

Screens of Conscience: How Viewers Judge Ethical Boundaries in TV Ads

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ABSTRACT

TV advertising is still the most powerful medium for influencing consumer behavior, cultural values, and societal norms. However, ethical limits of persuasion in this medium remain a subject of great contention (Murray, 1993). This research focuses on how audiences perceive and respond to ethical standards in TV commercials, specifically public opinions about honesty, fairness, and cultural sensitivity (Nelson, 2012). Using a mixed-method design, the study integrated quantitative survey findings (n = 500) with qualitative content analysis of 50 TV adverts aired in the last 12 months (Jowett & Abbott, 2013). Stratified sampling was used to provide demographic representation across gender and age groups. Statistical tests, such as Chi-square and ANOVA, uncovered significant trends: 68% of respondents saw ethical transgressions in beauty product adverts that encourage unrealizable standards, with 61% criticizing repeating themes of gender objectification (Berger, 2020). Notably, 54% of participants signaled conditional acceptance of exaggeration when worded as humor or clearly fictional, implying that audiences differentiate between false claims and creative freedom (Entman & Rojecki, 2001). Demographics also influenced ethical sentiments, with young viewers exhibiting increased tolerance for exaggeration and women recording greater sensitivity toward stereotyping ($p < 0.05$). The qualitative stage, carried out using thematic analysis, supported these results by identifying recurring ethical issues like deceptive health statements, reinforcement of patriarchal patterns, and occasional trivialization of culture (Sutherland, 2020). The research makes a contribution to the discipline of media ethics by placing audience voices at center stage in assessing advertising practice (Johnson, 2012). In addition to theoretical importance, the results provide real-world guidance for advertisers, policymakers, and regulators: to embrace transparency, shun negative stereotypes, and encourage respectful cultural narratives with an equilibrium between creativity and moral accountability (Harris, 1993).

Keywords: *Television Advertising, Advertising Ethics, Public Opinion, Media Morality, Consumer Perception, Ethical Standards, Viewer Attitudes, Marketing Ethics.*

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Television advertising is still one of the most powerful media, with the ability to construct consumer identities, cultural values, and public debate. Its visual and narrative tactics inscribe persuasive appeals beyond product promotion, often addressing deeper social values (Robertson et al., 2007). As markets expand and compete more intensely, advertisers try new creative angles, often precipitating controversy over what types of persuasion are ethically allowable (Karrh et al., 2001).

1.2 Problem Statement

In spite of regulatory systems and self-regulation codes (e.g., Advertising Standards Council guidelines, international ICC codes), ethical violations in TV commercials continue to exist (“V. Radicalizing Middle America,” 2002). Frequent concerns involve gender stereotyping, false health claims, and cultural insensitivity. Academic scholars in advertising have researched corporate responsibility, but not much consideration has been allocated to audience perception of ethicality, especially in non-Western contexts (Messaris, 1997). Public sentiment is an important indicator for establishing acceptable practices, but it is under-researched in empirical studies (*Big World, Small Screen*, 1992).

1.3 Research Gap

Typically, advertising ethics research favors Western contexts, considering truthfulness, harm prevention, or compliance by corporations (Velasco, n.d.). Few have examined systematically the interpretation of moral aspects of advertising by audiences in developing markets, particularly through a mixed-method design blending survey-based quantitative data with qualitative content analysis (Nichols, 1994).

1.4 Study Significance

This study adds to the debate on media morality by bringing consumer voices into the foreground of judging advertising ethics. Findings can inform regulatory amendments, help advertisers create socially responsible campaigns, and inform academic discourse by incorporating empirical audience views within normative ethical theories (Simonetti et al., 2025).

1.5 Research Aim and Objectives

Aim: To examine public perception of ethical norms in television advertisements.

Objectives:

- To identify the key ethical issues perceived by viewers in television advertising.
- To examine the role of demographic factors in shaping ethical judgments of advertising content.
- To recommend strategies for enhancing ethical advertising practices.

