

# Ethical theories of sme business advertisement (burger king)

[Business](#), [Company](#)



## **1. 0 Introduction**

Burger King corporation as one of the American multinational chain of fast food eateries, headquarters in Miami, Florida, United States. The company was first founded in 1953 by Keith Kramer and Matthew Burns as Insta-Burger King which is a venture in Jacksonville, Florida. In 1954, Insta-Burger King faced financial difficulties, two Miami-based franchisees David Edgerton and James McLamore bought the company and renamed it as ' Burger King'. (Chepkemoui and Joyce, 2019)

Burger King offered variety of food products from a basic menu such as hamburgers, french fries, milkshakes, and sodas to more diverse set of products such as Flamin Hot Deal, salads and veggies, desserts include Taro pie, nuggets and with the ' Whopper' Burger King's as their main signature product. (Lewis, R., 2019)

In year 2018, Burger King had been reported to have 17, 796 outlets in 100 countries. Meanwhile in Malaysia, Cosmo Restaurants Sdn. Bhd. had opened the first Burger King restaurant at the Overhead Bridge Sungai Buloh in December 1997. Up to today, Cosmo Restaurants Sdn Bhd are reported to have more than 50 Burger King restaurants in Malaysia. (Burger King Corporation, 2016)

## **2. 0 Ethical Issues**

Business companies use advertisement as one of the method to expand their reputation as well as to delivery their product or service in an unique way to attract customer and in return to scale up the sale of their products or

services. There are different aspects related to ethical issues in advertising. To protect the customer, there are rules and regulation in advertising, unfortunately, some unethical advertisers are finding ways to use unethical advertising without consideration that their act may interfere with legal issues despite governments had urged restrictions and rules in the marketing industry. (Boddewyn, 1985)

Advertising should bring benefits such as make consumer's life easier, comfortable and providing pleasant way in purchasing services or products. Thus, ethics and honesty in advertising are crucial elements that every advertiser should concern with during advertising their company's products or services. (Nageshwara Rao. S. B. 1987)

There are few unethical practices according to particular ethical theories are founded in , this chosen advertisement used by Burger King.

### 2. 1 Theory of Ethical Consumerism

#### 2. 1. 1 Contractual Theory

##### 2. 1. 1. 1 Duty of Disclose

Burger King do not inform their customer about the pricing of their food products in this particular advertisement. Without pricing, consumer will have doubts on the pricing when they first notice the advertisement. For instance, when the advertisement is available on Youtube but without exact pricing, customer need to approach to the Burger King restaurant by walk in or call their customer services line in order to know the exact pricing and

decide whether the price is in their affordable range after they are acknowledge with the pricing.

#### **2. 1. 1. 2 Duty Not to Misrepresent**

Advertisements must be truthful. In this particular Burger King advertisement, Burger King do not mention the size of the actual serving portion and the ingredients contents in their food products. The statement such as “ All pictures shown are for illustration purpose only. Actual product may vary due to product enhancement” are not available in this advertisement. For instance, the burger shown in the advertisement is with thicker meat and more vegetables but the actual serving size of the burger when consumer come for dine in at the restaurant are much more thinner meat and lesser vegetables in the burger.

#### **2. 1. 1. 3 Duty Not to Comply**

Burger King do not inform consumer about the promotion time. This might cause confusion among the consumer as they are not acknowledge about the availability of their food products. For instance, consumer do not know the specific promotion such as ‘ Free Two pieces Black Pepper Brasil Drumlets when you buy any large chicken meal’ are available for all the time or only on specific promotion time.

#### **2. 1. 1. 4 Duty Not to Coerce**

Burger King indirectly influence or threaten the customer to buy from them by stating ‘ From full meals to snacking treats, only Burger king offers you eight true chicken varieties’ in this particular advertisement. By saying this statement, Burger King have create a misconception that lead consumer to

have one side thought such as other restaurants are not able to serve them others true chicken varieties.

### **2. 1. 2 Due care theory**

Burger King do not mention the possible side effects of consuming their food products. Burger King serving variety of food products such as cheese hamburger, french fries, carbonated drinks, desserts and etc. which is in high sugar, high fat and high sodium content. Certain population such as people with diabetes, kidney issues or hypertension will not be aware of the possible side effects by consuming certain products such as carbonated drinks and hamburgers with heavy dressings that may pose health risk to them.

Furthermore, children are the population that require balance diet in order to sustain proper growth are not aware of consuming Burger King food products regularly will increase the healthy issues and obesity problems among pre-teenager and teenagers.

## **2. 2 Normative Ethics**

### **2. 2. 1 Non-Consequentialist Ethics**

#### **2. 2. 1. 1 Ethics of Rights and Justice – Ethics of Rights**

Burger King do not inform consumer whether their products are serve-able to all community in Malaysia especially the Muslim consumers. Religion plays a crucial part among the consumer to make decision as it influences the consumer to use certain products and services available for them. For instance, there is no “ Halal” recognition available in this particular advertisement. This missing information is causing confusion to Muslim

consumers about the status of products served by Burger King are whether halal or not.

