

ETHICAL ASPECTS IN ADVERTISEMENT REFERENCE TO CHILDREN

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Abstract: The purpose of this research is to distinguish the ethical issues that have in advertising targeted to children. Such unethical conducts and advertising implications had inherently becoming a controversial issue that raise to an alarming rate among nations. In which, those ethical issues that had causes health problems to children is widely discuss. In addition, the ways of developing an advertisement is further questioned for its credibility and deceptive tactics that is made for children. Furthermore, this paper also identifies how conflict of interest and misleading had significantly affected the children interest. And, as well identified how one-on-one marketing manipulate children and occupy their minds in a subliminal way are also discussed. In light with all the issues, the possible consequences that jeopardizing to both advertisers and consumers as well as the moral intensity of the situation is highlighted. It comes with recommendation that works side by side with the 7Ps of marketing and extended marketing mix which embedded throughout the entire research paper. Nonetheless, an additional discussion for the potential issues that may happen to children in future is discussed and determined for its possible consequence.

Key Words: Health Abuse, Deceptive Conducts to Advertisements, Minor, Target Issues, Ethical Issues in Advertising

INTRODUCTION

Puffery, Taste, Advertising to Children, and Stereotyping in Advertising, Advertising of Controversial Products and Subliminal Advertising are some of the most controversial topics in advertising (Wells et al., 1995); while interference in the editorial process and the unethical use of advertorial sections are the two specific problems being faced by advertisers and media.

Value Addition: Did You Know?

Influence of Advertising on Media

According to a survey related to ethics of advertising, it was found that, "71% editors were pressurized by the advertisers to kill stories,

- 93% threatened to withdraw advertising because of content disputes,
- 37% reported that advertisers succeeded in influencing news and features, and
- 55% said there are pressures from within the newspapers to write or tailor stories to please advertisers"

This clearly reveals how the advertisers try to influence media for their self-interests.

Source: Russell, 1996.

However, the following are considered as the main issues on which advertising has been generally criticized.

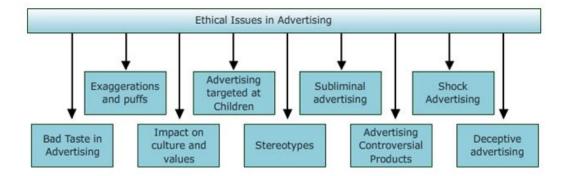


Figure: Ethical Issues in Advertising

Bad Taste in Advertising When we watch advertisements showing infected skin (ring guard ad) or involving products like low waist jeans, undergarments and feminine hygiene products; they produce higher levels of distaste. We all have our own ways of assessing as to what constitutes good taste. Unfortunately, these ideas vary a lot and, hence, creating general guidelines for good taste in advertising becomes difficult. Different things offend different people in different ways. The people who get disturbed by such visuals and consider them as bad in taste, find such advertisements as socially undesirable and also invoke ethical controversies. A few years back, an ad of 'close-up' toothpaste was pulled off because of its obscenity, wherein, a female jailer fulfills the last wish of the convict by offering him a kiss. This ad really embarrassed masses.

Bad taste is affected by factors like time, age and of course, personal perceptions of an individual about that advertisement. If a person is watching an ad with his family while having his dinner, he might view it differently as compared to the one who is watching it alone. What might be vulgar for an elderly person might not be so for a younger person or a teenager. Moreover, taste also changes overtime. What was offensive and unacceptable yesterday may not be considered offensive and unacceptable today (Elderly people might not like

what might be called fashion. The concept of dangerously low jeans is acceptable to youngsters but it might not be acceptable to older audience). Today's question of taste centers on the use of sexuality, nudity, vulgarity and violence in advertisements. However, advertisers must be careful of how these products should be presented and the language and terminology used.

Exaggerations and puffs

Puffing or exaggerating or tall claims in advertising is legal; hence, the issue of puffery involves how much exaggeration should be accepted. On the other side, for advertisers, the question of puffery is mainly an ethical one. Puffery is defined as, "advertising or other sales representations, which praise the item to be sold with subjective opinions, superlatives, or exaggerations, vaguely and generally, stating no specific facts."

