

Investigation of Ethical Dimensions in Sports Business Advertisement

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Abstract

Introduction: Adhering to advertising ethics can positively affect repeat purchases and customer loyalty. The purpose of this research was to investigate the ethical dimensions of sports business advertisements.

Material and Methods: The research method is based on the multi-grounded approach in terms of practical purpose and qualitative data. 15 participants were experts in the field of marketing, sellers, and customers of sports businesses. The sampling method was non-random and purposive. Sampling was carried out until theoretical saturation was reached. The research tool was a semi-structured interview. The interviewing process continued until theoretical saturation (15 people) was reached. Data analysis utilized three-stage coding and was conducted with MAXQDA software. Validation was done using the triangulation approach.

Results: The final model of the research was organized into 4 main axes: 1- Effective factors (factors related to the business company, market atmosphere, customer behavior, economic, cultural-social, rules and regulations governing businesses), 2- Strategies (infrastructure and equipment, management and structure, laws and regulations, supervision, training, dissemination, and promotion), 3- Dimensions of ethics in advertising (non-supply of dark products, religious values, methods of promotion and advertising, social values, communication with customers, content production, quality the product of laws and regulations), 4- Consequences (seller's internal satisfaction, branding, financial consequences, customer-related consequences).

Conclusion: This research identifies a new ethical approach for sports business ads. It emphasizes the importance of scientific, social, and cultural values, along with adherence to advertising norms and legal compliance. Monitoring should involve existing regulations and technology. Furthermore, sports business licensing should include education on ethical advertising.

Keywords: Sport advertising, sport marketing, ethics

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INTRODUCTION

Advertisements have been around as long as humans have existed, serving as a potent and effective means for individuals to persuade others to endorse their ventures or concepts [1]. Advertising stands out as a highly efficient

communication tool for imparting information to individuals in order to accomplish objectives set by a company or social organization working towards a specific goal [2]. In essence, advertising represents a crucial marketing tactic that operates in tandem with information and persuasion

avenues [3]. Advertising is crucial for marketing as it helps products or companies gain visibility among consumers. It enables companies to highlight the quality of their offerings [4]. Effective advertising plays a significant role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions [5]. Marketing communication professionals recognize advertising as a vital tool in global competition [6]. In business, advertising is crucial for attracting consumers. It plays a vital role in conveying product information. Ethical issues emerge when ads prioritize profit over values [7]. Researchers have pinpointed key traits of effective advertising, including content, creativity, and ethics [8-11]. Message ethics in advertising is related to the authenticity of message [12]. Ethics in advertising isn't just about legal compliance, but also about moral responsibility [13]. Companies must uphold ethical standards in their advertising efforts, which in turn can lead to profitability. Ethics in advertising pertains to fairness, ethical decision-making, and establishing guidelines for responsible conduct among individuals and organizations [4]. Ethics is a crucial aspect of the advertising sector. While advertising offers numerous advantages, there are instances where practices may not align with ethical standards [11].

Researchers have highlighted different aspects of ethics in marketing, including brand ethical characteristics [14], consumer behavior ethics [15], and ethical marketing strategies [16]. However, a research gap persists concerning the ethical dimensions of advertising.

Deceptive advertising is a prevalent aspect of corporate advertising trends, designed to allure customers. It extends beyond legal and ethical boundaries, posing a common challenge for advertisers [17]. Deception in advertising happens when a message presents product features and benefits in a manner that generates unrealistic expectations about its performance

[18]. Many definitions state that for an advertisement to be deceptive, it must include a statement or suggestion that leads a consumer to divert resources to a product or brand they wouldn't have chosen otherwise [17]. Experts commonly describe deceptive advertising as dishonest, either by excluding crucial product details or offering misleading information [19]. Various studies in the field of advertising ethics have been carried out in different countries. Financial pressures from new business challenges affect individuals' perceptions of the ethics of advertising potentially harmful products [20]. Ethical advertising involves delivering accurate product information, ensuring that advertisements are truthful and refrain from false claims [11]. Ethics in advertising within new media is a dynamic and intricate concept, necessitating self-regulation, the presence of ethical arbiters, safeguarding of privacy, as well as reforms and regulations to foster the advancement of advertising practices and enhance audience convenience [21]. Many social media ads are deceitful. Recruitment and product marketing ads often violate ethical standards, relying on deception to attract reluctant customers [22].

