible to advertising's manipulation are marginalized groups, such as those with poor incomes or low levels of media literacy. Greater regulatory control and ethical responsibility in advertising practices should be highlighted by evaluating public opinions of these concerns. In addition, the research delves into how industry self-regulation and regulatory frameworks work together to keep television ads ethical. When it comes to establishing standards and checking for conformity, regulatory agencies and advertising standards groups are crucial. Inconsistencies in ethical behaviors arise, however, since these norms are not uniformly enforced across areas and sectors. As a supplementary strategy, self-regulation by media organizations and advertising firms has grown in popularity, with some businesses willingly committing to ethical standards in an effort to gain public confidence. In light of these ongoing efforts, it is clear that a stronger and more open framework is necessary to tackle new problems in the media industry, as unethical advertising practices continue.

Review of Literature

Dmitrieva, Natal'ya *et al*., (2022) [3]. Along with advertising came the advertising ethics. Ethical concerns about advertising have persisted over the globe despite centuries of public and legislative control. Since domestic advertising in Russia did not begin to emerge until after the Soviet Union's demise, these issues are more noticeable there than elsewhere. Russian advertising had to go the distance that industrialized nations took a century to cross in only thirty years. Both Russian individuals and public or commercial entities were outraged by the problematic advertising messages presented in the study. This article presents a comparative study of consumer and advertising industry professionals' ethical evaluations of contentious advertising messages. Additionally, it delves into the background of Russia's advertising sector, several infractions of the Advertising Law, what constitutes unethical advertising, and the processes for contentious ads in Russia. Public control, educational initiatives, pre-publication expert evaluation, etc., were among the self-regulation strategies suggested by the writers.

Sorab, Deepika S *et al*., (2022) [13]. An organization's and its members' actions within a community are shaped by its code of ethics. Ethical advertising methods that include moral principles are being adopted by companies at an increasing rate. The goal of ethical advertising is to get people to embrace the ideals that are being pushed. Primary data was collected from 200 respondents using a predefined questionnaire and a simple random selection procedure. The participants are from Bengaluru City, Karnataka, India, and range in age from fifteen to forty-five. The effect of ethical advertising on consumers' attitudes is studied by using SPSS factor analysis and Simple Percentage Analysis on collected data. A simple percentage study reveals that customers are inspired, attracted, and entertained by Ethical Advertisements. Even a basic percentage study reveals that people may form emotional connections to brands via ethical advertising. Everyone knows that ads with a moral message get more attention and inspire people to live by those principles. Attraction, inspiration, enjoyment, and

ethics are important criteria, according to the Factor Analysis. As the secondary considerations, preference, brand affinity, and purchase were paramount. Businesses in the advertising industry would do well to make it a policy to appeal to consumers' morals by using and advocating for moral causes. A small sample of persons in Bengaluru, Karnataka, between the ages of 15 and 35 is included in this investigation. This study found that customers' mindsets are greatly impacted by ethical commercials, which in turn inspire, entice, and create brand loyalty.

Ibrahim Abdullahi, Shafiu. (2018) [7]. Using a logistic model, this study experimentally tested the public's perceptions of ethics-related ad factors in Nigerian media, controlling for respondents' demographics. Consider factors such as the target audience's age, level of education, religious affiliation, and the degree to which advertising messages include deceit or extravagant spending. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to investigate how Nigerian customers feel about contentious advertisements. The study's data came from surveys sent out to people who were likely to be acquainted with advertising messages sent via various online platforms, including social media, print media, radio, and television. Findings show that respondents' religious affiliation and degree of education significantly impact their perceptions of advertising's ethical difficulties, or offenses. Both factors have a favorable impact on consumers' ethical orientation, but those who are more committed to doing the right thing tend to dislike advertisements that encourage wastefulness.

Zahid, Zahid *et al*., (2015) [15]. It is common knowledge in today's business world that advertising takes up a disproportionate share of most companies' budgets. The current research makes an effort to look at the ethical issues with ads. Ethical concerns, including wrongdoing by celebrity endorsers and flaws with the message and substance of ads, are the focus of this research. The information was collected from 12 universities in Pakistan's Islamabad and Rawalpindi twin towns via a questionnaire. Reliability, validity, and regression analyses are carried out using the SPSS program. The research found that there is a substantial association between the efficiency of advertising and the ethics of advertising messages as well as the attraction of advertising. Statistical analysis also revealed a correlation between the ad message and its efficacy. The study's results show that the ethics of celebrity endorsers don't significantly impact the ethics of advertising. This research found that among Pakistani youth, the personal histories of celebrity endorsers don't matter much; what matters more is the product they're marketing. Ads in Pakistan aren't getting the message across; instead, consumers think marketers and advertisers should be more ethical and respectful of Pakistani culture. This is according to the findings of an appeal and a messaging study.

