

Unethical advertisement in the philippines



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From this phenomenon, advertisers seize the opportunity to maximize its profit, thus increasing competition in finding ways to captivate the attention of millions of potential consumers to buy their products. This competitive environment pressures advertisers to go beyond the tradition and find new ways to mesmerize the potential consumers. Most of the time, advertisers would sacrifice ethics along the way just to reach their goal in persuading people to buy their products. Even big companies like McDonalds are guilty of this. McDonalds would lure kids to buy their unhealthy meal of hamburgers and soft drinks by giving away free toys when kids purchase a whole meal.

Advertisement like these, which crosses the boundaries of ethics, is against consumer's right. Unfortunately, here in the Philippines, most consumers are not aware of their right. Unlike in America and other liberal countries where even the colossal corporations are not spared from their unjust advertisements, most Filipino consumers tend to see these unjust advertisements as a part of promotions like there is nothing wrong with seeing women posing sexually just to promote a jewelry, women and men wearing underwear only, products promising an exaggerated truth like a 360 degree damage control hair with in 7 days or even asking influential imaged celebrities to promote alcohol.

Maybe the consumers are oblivious to the ethics of advertising because of the majority of the Filipino consumers cannot differentiate ethical from unethical advertisement. This research paper will hope to elucidate on the unethical advertising and the status of the consumers against such ads. It will first define the characteristics of advertising and ethics. Then proceed to

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the ethical boundaries advertisers cross. To support the suppositions of the research, there are statistical figures that would showcase the opinions and stands of Metro Manila Filipino consumers on the dilemma of unethical advertising. In this paper, the most observed unethical factors in the Philippines which majority, if not all, advertisements violate one way or the other is claiming unrealistic promises, using of psychological impact on potential consumers or promoting of harmful products.

Advertising in its simplest characteristic is a medium of communication use to inform consumers about a product. “ Advertisers, agencies, the media and audiences are all part of a larger environment, influencing and being influenced by a network of forces that includes the economy, government, interest groups and society at large” (Arens, 2004, p. 55). The general atmosphere created by these external elements is the advertising environment. “ This environment is a complex and ever-changing dynamo” (O’Guinn, Allen, & Semenik, 2005, p. 125). It has developed from simple statements, in the start of advertising existence, to a multibillion-dollar, global industry.

The growth of these industries leads to the increase of consumerism which is one factor of the development of advertising environment. “ The more products that are available dictate a greater need for the diversity of these products to be known, thus steps in the communication device known as advertising and the advertising practitioner” (Spence, & Heekeren, 2005, p. 17). This is the importance of advertising. It is the purpose of the advertiser to communicate to the consumer that a particular brand or product is the most worthy of purchase and use (Bovee, 1995). Therefore, the pressure

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given to the advertisers by the company is enormous. For the positive outlook, this intense pressure for the income of the advertisers brings forth creativity in capturing the interest of consumers. At its worst, it leads to advertising campaigns that not only push the boundaries of societal acceptance but also go beyond acceptable norms, thus creating ethical problems and dilemmas.

These ethical dilemmas differ in every place. This is because of the vast interpretation on what ethics is. " Ethics can be simply defined as a set of prescriptive rules, principles, values, and virtues of character that inform and guide interpersonal and intrapersonal conduct; that are the conduct of people toward each other and the conduct of people toward themselves" (Spence, & Heekeren, 2005, p. 2). If this definition taken into consideration, ethics therefore differ from the reasoning of each individual. When the common reasoning of each individual is combined, universally accepted ethical rules and principles are applied by the majority (Jhally, 1990). This is also known as the codes of ethics. The codes of ethics would help in determining if the advertisement would be considered Unethical advertising is a serious issue especially here in Metro Manila because consumers are exposed approximately more than a hundred ads a day through different medium available. In addition, most Metro Manila consumers barely have a clue on unethical advertising. Therefore allowing such unprincipled acts of advertisers to continue that could eventually harm the society. After all, it has already been mentioned that advertising does have the power to influence each individual's decision and lifestyle and thus the whole society itself.

Parent with at least one kid who is not yet of legal age

In dissecting further, figure 1. 1 exhibits the different segments of Metro Manila consumer awareness on unethical advertising. As shown in the figure above, only 5% of the highschool students and college students know nothing about unethical advertising. Meanwhile, 50 % and more of the single working consumer and the parent consumer recognize unethical advertising. Therefore, it could be said that teenagers below 18 years are still partly innocent when it comes to unethical advertising. As well as, more than 50% of the population barely knows the essence of unethical advertising.