Despite evolving advertising methods, ethical issues persist, particularly concerning organizational hurdles [20]. Field observations today reveal that unethical advertising results in fraud, embezzlement, and diminished customer trust. Conversely, sports enterprises are thriving in the modern era, fostering a range of services and products that boost sales and drive advertising advancements within the industry. The importance of ethics in advertising within the sports industry is crucial due to the diverse range of products offered. Focusing on advertising in this sector can provide valuable insights for policymakers, managers, officials, and business owners. This study aims to explore

the ethical aspects of advertising in sports businesses.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research method is based on the multi-grounded approach in terms of practical purpose and qualitative data [23, 24]. The statistical population included three categories: 1) marketing management specialists in sports, 2) ethics experts, and 3) sports business owners. The sampling method was non-random and purposive. Sampling was carried out until theoretical saturation was reached. 15 participants (6 women and 9 men) were experts in the field of marketing (2 women and 5 men), sellers (2 women and 2 men), and customers (2 women and 2 men) of sports businesses. Four participants held a master's degree, while eleven had a Ph.D.

The research tool used was semi-structured interviews. The interviewing process continued until theoretical saturation was reached with all 15 participants. The researchers arranged the interviews in advance and conducted them in a calm environment. At the start, they assured participants of the confidentiality of their information. After collecting demographic details, the researchers asked the interview questions in order, prompting further inquiries to explore deeper concepts and topics.

In the following phase, multiple articles and books focused on "ethics in advertising" were retrieved from scientific databases and analyzed. The researchers examined commonly utilized models and theories by merging keywords such as ethics, advertising, and marketing from reputable sources like Scopus, Science Direct, Magiran, etc. All data extracted from interviews and research backgrounds were analyzed. From this analysis, conceptual codes, sub-categories, and main categories were derived. The data was analyzed using Maxqda software version 2020.

The model's presentation involved three key steps in multi-ground methodology:

1. Theory Generation- This process entails inductive coding, conceptual refinement, pattern coding, and theory condensation.
2. Explicit grounding- multi grounded can be designed with three types of grounding: theoretical matching, explicit empirical validation, and evaluation of theoretical cohesion [24]. Grounding involves analyzing and controlling the validity of an evolving theory, which relates not only to empirical truth but also to various validity claims, a concept [23]. We adopt this concept with some variations, primarily focusing on the idea that validity claims can be challenged and validated in different ways. For a deeper exploration of validity claims in knowledge grounding, see the three grounding processes align with three types of validity claims:
 - Theoretical validity ensures the theory aligns with other theoretical abstractions.
 - Empirical validity confirms the theory corresponds to empirical observations.
 - Internal validity assesses the coherence of the theory's discourse about the world.
3. Reflection on Research Interests: This step involves reflecting on the research process and potentially revising questions and findings in light of new insights, which can also inform future research directions.

A triangulation strategy was employed to validate the research, utilizing various methods (interviews and text analysis), multiple coding techniques for data analysis, and diverse participants (business owners, university professors, marketing specialists, and ethicists).

RESULTS

In the data analysis process, 504 open codes were initially coded, resulting in 177 concepts after removing duplicates. These concepts comprised 131 from interviews, 32 from backgrounds, and 14 common to both. During axial coding, 24

codes were identified by amalgamating primary codes. Subsequently, in selective coding, 4 codes were established within a theoretical framework by refining core codes. The research model was structured around 4 main axes: 1- factors affecting business (company-related factors, market environment, customer behavior, economic and socio-cultural aspects, laws and policies), 2- strategies (infrastructure,

management, legal compliance, oversight, training, promotion), 3- ethical dimensions in advertising (avoidance of controversial products, religious considerations, advertising methods, social values, customer communication, content quality, adherence to laws), and 4- Outcomes (internal satisfaction, branding, financial and customer-related impacts).

