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Three Perspectives about Ethical Value in Advertising Business

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Abstract

In a period when the importance of the sense of corporate ethics and the perception of social responsibility is gradually emphasized, this paper observes consumers' ethical values interdisciplinarily applied into the advertising business, focusing on perspectives based on deontology and utilitarianism, traditional distinctions, and Aristotelianism, recently attracting attention as the foundation of 'virtue value'. Deontology-based advertising ethical value is a concept based on duties, regulations and processes. Thus, it is effective in blocking the harmful effects of advertising for groups that need policy-oriented protection from society, but embodies the problem of excessively abiding to principles. Utilitarianism-based advertising ethical value is a concept centered on desirable results for the majority. It is effective for enhancing practicality and efficiency in advertising business, but lacks clarity in identifying the deciding agent about the majority and excluding the minority opinion. Aristotelianism-based advertising ethical value is a concept centered on the actor and virtue and character. Compared to the other two perspectives, which give importance to ethical decisions about actions, it is differentiated as a concept centered around the actor's character and virtue, emphasizing the sense of practical ethics. On these perspectives, deontology-based ethical value in advertising business is the ethical value that advertising people should keep in order to help solve the question 'What advertising communication practices are based on the right processes and universal principles?' Utilitarianism-based ethical value in advertising business is the ethical value that advertising people should keep in order to help solve the question "What advertising communication actions can ultimately contribute to increasing the happiness and utility of the majority of consumers?" Aristotelianism-based ethical value in advertising business is the ethical value that advertising people should keep in order to help solve the question "As agents of advertising activities, what kind of people must we exist as?' In conclusion this paper opposes inhumanity formed by instrumental reason-centered thinking, methodization of humans that can easily occur from individualistic thinking, forming a hierarchy of people due to the evils of capitalism and suggests that virtue ethics based on the actors' character and the importance of a communal society pursuing symbiotic value must be continuously recognized. Furthermore, when considering that capitalistic society cannot exist only as an infinitely competing society based on rationality and reason and an instrumentalized society, the advertising industry, one of the key factors of capitalism, should not place the core of its identity only in commercial profit-seeking actions based on a micro-practical perspective. Harmoniously, with a macro-environmental perspective, this paper also suggests that advertising industry should accept the advantages of deontology-based, utilitarianism-based, Aristotelianism-based ethical values realistically, selectively, flexibly so that the business should evolve to pursue harmony and balance among consumer, advertiser, media, agency, regulatory agency, society etc., and pursue virtue value and symbiotic value.

Introduction

The perspectives modern society has on advertising can be divided into two. Firstly, a macro-environmental perspective views advertising as a factor composing society. It sees advertising as a being that shares meaning by continuously interacting with society. Secondly, a micro-practical perspective views advertising as a strategic tool linked with enterprises' search for economic profit as an efficient method aiding enterprises in reaching marketing goals [1].

Thus, ethical values in advertising business from a macro-environmental perspective is an obvious concept for related agents in advertising business to understand the importance of practical application and actual practice with consideration about the effect advertising has on society and the interaction advertising has with society. On this point, this perspective also sees the importance of the advertiser's social responsibility and media's social responsibility. From a micro-practical perspective, however, because ethical values conflict with the premises of competition and the pursuit of commercial profits, it can be burdensome to execute.

However, the perception and execution of ethical responsibility in the long term improves corporate image, strengthens consumer trust, expands and secures favorable and positive external attention, and ultimately actualizes the right function reinforcing corporate competitiveness and sound growth. Mutual checking and maintaining the balance between the macro-environmental perspective and the micro-practical perspectives through integrated consideration is absolutely necessary in constructing strategic directions for businesses' integrated communication.

Execution of ethical perception in advertising business has been relatively slow compared to the development and evolution of

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marketing strategy, the emergence of media based on high-end technology and the expansion of such media's influence, and the change of the marketing communication environment using such media. The main causes are as following.

