

Advertising Ethics: A Bibliometric Analysis from 1979 – 2023

SAPNA DHALIWAL

Associate Professor

Mata Sundri College for Women, New Delhi (India)

ABSTRACT

Advertising is an effective strategy that can help you draw in clients, educate them about your offerings, and win their trust. The majority of businesses use advertisements of one kind or another to market their goods and services. This advertisement looks at the fundamentals such as story development, channel use, message creation, and effectiveness evaluation, with a focus on using creativity, emotional appeal, and insights into consumer behavior. It also includes distinct strategies and effects of various advertising formats, including print, broadcast, digital, and outdoor advertising. The most crucial aspect of the advertising industry is ethics. This paper discusses the ethical controversy surrounding advertising, referencing academic discussions and objections to the industry's use of materialism, stereotypes, and deceptive practices. This study presents a bibliometric analysis of the research on advertising ethics from 1979 to 2023. The study's methodology focuses on five main research questions, including the most popular keywords, the most frequently studied countries, the relevance of journals and authors in the field, and trends in publications on advertising ethics. Intending to offer a thorough grasp of the present status of advertising ethics research, this approach aims to pinpoint important trends, important figures, and focal points in the academic conversation.

Key Words : Advertising ethics, Majority of businesses, Goods, Services

INTRODUCTION

Advertising is a form of communication that aims to promote or sell a product, service, idea, or brand. Its primary goal is to reach and influence a target audience, encouraging them to take some action, such as purchasing a product, adopting a particular behaviour, or supporting a specific cause. It can take various forms like Print advertising, Broadcast advertising, digital advertising, direct mail, outdoor advertising etc.

The key elements of advertising include creating a message that captures the target audience's attention, developing a persuasive and compelling narrative, choosing appropriate channels for dissemination, and measuring the effectiveness of the campaign.

Effective advertising often employs creativity, emotional appeal, and a deep understanding of consumer behavior. Advertisers use various strategies, including

market research, branding, and storytelling, to connect with consumers and build a positive perception of the product or brand. The ultimate aim is to drive awareness, generate interest, and, ultimately, stimulate the desired consumer response.

Ethics refers to a set of principles, values, and standards of conduct that guide the behavior of individuals or groups. It involves distinguishing between right and wrong, and making decisions based on moral principles. Ethics provides a framework for evaluating actions and determining what is considered acceptable or unacceptable behaviour in a given context.

Advertising ethics refers to the principles and guidelines that govern the conduct of individuals and organizations engaged in the creation, distribution, and consumption of advertising. It involves making ethical decisions throughout the advertising process, from the development of ad campaigns to their execution and

impact on the target audience. Key considerations in advertising ethics include truthfulness, transparency, fairness, and the responsible use of persuasive techniques.

Industry organizations and regulatory bodies often provide guidelines and codes of conduct to help ensure ethical advertising practices. Adhering to these ethical standards not only helps build trust with consumers but also contributes to the overall integrity and reputation of the advertising industry. Violations of ethical standards can lead to legal consequences and damage the credibility of brands and advertisers.

The multifaceted and heterogeneous nature of ethics makes it difficult to have a cohesive view of what ethics in advertising should mean (Drumwright, 2008), yet scholarly interest in “ad ethics” is growing. According to Shabbir and Thwaites (2007) and Richards (2008), there is general agreement that advertising is the most morally dubious component of marketing. Beltramini (2003) referred to ad ethics as the “ultimate oxymoron” because of the criticisms levelled against the industry (Pollay, 1986, 1987; Calfee, 1997; Smith and Quelch, 1993; Hyman *et al.*, 1994) regarding the promotion of stereotypes and unchecked materialism as well as its manipulative and persuasive qualities.

METHODOLOGY

The present study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the annual trend of publication?

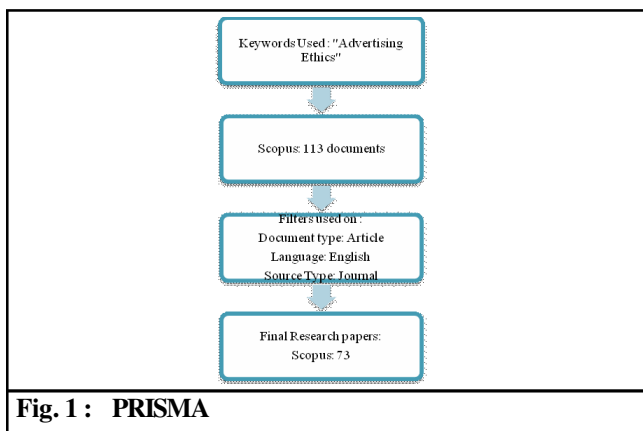
RQ2: Which is the most relevant journal?

