

Ethical Practices in the Content of Food Supplement Advertisements

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Abstract –The study aimed to determine the ethical practices in the content of food supplement advertising. Descriptive research through quantitative approach was used to 1200 Filipino consumers of food supplement products in the National Capital Region. The researcher utilized primary data through self-administered survey questionnaire which undergone validation from experts and pre-testing. Findings revealed that in general, ethical advertising is being practiced by food supplement products as assessed by respondents. The advertisements with theme of family values was noticed to be the most practiced, however sensitivity to persons with ailments was found to be the least practiced in terms of standards of presentation. The benefits and purpose of food supplements were clearly presented in ads, while precautions on excessive consumption diminished in terms of consumer protection and safety. Respondents also witnessed respect among competing brands in the practice of fairness on trade conduct, however, transparency in sales promotional materials were otherwise. Ads also do not suggest that it can replace healthy food but was noticed implying it can prevent disease alone. Significant differences were observed in the assessment of standards of presentation by highest educational attainment and average monthly income. There is also significant difference in consumer protection and safety by gender, education, and income. In terms of fairness, there is significant difference by education and income. Assessment on product claims has significant difference by age, education and income. Based on findings, it is recommended to consider providing more and proper information about the food supplement products in their marketing communication through informative advertisements. Another study on this ethical ads and its impact to consumer buying behaviour is recommended.

Keywords –Advertising Ethics, Food Supplement, Fairness, Marketing Communication, Product Claims

INTRODUCTION

Advertising has become a vital source of information about food supplement for consumers to make a sound purchase decision. Hawkes [1] believed that factual information on nutrition label and health claims on food can largely contribute to public health objectives.

Filipino consumer has the right to know whether these products being promoted by advertisers are beneficial or harmful to their health. Under Articles 100 to 115 of the Republic Act No. 7394, deceptive, misleading and fraudulent advertisements are prohibited. Any misleading advertisements that cause people to believe may lead to irreversible consequences from consuming these products.

Public health authorities in the Philippines have issued statements about studies showing ineffectiveness of particular supplements and have warned the public about the rampant misleading claims of these products. They have been worried about the

way food supplements are being advertised in making people believe they can cure diseases as endorsed by celebrities and testimonials of cured patients [2].

Regulating Food Supplement Advertising

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the Philippines is the national health product regulatory body that ensure health and safety of the food supplements available in the market. Republic Act 9711 which is also known as the Food and Drugs Administration Act of 2009 describes food supplement as processed food product that is intended to increase the total daily amounts of dietary substance. These products are expected to conform to the latest Philippine recommended Energy and Nutrient Intake (RENI) or international daily requirements [3]. On the other hand, the Advertising Standards Council (ASC), a self-regulatory body for advertisements ensures that food supplement ads before release to the public has followed all the

requirements by FDA and has abide to the ethical standards of advertising.

One of the product categories that have the most disapproved decision from ASC is food supplement along with pharmaceutical products, telecom, skin care products, and banking and finance. The promotional materials of these products are often rejected with their dubious and misleading claims such as presence of curative properties. The use of deception was the most common ground for disapproval of permit to air or post these advertising materials [4]. Deceptive and unfair ads were defined by US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) as promotional materials contain a statement or did not include information that mislead consumer to act rationally. It is deceptive if the consumer buys the product because he believed in the life of the ad. The ad is unfair if it causes consumer injury which he could not reasonably avoid and is not outweighed by its benefits. If the pros are greatly outweighed by the cons, the ad is unfair [5]. Therefore, deceptive and unfair ads are according to how the materials are presented and how a rational consumer would react to the advertisement and the outcome of the response.

Advertising General Standards of Presentation

The first article in the ASC Code of Ethics is the Standards of Presentation which clearly sets the ideals for presenting the Philippine identity, Filipino culture, values and beliefs; and the norms of decency for all advertisements including food supplement [6]. The standards of presentation are rules of conduct that maintain positive relationship between advertisers and the general public.

Advertisements reflect the culture and ideas of the society as it depict the consumers' wants and desire [7]. According to Kozłowska [8] more than marketing message advertising is a social communication where advertisement should be socially acceptable and consistent to the general belief of the society and should not violate any legal, moral or religious norms. Base on the study conducted by Bachnik and Nowacki [9] consumers are more sensitive and are likely to complain on any unethical advertisement because of the increasing awareness about their rights. They define socially responsible advertising as keeping the ethical values shared by costumers that do not evoke negative emotions due to offensive messages.