First, the remaining effect of the traditional perspective that views the advertising industry with a micro-practical perspective linked to business survival and goal achievement. Second, regardless of continuous appearance of media indivisible with the advertising industry, many corporations' attitudes that give more attention to anticipation and confirmation of profit creation and economic effects by utilizing media rather than expansion of interest and research on such media's social, cultural, ethical influence. Third, limitations in the application of ethical perception due to differences in viewpoints of whether creative in advertising is a 'creative art activity' or a 'commercial sales activity'. Fourth, implicit support from individual countries that have protected domestic media industries and related high-tech industries that are indivisible with advertising in order to obtain national profits and to preoccupy market dominating power in a global competing society. Fifth, the limitations of applying a universal ethical perception due to the differences in relation, culture, and customs in recent society, where interaction among cultures is expanding.

Table 1 organized the reasons why the application of ethical perception in advertising business was relatively insufficient with interdisciplinary perspectives.

Perspectives	Context
Perspective of macro-environmental social sentiment and awareness's influence	Emotional generalization of the previous political, economic, social environment where prioritization of survival through competition was implicitly tolerated due to the repetition of global recessions and economic depressions
Perspective of influence that the media environment and the change in advertising planning and execution have	A trend of research and practicality relatively giving more attention to the micro-practical perspective considering 1) Economic effects following the emergence and integration new media in the short term, 2) The constructing, confirming, and supplementation of a policy-oriented, institutional base to connect these effects with economic vitalization, 3) and constructing an academic base to theoretically support this Over the social, cultural, ethical influence and the awareness of social responsibility that future industries closely related to the advertising industry have following the rapid development and practicalization of such industries and the generalization of integration and reconstruction among related industries.
Perspective of micro-practical advertising activity by advertisers and advertising practitioners	Under an environment of fierce competition, even when considering the advertising industry linked with the survival of businesses and the achievement of quantitative goals, the remnants of the micro-practical perspective
Perspective of awareness about creative	Limitations on the application of ethical awareness because of conflicting, coexisting opinions on whether creative expression in advertising is the concept of artistic creativity or the concept of a commercial method. →Creative art activity vs. Commercial sales activity
Perspective of national support	To obtain national profit and preemptive market control in a global competing society, national implicit support for domestic media industry and related high-tech industries in a deep relationship with advertising
Perspective of awareness about consumer relationships and ethical trust	Despite the changes in consumers' status as information producers, managers, complementers, and distributors thanks to the vitalization of social network, which expresses and shares various information and messages, A relative lack in the reestablishment and new understanding about mutual 'ethical trust' based on the 'authenticity' and 'consideration' based consumer-oriented 'relationship' of consumers, companies(advertisers), agencies, media, and society.
Perspective of generalization and acceptance of pluralistic social culture environment	Regardless of the generalization of a pluralistic social culture environment, slow change about accepting and acknowledging specific groups' identities and existence values and the socio-cultural remnants of ethical stereotypes following this slow change.
Perspective of ethical awareness itself	Difficulties in generalizing standards for ethical awareness and limited application of universal ethical awareness following this caused by a mix of previous cultures and values and other cultures and values after the generalization of a global social environment.

Table 1: Interdisciplinarilly organized reasons why the application of ethical perception in advertising business was relatively insufficient*

*Chulho Kim [1] Understanding Advertising Planning with Interdisciplinary, Integrated Symbiology, p.230. Hankyungsa. Seoul. Korea. Modified. Chulho Kim [2]. The Influence of Ethical Intention and Value Expectation about Advertising on the Preference of Advertising Appeal Types. The Korean Journal of Advertising. 19(6). pp.211~236. p.214. Modified.

On the other hand, previous studies on ethical values in advertising business have been differentiated according to researchers' interests and research themes. The studies can be categorized as follows.