RQ3: Who is the most relevant author?

RQ4: Which keyword has been used the most?

RQ5: Which country has been studied the most?

Fig. 1 shows the PRISMA that is being followed in the present study to conduct the bibliometric review.



The keywords used to search for the research papers are “Advertising Ethics” in the Scopus database. 113 documents were shown. After applying the filters for language, journal and articles, 73 documents were used to analyse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description of the data:

Table 1: Description of the data

Description	Results
Main Information about Data	
Timespan	1979:2023
Sources (Journals, Books, etc.)	42
Documents	73
Average years from publication	13.2
Average citations per documents	15.27
Average citations per year per doc	1.232
References	2928
Document Types	
Article	73
Document Contents	
Keywords Plus (ID)	62
Author's Keywords (DE)	179
Authors	
Authors	156
Author Appearances	168
Authors of single-authored documents	24
Authors of multi-authored documents	132
Authors Collaboration	
Single-authored documents	25
Documents per Author	0.468
Authors per Document	2.14
Co-Authors per Documents	2.3
Collaboration Index	2.75

Annual Production:

The Fig. 2 shows the annual production starting from the year 1973. As can be seen in the graph, the research in the field picked up in the year 2009 with five research papers. In the year 2019 and 2022, the papers went up to 6 in numbers.

Most Relevant Sources:

The most relevant source for the research papers in this area is Journal of Business Ethics with 20 papers published. Journal of Advertising has published the 5 papers and International Journal of Advertising has

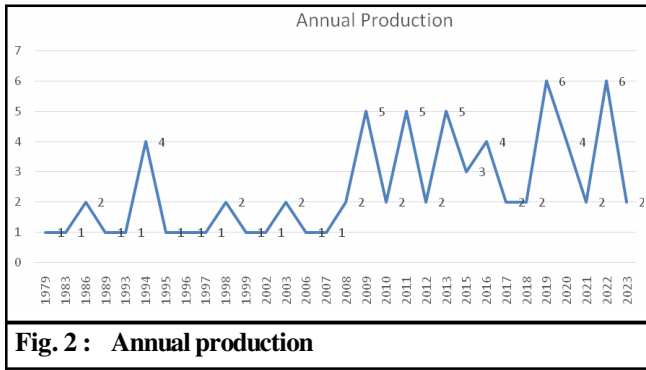


Fig. 2 : Annual production

published 3 papers. Following papers shows top 20 journals which has published the papers in the area of advertising ethics.

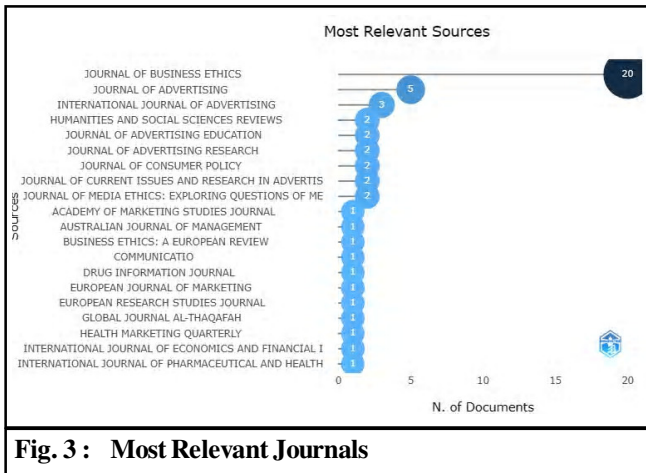


Fig. 3 : Most Relevant Journals

Most Relevant Authors:

Fig. 4 shows the top 20 authors who has published the research papers in the said area. Topmost author with 3 research papers is James EL.