According to Kotler and Armstrong [10] unethical marketing could harm not only consumers and society but could eventually damages a company's reputation

and effectiveness, jeopardizing its very survival. Unethical ads do not only possess potential harm to consumers, likewise to the product itself when consumers project negative response to advertisement which could lead to drop of sales or boycotting.

Advertising has the power to convince and convert. It can transform the mundane into an emotion, thus, could raise expectation. Advertising has the power to influence behaviour and change lives. The responsibility goes beyond those who are being targeted as market but to the whole society.

Consumer Protection and Safety

The FDA Philippines and ASC have delineated the guidelines on advertising and promotion for all food supplement products. This is to ensure that promoted products are safe for consumption and that they undergone certification and clearance from these authorities.

Consumer protection is the utmost priority of ASC. To enforce consumer protection, screening of food supplements ads is stricter as with alcohol and non-prescription drugs. Food supplement ads were required for pre-screening prior to their airing, publication, display, posting, or uploading. Aside from the need to be pre-screened, post-screening is also required for print ads, merchandizing materials, and internet/ digital/ mobile ads on these products most especially when there are absolute claims or a guarantee promise of full product performance [6].

According to Csorba [11] the law grants the consumers a number of rights that would protect them from any abuses that may endanger their health and lives due to promotion of fake, risky and dangerous products especially most consumers rely on advertising on their purchase of food supplement products. These are the reasons why FDA Philippines and ASC have to be strict in regulating these products.

Advertising Practice of Fairness

Fairness sets the principle of being truthful in delivering message to the consumers. It also calls for professional practice among competitors. Consumers can only make good choices if proper information is given. Thus, when legal, decent, and truthful advertising are promoted, public confidence is built [4]. Daborji and Hamed [12] said that advertising is one of the most important factors that have impact on consumers' rights of choice. With the protection on consumers' rights, they can make a sound and correct decisions which could prevent further expenditures

from law suits. According to the study of Nuseir [13] exposure to misleading and false advertising lead to consumers' lose, thus ceasing to patronize the brand, more so distrust to any kind of advertising.

Product Claims

Food supplements aim to boost the diet and marketing of these products as treatment, cure, prevention or diagnoses for a disease are not allowed [14]. Dr. Esperanza Cabral, the then secretary of the Department of Health said that there is no scientific evidence to prove that these products can cure health disorders [15]. According to American Cancer Society, unlike vaccines, these products cannot cure or prevent disease. Therefore, it is not proper to make disease claims such as lowers cholesterol or treat heart disease [16]. On the other hand, dietary supplements makers are allowed to make some kinds of claims on their products' label only if they are nutritional claims on the general effect of supplement to nutritional deficiency, likewise, for the known health benefits of certain compound but not the same as prevention claims. These health claims are allowed if evidence from scientific studies were provided to FDA [1]. Ziembra [17] said that any major health claims by food supplement product require substantiation through documentation to support such health benefit claims.

The claims made through marketing communication constitute greater risk because of the disproportion on the consumer understanding and perception to the complex field of public nutrition which is difficult to apprehend [18]. Base on the study conducted by Dodge [19] consumers in the United States are misguided on their beliefs that food supplements are approved by the government that these undergone safety and effectiveness testing, also the requirements set for labelling for transparency was found to be relatively ineffective .

Every company is expected to comply with legal requirements. The law established minimum standards of behaviour. It stipulated the specific rules of what are prohibited and what are required. The law is essential in protecting business and consumers, thus, maintain societies and institutions. Furthermore, ethics set the maximum standards of behaviour, and therefore, conducting trade ethically is a requisite for a socially responsible firm [20].

The Future of Food Supplement Industry

Food supplements have rapidly gained popularity among consumers in the recent years. The overall

health and wellness benefits was the top of mind reason for taking food supplement [21]. According to Esplanada [15] Filipinos were spending more than 75 billion pesos a year on these products. According to Zion Market Research [22] the global supplements market valued at USD 132.8 billion in 2016 and is expected to reach USD 220.3 billion in 2022. It is also anticipated to grow at compound annual growth rate of 8.8% between 2017 and 2022. The primary factors that impact the dietary supplement market growth are the advancement in the industry alongside with the growing influence of media in pharmaceutical and retail industry. Thus, there is increase consumer awareness for preventive healthcare as well as with aging population [22]. However, negative publicity and fake product claims are expected to hamper the overall growth of the market in the forecast period.

