

# Marketing communications and ethics

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



According to Cunningham (1999, p. 500), ethical advertisements encompasses critical question of what should be done rather than focus on the legalities. In the past many organizations have not engaged in responsible advertising because they are more conscious of the legal ramifications that the social impact of the target consumers. This narrow focus has led to massive ethical and unethical advertisement debates at the expense of the consumer. (Drumwright, 1993). This paper gives a brief synopsis of some of the burning issues in ethical advertising. Criteria Used to distinguish ethical advertising from unethical advertising:

According Clay (2000) of Monitor on Psychology, many advertisers have been very keen in luring young people to some consumption by advertising. However, some practices are ethical and others are not. One of the most common but unethical practices is advertising to the children. This strategy is unethical because it is damaging to the children's psychology and denies that the chance to progressively be able to make choices in life. Any form of advertising that is against public interest, values and sense of living is also referred to as unethical, because they impact negatively on families and individual rights.

Any form of advertising that exploits either the advertising participants or the right of the audience to make informed buying decisions is unethical. This is true because the buyer's psychology is under abuse. (Clay, 2000) Any advertisement that exploits psychological tactics to propel commercial principals and buying goals while causing consumers to engage in impulse buying is considered unethical. Advertisement that manipulate the capital resources of consumers or those that insensitive the morality messages to

families and individuals or damaging to their health or soul are the most common types of unethical advertising.

Any other advertising that advertisement that conforms to good practice, promotes business fairly and incorporated corporate social responsibility is generally considered ethical. Similarly, ethical advertisements are those that avoid going native on business while ignoring people; avoids ostrich syndrome; avoid moral muteness; avoid market compartmentalization and above all avoids illegalities. (Murphy, 2004) Behavioural Targeting ethics and conformance to market research standards: I think behavioural targeting is not ethical and does not conform to market research standards.

This is because most of these internet based target marketing behaviour are use non-consent technology to retrieve and store people's personal private information. This information is later used to spam mails to the people. Initially this information is collected in the pretext of market research but could be used by the holder for non-marketing issues. (Chester & Mierzwinski, 2007, p. 1-74). Therefore behavioural target marketing is unfair and unethical non-conforming to marketing research standards because the people privacy is sacrificed.

How companies can gather customer data without infringing individual rights to privacy: It is possible for companies to gather customer data without infringing individual rights to privacy. Even though this process has been slow, companies are coming up with technological strategies that ensures personal and credit data is secure. They are doing so by electronic authentication and coding system such as ChoicePoint to tackle possible fraud when privacy information is hacked. ([email protected] Emory, 2004).

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The use of biometric has been gaining credible use to prevent unauthorized access to private data.

Aside from the finger printing methods, the latest technology includes voice identity match and DNA can also be used with the consent of the customer without compromising their security. Most firm leadership have come up with a mix of technology to curb identity theft which is on the increase. Above all the customer must be aware and should consent. ([email protected] Emory , 2004). Conclusion: As business competition intensifies internally and globally, many firms are engaging in aggressive advertisement. It is important that these firms are able to identify what is ethical and what is not aside from keeping their practices legal.

One such advertising strategy has been behavioural targeting that is commonly used in the internet. Most of their operations are considered unethical because they breach customers' privacy. However, all is not lost for these business firms as there are modern technological ways in which they can gather customer data and information without infringing on their privacy rights.

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