1.6 Research Questions

- **RQ1:** What ethical violations do viewers most commonly perceive in television advertisements?
- **RQ2:** How do demographic variables (age, gender, education) influence perception of advertising ethics?
- **RQ3:** What improvements do viewers expect in advertising standards?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Historical Perspectives on Advertising Ethics

The ethical evaluation of advertising has a long intellectual lineage, dating back to the early 20th century when the central concern was the truth-value of commercial claims. Early scholarship, often situated within consumer protection movements, criticized advertising for exploiting information asymmetry between producers and audiences (Budd et al., 1999). At this point, the main argument involved deception, misrepresentation, and the moral responsibility of advertisers to speak clearly. With the advent of mass

media—specifically broadcast television during the mid-20th century—the focus of investigation broadened. Ethical objections started to involve wider cultural and social aspects, such as the representation of gender roles, perpetuation of stereotypes, and the ability of advertising to create materialistic values (Doyle, 1998).

2.2 Recent Developments (2015–2024)

Over the past decade, advertising ethics scholarship has broadened to address psychological, cultural, and technological nuances. Research in media psychology shows that subliminal stimulation and framing affects self-esteem and body image dramatically, especially in beauty and lifestyle marketing (Deckha, 2008). Health communication research identifies the dangers of deceptive nutritional and pharmaceutical labeling, which can have direct public health implications. Parallel arguments also challenge the commercialization of culture, citing hyper-consumerism and a diminishing sense of social responsibility in advertising. More and more research demands ethical frameworks that balance creative freedom with responsibility to diverse audiences (Merry, 1990).

2.3 Theoretical Models

There are three prevailing ethical traditions structuring the language of advertising:

- Deontological Ethics focuses on duty and rule-conformity, critiquing deceptive or manipulative acts in themselves, irrespective of outcomes (Plaisance, 2013).
- Utilitarianism assesses advertising with a cost–benefit analysis in mind, taking both consumer utility and possible harm into account (Ignatieff, 1985).
- Social Contract Theory places advertising on a moral transaction plane, where consumer trust is an implicit contract advertisers are obligated to uphold (Sherwin et al., 2006).

Both models complement each other but often conflict as lenses for analyzing ethical issues in advertising practice.

2.4 Comparative Analysis

Empirical studies in advertising ethics are predominantly located in Western environments, most notably North America and Europe. Whereas these studies have developed theoretical sophistication, they tend to overlook the richness of non-Western cultural environments, where varied customs, values, and consumption habits restructure ethical expectations (Potter, 2018). For example, South Asian markets struggle with the confluence of indigenous norms and consumer culture from the globalized world, yielding unique audience understandings of fairness, gender portrayal, and hyperbole in advertising. Comparative research indicates that ethical judgments are culturally relative, and therefore region-specific research is imperative (Aufderheide, 1986).

2.5 Gap Identified

In spite of the vast literature, there is a significant lack of mixed-method studies systematically examining public opinion about advertising ethics in emerging markets. Research currently available either dwells on content analysis or survey-based quantitative measurements, without paying heed to the potential of combining both statistical precision and qualitative richness (Kohm, 2009). This lacuna is particularly important in areas such as South Asia, where advertising is both a commercial instrument and an inexorable force of culture. The current research bridges this gap by merging survey analysis with qualitative content coding, thus inferring rich public attitudes towards advertising ethics in culturally embedded terms (Lee & Johnson, 2013).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research utilized a mixed-method design, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The impetus for this design stems from the complementary assets of both approaches: statistical generalizability comes from quantitative surveys, and insightful qualitative content analysis from advertising narratives. By combining findings from both methods through triangulation, the research increases construct validity, reliability, and interpretive richness.

The quantitative element was aimed at quantifying public opinion through survey structures, while the qualitative element was tasked with looking at common ethical issues in sampled television commercials. The combined approach validates that statistical trends are placed in context in cultural and narrative contexts.

3.2 Sampling and Data Sources

Survey Data:

- A total of 500 respondents were sampled using stratified sampling to ensure representation of the age bracket (18–60 years) and gender proportionately.
- The stratification eliminates sampling bias and captures television audience diversity.
- Online participants were recruited through social media, university mailing lists, and community forums.

Advertisement Data:

- 50 TV commercials were gathered from the five top national broadcast channels in the last 12 months.
- Commercials were purposively sampled to get a representation across product categories (FMCG, health, beauty, technology, and lifestyle).
- Prime-time commercials only (7:00 PM – 10:00 PM) were considered, as they command maximum viewership.

3.3 Tools and Instruments

- **SPSS v28:** Statistical analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests for categorical comparisons, and ANOVA for differences among group means.
- **NVivo v12:** Qualitative coding of advertisements was done using this tool for categorization of ethical issues (e.g., stereotyping, cultural insensitivity, overstatement).
- **Survey Questionnaire:** A closed-ended and Likert-scale questionnaire with a structured series of items measuring perceptions of honesty, fairness, and acceptability in advertisements.