Literature Gap

Most of the studies and literature pointed out that regulating food supplement especially on its promotional materials through advertising is a serious matter because it could potentially harm the consumers, if not properly informed.

There were several studies and analysis on the unethical practices in advertising and problems on regulating food supplement ads, however, food supplements ads on the context of Philippine setting is very limited. This study tries to fill the gap to emphasize ethical practices in food supplement advertising and identify the market segments that are critical to those ads.

Theoretical Framework

The framework of the study is anchored to the code of ethics of Advertising Standards Council which champion truth and fairness. The responsibility revolves around inspiring public confidence, being legal, decent, and honest and above all truthful. Through these values consumers are protected from misleading and offensive advertising. Ethics and morals are key principles that guide business activities [6].

This study also used Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to explain the need to adjust the marketing communications to gain public confidence among market segment that are indifferent to the ethical practices of food supplement advertising. CAT addresses interpersonal communication as well as larger context of intergroup stakes. It explains the need to balance social

inclusiveness and differentiation in social interaction, thus, convergence and divergence are the communication strategies employed to signal attitudes towards each other and to the social group [23]. Galois and Giles [24] explain that these strategies were employed to relate to people's goals for social approval, communication efficiency and identity. To minimize social difference, convergence strategy is used where one adapts other's communicative behaviour, while divergence emphasizes speech and non-verbal differences between themselves and their subjects. According to Hordilla [25], this theory may help in discovering how people perceive, assume and express their identity in a boundless community.

The theory provides a better judgment whether the ethical practices in marketing communication on food supplement have the need to adjust in order to gain positive approval and positive identity from the market or they only have to maintain their current communication style.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In this paper, the researchers aim to determine the ethical practices in the content of food supplement advertisements in terms of standards of presentation, consumer and safety, fairness, and product claims as assessed by food supplement consumers. This will provide a better understanding on how consumer perceived the ethical practices in advertising; thus, will aide advertisers and advertising practitioners in planning their marketing communication materials. This study also tests the significant difference of ethical practices in advertising content by profile of the respondents.

METHODS

This study used descriptive research designed to gather information from food supplement consumers to assess the ethical practices in the content of food supplement advertisements. Inferential statistics was also used to interpret data. Purposive through quota sampling was employed. The researchers surveyed 1,200 consumers of food supplements who are exposed to different advertisements of these products. They have experienced taking one or more food supplements either on regular or intermittent pattern. They purchased supplement products from major drugstore around Metro Manila.

To obtain data, a researcher-made survey questionnaire was utilized. The research instrument underwent several revisions and was validated by

experts in advertising field. The Filipino translation was edited and validated by expert in Filipino language. It was pre-tested to 30 respondents and had been through Cronbach's Alpha reliability test which garnered 0.98 alpha coefficient.

The survey instrument contained two parts: the respondent's profile with checklist and the assessment part which used a five (5) point Likert scale to measure the degree of practice of their observed advertisements to different variables. The researchers sought the full consent of the respondents informing them of the purpose of the study. Their information was held with anonymity and confidentiality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The food supplement consumer profile revealed their ages ranges from 41-50 years old (35%) and less than 40 years old (34.1%). They are dominated by female consumers (59.9%). Food supplement consumption was high with college degree (44.3%) and high school level (43.2%) respondents. The largest consumers of supplement products belong to the middle class with income ranging for P15,001-30,000 (38.8%). The frequently purchased food supplement is under the category general health wherein the most popular brand is MX3 (59%). The respondents preferred the capsule form (37.8%) as compared to other forms. Most of the respondents buy the product on monthly (25.7%) and weekly (20.3%) basis. They buy these products at Mercury Drugstore (47.8%). The primary reason for taking food supplement is for maintenance of adequate intake of certain nutrients (30.6%). Their primary source of information about food supplement is television advertisements (48%) and the frequently seen advertisements are food supplement for general health category (39.8%).