Other examples include, using a particular product would give a consumer a job, ours is the best product, advertisements of fairness creams etc. However, the empirical proofs of the effectiveness of puffery have been mixed. Some research suggested that the public might expect advertisers to be able to prove the truth of their tall claims, and other research indicates that reasonable people do not believe such superlative claims. It, however, becomes the responsibility of the advertisers to put

adequate 'puffs' in their advertisements that are socially acceptable.

Impact on Culture and Values

It has been observed that advertising sometimes shapes the society's values and norms or sometimes only mirrors them. If we believe that advertising has the ability to shape our values, then it is essential that advertisers should become aware of how they portray the culture and values of their society which they generally fail to do. Conversely, if we believe that advertising mirrors society, advertisers have a responsibility to ensure that what is portrayed is accurate and value-laden and instill cultural values in the minds of the youngsters.

Marketing ethics are dimensions that portray marketers' morality attitude behind marketing or advertising. Additionally, it is also subjected to the way of marketers conducting advertisements that determine whether it will bring positive or negative values to the targeted consumers. However, it is known that advertising is often done in a framework that has inclined the value of true marketing. For instance, if an advertisement targeted to children violates its credibility, transparency, integrity or privacy of the children, it is recognized as unethical conducts.

In this ethical's viewpoint, it raises unique issues. So often, these issues cluster with inseparable arguments as identified in (Winston 2004, 11), whether or not, children understood certain marketing principles? Concurrently, if political, policy makers and regulatory controls should cease advertising for children? In (Alcohol Consumption in Australia 2006) pointed, whether children could identify the negative aspects of the products that promoted to them? Lastly, do marketers actually get parents consent for children in deciding the final purchase authority? As to say, these questions

had shown that children markets are so fragmented and in this rapid changing world, marketers tend to make use of this fragmented market as their sole target to scavenge for more profits (Faith 2002, 1001).

On top of that, advertising to children are about manipulating the mindset of their customers (Paul 2000, 25). In other words, (Winston 2004, 11) pointed that children market are known as "No other market simultaneously involves advertising to users who are rarely purchaser; and purchasers who are rarely users." Without a doubt, it reflects the reality of the marketplace. Thus, we can no longer assume that the truth of conventional marketing and advertising is merely to transmit information and generate acceptable profits for the company. For keeping up with the ever changing trend, conventional marketing has been redefined by (Debra and Michael 2008, 910) to "persuade and remind their public of their wares into ability to inform and offend."

Due to these ethical issues, marketers are facing great challenges from various authorities' bodies during advertising their products into the children marketplace. However, in (in what??) (Henry and Frank 2000, 482) by Ambler (1996); Boddewyn (1994); Madden and Grube (1994) had question about the effectiveness for having all the advertisement bans and whether such practice is ethical to demonstrate positive effects to marketers and as well consumers. Therefore, in order to produce good advertisement, marketers are to consider unethical strategies that could assist them to reach their objectives at all costs.

To tackle these unethical issues, this research paper will further depicting the intrinsic values of relevant 7Ps come separately from Marketing Mix (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) and Extended Marketing Mix (People, Process, Physical Evidence), which impacted by the highlight ethical issues towards Children industries in later discussions.

Children's Health Abuse Issues: Obesity

Numerous health related issues has been identified in advertising to children. Among them, the one that causes greatest problems is shamefully crowned by obesity. It has been defined as overwhelming fat accumulation that may impair one's health (Obesity and overweight 2006). In today's world, the situation in several countries and especially US are so severe where children prefer to spend their evening with TV and snacks than to outdoor activities. According to (Carolyn 2010), children is naive and equipped with least ability to justify what and which is actually good for them, what they have is the desire of obtaining foods from the ads that pitched them.