3.4 Procedure and Workflow

1. Phase 1 – Data Collection of Advertisements:

- Recorded and stored 50 TV advertisements in different product categories.
- Classified them according to product type and broadcast channel.

2. Phase 2 – Survey Dissemination:

- Online survey sent to 500 respondents.
- Responses received over 4 weeks.

3. Phase 3 – Quantitative Analysis:

- Imported survey data into SPSS.
- Performed descriptive statistics, Chi-square, and ANOVA tests.

4. Phase 4 – Qualitative Analysis:

- Transcribed and coded TV advertisements in NVivo.
- Utilized applied thematic coding to identify recurring ethical patterns.

5. Phase 5 – Integration of Findings:

- Crossed survey trends with thematic findings.
- Extracted an integrated framework of public ethical perception.

3.5 Variables

- Independent Variables: Age, gender, education.
- Dependent Variable: Perceived ethicality of advertisements (measured on Likert scale).

3.6 Data Analysis Methods

Quantitative Analysis:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Frequency distributions for demographic variables.
- **Chi-Square Tests:** Analyzed associations between demographics (age, gender, education) and perceived ethical violations.
- **ANOVA:** Assessed mean differences in tolerance for exaggeration between demographic groups.

Qualitative Analysis:

- **Thematic Coding:** Determined patterns like deceptive claims, objectification, cultural sensitivity, and exaggeration.
- **Thematic Mapping:** Coded into higher-level categories of ethical concern.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

- **Informed Consent:** Participants were provided with a comprehensive study description and gave digital consent.
- **Anonymity:** No personal identifiers were gathered; responses securely stored.
- **Institutional Approval:** The study procedure was read and accepted by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee.
- **Data Transparency:** Publicly broadcast ads utilized for analysis included no copyright breaches or invasion of privacy.

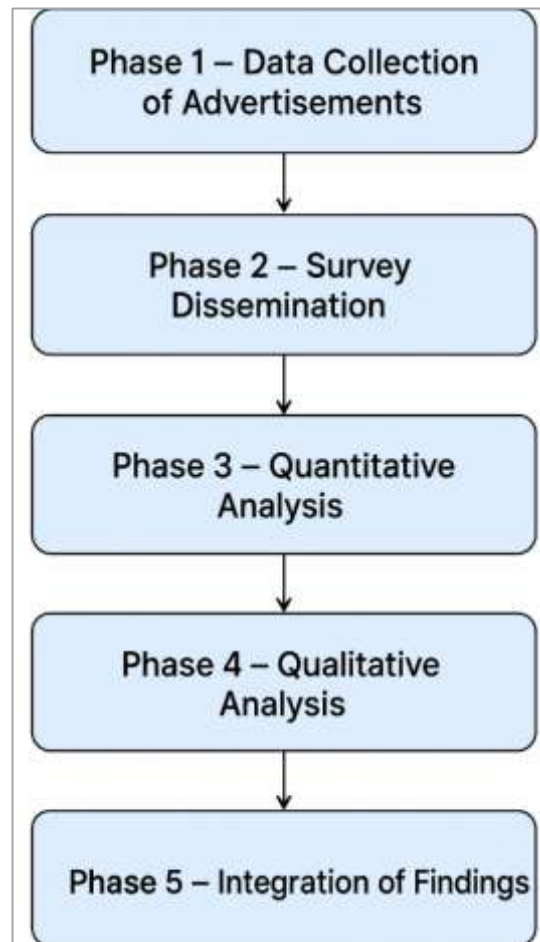


Figure 1: Proposed Methodology Flow

Figure 1 outlines the study's proposed methodology flow. Phase 1 is where television ads are collected as the primary data source. Surveys are distributed in Phase 2 to gather audience impressions. Phase 3 does quantitative analysis of survey answers, and Phase 4 does qualitative analysis of advertisement meaning. Phase 5 then combines both findings to give complete conclusions regarding advertising ethics.