Table 1 illustrates respondents' assessment on the food supplement advertising ethical practice in terms of standards of presentation. It can be deduced from the table that respondents assessed standards of presentation "Practiced" (WM=4.32). The assessment on standards of presentation found family values yielded the highest assessment amongst all variables (M= 4.51), the only variable that was observed as "Very Much Practiced". The lowest practice is sensitivity to individual with illness (M=4.16).

This validates Lim & Soriano's[26]study that the most common theme in the advertisements are nurturing family and social relationships. This reflects

the central role of family in the Philippine culture. According to Matsuzawa [27] advertisements focusing on family, values and health with relatable and comedic relief have great appeal to consumers, thus, stimulate positive response. Filipino market seek values in advertisement particularly those that concern health.

Table 1. Level of Ethical Practices in Terms of Standards of Presentation

Standards of Presentation	Mean	VI
Respect for country, the law and its authorities	4.27	Practiced
Pride for being Filipino and supporting Philippine products	4.35	Practiced
Respect for Philippine symbols	4.34	Practiced
Respect to religious beliefs	4.27	Practiced
Family values such as obedience to elders, strong family ties	4.51	Very Much Practiced
Social values like cooperation and fellowship	4.37	Practiced
Decency in language and exposure of body parts	4.28	Practiced
Quality of life through healthy lifestyle and living	4.36	Practiced
Empowerment of women and minority	4.33	Practiced
Sensitivity to individual with illness	4.16	Practiced
Weighted Mean	4.32	Practiced

The ASC Guidebook [4] has included a section on individual with illness which should be presented with sensitivity; however, the result shows a low assessment on this practice. This is same true with the study of Ylänné et al. [28] where they found out that predominant advertisement in British magazines for food supplements were older people having problem with their mobility and the overarching message of comfort and safety through the products. Dramatizing ailments could mean insensitivity that may deem offensive to the public especially the sick people.

Table 2 reflects respondents' assessment on the food supplement advertising ethical practices in terms of consumer protection and safety. It can be deduced from the table that respondents assessed the consumer protection and safety "Practiced" (WM=4.33). The highest assessment was found in presentation of purpose of supplement; and stating the active ingredient and its physiological effects (M= 4.41). The last two variables that garnered the lowest assessment on ethical practices are Precautions on excessive consumptions (M=4.22) and for Reminder on the importance of proper diet and healthy lifestyle (M=4.2).

It implies that respondents observed the required details on food supplement ads by FDA and ASC especially on the clear purpose of the product as well as its active ingredient. According to Kennett [29], the

ingredients and the effect of the food to the body as promoted drive consumers to buy these products.

Table 2. Level of Ethical Practices in Terms of Consumer Protection and Safety

Consumer Protection and Safety	Mean	VI
Food and Drug Administration (FDA) mandated phrase "Mahalagang paalala: ang (brand) ay hindi gamot at hindi dapat gamiting panggamot sa anumang uri ng sakit"	4.32	Practiced
FDA registration	4.39	Practiced
Identity of the product manufacturer	4.35	Practiced
The generic name or botanical name of the brand	4.36	Practiced
The purpose of supplement	4.41	Practiced
The active ingredient and its nutritional or physiological effect	4.41	Practiced
Precautions to possible complication	4.34	Practiced
Precautions on excessive consumption	4.22	Practiced
Reminder on the importance of proper diet and healthy lifestyle	4.2	Practiced
Advertising Standards Council or ASC reference code	4.33	Practiced
Weighted Mean	4.33	Practiced

However, the absence on the precaution on excessive consumption could put the consumers at high risk. According to Egan et al. [30] there is confusion among consumers on how much and how long food supplement should be taken and that this lead to risk of over-consumption. The study conducted by Margarida Costa [31] proved that large dose intake of food supplement products that contain fat-soluble vitamins that is above the recommended daily doses could have adverse effect.

But generally food supplement ads are following the mandates of the regulating bodies. Unfortunately the case is different in the United States where FDA is facing challenges in enforcing their regulations especially in proving the efficacy, marketing claims and unsubstantiated labelling of food supplement products [32].

Table 3 describes respondents' assessment on the food supplement advertising ethical practice in terms of fairness in trade conduct. It can be deduced from the table that respondents assessed fairness "Practiced" [WM=4.24). The respondents revealed that Respect for competing products yielded the highest (M=4.38). The lowest assessment is for Specific stores where promotion is applicable (M=4.10) and Raffles and contest mechanics (M=4.06).