First, studies on ethical perception in advertising business based on the macro-environmental perspective can be divided into 1) the legislative aspect of ethical perception 2) the aspect of advertising ethics' social effect 3) the aspect of culture-related ethical conflicts in a multicultural, multi-religion coexistence system 4) the aspect of ethical conflict related to 'reliability' and 'sincerity' about empathic value expectation(EVE) and shared value expectation(SVE) in an environment based on social relationships and interactive media.

Likewise, studies on ethical perception in advertising business based on the micro-practical perspective can be divided into 1) advertiser(company), media, producer, and advertising manager ethics 2) ethics related to products from a marketing perspective 3) ethics related to advertising targets (children, teenagers, women, the elders) 4) ethics related to appeal types/methods from a communication perspective 5) ethics based on consumer perception as an agent of marketing communication, and etc.

As mentioned, the macro-environmental perspective and the micro-practical perspective to advertising interact, affect each other, and complement each other from time to time. Likewise, for ethical perception applied into the advertising industry, the macro-environmental perspective and the micro-practical perspective pursue checking, balancing, and supplementing each other. Therefore, there is a common field between the two perspectives.

Table 2 organizes the key range of studies on ethical perception in the advertising business.

Then, in a reality where not all unethical actions violate the law, from what perspective should ethical values in advertising business be viewed? How can advertising communication ethics that consumers of recent society aim for be classified?

The theoretic frame of ethics is traditionally divided into normative ethics and utilitarian ethics [3].

Because advertising business is a practical field, the classification of consumers' ethical values means the establishment of a managerial, integrated perspective about ethical values in advertising business. The establishment of this managerial, integrated perspective means that differences in phenomena recognition, actions, and post-action evaluation can be anticipated depending on differences in ethical values.

Furthermore, such an anticipation process suggests the possible expansion of fields of communication drawing quantitatively, qualitatively mature 'sharing of meaning' not only in business's marketing communication but also in interactive communication among agents constructing society considering the cultural traits of their corresponding societies.

Finally, this paper suggests the following exploratory perspective to view ethical values in advertising business. This is to eventually help strengthen ethical perception on advertising communication through reconfirmation of each ethical value perspective and each of their traits, which can be interdisciplinarily and integratedly applied into advertising business.

Three Basic Perspectives

Deontology-based ethical value

As deon means 'duty', deontology-based ethical value is an ethical value fundamentally based on 'duty' and 'principle'.

Looking at the philosophical aspect related to the academic foundation, this is related to Kant's universal principles and categorical imperative, the ethical order related to duty. Because the categorical imperative has its foundation in universality and necessity and means absolute value understood by reason, deontology focuses on 'righteousness' in the 'process' of action than the 'result' of action. Thus, it can be called an ethical value aiming for thinking and acting based on non-exclusive, absolute principles. From this perspective, deontology-based ethical value in advertising business is the same context as idealism suggested by Schlenker & Forsyth [4] in previous research.

From the advertising industry aspect, because deontology-based ethical values understand consumers as a goal, not a method, it

Category	Viewpoint	Subcategory
Macro-environmental perspective	Emphasizes the ecological, environmental perspective viewing advertising functions as a part of the system constituting society	1) The legislative aspect of advertising ethics 2) The aspect of advertising ethics' social effect 3) The aspect of culture-related ethical conflicts in a multicultural, multireligion coexistence system 4) The aspect of ethical conflict related to 'reliability' and 'sincerity' about empathic value expectation(EVE) and shared value expectation(SVE) in an environment based on social relationships and interactive media
Micro-practical perspective	Emphasizes the managerial perspective that advertising functions as an efficient tool for reaching business goals	1) Advertiser(business), media, producer, advertising manager ethics 2) Ethics related to produces from a marketing perspective 3) Ethics related to advertising targets (children, teenagers, women, the elderly) 4) Ethics related to appeal types/methods from a communication perspective 5) Ethics based on consumer awareness as agents of marketing communication.