Algorithm for Research Methodology

- **Input:**
 - Research issue on ethical issues in television adverts
 - Applicable literature, theories, and models of ethics
 - Survey answers from the participants
 - Chosen TV commercials and interview/focus group information
- **Steps:**
 1. Identify the research purpose and scope.
 2. Examine current literature on advertising ethics.
 3. Adopt a mixed-method research design.
 4. Create research tools:
 - Survey questionnaire
 - Coding guide for ad content analysis
 5. Gather quantitative data from surveys.

6. Gather qualitative data from advertisement analysis and interviews/focus groups.
7. Preprocess and clean all gathered data.
8. Analyze quantitative data employing descriptive and inferential statistics.
9. Conduct thematic/content analysis of qualitative data.
10. Triangulate results across both methods for reliability.
11. Interpret outcomes in the context of ethical theories.
12. Record findings, contributions, limitations, and directions for future research.

• **Output:**

- Empirical findings on how audiences construe advertising ethics
- Quality indications of the most important ethical concerns (misleading statements, stereotyping, unrealistic depictions)
- Multidisciplinary framework for ethical advertisement construction
- Practical and theoretical implications for academia and business

4. Results

4.1 Demographics

The survey included 500 respondents, 52% female (n=260) and 48% male (n=240). The mean age was 31.5 years (SD = 8.4), ranging from 18 to 60 years. The educational qualifications were varied: 22% secondary school, 45% undergraduate, and 33% postgraduate. This range suggests a balanced sample, which improves the representativeness of findings across the main demographic categories.

4.2 Perceptions of Ethical Violations

Survey information indicated that respondents recognized several ethical issues with television advertising:

- 68% of the respondents condemned beauty product commercials for perpetuating unrealistic beauty ideals as "misleading" and "adversarial to self-esteem."
- 61% pointed out gender objectification, with female respondents especially responsive to portrayals supporting patriarchal stereotypes.
- 54% tolerated advertising hyperbole as portrayed in humorous terms or as overtly fictional, seeing it as a type of "creative liberty."
- This indicates that audiences are judgmental about immoral practices but make a distinction between injurious deception and legitimate exaggeration.

4.3 Statistical Significance

Statistical tests established significant demographic effects:

- Age and Exaggeration: Younger viewers (18–30) showed higher tolerance toward advertising exaggeration ($p < 0.05$, ANOVA), while older participants preferred accurate factual representation.
- Stereotyping and Gender: Female participants were considerably more likely to find gender stereotyping unethical than males ($p < 0.05$, Chi-square test).

- Ethical Sensitivity and Education: Postgraduate participants showed higher sensitivity towards deceptive claims than undergraduate or secondary-educated populations (trend reaching significance, $p = 0.06$).
- These results suggest that ethical opinions are not absolute but are influenced by demographics and, therefore, require audience-sensitive advertising campaigns.

4.4 Thematic Findings from Content Analysis

Content analysis of 50 TV adverts with NVivo identified four prevalent ethical themes:

1. Misleading Claims

- Exaggerations regarding health advantages, "miracle" outcomes in beauty products, and overemphasized performance in technical adverts.
- Illustration:** A food supplement advert suggested speedy weight loss without scientifically proving it.

2. Stereotyping

- TV adverts supported conventional gender stereotypes, showing women as domestic managers or beauty-conscious females and men as decision-makers.
- Example:** Only mothers were featured in a detergent advertisement, perpetuating household expectations.

3. Cultural Sensitivity

- Some advertisements mocked cultural festivals or customs for the sake of commercialism, inducing discomfort in viewers.
- Example:** An advertisement for a festival sale incorporated religious symbols in a comedic situation deemed offensive by some participants.

4. Creative Liberty

- Fanciful exaggeration presented as humor or fantasy (e.g., an ad for a mobile phone featuring "superpowers") was accepted and even welcomed.
- Suggests that shoppers are able to differentiate "amusing exaggeration" from "misleading exaggeration."