## **2. 3 Advertising Theory**

### **2. 3. 1 Social Effect**

Burger King advertisement bring negative impact on the society mainly in the aspect of health issue. Burger King advertising their food products to attract the attention of community thus resulting in more people acknowledge the existence of Burger King and will consider to consume their products. Fast food such as hamburgers, fried chicken and carbonated drinks offered by Burger King in their menu set are known for their low nutrient values, high salt, high sugar, and high fat that might pose the risk of getting obesity and other illness. For instance, as declares by Chronic Disease Alliance " About 26 per cent of youth population that aged between 2 and 17 years old are suffered from overweight or obese."( Essays, UK., 2018) Youth population are the potential group that are able to change the world for the better in future. Hence, when health issue among youth are showing negative impact indirectly this will result in poorer health status community in future.

### **2. 3. 2 Effect on Desire**

Burger King advertising their food products in special and unique way by offer eight chicken varieties and promotion such as ' Free Two pieces Black Pepper Brasil Drumlets when you buy any large chicken meal' to attract customer to buy more and try their food products despite knowing that

Burger King food products such as the burgers and fried chickens are unhealthy fast food.

### **3. 0 Recommendations**

There are few relevant strategic recommendations corresponding to the ethical theories are suggested to improve the business unethical behavior in this particular advertisement used by Burger King corporation.

#### **3. 1 Theory of Ethical Consumerism**

##### **3. 1. 1 Contractual Theory**

###### **3. 1. 1. 1 Duty of Disclose**

Burger King should include the pricing of their food products in the advertisement to avoid doubts among consumer without any imitation.

###### **3. 1. 1. 2 Duty Not to Misrepresent**

Burger King should include the statement such as “ All pictures shown are for illustration purpose only. Actual product may vary due to product enhancement” should be mentioned earlier. The actual size of the serving portion should be mention in the advertisement and any report regarding the deviation from food products that served to the consumer should take immediate action in every branches of Burger King restaurant.

###### **3. 1. 1. 3 Duty Not to Comply**

Burger King should inform consumer about the promotion time whether is only applicable on specific hour or is available all the time. Consumer have the right to know more details on the promotion time as well as the term and condition applicable in order to get the mentioned promotion in the advertisement.

**3. 1. 1. 4 Duty Not to Coerce**

Burger King should advertising their chicken varieties in a way that do not devalue other competitors by stating Burger King are the only fast food eateries that do offer eight chicken varieties in the particular market. By doing so, Burger King are limiting consumer choices to choose other eateries that are available in the market by indirectly saying other competitors do not offer them more varieties of true chicken products.

**3. 1. 2 Due Care Theory**

Burger King should acknowledge the consumer about all the possible health danger that may pose by eating their products. For instance, certain population such as individual with obesity, hypertension, diabetes or kidney disease should avoid taking their food products without limitation. In addition, any ingredients that used in making their food products such as salad dressings that may contains peanuts which may cause allergies in some individual should mentioned in the advertisement.

**3. 2 Normative Ethics****3. 2. 1 Non-Consequentialist Ethics****3. 2. 1. 1 Ethics of Rights and Justice – Ethics of Rights**

Burger King should inform consumer whether their food products are serve-able to all community especially Muslim consumer by stating the ‘ Halal’ recognition to avoid any confusion among Muslim consumer and also protect Muslim consumer rights.



### **3. 3 Advertising Theory**

#### **3. 3. 1 Social Effect**

Burger King should promote more healthier food products instead of only promote mainly on meat oriented snacks and hamburgers as their main dishes. Burger King should includes vegetable oriented burgers on a specific day once a week as their main dishes of the day or giving promotion price on their salads and vegies on their promotion day by establishing special promotion day such ‘ GO GREEN DAY’ or ‘ GO HEALTHY DAY’. New menu such as fruits desserts as their side dishes or free upgrade size of tea instead of carbonated drinks to encourage the society to eat healthy and indirectly give the society to have more choices on picking more balance diet.

#### **3. 3. 2 Effect on Desire**

Burger King should inform the consumer about the exact calories contents of their food products by illustrate the nutrition labeling in picture or by animation format which is more attractable than words in order to help consumers easier to understand or read the nutrition information and giving consumers to have more chance to make reasonable consideration on buying Burger King products according to consumer’s health status.

### **Conclusion**

As a conclusion, education and information are easier to obtain from this modern era within fingertip by surfing internet, consumers are more conscious and aware of their rights in purchasing the products or services carefully. Therefore, the ethics related to advertising are main concern in

order to build up the positive attitude and confidence level of consumers. Advertisers should follow the implemented ethical standard according to the codes of ethics stated in rules and regulations to deliver their message to the targeted consumer and treat the consumer with the honesty, truthness and integrity to the different type of consumers and audience regardless of gender, religions and age.

## References

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