Table 2: Classification of research on ethical perception in the advertising business**

**Chulho Kim [1] Understanding Advertising Planning with Interdisciplinary, Integrated Symbiology, p.233. Hankyungsa. Seoul. Korea. Modified. Chulho Kim [2]. The Influence of Ethical Intention and Value Expectation about Advertising on the Preference of Advertising Appeal Types. The Korean Journal of Advertising. 19(6). pp.211~236. p.215. Modified.

supports opinions and actions strictly restricting communication that deceives consumers or pursues unfair profits by using consumers' psychological traits. The perspective that traditionally sees businesses' advertising actions as a method to achieve commercial profit and argues for application of strong restrictions supports deontology-based ethical values.

Therefore, an example of deontology applied into advertising activities, the process of establishing, executing, and evaluating a system to prevent the harmful effects of advertising from those who need social protection (children, teenagers, women, and elders who may have relatively poor judgment), is related to this.

However, deontology-based ethical values are the target of controversy. Because they are excessively regulatory, impractical due to the application of non-exclusive legislative restriction, and set ambiguous standards for ethical values in a global multicultural society where various cultures, religions, and customs are integrated, they can be seen as a concept that somewhat disregard reality.

Especially, in terms of corporate marketing activities, when actions pursuing business profits and deontology-based ethical values conflict, from the perspective viewing advertising industry agents, the contradiction between companies', advertising agencies', and media companies' legitimate pursuit of profit and ethical values can be a source of conflict. From the product-centered perspective, the contradiction between marketing communication activity for products targeted towards teenagers, pregnant women, and the elderly and ethical values can be a source of conflict. Thus, working in and understanding the advertising phenomena based on deontology has often provided a source of controversy in the advertising industry, where practicality is emphasized.

In terms of consumer psychology, because deontology is a reason-centered value, when applied to the advertising industry, which in modern society considers human emotion as a main variable, it innately has the limitation of blocking or not considering the intervention of emotions.

In terms of the media industry, deontology-based ethical values can be closely related to ethical perception of the media industry about specific user groups of high-tech based media. This is because, regardless of legislative restriction, it is easy for entertaining, gambling contents provided through advanced individualized media (tablet PCs, cell phones, etc.) and social networks to be exposed to inappropriate targets and because such a phenomenon can cause not only dispute about the main agent of social responsibility (advertiser, media company, portals, etc.) but also social problems.

From this perspective, deontology-based ethical value in advertising business is the ethical value that advertising people have to keep in order to help solve the question 'What advertising communication practices are based on the right processes and universal principles?'

Utilitarianism-based ethical value

Utilitarianism-based ethical value emphasizes the increase of personal and social utility in a purpose-based life. Furthermore, it is a concept that fundamentally gives meaning to happiness that satisfies the majority and the results of desirable actions.

Looking at the philosophical aspect related to the academic foundation, this perspective expands the individual-centered pleasure of the Epicurean school to a social ethical concept. Through Bentham's quantitative utilitarianism, which argued for quantitative pleasure, it develops into Mill's qualitative utilitarianism, which supports qualitative pleasure. Also, this perspective is linked to economic liberalism in terms of being based on individual happiness, and is linked with pragmatism in terms of emphasizing the value of utility.

From the perspective of the advertising industry, utilitarianism-based ethical value can consider communication actions in advertising business as a method to reach the desirable goal of consumer 'satisfaction' and 'happiness'. Thus, it is relatively closer to a perspective viewing advertising communication as a creative expression activity to effectively share meaning with the consumer group than one viewing advertising communication as activities pursuing commercial profit activity. In this context, examples of Utilitarianism applied to advertising activity are relaxation of advertising restrictions by considering practicality and realisticness, flexibly allowing exemptions for smooth interaction and sharing of meaning with consumers rather than excessively abiding to rules, and etc.

Along with the business marketing activity aspect, this perspective is closely related to growth of 'utility of actions', so it is also related to diversification and realistic execution of communication tactics to efficiently achieve marketing goals. For example, the use of comparative appeal, sex appeal, puffery and etc. in creative strategy can be ethically controversial subjects, but because they can be used as effective methods to increase consumers' understanding about a brand and to increase consumer happiness index, the perspective based on utilitarianism supports self-adjustment over strict, absolute restriction.