The finding as shown in the table implies that discrediting competitors in food supplement industry was not observed by respondents and that respect was practiced. According to Andraško and Sopúchová

[33]US and EU legislation have almost the same framework on comparative advertising. They have permitted the use of comparative advertising as long as they are objective and does not denigrate or discredit other brands.

Table 3 Level of Ethical Practices in Terms of Fairness

Fairness	Mean	VI
Respect to competing product without denigration	4.38	Practiced
Respect for other brands' identity like logo, statement or titles	4.24	Practiced
The show of convincing result after taking the supplement	4.29	Practiced
Disclosure on the possible adverse reaction	4.31	Practiced
Readily perceptible as commercial announcement and not news	4.25	Practiced
Directed to adults and not to children	4.37	Practiced
Mention of suggested retail price	4.28	Practiced
Price comparison, discounts and other claimed savings	4.13	Practiced
Specific stores where promotion are applicable	4.1	Practiced
Raffles and contests mechanics	4.06	Practiced
Weighted Mean	4.25	Practiced

One of the strategies in advertising that could highlight the advantage of a brand among others is comparative ads where defamatory references could appear. It was also discovered by Alipantri et al. [34] that firms are spending more budget using comparative advertising and so advertisers prefer not to employ such strategy.

ASC upholds the integrity and credibility of advertising, thus, truthful advertising also encourages fair play among competitors and the ASC has provided a venue for efficient resolution of advertising disputes among companies [4].

Sales promotion materials garnered the lowest assessment which may mean that these types of advertisements are not very specific and clear on the details of their marketing materials. Under article nine of ASC code of ethics [6], information or qualifications for promotions should be clearly and prominently presented in advertisements. Incomplete information may mislead consumers to act reasonably.

Hawkins [35] explained that market failure happened when consumers make systematic, predictable mistakes in evaluating products and services due to imperfect information they gathered through promotional materials.

Table 4 Level of Ethical Practices in Terms of Product Claims

Product Claims	Mean	VI
The supplement is not a medical product	4.39	Practiced
The supplement is not substitute to medical treatment	4.28	Practiced
The supplement alone cannot prevent disease	4.15	Practiced
The supplement is not intended to alleviate disease	4.28	Practiced
The supplement cannot reverse chronic disease	4.28	Practiced
The supplement is not more effective than medicine	4.24	Practiced
The supplement is not replacement to healthy foods	4.4	Practiced
Good health is not dependent on the use of the supplement	4.29	Practiced
The claim "most recommended" is not subjective	4.19	Practiced
Number 1 claim is not lacking with category description or area of sales lead	4.27	Practiced
Weighted Mean	4.25	Practiced

Table 4 demonstrates respondents' assessment on the food supplement advertising ethical practice in terms of product claims. It can be deduced from the table that respondents assessed product claims "Practiced" [WM=4.28]. The assessment on product claims revealed that the claim Supplement is not replacement to healthy foods [M=4.4]. While the lowest assessment went to the claim supplement alone cannot prevent disease (M=4.15).

The finding implies that food supplements ads clearly delivered the message to consumers that they should not solely depend on food supplement for their nutrition. According to Dudeja and Gupta [36] supplement should not be taken as alternative to a complete meal and variety of foods in getting a healthy diet. Even though supplements can help meet daily requirements for certain nutrients, there are also risks when combined with drugs and foods, also too much of some nutrients can also cause problem [37]. Shield et al. [38] shared the same observation. They gave relevant warnings and advised consumers to consult physician prior to its use. It is to be noted that these products are not designed for medication, diagnosis or disease effects reliever [14].

However, the result also shows that ads for this product have the lowest practice for indicating that food supplement alone cannot prevent disease. There are other factors to be considered that may prevent disease. Since consumers buy this product with primary reason to prevent certain condition or treat specific problem [30], adequate information about the

product and its ingredients should be provided so that consumers may fully understand the product. Better labelling information especially in its health claim has critical effect in consumer trust in food supplement; this could be a motivating factor for consumer to buy the product [39].