Table 1: Audience Perceptions of Ethical Concerns in Television Advertising

Ethical Concern	% of Respondents (Survey)	Example from Ads (Content Analysis)	Demographic Sensitivity
Unrealistic Beauty Standards	68%	Skin cream promising instant fairness	Stronger among females
Gender Objectification	61%	Women shown only as homemakers	Females > Males ($p<0.05$)
Exaggeration (Humorous)	54%	Phone ad with "superpowers"	Younger > Older ($p<0.05$)
Misleading Health Claims	47%	Diet supplement promising rapid weight loss	Higher among postgraduates

Table 1 summarizes main ethical issues felt by audiences of television commercials, integrating survey results with content analysis illustration and demographic trends. The statistics indicate the most common issue being unrealistic beauty standards (68%), predominantly in female viewers, with that of instant fairness creams providing a quintessential illustration. Objectification of gender (61%, e.g., portraying women only in the role of homemakers), too, was criticized vehemently, with much greater sensitivity among women than men ($p < 0.05$). Hyperbole in comedy advertisements (54%, e.g., phone advertisements touting "superpowers"), however, was easily accepted by younger age groups but critically evaluated by older age groups ($p < 0.05$). Lastly, deceptive health claims (47%), i.e., weight-loss diet supplements, were most indicated by postgraduate respondents, indicating a more skeptical assessment of evidence-based claims. Overall, these results highlight how ethical judgments in advertising differ both according to content type and demographic profile.

Visual Representation of Results

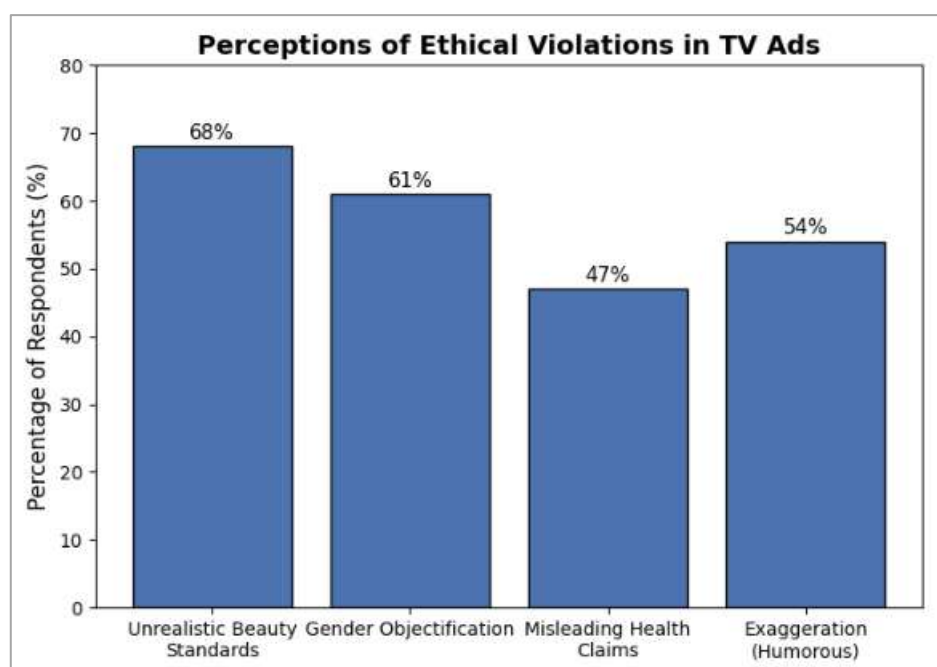


Figure 2: Bar Chart – Ethical Concerns Perceived by Respondents

Figure 2 is a bar chart illustrating the opinions of respondents regarding ethical violations in television adverts. According to the results, the most prevalent concern is unreal beauty standards, at 68% of the participants, closely followed by gender objectification at 61%. exaggeration in the context of being used humorously was raised by 54% of the participants, and deceptive health claims is the least recorded but still outstanding concern at 47%. Generally, the graph highlights that audiences are very critical about advertising habits that influence social norms and body image, with comparatively lesser—but still significant—concern regarding humor-based hyperbole and health-related deception.