The awareness rate mentioned above is not a good start for consumerism. “ It is the right of the consumers to be given correct, clear and reliable information” (Bovee, & Arens, 1986, p. 63). But without the consumer’s awareness of its right, advertisers can get away with most of the ethical dilemma. The ethical dilemma with commercial advertising of the consumer’s right to information, is that the persuasion, under the disguise of information, which not only deceptive, in addition, it can have harmful consequences both for the targeted consumers as well as for the community (Spence, & Heekeren, 2005). Especially after the expansion of media, targeted consumers as well as the whole community are frequently exposed to advertisements which intensify the probability of the occurrence of the harmful consequences. Unfortunately, an ordinary consumers cannot avoid being exploited to at least a thousand ads per day (Jones, 2000).

Portrayed in the figure 2. 1, is the opinion of Metro Manila consumers in the array of advertisements they are exposed to everyday. As, visualized in the

graph, the color violet representing 150-200 array and the color tortoise representing 200 onwards array has a total of 3 out of 56 participants enlisted in that cluster. While most of the consumer categories have colors red representing 50 -100 array and green representing 100-150 array, which sums up to a total of 41 out of 56 participants claiming to have exposed around 50-150 ads everyday to most of the individual with no discrimination.

Insofar, the figure shows that the majority of the consumers assume they are exposed to at least 50 advertisements per day. A range tremendously lower than Jones (2000) claim of consumer's exposure to a thousand advertisements. The cause of such claim that most consumers are exposed to a high number of advertisements is advertisers are very skillful in creating advertisements that will be in plain sight of the consumers in their everyday hassle in life, to give it an unavoidable characteristic. " Consumers are so well-researched and targeted that they can be covertly seduced by a strategy that surrounds them and that infiltrates their physical and mental space, often without their realization" (O'Guinn, Allen, & Semenik, 2005, p. 88). Hence, most Metro Manila consumers lose track of the number of advertisements they are exposed to, believing its less than 200 and not otherwise.

Thus, an ordinary individual is bombarded with more artistic communication than they can handle and most of the time without their knowledge. This frequency of artistic communication existing creates a clutter " which is a barrier to effective communication" (Parker, 2006, p. 44). This is the reason why advertisers think outside of the box for a breakthrough possibility. " In order to stay competitive in this cluttered media landscape, the architects of

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advertising need to be creating advertising that does not look, feel, smell or taste like the generic advertising that the new media-savvy and sophisticated consumers have become used to" (Spence, & Heekeren, 2005, p. 17). To achieve that goal, advertisers try to find effective channels of communication. From traditional channels of TV, radio, posters and newspapers, advertisers embrace the new medium of communication, technologies such as internet and other digital media. Although being in the third world country like Philippines, the traditional medium is still thriving.

Represented in figure 3. 1, Metro Manila consumers are exposed to different types of advertising medium frequently. As interpreted by the graph, the predominant medium that most Metro Manila consumers are exposed to is TV leading by 9 marks against billboard the 2nd dominant advertising medium. Notice that through out the different categories of consumers printed ads like posters, flyers and brochures are low. It might also the factor that billboards and TV are almost unavoidable compared to brochures and flyers. So this shows that traditional advertising communication like TV in the Philippines is still a fad. Though, new approaches like online advertisements are still progressing.

These three figures that were just shown exhibit the demographics of the Metro Manila consumers in relation to advertising and its ethics. With the results shown Metro Manila consumers need some consumer rights educational background to help understand what the advertisers are getting away with. Out of the two-digit estimate of ethical issues the advertisers face, three commonly violated are unrealistic promises, use of psychological impact and promotion of harmful product (Spence, & Heekeren, 2005). These

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ethical issues are evident almost everywhere, including the Philippines. After all, “ advertising addresses people primarily as consumers” creating a similar advertising environment almost everywhere (Schultz, 1990, p. 28).

The first and most obvious unethical line most advertisers cross without second thoughts is claiming unrealistic promises. “ One of the most common short-term arguments about advertising is that it is so frequently deceptive. For advertising to be effective, consumers must have confidence in it. So any kind of deception not only detracts from the complete information principle of free enterprise but also risks being self-defeating” (Bovee, & Arens, 1986, p. 68). A most common example seen by the majority is whitening cream; “ Use this product and get whiter skin in just 7 days!” This whitening cream advertisement gave a promise of whiter skin in just 7 days without genuine evidence of its claim. This kind of deception may profit business firms in the short-term but create a greater harm in the long-run (Lane, & Russell, 2001). For the short-term, consumers will purchase the product, but once they figured it is ineffective the purchasing will stop and the sales will go down.