Ironically, according to (Bette and Jackie 2001, 75) {Bette and Jackie (2001, 75)} children's segments are on top of the important business opportunities which merchants can't afford to miss it. In addition, (Aysen and Scott 2000, 299) {Aysen and Scott (2000, 299)}also supported the aforementioned facts, and further by McKay (2005) pointing US is spending \$10 - 12 Billions to advertisements that targeted to children for foods. It is ascertained in (Elizabeth 2004, 161),{Elizabeth (2004, 161)} pointed that "Children account for approximately \$24 Billions in direct spending each year." Here, regardless of the return they can make, in (Aysen and Scott 2000, 299) {is this a secondary source reference bro?} quoted by Kotz (2007) learn that the Kaiser Family Foundation had found out "Children are exposed to more than 7,600 commercials on candy, cereal, and fast food in any given year." Hence, it is because of all this

vulnerability that making marketers so actively and cleverly penetrating children with vague information.

A study of WHO had defined Overweight as BMI more than 25 and Obese as BMI more than 30, WHO also projected in 2005 to have approximately "1.6 Billion (age 15+) were overweight and at least 400 millions were obese (Obesity and overweight 2006)." In a recent statistics survey, it had shown that "50% of elementary-school children and 80% of teenagers will battle obesity throughout their lifetime" (Aysen and Scott 2000, 299)." These staggering figures are so devastating that it is in high chances to invite premature death and disability in adulthood. Namely, some of the harmful chronic disease such as Cardiovascular Disease, Diabetes and Heart Disease which thanks to the intensive and unethical marketers that promotes junk foods without concerning children's health.

For an instance, an advertisement from McDonald of its Supersized French-Fries and Soft drinks by just topping up with 39 Cents had received critics for encouragement of overeating. In marketing mix viewpoint, McDonald cleverly uses its products, prices and promotions tactics to invites people to dine in by having greater portion with merely 39 cents added. They constantly setting a mindset for Children that food are fun, as physical evidence shown that McDonald had packages made specifically for just children that comes with toys and collectibles. Furthermore, it depicts for rather just selling for fast food but is a family adventure for having meal together at McDonald fast food centre. In addition, McDonald uses prints calorie count sheet in trays and claiming that their food will not caused obesity if consume accordingly.

The impacts that brought by such ads is unforgiving. The aftermath for such unethical advertisement contributes more health issues and shifting not just the diets of consumers but it fact, it lead to "Supersized" consumers from their products by every topping of 39 Cents (William n.d.). Hence, actions have to be taken to effectively deal with these unethical conduct that leads to obesity and other health issues.

Credibility and Deceptive Conducts to Advertisements

In addition to health concerns, other ethical issues are involved with advertising to children. As though a lot of studies filled in with interesting details by stating that advertising unprecedented ease of access to an array of innocent children. Despite in some countries like Sweden, Norway, and Netherlands had give in a lot of efforts in reducing and banned the advertisement targeted to children (Tammo, Wilma and Britta 1998, 172). Somehow, the marketers will keep on finding ways within this regulated market-space to produce inadvertent adverse outcome compromise the credibility of the advertisement in a deceptive ways.

In (William 2002, 73),{the article name/title or maybe you want redo it:- As William (2002, 73) mentioned, Peggy Chan as the founder and president of the watchdog group Action for Children's Television, pointed that TV is a media that taught children by tendering for unnecessary products instead of to save for the instance. It is informed that children are less than able to fully understand and to comprehend the real intention that marketers deceptively made for them. Thus, in a real life example of Campbell Soup back in the late 60s. In order for all the vegetable and the alphabetical wordings visible during the shot, the

ads are found to be placing "clear marbles" in the bottoms of the bowl. However, it is complaints for untruthful display as though the vegetable and alphabetical wordings aren't as visible as in the ads (William n.d.). For this reason, these deceptive practices and degrees of credibility is proved to be questionable. In the end, the potential impact will make consumers losing faith towards its products and ways they promote it. Campbell resulted in considerable negative publicity for the company and it is no longer a price's concern than to ethics concern for vast consumers.

Another ethical issue that draws the attention of researches is when marketers involve children's psychologists in their market research. The reason is clear that these psychologists are at its best from their profession. They were hired to launch attack to the children's mind. As said by the advertising president (Special Issues for Young Children n.d.), Nancy Shalek, "Advertising at its best is making people feel that without their product, you're a loser. Kids are very sensitive to that." {Move it to here (Special Issues for Young Children n.d.)}, From the 3Ps of extended marketing mix perspective, the people and process that get involve is unethical, and the physical evidence is the advertising itself. The fact had shown that marketers are viewing children as a "cash machine" that constantly generates profit for them. Hence, it is in need of setting stricter rules from the government and policymakers to iron out the unhealthy advertising that aims to children. Thus, it equally means that by enhancing the credibility and reducing the deceptive adverse could dramatically infuse promising outcomes.