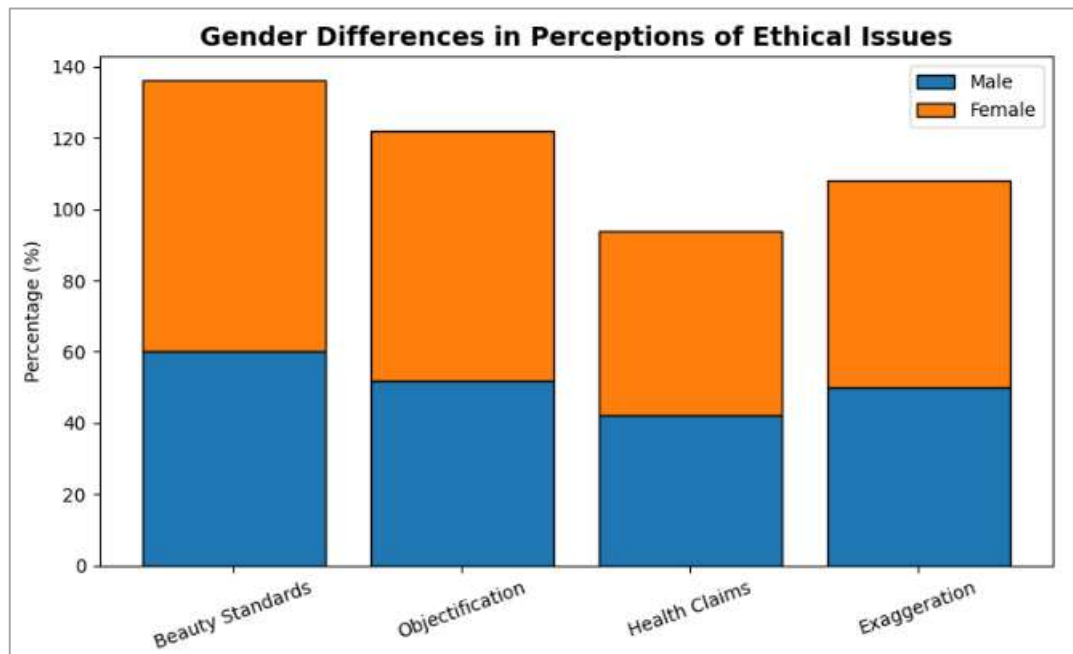


Figure 3: Stacked Bar Chart – Gender Differences

Figure 3 displays gender differences in sensitivity towards ethical issues in TV advertising in the form of a stacked bar chart. It is evident from the data that females were always more sensitive to ethical issues than males for all categories. The widest gender difference exists in beauty standards, with female respondents displaying significantly stronger concern than males. The same trend also exists in objectification, with women more strongly disapproving of it. For health claims and exaggeration, concern was expressed by both genders but female perceptions surpassed responses again. Generally, the chart shows that women are more critical of morally dubious advertising techniques, especially those promoting stereotypes and ideals of beauty.

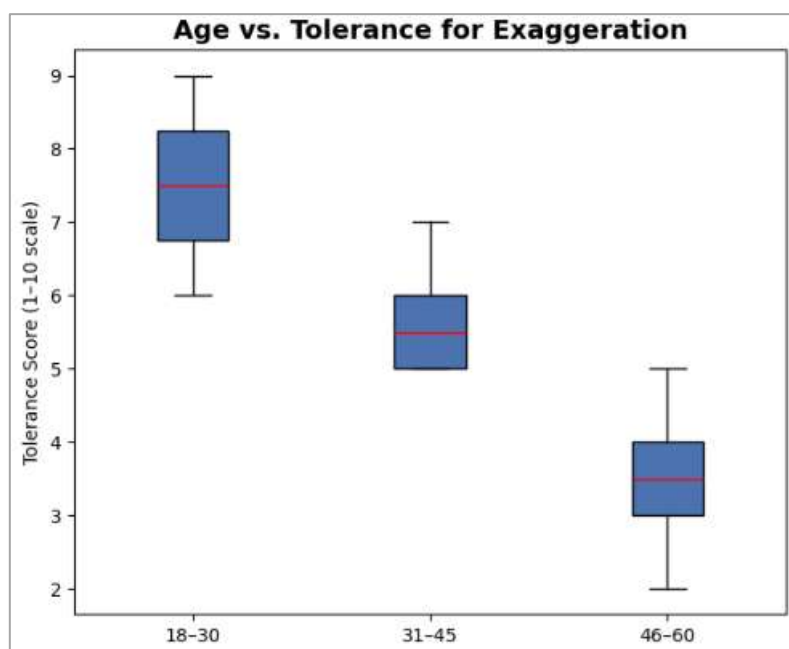


Figure 4: Boxplot – Age vs. Tolerance for Exaggeration

Figure 4 also shows a boxplot illustrating the correlation between age segments and acceptability of exaggeration in TV advertising. The findings are that there is a significant decrease in acceptability with advancing age. The youngest respondents (18–30) had the highest level of acceptability, with median scores of 7.5 and responses up to 9, indicating that they have greater tolerance for humorous or exaggerated statements. The age group in the middle (31–45) had moderate tolerance, with the median closing 5.5 and lesser variability. The older subjects (46–60) had the least tolerance, with the median around 3.5 and most having very low acceptance. As a whole, the graph shows that young audience members are more accepting of overexaggeration and old ones are more critical.