From a consumer psychology perspective, Utilitarianism-based ethical values are related to the resilient handling of ethical dilemmas consumers have during decision-making. Furthermore, because it is a value fundamentally aiming for 'mental happiness' and desirable 'results', it is related to satisfaction of value expectation, which consumers pursue. When considering that value expectation functions as a motive leading consumers to voluntarily participate in various marketing communication activities to obtain goals, what each consumer is ultimately purchasing is his/her own value expectation, and this is because this is related to the maximization of 'mental happiness' and 'utility value', which individual consumers pursue.

From a media industry perspective, utilitarianism-based ethical intention is connected to media's role of making many society members' lives better and helping individuals discover the meaning and happiness of life as a social member by providing information. Thus, it supports the completion of interaction mediating media, integration among media pursuing to maximize communication utility, sharing meaning and reaching goals using various media like utilizing one source multi-use.

Such a phenomenon requires a new perspective about the existence and purpose of media from a practical perspective. In conclusion, this perspective reminds us that as a 'relational being' between stimulus and reaction sources such as message sender and receiver, information sender and receiver, content creator and consumer, etc. whether it is current or potential (time), here or elsewhere (space), intentional or accidental (purpose), continuous or intermittent (situation),

because it exists as an empathy-orienting being connecting two or more relationships, media in recent society that fundamentally existed with these relationships as an empathy-orienting being is every being, phenomena, and action itself [5].

From this view, utilitarianism-based ethical value in advertising business is the ethical value that advertising people have to keep in order to help solve the question "What advertising communication actions can ultimately contribute to increasing the happiness and utility of the majority of consumers?"

However, utilitarianism-based ethical intention has the following limitations: unclearness of who decides who is the majority, lack of consideration about minority groups' goals, the possibility of infringing the minority's pursuit for happiness, the possibility of collectivism and racism in a multi-cultural society from the cultures that have strength and monetary power.

Aristotelianism-based ethical value

Unlike deontology-based ethical value and utilitarianism-based ethical value, which give weight to ethical judgement about actions, Aristotelianism-based ethical value is an actor-centered concept focusing on the actors' virtue and character that emphasizes practical ethical perception.

However, because good, virtue, character are abstract concepts, a drawback is that detailed, specific, and objective execution is difficult.

Looking at the philosophical aspect related to the academic foundation, this perspective is based on Aristotle's ethical perspective that views people's ultimate goal as good/happiness based on a teleological worldview.

From an advertising industry perspective, regarding perception about advertising managers, this perspective goes beyond the concept of a 'strategy planner for the pursuit of business profit' that, under a capitalist system, the advertising business, which originally is commerciality-oriented, has relatively given meaning to. It evokes the necessity of being aware of the role of a 'communicator based on good character'. This is because the Aristotelianism-based ethical value believes that good actions occur because of the actor's character. From this perspective, for perception about targets of advertising as well, this goes beyond the view of 'people as consumers' and suggests an expansion to 'people as beings with value'.

Likewise, by expanding and applying this concept to business marketing activity, it implies that as the acting entities considering what is a good action, they must exist and act as an organization that can fulfill good character to society, moving away from a business profit pursuer-based position.

From a media industry perspective, this perspective can be applied to ethical perception of recent information producers using social network. This is because information creators, who are closely related to information creation, distribution, interpretation and recreation in modern society, when considering the influence of interactive media on a society and others, must have a righteous character from an ethical perspective and must continuously execute this character.

From a consumers' buying behavior perspective, the phenomena of emphasizing ethical consumption is closely related with this ethical value. This is because actions pursuing purchase decisions based on ethicality rather than economic profits are socially applied actions of actor-based, virtue value-based ethicality.

On the one hand, when considering that violence from strength and monetary power hidden in capitalism is, more than anything, an idea that can come from human consciousness, Aristotelianism-based ethical value focused on manifesting natural human virtue value [6] and character value can be a healing value about the evils of capitalism.