Conflict of Interest & Misleading Approach in Advertisements

At the root of a success trade comes from an interest of a purchaser. Whereas, research had shown that such interest often germinate by marketers and advertisers in an unethical approaches. They cultivate children desire by continuously enriching children horizon to an extent of homogenizing them to be part of the market segment. And legitimately, children turn out to be a good target, a target that unable to makes accurate decision due to the information that captured by them are misleading and of conflicting their real interest. Hence, in short, marketers and advertisers are at their best in limiting children alternatives to only their merchandise (Paul 2000, 27).

Separately, in (Elizabeth 2004, 162) suggest u slot in the article name if u structure yr sentence this way then follow by (Elizabeth 2004, 162)} it is said to be by constantly misleading children from intricate advertisement content in their young ages, it could lead to some undesirable social values such as materialism and materialistic. The effect is so prominent, as young children are unable to resist the attraction of purchasing the products that promoted to them from ads that starring by kids' celebrities, famous cartoon icons as they believe it could provide exaggerated qualities when they have it. Thus, children will crave for all these sort of unnecessary products by all means and not to mention the amount of wasteful money parent need to spend.

For this reason, a lot of countries had prohibited famous icons to go on air and recently in early 2010, Children's Television Standards (CTS) in Australia was established and had set rules that promotion through popular characters are ceased to

be used as an endorsement in commercial products (Jamie and Andrew 2010, 1). Such practices are accredited for tackling the outrageous marketing attitudes that deploy by unethical marketers and advertisers. There was evidence in {in what bro?}(Debra and Michael 2008, 911) being identified by Jardine and Wentz (2004) saying that Ireland restricted celebrities to appear in foods advertisement that aimed to children. It is due to "policymakers and researches view a child's capacity to recognize advertising's persuasive intent as a developmental milestone" (Elizabeth 2004, 162)." As to say, it is the marketers themselves who provide opportune for the authorities to minimize their advertisement boundaries.

Another example of McDonald, according to {to what?} (Paul 2005, 9) collectibles and toys are so often comes with meal. These collectibles are a series of characters that could not be missed by children. For this reason, children would need to buy many of those meals to have entire set to be collected. As defended by the merchants, their goal is to provide fun for children while having meals. However, such advertisement measuring the same thing differently when goes to children. This is when misleading and conflict of interest happen as children are craving for the toys and collectibles than to the foods (Paul 2005, 10). It is certain that such ads are unethical, they had ignored the consequences that compromise children health, parents spending and as well forgone the fact that fast food is "junk food". Most notably, in order to get these collectibles for their child, parent are force to purchase specific kid's package in a designated price and don't have alternatives for the food within the package.

In long term, when consumer realize that such unethical conducts are made for lure them to purchase unwanted toys for their children, in return, the company might in face with sales shrinking and end up with fewer profits. Thus, it is this misleading and conflict of interest that leads to a failure which impacts to marketers' marketing mix in term of product, price, promotion and placement concern. (Paul 2000, 27){Paul (2000, 27)} suggested that it is better for each and every company jointly helps in diminishing intricate junk food advertisement's content and portraying better message to promote healthier lifestyle that enabling iudgments towards the integrity of the advertisement's message when targeting to children.

One-on-One Marketing: Minor as a Target Issue

Clearly, when comes to marketing, it is about timing and precision when the message that intended by advertisers being delivered precisely to their target. It is important for advertisers that those children receive an impact towards their products when advertisement was viewed. In another term, it is known as Subliminal. It is a visual stimulus that so quickly masked into the mind before one could actually process it and having no consent that it had actually take place (Johan, Wolfgang and Jasper 2006, 793). Thus, for such advertisement to be effectively done, the degree of distraction during the advertisement have to be minimal and it is best when children are alone and vulnerable. It is an undeniable fact that such exploitation of children's mind was said to be unethical.