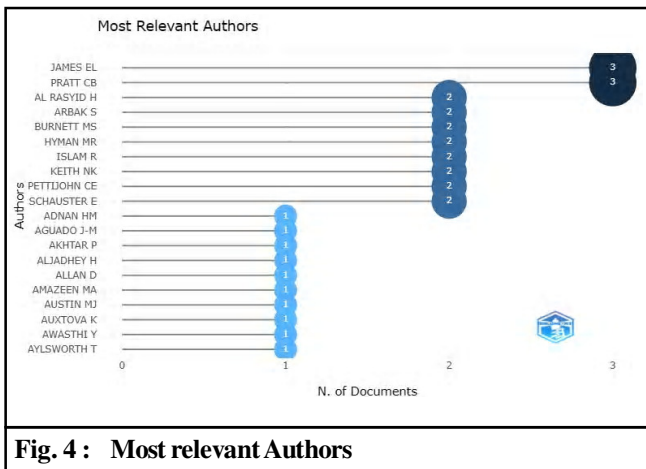


Fig. 4 : Most relevant Authors

Word Cloud:

Following Fig. 5 shows the word cloud. The larger and the bolder the word is, the most frequently is has been used in the literature. Most frequently used word in the present research area is Advertising followed by ethics. The words like purchase intention, business ethics and marketing ethics have also been used frequently in the literature.



Fig. 5 : Word Cloud

Country's Annual Production:

Table 2 gives the overview of the research papers published in different countries regarding the advertising ethics. The highest number of papers have been published in USA with 71 papers followed by UK with 14 papers and India with 11 papers on advertising ethics.

Country	Frequency	Country	Frequency
USA	71	France	2
UK	14	Netherlands	2
India	11	Saudi Arabia	2
Malaysia	11	South Africa	2
Spain	6	Argentina	1
Australia	4	Belgium	1
Austria	4	Germany	1
Canada	4	Italy	1
Israel	4	Norway	1
Indonesia	3	Peru	1
Turkey	3	South Korea	1
China	2		

Following world map shows the production of different countries. The darker the shade of blue, the more the number of papers published (Fig. 6) .

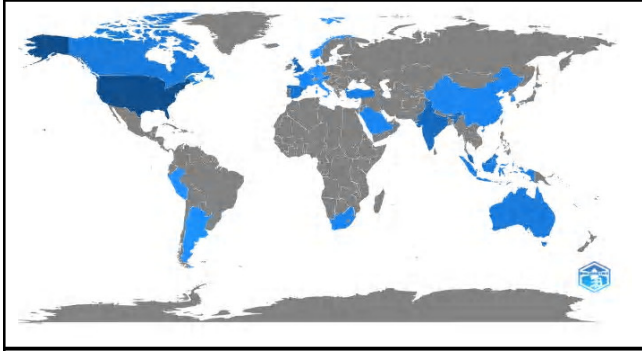


Fig. 6 : Country Scientific Production

Conclusion:

As can be seen from the analysis and findings, there is dearth of studies in the area of advertising ethics. The said area has lot of scope for study. There has been rise in the awareness of ethics in case of advertising and marketing area. According to the findings it can be seen that it was in the year 2009 only that number of research papers have been increased notably. The journal of Business Ethics has published the most of the research papers and the country which has been researched the most is USA with 71 research papers.

Like all the studies, this study is not free from limitations. The present study has considered only the Scopus database. However, the Web of Science database can also be studied and the combined research papers from both the databases can be looked into and analysed. Secondly, more combinations of keywords can be used to include the wider perspective of the advertising ethics.

REFERENCES

- Beltramini, R.F. (2003). Advertising ethics: The ultimate oxymoron? *Journal of Business Ethics*, **48**(1) : 215–216.
- Calfee, J. E. (1997). Fear of persuasion: A New perspective on advertising and regulation. Monnaz: Agora with American Enterprise Institute Press.
- Drumwright, M.E. (2008). Advertising ethics: A multi-level theory approach. In G. J. Tellis & T. Amblereh (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of advertising* (pp. 398–416). London: SAGE Publications.
- Hyman, M.R., Tansey, R. and Clark, J.W. (1994). Research on advertising ethics: Past, present, and future. *Journal of Advertising*, **23**(3) : 5–15.
- Pollay, R. (1986). The distorted mirror: Reflections on the unintended consequences of advertising. *Journal Of Marketing*, **50** (4) : 18–36.
- Pollay, R. (1987). On the value of reflections on the values in “The Distorted Mirror”. *Journal of Marketing*, **51**(6) : 104–109.
- Richards, J.I. (2008). Advertising ethics. In W. Donsbach (Ed.), *The international encyclopedia of communications* (pp. 77–82). Milton: Blackwell Publishers.
- Shabbir, H.A. and Thwaites, D. (2007). The use of humor to mask deceptive advertising: It’s no laughing matter. *Journal of Advertising*, **36**(2) : 75–85.
- Smith, N.C. and Quelch, J.A. (1993). *Ethics in marketing*. Homewood, IL: Irwin.