“ Advertisement does not have to be literally true, but an advertisement that is designed to deceive or mislead a consumer is a different matter” (Belch, & Belch, 2007, p. 224). This is the situation in which the use of puffery in advertising comes under inquiry. Puffery, which is a common practice in advertising, is not considered illegal in most countries even here in the Philippines. This is because puffery is “ an expression of opinion not made as a representation of a fact” (Bovee, & Arens, 1986, p. 57). It is the key reason why consumers have the expectation that advertising will stretch the truth rather than express the truth.

Shown in figure 4. 1 is the perspective of Metro Manila consumers on the categories of unethical advertising. As measured in the graph above, advertising on harmful product and exaggerated truths are ranked 1st and 2nd place as the most viewed unethical category in advertising. From a total of 56 consumers who answered the survey, 55 considered exaggerated truths as unethical and 49 considered ads on harmful products are unethical. Confirming, that most consumers, even in Metro Manila, does have the expectation that advertising will stretch the truth rather than express the truth.

A dilemma such as this exists because of no legally backing against it. Stated in The Law on Obligations and Contracts under Title 2 Contracts, Chapter 2 Essential Requisites of Contracts, Section 1 Consent, Article 1340, is “ The usual exaggerations in trade, when the other party had an opportunity to know the facts are not in themselves fraudulent” (De Leon, 2003, p. 128). Explained by De Leon (2003), it is the natural tendency for advertisers to resort to exaggerations in their attempt to make a reasonable profit of the business firm. Customers are expected to know how to take care of their concerns and to rely own independent judgment. Anyone who relies on said exaggerations does so at his own risk. So in essence, the notion of puffery refers to exaggerated claims, comments, commendations, or hyperbole for consumers to based on their own subjective views and opinions. “ It is generally considered to be part of the artfulness and playfulness of advertising and should not be taken seriously by reasonably consumers” (Jones, 2000, p. 86).

For the second ethical issue the advertisers trespass is playing mind games with the target consumers by using psychological impact on them. It has already been established that the role of advertising is to creatively show potential consumer products or services in a way that persuades them to buy or at least feel positive towards those products or services. " Advertising also often seeks to persuade primarily by an appeal to sentiment rather by an appeal to intellect" (Schultz, 1990, p. 32). Some examples are advertisements that associate products with feelings of well-being, fun, humor, freedom, romance, glamour loved ones and such. Gigantic industries like Coca-cola, Pepsi and McDonald's could be observed using such types of ads internationally. Even though these advertisements are said to appeal the consumers intellectually and emotionally, " advertising cannot create primary demand in mature product categories" (O'Guinn, Allen, & Semenik, 2005, p. 125). This theory is also agreed upon by the Metro Manila consumers in their survey.

*5 being the highest

Figure 5. 1 has a graph about the belief of Metro Manila consumers on how advertisements influence their decisions. As proven in the figure, there are more than 50% of the participants in the high-school category who answered 4 and 3 compared to the other categories where at least 50% of their participants answered 2 and 1. This could mean that younger participants are more influenced to ads compared to adults. Therefore advertisements appealing to intellectual are effective especially to the innocent consumers.

So, “ in those cases, the ads are not intended as true representations of reality or as narratives that correspond to the truth, but rather as rhetorical and metaphorical evocations that are designed to appeal to the consumers’ emotions and aspirations for the purpose of creating positive and alluring images for the products in the minds of the consumers” (Lane, & Russell, 2001, p. 91). Therefore, truth could be simply not relevant in advertisements. Seventy-four percent of American consumers either “ strongly” or “ somewhat strongly” believe that “ most advertisements deliberately stretch the truth about the products they advertise,” claims Jhally (1990, p. 103). This statistics would not really surprise most consumers, since advertising is a form communication that does its best to stretch the truth in order to create some profit. “ As communication genre, it wants you to believe and dispel belief in the same breath” (Burton, & Purvis, 1991, p. 23).