For instance, given in{in what?} (William 2002, 74) of a real business environment, cartoon characters are widely recognized by children that, "They" are created just for them, hence, the ethical issues that arise, is where such advertisement are usually broadcasted in the afternoon children's television programming. At this timeframe, it turns

out to be the weakest parental supervision's period, as to say, such isolation in the afternoon perfected the intention of marketers. Undoubted, it is to have children viewed the advertisement at all costs. As a result, in children mindset parent is the only channels that can potentially purchases what is made specifically for them. Thus, it is well aware that such violation is unethical, in addition to spoiled children's attitude, it would literally put parent in face with financial hardship as well.

Advertising targeted to children alone often exceeded the limitations and resulted with various ethical issues. There is ample estimate that had shown children influential in family purchase itself are about \$500 Billion a year (Elizabeth 2004, 161). Furthermore, another study in {?} (Christine and Nancy 2001, 21) mentioned that the children spending alone had account for another \$14 Billion from their pocket money in country like US. Concurrently, a UK survey also uncovered that children possess a lot more liberty in spending and as well influence over their parents (Lionel 2000, 326). Hence, when the advertisement is targeted to children, and so often, advertisers are intended for an outcome that favor to them. For this reason, it is believe that sooner or later, two of their marketing mix elements which are the ways of promoting and placement will further intervene by authorities bodies and invite new regulations to minimize attention that can be drawn towards children.

In this study, it is pointed that it is a controversy for saying that with least cumulative exposure of advertisement to children which in turn could compromise children's understanding of advertising intent (Alcohol Consumption in Australia 2006). However, according to {to what?} (Tammo, Wilma and Britta 1998, 176), there is evidence to say that by having healthier content in the advertisement is much more effective than by having parents

controlling or restricting children on their TV times. It can be conclude that the negative impacts which happen is neither benefiting consumers nor to the advertisers. For example, advertisers can always give a warning sign saying that "Parental supervision is required" during the advertisement is on air. Therefore, it would be better off to embark advertisement onto children in an appropriate manner, in a way that do not appear to be aiming to just children but with the consent of their parent (Jeffrey 1999, 114). {will it be conflicting of what u hv presented earlier as u mentioned that advertising aim at children on the weakest parental supervision timing, so if there is a warning sign the parent will not notice it also right? It just my opinion bro}

Recommendations: Responsible Advertising with 7Ps

Advertisers Responsible in advertising is not about restricting or banning the advertisement. It is apparent that advertising brings in ethical issues for children. Children are a vulnerable segment and due to the advancement of technologies, it further enhances the transmission of message instantly to children. However, the responsibility of protecting children is still on the advertisers' hand. Advertisers have to appreciate and abide to the rules and regulations that by ethics initiatives set representative, taken up these code-of-conduct as an important guideline and to be best, inputted into respective company's rules during advertisement. For an example, if the advertisement projecting a message for a product that deemed as a "musthave" item for children and it is known that such exclusivity is unethical. Clearly, it is vital to come up with a solution towards the issues by conducting advertising in a way that neither tipped to consumers nor favor to advertisers. (Paul 2005, 9-11).

Advertisers would need to constantly market their products but in a way that promoting further space for children in future rather than rigorously conquering all they have. This can be best achieved by treating children as an informed consumer by teaching them what {and} how to foresee marketing is all about. Consequently, it will further enlighten them about what is market segment and in return, for children to germinate a priceless asset - decision making. Such realization of the intricacies advertising tactics at an early age can ensure children be aware to the fundamental of the marketing environment. (Paul 2000, 28-29).

Due to the fast moving pace in today's business, children had becomes a promising spending group. Thus, if children have the ability to make decision, they can decide whether or not such products is a necessity or unnecessary. Accepting the facts that parents are unable to fully shielded their children away from advertisement, thus, the best practice is makes children to cope and gain experiences with what is about to fall upon to them. (Paul 2000, 26).

It literally means that children will no longer being viewed as a vulnerable group that advertisers can take advantage on. Children can develop themselves with the knowledge to make comparisons between products, prices promotions. Hence, by not undermining message behind advertisement, children could turn their weaknesses to strength and the concerned ethical issues of children's naivety will further be diminishing in a healthier way. (Elizabeth 2004, 163).