Table 1. Selective, axial and open codes

Selective code	Axial code	open code
Effective factors	Factors related to business enterprise	Organizational atmosphere related to the business company (1), The organizational structure of the business company (1), Ethical organizational culture (1), lack of knowledge and awareness (1)
	market atmosphere	Business interaction with distributors (1), Interaction of businesses with raw material producers (1), Competitors' behaviour in attracting business customers (1), Competitive atmosphere between sports businesses (1)
	Customer behaviours	Employees' lack of awareness of ethical principles (1), Customer shopping ethics and culture (1), Lack of customer awareness of rules and procedures (1)
	Economic factors	Greed for more profit (3), The short-term capital return period (1), Increasing competition (1), Economic pressures of the market (1), initial price fluctuation (1), Compliance with moral values in the expected profit of the seller (1), Ethics in business financial issues (1), Commitment to economic profit (1), The economic situation of society (1)
	Sociocultural factors	Customary behaviours of society (1), Beliefs and beliefs of the seller (1), Injustice prevailing in society (1), Attention to cultural and social responsibilities (1), Social status of people (1)
	Rules and policies	Lack of effective supervision and control (1), Policies governing businesses (1), Regulatory policies (1), Creation and amendment of business laws (1)
Strategies	Infrastructure and equipment	Strengthening the infrastructure and culture (1), Using technology tools (1)
	Management and structure	Strategies for financial transparency in businesses (1), Research and development in the category of business ethics (1), Preventive strategies of financial crimes (1)
	Rules and regulations governing businesses	Standards or codes of ethics related to advertising at the country level (1), Determining ethical principles and observing them (1), Establishing laws and regulations to prevent fraud (1), Establishing laws to fine various businesses (1), Establishing incentive laws for ethical businesses (1)
	Supervision	Establishing or strengthening regulatory institutions (1), Continuous monitoring and control (1), Physical monitoring systems (1), Technology-based surveillance systems (1), Strengthening supervision by unions and guilds (1), Increasing supervision and judicial inspections (1), Supervision and inspection of custodian government organizations and institutions (1)
	Education	Teaching moral issues in schools (1), Training of advertising administrators (1), Staff training (1), Proper training of the salesperson by rules and business issues (1), Development of training courses and empowerment based on ethics in business (1), Empowering business owners through unions and guilds (1), Ethical training of customers through the media (1)
	Spread and promote	Increasing the awareness and alertness of audiences and customers (1), Promoting ethical culture among businesses (1), Customer participation (1), Universalization of moral values (1), Promoting social responsibility in advertising (1), Encouraging transparent advertising (1), Promotional role of social networks in ethical issues of business advertising (1), Spreading and promoting professional ethics through mass and public media (1), Developing professional ethics through unions and guilds (1),