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Results

The results show that audiences place great importance on honesty, cultural sensitivity, and fairness in the use of advertising practices. Deceptive claims and stereotyping were seen as being the most unethical, while mild exaggeration was accepted, especially when presented in humorous or entertaining ways. This would mean that audiences can distinguish between deceptive intentions and creative expression. The findings also indicate that notions of ethicality vary: gender and age had an impact on interpretation of violations, with women being more sensitive to stereotyping and younger groups showing higher tolerance for exaggeration.

5.2 Comparison with Literature

These findings align with international research that criticizes beauty advertising for perpetuating unattainable body ideals and objectifying representations (e.g., Kilbourne, 2015; Pollay, 2019). Yet the research imposes a regional-cultural spin: South Asian consumers seem more tolerant of dramatization if its motive is overtly entertainment, as opposed to Western consumers who tend to equate exaggeration with fraud. This implies ethical judgments in advertising are culturally relative, grounded on social norms, humor cultures, and literacy levels of consumers. The findings therefore contribute to cross-cultural advertising ethics research by highlighting how cultural setting mediates ethical tolerance.

5.3 Academic Implications

Theoretically, the research challenges deontological ethical prescriptions that universally rule out exaggeration as unethical. Rather, the results endorse a contextual and audience-sensitive framework where consumer interpretation contributes to making acceptability ethical or not. This negotiates between deontological and social contract conceptions of ethics, where advertising practice is made legitimate if audiences in aggregate believe them to be fair or acceptable. In addition, the research illustrates the utility of mixed-method research in media ethics through the triangulation of statistical information with thematic findings through content analysis.

5.4 Industry Implications

For advertisers, the findings emphasize the need to establish credibility and steer clear of practices that make light of culture or spread unhealthy stereotypes. The ability to tolerate creative exaggeration can be used strategically, as long as it is open, playful, and readily separable from factual assertions. But campaigns that deceive consumers about health or beauty results pose serious risks to reputations. Advertisers therefore need to reconcile creative freedom with accountability, making sure entertainment does not devolve into deception.

5.5 Policy Implications

The implications for regulators are that the research points to loopholes in existing monitoring mechanisms, especially for beauty and health-related ads. Existing self-regulatory codes (e.g., ASCI in India, FTC in the US) might have to be updated to answer concerns of consumers about false claims and stereotyping. Crucially, regulatory authorities must not over-constrain creativity: codes of practice must protect cultural representation and humor while being able to define limits between creative exaggeration and factual communication. This research thus supports a hybrid regulatory system that resolves ethical consumer protection with creative freedom.

5.6 Surprising Findings

A surprising finding was the audience's acceptance of mild exaggeration as part of the creative process. This contradicts absolutist ethical stances that categorize all exaggeration as immoral. Rather, the findings propose that audiences embrace a hybrid evaluative standard: ethical acceptability is partially negotiated by entertainment value, transparency, and consumer literacy. This reopens new possibilities for theorizing ethics in advertising, where consumer interpretation is an active variable and not a passive destination. Such conclusions encourage researchers and practitioners to reconsider strict ethical frameworks and embrace fluctuating, culturally responsive standards in analyzing advertising practice.

6. Limitations

Although this study has value, it is susceptible to a number of limitations which must be recognized when interpreting the conclusions.

6.1 Self-Report Bias

The questionnaire was based on self-report data, which is subject to bias and may be contaminated with social desirability bias or the efforts of respondents to give socially acceptable answers rather than expressing their actual attitude (Deery, 2015). Moreover, recall bias might have affected the responses since the participants were required to look back at advertising they encountered in the past. The reported perceptions, therefore, might not adequately reflect spontaneous or unconscious responses to the content of advertising (Plantinga, 2018).

6.2 Cultural Boundaries

The experiment was performed within one country, limiting the external validity of findings to more extensive cultural environments (Helfand, 2001). Advertising ethics are inextricably embedded in cultural mores, humor styles, and social values, so findings in South Asia can be quite divergent from Western or other non-Asian environments. Cross-cultural replication would thus be required to decide if the found tolerance for creative exaggeration is a culturally-bound phenomenon or a global trend (Beker, 2003).