The last line advertisers cross to earn millions, is accepting assignments in which harmful products are to be advertised. In particular, advertising for alcohol and tobacco products have been a controversy in most countries claiming to encourage consumers to use unhealthy products. Some countries, such as Canada, Finland and Philippines, have completely banned cigarette companies from advertising their product. While other countries, such as United States and Australia are very successful in anti smoking campaigns in which cigarette advertising is not entirely banned but all public places are banned from smoking (Arens, 2004). The government does possess the right to intercede, when it believes it needs to, in order to restore a health environment for the majority. “ In most advertising

environments, administrators have embraced what they label a self-regulatory model, in effect establishing a situation in which the industry or profession is doing the regulating with varying degrees of contribution from other stakeholders, including the government” (Burton, & Purvis, 1991, p. 12). In the Philippines, the government, employing Burton, & Purvis self-regulatory model, utilized its power in banning cigarette advertisements. Such action is required by the government, the reduction if not absolute elimination, for the benefit of the majority in the society.

Exhibited in figure 6. 1 are the responses Metro Manila consumers on government banning cigarette companies to advertise. As, portrayed above, around 55% do agree that cigarette companies should be banned in advertising. While around 5% disagree with the majority. The irony is in figure 4. 1 49 out of 56 believes that it is unethical for advertisers to advertise harmful products while in this figure only 32 out of 56 believes that cigarette ads should be banned.

Advertisements such as these should be effectively self-regulated. Effective self-regulation calls for the development of a commitment to the wider community, no just to a business firm’s consumers. In this regard, “ a process of consultation between industry, consumers and government is established as each has a role to play to make the system work” (Belch, & Belch, 2007, p. 89). Government offers a public policy perspective, whereas business firms offer the alternative view to a regulatory environment (Burton, & Purvis, 1991). Consumers input are just as important in order to maintain relevance and confidence in the system. Especially now, where the advertising industry gets intense in competing for consumers limited

resource of time by seizing their attention to withhold interest in the advertised product, ignoring the moral obligation they have as advertisers to the consumers. Therefore, in this immense competition there is a chance that most, if not all, advertisements have already cross the border of ethics.

This research paper has discussed on unethical advertising in the Philippines. Unfortunately, in-depth discussion on the Filipino consumer's perspective on ethics, advertising strategies and theories practiced in the Philippines and rules and issues of unethical advertising present in the Philippines has not been fulfilled. This is because of the very few past researches done in this topic. The lack of sources on Filipino consumer's perspective of ethics gave need of conducting surveys, which results are shown in the figures presented in this paper. However, the sampled used in the survey is not big enough giving a possibility on a significant error percentage. In addition, the survey has not been conducted throughout Metro Manila, the heart of Philippines commerce, but just a part of Metro Manila. So the survey reference is not enough for more in-depth discussion on the issues where the line of ethics would be drawn for Filipino consumers.

For the advertising strategies conducted, theories practiced, rules implemented and issues seen on unethical advertising in the Philippines discussed in this paper, the references used were written by foreign authors with a very credible background. They wrote regarding on advertising theories, examples, issues and ideals based on the western countries.

Regrettable, most of the authors have not conducted researches on the advertising scenario in the Philippines. Although, some theories are applicable everywhere, the culture and economic position of the Philippines

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is really different from the western. This research paper selected references consisting of theories applicable ubiquitously so that it could be used to study unethical advertising in the Philippines.

Furthermore, the time allotted for this research paper was very limited for a more extensive research. With a two month time allotment, not all useful resources were gathered. Resources were limited to the books available at the university library. Likewise, the time allotted for the survey was approximately two days. Consequently, not much respondents were sought in a very short period, sacrificing the accuracy of the results.

The recommendation to improve the credibility of the research paper due to lack of written resources is interviewing credible persons. A well-renowned Filipino anthropologist may give answers on the culture of ethics in the Philippines. Another recommended interviewee are marketing or advertising managers, because they have put into practice the theories and understood which one is applicable in the Philippines.

Although, there is lacking written resources about unethical advertising, written resources should not be entirely forgone. Resources such as Advertising Ethics by Spence, E., & Heekeren, B. V. and International advertising: Realities and myths by Jones, J. P. , are needed for conducting this study. These resources would greatly help in building the foundation for this research.

With the interview and written resources, the survey should also be a part of the research. This research method would gather information from the individual directly involve in the research at hand. It would be best if more <https://assignbuster.com/unethical-advertisement-in-the-philippines/>

time is allotted here, to disperse the survey form different parts of the Philippines or at least the Metro Manila and to increase the number of respondents for lower statistical percentage error of the survey.

Over all, the existence of unethical advertising is evident everywhere even here in the Philippines. It is evidently seen in the unrealistic promises made by business firm to promote sales. Even harmful products are being advertised without shame just to profit. The advertisers are also becoming masters in playing with the minds of their potential consumers. This psychological impact on consumers particularly on children is shamelessly used even by big companies like McDonalds. Consumers at the very least should be aware of these unethical strategies.