Table 5. Significant Difference on the Level of Ethical Practices of Food Supplement Advertisements by Age of Respondents

Indicator	Age	Mean	F test	p value
Standards of Presentation of Communication Materials	<40 years old	4.32	2.592	0.051
	41 - 50 years old	4.36		
	51 - 60 years old	4.28		
	61 years old and above	4.33		
Consumer Protection and Safety	< 40 years old	4.35	0.952	0.415
	41 - 50 years old	4.32		
	51 - 60 years old	4.32		
	61 years old & above	4.34		
Fairness	< 40 years old	4.25	1.011	0.387
	41 - 50 years old	4.24		
	51 - 60 years old	4.25		
	61 years old and above	4.17		
Product Claims	<40 years old	4.3	4.007	0.008
	41 - 50 years old	4.28		
	51 - 60 years old	4.26		
	61 years old and above	4.16		

Table 5 unfolds the significant difference on the assessment of ethical practice of food supplement advertisements according to age. The standards of presentation got the p-value of 0.051, consumer protection and safety got the p-value of 0.415 and fairness got the p-value of .387 which is greater than the assumed level of significance of 0.05.

Therefore, there is significant evidence to conclude that assessment on ethical practice on standards of presentation of materials, consumer protection and safety, and fairness have no significant difference when respondents are grouped by age, thereby accepting the null hypothesis.

On the other hand, the p-value for product claims is .008 which is less than the assumed level of significant of .05, therefore, there is no significant evidence to conclude that the assessment on ethical practice have no significant difference when respondents are grouped by age of food supplement consumers. Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected.

This clearly manifests that older consumers are more critical in the health claims made by food supplement advertisements. According to Anunziata [40] there is general suspicion from the older consumers on the reliability of the information provided by manufacturers. This is the reason why this group in population is interested to receive detailed information about these products [41].

Table 6. Significant Difference on the Level of Ethical Practices Of Food Supplement Advertisements by Gender of Respondents

Indicator	Gender	Mean	F test	p value
Standards of Presentation of Communication Materials	Male	4.36	2.918	0.054
	Female	4.32		
	LGBT	4.29		
Consumer Protection and Safety	Male	4.38	5.211	0.006
	Female	4.33		
	LGBT	4.27		
Fairness	Male	4.2	2.402	0.091
	Female	4.25		
	LGBT	4.26		
Product Claims	Male	4.29	0.914	0.401
	Female	4.28		
	LGBT	4.25		

Table 6 discloses the significant difference on the assessment of ethical practice of food supplement advertisements by gender. The standards of presentation got the p-value of .054, the practice of fairness got the p-value of .091, and product claims got the p-value of .401 which is greater than the assumed level of significance of .05.

Therefore, there is significant evidence to conclude that assessment on ethical practice on standards of presentation, fairness, and product claims have no significant difference when respondents are grouped by gender, thereby accepting the null hypothesis.

The p-value for consumer protection and safety got the p-value of .006 which is less than the assumed level of significant of .05, therefore, there is no significant evidence to conclude that the assessment on ethical practice have no significant difference when respondents are grouped by gender of food supplement consumers. Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected.

The result confirms the finding of Baglioni [42] that health-related food products are better accepted by female. They are more willing to use alternative health care products than men. Nemeth [39] found out that men mostly accept recommendations from

doctors and pharmacists for food supplement. Safety is the main factor for men’s judgement.

Table 7. Significant Difference on the Level of Ethical Practices of Food Supplement Advertisements by Educational Attainment of Respondents

Indicator	Highest Educational Attainment	Mean	F test	p value
Standards of Presentation of Communication Materials	Elementary	4.3	3.158	0.024
	High School	4.32		
	College	4.33		
	Post Graduate	4.61		
Consumer Protection and Safety	Elementary	4.29	3.908	0.009
	High School	4.32		
	College	4.37		
	Post Graduate	4.17		
Fairness	Elementary	4.17	4.679	0.003
	High School	4.23		
	College	4.28		
	Post Graduate	4.18		
Product Claims	Elementary	4.22	8.932	0.000
	High School	4.24		
	College	4.34		
	Post Graduate	4.34		

Table 7 depicts the significant difference on the assessment of ethical practice of food supplement advertisements by highest educational attainment. The standards of presentation got the p-value of .024, consumer protection and safety got the p-value of .009, fairness got the p-value of .003, and product claims got the p-value of .000. Since the p-value is less than the assumed level of significant of .05, therefore, there is no significant evidence to conclude that the assessment on ethical practice has no significant difference when respondents are grouped by highest educational attainment. Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected.