Butt, S. *et al*., (2009) [2]. This research takes a look at the ethical dilemmas that advertisers have when trying to reach their demographic and offers solutions to lessen their impact. The field of business ethics, which involves bringing moral principles to bear on corporate decisions, is, as you may be aware, rapidly expanding in significance. However, as we discovered in our study, advertising corporations are engaging in several unethical techniques to promote their goods and services, which is causing customers significant distress. Many firms now use children and teenagers as targets in their ads, encouraging harmful habits. Subliminal ads, comparison ads, and competitive ads are just a few of the unethical advertising methods they're utilizing to promote their wares.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Examining how viewers of television commercials perceive the ads' adherence to ethical norms, this study used a descriptive research strategy.

Sampling Strategy

To make sure that important demographic groups were represented, we employed a stratified random sampling procedure. Age, gender, level of education, and region were the criteria used to classify the population into different groups. To maintain diversity of thought, we surveyed 120 people from city, suburb, and rural locations.

- **Target Population**: People who watch TV and are exposed to ads must be 18 years old or older.
- **Sample Size**: 120 participants.

Data Collection Methods

The following method was used for data collection:

Surveys: Structured questionnaires were distributed both online and offline to gather quantitative data Quantitative data was gathered via the online and offline distribution of structured questionnaires.

- The survey used a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement, for its closed-ended questions.
- Expectations from advertising, general views, and ethical considerations were all included of the poll.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Public Opinion on Ethical Standards in TV Advertising

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	14	12%
Agree	34	28%
Neutral	36	30%
Disagree	34	20%
Strongly Disagree	12	10%
Total	120	100%

Table 1 shows that people have different opinions on whether or not television ads adhere to ethical norms. Of those who took the survey, only 40% had an optimistic view; of those, 28% agreed and 12% strongly agreed that TV ads follow ethical standards. Thirty percent were ambivalent or unclear regarding the ethics of advertising methods, representing a significant part of the total. Although 20% of respondents disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed, 30% had an unfavorable impression. Advertisers should address ethical problems and work to gain their viewers' confidence in light of these results, which indicate a high degree of public mistrust.

Table 2: Common Ethical Concerns in Television Advertising

Ethical Concern	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Misleading Claims	48	40%
Reinforcement of Stereotypes	30	25%
Over-targeting of Vulnerable Groups	24	20%
Lack of Transparency in Messaging	12	10%
Privacy Invasion	6	5%
Total	120	100%

The main ethical problems that the public connects with television advertising are highlighted by the statistics in Table 2. Forty percent of those who took the survey expressed unhappiness with the truthfulness and accuracy of advertisements, with misleading promises being the main concern. A quarter of people were worried about the perpetuation of stereotypes, highlighting the industry's ongoing battle to promote diversity and prevent damaging representations. Twenty percent of respondents raised concerns about over-targeting of low-income or children-related groups, highlighting the moral obligation of marketers to safeguard vulnerable consumers. An increasing awareness of data ethics in advertising is seen in the 10% of respondents who pointed out a lack of openness in message and the 5% who voiced worries about privacy invasion. These results show that there are critical places where ethical changes are required to bring advertising in line with what the public expects.

Table 3: Expectations for Ethical Advertising Practices

Priority	Weighted Score	Percentage (%)
Truthfulness and Accuracy	42	35%
Promoting Diversity and Inclusion	30	25%
Protecting Vulnerable Populations	24	20%
Avoiding Stereotypes	18	15%
Transparency in Data Usage	6	5%
Total	120	100%

According to Table 3, which shows what the public expects from television ads in terms of ethics, the most important factor is "Truthfulness and Accuracy" (which accounts for 35% of the overall weighted score). This proves that people respect truthfulness and veracity in advertisements more than anything else. With 25% of the vote, "Promoting Diversity and Inclusion" is clearly one of the most popular themes that people want to see reflected in ads. The third most important goal, "Protecting Vulnerable Populations," which includes children and oppressed groups, received 20% of the total score. One in five people who took the survey placed a premium on avoiding preconceptions, which goes hand in hand with the importance of diversity and inclusion. Last but not least, "Transparency in Data Usage" only managed 5%, indicating that data ethics is still a developing issue and not a top priority just yet. This research shows that in order for marketers to live up to the public's ethical expectations, they need to prioritize transparency, diversity, and the safety of marginalized communities.

Conclusion

A key lens for understanding the link between media, consumer trust, and society values is the public's view of ethical standards in television advertising. Cultural conventions, personal views, and larger social movements promoting openness, accountability, and inclusion all have a role in shaping these attitudes, as this research emphasizes. Ads on television still have a lot of influence on people's actions and beliefs, but unethical gaffes like making false promises, perpetuating negative stereotypes, and taking advantage of vulnerable viewers make people distrust and question the industry. Privacy and responsibility are two of the many ethical questions that have been prompted by the growing importance of data-driven customization and the changing function of technology. Sector stakeholders, regulators, and consumers will need to work together to build confidence and ensure that advertising tactics are in line with public expectations as the sector faces these difficulties. By placing an emphasis on ethical standards in television advertising, we can guarantee that media portrays ideals of justice, respect, and accountability and, in the end, boosts credibility and efficacy.

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