Ethical Value	Basic Concept	Conceptual Question Applied to Advertising Communication	Draw back
Deontology-based ethical value	- Fundamentally emphasizes ethical decisions about actions - Value based on 'duty' and 'regulations'	What advertising communication practices are based on the right processes and universal principles?	- Excessively regulation-focused - Impracticality of non-exclusive laws and application of restrictions - Ambiguity of setting standards about ethical values in a global multi-cultural society where various cultures, religions, customs, and etc. are being combined
Utilitarianism-based ethical value	- Fundamentally emphasizes ethical decisions about actions - Emphasizes the increase of personal and social utility in a purpose-based life - Gives meaning to happiness that satisfies the majority and the results of desirable actions	What advertising communication actions can ultimately contribute to increasing the happiness and utility of the majority of consumers?	- Unclearness of who decides who is the majority - Lack of consideration about minority groups' goals - Possible infringement of the minority's pursuit for happiness - Collectivism in a multi-cultural society from the cultures that have strength and monetary power - The possibility of racism
Aristotelianism-Based Ethical value	- An actor-centered value focusing on the actors' virtue and character that emphasizes practical ethical awareness - A healing value about the evils of capitalism focused on manifesting natural human virtue value and character value	As agents of advertising activities, what kind of people must we exist as?	- Possible relative lack of perception about common social good - Difficulty in objective execution due to its abstract traits

Table 3: The concept and traits of the three ethical values in advertising business.

From this perspective, Aristotelianism-based ethical value in advertising business is the ethical value that advertising people have to keep in order to help solve the question "As agents of advertising activities, what kind of people must we exist as?'

Table 3 organizes the concept and traits of the three ethical values in advertising business.

Conclusion

Unless based on the company mission and philosophy in a macroscopic and long-term perspective, emphasizing ethical value in advertising business, which began with commercial profit pursuit as a base, is realistically an uncomfortable topic.

Ethical actions and the ethicality of actors are, to humans interacting with society as members, important basic factors that evoke the individual or communal identity of oneself, others, and/or society. Likewise, ethical value perception in advertising business presupposes recognition of the necessity of ethical responsibility of companies as ecological beings like humans in a capitalistic society.

However, in an advertising environment that originally emphasized competition and creating profit, it cannot be denied that the necessity of ethical value perception shows endless conflict between the micro-practical perspective that sees advertising as an efficient method to achieve business goals and the macro-environmental perspective that sees advertising as an ecological component factor interacting with society.

When looking at the fact that recent society no longer lingers on foundations of modern values centered on development and growth, from the external corporate aspect, the conflict can appear stronger in situations that require company survival such as economic depressions or more global competition, and from the internal corporate aspect, the conflict can appear stronger when appeal strategy or expression of creative in marketing communication may have the possibility of causing ethical problems.

On the one hand, the necessity of considering ethicality in a capitalistic society avoids inhumanity formed by instrumental reason-centered thinking, methodization of humans that can easily occur from individualistic thinking, forming a hierarchy of people based on strength and monetary power. The necessity continuously evokes the importance of a communal society pursuing virtue ethics based on the actor's character and symbiotic values.

From this perspective, this paper suggests that the advertising industry should not place the core of its identity only in commercial profit-seeking actions based on a micro-practical perspective. Harmoniously, with a macro-environmental perspective, this paper also suggests that advertising industry should accept the advantages of deontology-based, utilitarianism-based, Aristotelianism-based ethical values realistically, selectively, flexibly so that the business should evolve to pursue harmony and balance among consumer, advertiser, media, agency, regulatory agency, society etc., and pursue virtue value and symbiotic value.

Finally, this is because the ethical value directed towards maintaining a good attitude that agents of advertising action should keep as well as an understanding of judgment of advertising activities and the logical foundation is gradually required for an advertising business society that has to run with both commerciality and creativity.

Competing Interests

The authors declare they have no competing interests existing.

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