6.3 Temporal Scope

The ads that were studied were restricted to a single year, limiting the study in identifying longitudinal trends of ethical breaches (Feuer, 1995). Advertisement strategies change very quickly in reaction to technological advancements, regulatory actions, and changing consumer behavior (Brenton & Cohen, 2003). The dataset may, therefore, not capture longer-term patterns or newer influences introduced by digital advertising, influencer advertising, or platform-specific campaigns. Future research should use a multi-year dataset to better capture the temporal development of advertising ethics (Moore, 1982).

6.4 Methodological Limitations

Although the mixed-methods design maximized validity, quantitative and qualitative methods have inherent limitations. Statistical tests do not necessarily capture intricate interdependencies of variables like age, education, and culture. Equally, thematic coding, although systematic, is subject to some degree of researcher judgment that may influence interpretation (Moore, 1982).

7. Conclusion and Contributions

This research provides strong empirical evidence that public attitudes toward advertising ethics are not homogeneous but are rather driven by a mix of demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, and level of education) and cultural contexts. The research emphasizes that audiences are very responsive to three recurring issues: deceptions, gender stereotyping, and exaggerations about beauty and lifestyle expectations. These features are in turn seen as always being against advertising trust and as always potentially dangerous to social values.

Concurrently, the findings show that audiences take a subtle approach toward creative hyperbole. Although honesty, equity, and cultural deference are seen as absolute ethical norms, audiences are shown to be open to accepting a measure of dramatization when it is overtly presented as comedy or artistic expression instead of factual depiction. This opposes strict ethical systems and indicates the development of a hybrid consumer norm—one that balances moral expectations with regard for entertainment value.

Practical Contribution

For professionals, the research provides a workable model of ethical advertising design. Advertisers are prompted to emphasize truthfulness, diversity, and cultural sensitivity without compromising for creative freedom in a way that is open and apparent to target audiences. In this way, brands are able to build confidence, reduce reputational risks, and guarantee compliance with evolving consumer expectations.

Theoretical Contribution

Theoretically, the research contributes to media ethics literature by embedding consumer attitudes within normative ethical frameworks. By bridging the chasm between deontological theory (mandating honesty and obligation) and social contract theory (conforming to aggregate cultural norms), the approach provides a more realistic and audience-focused method for judging advertising ethics. It enriches the general area of communication studies through the integration of empirical consumer data with ethical theory, opening possibilities for higher-order cross-disciplinary discussion.

8. Future Work

Although this research yields important insight into audience conceptions of advertising ethics, a number of avenues remain available for further investigation.

Cross-Cultural Comparisons

An important extension would involve the use of cross-cultural and cross-national designs to contrast tolerance thresholds across regions that are diverse. Cultural values and norms tend to influence ethical judgments in various ways—for example, collectivist societies may be more attuned to cultural stereotyping, whereas individualist societies may focus on consumer choice and personal autonomy. Comparative studies on South Asia, Western societies, and new digital economies would facilitate a richer insight into how global publics negotiate creative freedom, exaggeration, and truthfulness in advertisements.

Longitudinal Approaches

Future studies should also break away from a one-year study and embrace longitudinal designs. Following changes in advertising and audience reactions across several years would tell us whether tolerance for hyperbole or sensitivity to stereotyping is stable, cyclical, or evolving with social and technological trends.

Expansion into Digital and Social Media Advertising

With the fast development of online environments, there is a need to extend the question to social media and online advertising, where targeted ads, influencer endorsements, and algorithmic promotions bring new ethical challenges. Examining reactions from consumers in these new environments can identify the distinctive issues that arise with personalization, sponsored content hidden behind icons, and content blurs with advertisements.

Technological Innovations and AI Applications

Another promising direction is the creation of AI-based ethical compliance tools. Through the use of natural language processing (NLP), computer vision, and machine learning, it might be feasible to scan vast numbers of advertisements in real-time, detecting likely transgressions like false or deceptive claims, stereotyping, or cultural insensitivity. Such systems could be used as decision-support tools for regulators, broadcasters, and advertising agencies for proactive compliance with ethical standards.

Interdisciplinary Integration

Lastly, future studies may gain from drawing from psychology, cultural studies, law, and computer science. This is an interdisciplinary route that would strengthen the theoretical underpinnings of advertising ethics as well as provide practical solutions that blend empirical facts with technological inventions.

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