The result signified that by educational level there are varying responses from respondents especially for those who attained higher education. This segment is more critical in advertisements of food supplement especially on the practice of consumer safety and protection, fairness and product claims. According to Gregori et al. [43] higher educated people rely on school and do their validation in internet for diet information so they can process complex information. With proper information they know how to use nutritional information effectively.

Table 8 manifests the significant difference on the assessment of ethical practice of food supplement advertisements by average monthly income of food supplement consumers. The standards of presentation

and consumer protection and safety got the p-value of .000, fairness got the p-value of .003, and product claims got the p-value of .004.

Table 8. Significant Difference on the Level of Ethical Practices of Food Supplement Advertisements by Average Monthly Income

Indicator	Average Monthly Income	Mean	F test	p value
Standards of Presentation of Communication Materials	15,000 and below	4.44	9.462	0.000
	15,001 - 30,000	4.29		
	30,001 - 60,000	4.3		
	60,001 - 100,000	4.36		
Consumer Protection and Safety	100,000 above	4.8	7.027	0.000
	15,000 and below	4.38		
	15,001 - 30,000	4.35		
	30,001 - 60,000	4.31		
Fairness	60,001 - 100,000	3.97	3.963	0.003
	100,000 above	4.3		
	15,000 and below	4.23		
	15,001 - 30,000	4.23		
Product Claims	30,001 - 60,000	4.27	3.827	0.004
	60,001 - 100,000	3.96		
	100,000 above	4.4		
	15,000 and below	4.29		
	15,001 - 30,000	4.28		
	30,001 - 60,000	4.28		
	60,001 - 100,000	4.01		
	100,000 above	3.5		

Since the p-values are less than the assumed level of significant of .05, therefore, there is no significant evidence to conclude that the assessment on ethical practice has no significant difference when respondents are grouped by average monthly income. Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected.

The result only proves that income is a major factor that differentiates understanding on ethical practices. The research finding of Hussainy et al. [44] revealed that advertising has a greater influence on communities which are more financially stable.

However, in this study it shows otherwise, upper-middle-class consumers, those with higher earnings are not easily induced by advertising messages by food supplement products. According to Ahmed et al. [45] in the developing nations, the spending considerations of upper-middle-class are based on logic and prudence. This could be the reason why they perceived the ads to be low in ethical practice because they demand more information and truthfulness in the presentation of food supplement details.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The way consumers observed the ethical practices of food supplement advertising content, it can be

concluded that ethical standards in all four practices - standards of presentation of communication materials, consumer protection and safety, fairness, and product claims are being exercised.

However, there are some practices that advertisers and advertising practitioners should look into more consideration because they were observed to be low in practice: sensitivity in presenting sick people in a distress situation; precautions on excessive consumptions that may put the health at risk; comprehensible ads for promotional activities particularly transparency with raffles and contest mechanics; the message that consumers should not solely depend on food supplement for their health.

The test of significance difference revealed that respondents by profile have different views on how ethical advertising is being held. The Communication Accommodation Theory states the need to adjust communication in order to gain acceptance from the stakeholders, thus, for advertisers would gain greater market share and loyalty among important market segment. Adopting the theory to improve the marketing communication of food supplement ads may increase better reception from the consumers because the Filipino market still has high regards to values. To cultivate trust from the consumers, marketers need to relate to their values.

The result revealed the segments of consumers who noticed the lowest observation in advertising ethical practice. For product claims it was the older consumers who observed them to have low practice. This is the group who wants to be informed for products that could revitalize health and that may want manufactures to disclose more information about their product properties. Another segment is the male consumers who are not convinced on the safety being communicated in ads because male tend to rely more on medical professionals than in advertisements. Those with higher education tend to be more critical on the ads' honesty on products' properties and safety. This group usually do extra effort researching to confirm the statements made in ads. The most skeptical about ethical ads are those from the upper-middle-income earners since these are the consumers who are seeks more truthfulness in ads.

Consumers need reliable information to be able to evaluate product's safety and efficacy, and thereby making them come up with sound decisions. It is therefore recommended to consider making necessary modification in marketing communication that will conform to the values of these important market

segments. The consumers need more information about food supplement products; thus, clear, honest and comprehensible ads will fill the gap on ethical ads practices. The researchers would like to recommend for a conduct of study that will focus on the impact of ethical ads on the buying behaviour of consumers.

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