Parents and Authorities Bodies

Furthermore, parents should play as an important role in tackling the advertising ethical issues. According to {?} (Lionel 2000, 327) parent should educate their children and make known for children

about the marketing strategy that draw by advertisers. This can be achieved by setting it as a learning milestone since they are young. This will drastically develop children to be aware of advertiser's marketing processes by identifying the content and terminology used by them.

Moreover, given that authorities bodies are already in place, but there is always a need to further emphasis when pursuing for unethical conducts. For instance, it is suggest having government intervene in setting rules and regulations in the TV advertising industries for the reason of minimize advertisement that make directly to children. In term of products promotions and placement, according to Dibb (1996) in {?} (Tammo, Wilma and Britta 1998, 172) identified that countries like Norway, Sweden and Netherlands was found aired less than 5 advertisements in one hour of television programming for children. In addition, informed advertisers to collaborate parents and family members for advertisement that be put on air or by reducing advertisement during children's programming period.

Some country like France are in face with choosing between attach with a health message in their advertisements or to paid 1.5% tax based on their advertisement budget to foot the healthy related message (Aysen and Scott 2000, 301). Separately, even the fast food typhoon{tychoon or typhoon?}, identified by Jardine and Wentz (2005) saying that McDonald is adhere with the strict rules and providing differing strategies in each country based on how to advertise their products. For these reasons, in order to success, changes have to be made with an immediate effect as evidence shown that the existing practice had flawed into a devastating phase. It is clear that with the cooperation from advertisers, it could propel to have healthier products sales, widely accepted promotions strategies and with reasonable pricings for the general consumers.

Conclusion

Overall, the aim of this comprehensive research was to scrutinize that ethical issues in advertising exist and will gives impacts towards children through various channels. A channel that remit for obtaining nothing else but profits from their targeted segments and therefore, as said in{?}(Aysen and Scott 2000, 300) "The judgments and behavioral intentions are important constructs to gain insights regarding advertising directed at children." It is clear that when advertisers properly fill up the gap by regulating their content which adheres to the rules, it helps in realizing and educating their targeted audiences that overindulge for their products in a better way.

So as to say, advertisers have to know that the boundaries of reasonable practice have been severely breached and they should not dismiss the attention that has been given in respect for a "cleaner" outcome of their advertisements. Thus, those outrageous advertising claim that previously roamed the media have to be virtually impossible in the current situation. As a result, if all these groups take their responsibility into account, the accomplishment of advertising towards children will be more ethical and approachable in future.

OTHER ETHICAL ISSUE IN FUTURE A WAY FORWARD

This paper examined the ethical issues have in advertising towards children and as well recommendation directed to 7Ps has been identified accordingly from conventional marketing medias. The disguise advertisement that makes children vulnerable via the internet is yet to be scrutinized in this topic. This study is in an attempts to fill up the

gap from another medium of communication; The Cyberspaces. A disguise Advertisement is better be known as a breakthrough from typical advertising technique that being put in TV ad, magazine and etc. It had further exploited into the internet world where advertising is at the ease of fingertip. They can transmit the message at a lower cost and with better influence. It was a cover-up in a way that people are unaware that the advertisement had moved in to their mind. (Austin and Reed 1999, 590-591).

For an example, nowadays children are quick in learning and "blogging" had turn out to be a typical ways of projecting one's stories and endeavors. Thus, some food industries has been found to hiring famous "Blogger" to make disguise news for promoting their brands, products, product's price and place to find their product as though the blogger himself are telling his daily endeavors. Hence, the digital age had further facilitated children and adolescent to view on their beloved blogger flawed statement and pursue for what is recommended by them. (William n.d.).

Such disclosure is unethical, unethical in a way that they need not to hold any responsibility about the content that being uploaded into blogs and ignoring the harm that possibly brings to consumers, notably, children and youngsters. Thus, supervision that needed is crucial, as if these advertisements will intrude even to an adult and not to mention the vulnerable children. (Austin and Reed 1999, 590-591).

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