		Promoting social responsibility through the media (1), Awareness of moral values through the education system (1)
Dimensions of ethics in advertising	No supply of dark products	Not advertising and promoting illegal services (betting, etc.) (1), Not advertising and promoting illegal sports goods (energetic substances, etc.) (1)
	Religious values	Honesty of advertisements (3), No lying in product description (2), Preservation of religious and national values in advertising (2), Respecting human dignity in advertising (2), Observing modesty and politeness in advertising (2), Preservation of the dignity of Muslim women in advertisements (2), The belief system and value beliefs of the seller (1), Attention to cultural and religious values (1)
	Methods of promotion and advertising	fair competition (3), Not denying similar goods (2), Compliance with ethics in describing competing companies (1), Diversity and plurality in presenting ethical advertising methods (1), Not using fraudulent and deceptive techniques (1), Not providing false information about competitors in advertisements (1), Not humiliating and destroying competitors (3)
	social values	Refraining from endangering people's health in advertisements (2), Advertising and marketing for children and teenagers based on the rules of the supervisor (3), Healthy economic competition in advertising (2), Maintaining the health of society (not advertising harmful products) (2), Not using western and intangible names to advertise goods or products (2), Respect for all sections of society (absence of racial, gender, religious discrimination, etc.) in advertisements (3), Honest and transparent advertisements (1), No customer theft in the advertising process (1), Non-violation of consumer rights in advertising (1), Not abusing people in advertisements (1), Not promoting addiction in advertisements (1), Not promoting consumerism in advertising (1), Advertising tailored to people's needs (1), Not creating false needs (1)
	Communication with the customers	Awareness and people's right to choose (2), Creating and developing ethical communication (2), Protecting the privacy of customer information (3), Not taking advantage of the audience's moral weaknesses (2), After sales support(1), The seller's denial of the initial price (debasement) (1), Considering the economic conditions of the people (1), No forced sales to the customer (1), Paying attention to customer requests (1), Promise to the customer (product quality, delivery time, etc.) (1), Protecting the privacy of customers when shopping (1), Honesty and truthfulness in sales (1), Protecting the rights of customers (1), Criticism of the seller (1), Justice in customers (1), Encourage customer feedback(1), Creating and maintaining customer trust (1), Using people who specialize in sales (1), Interaction and positive verbal communication with the buyer (1), Ethical speech with customers (1), Taking time to understand customer needs (1), Lead time in responding to customers (1), Increasing interaction and ethical communication with customers (1), Committed to respecting customers (1), Using offensive or inappropriate jokes(1), Attracting more customers (1)
	Content production	Not using aggressive and anti-social content (2), Prohibition of using irrelevant images (2), Providing accurate and correct information about advertising services (2), Distinctiveness of advertising content (2), Not using misleading images (2), Compliance with ethical principles in the design of advertising content (2), Using attractive content for advertisements (2), Creating a sense of curiosity through advertising content (2), Transparency of advertising information (2), Not creating a negative mentality in the field of human beliefs (2), Not using exaggerated concepts (2), Using similar lyrics to other advertising programs (2), Using audio and video effects (2), Not using attractive tools that are not related to the product (2), Compliance with ethics in content production (1), Stealing other people's advertising content by the seller (1), Not using sexual, provocative and violent images (1), Not using humiliating images (1), Forgetting the weaknesses of the product (1)
	Product quality (product value)	Information about the quality and price of products (3), Information about the product's advantage over similar products (3), Having a product standard (3), Not deceiving and hiding the truth of the goods (2), Ethics in providing quality products (1), fair pricing(1), Committed to providing accurate information (1), Not using misleading advertisements (1), Promoting a product with incorrect features (1), Misleading customers about product features (1), Non-compliance of the product or

		service with the relevant advertisements (1), Advertisements of fake and counterfeit products (1)
	Rules and regulations governing businesses	Compliance with laws and regulations (1), Absence or insufficient implementation of rules (1), Advertising according to the rules and regulations (1)
Outcomes	Seller satisfaction	Seller satisfaction (1), Developing products with an ethical approach (1), Protection of human rights (1), Earning a halal livelihood (1), Not having a guilty conscience (1)
	Branding	Commitment to the brand (1), Brand recommendation to friends and acquaintances (3), Building positive relationships between vendors and customers (1), Increasing reputation in the market (1), Willingness to repurchase customers (1), Preference of this organization over other competitors (1), Customer increase (1), Development of competitive advantage (1)
	Financial consequences	increase in sales (1), income generation (1)
	Customer related implications	Repurchase decision (2), Stimulating the emotions of the audience (2), Creating a good feeling in the audience (2), Creating a sense of belonging in the audience (2), Customer trust (3), Meeting the needs of customers (1), Customer loyalty (3), Establishing a relationship between the seller and the customer (1), Customer satisfaction (3), Shareholders' satisfaction (1)

Codes extracted from the interview (1) Codes extracted from the research background and literature (2) Common codes between the

interview and research background and literature (3)

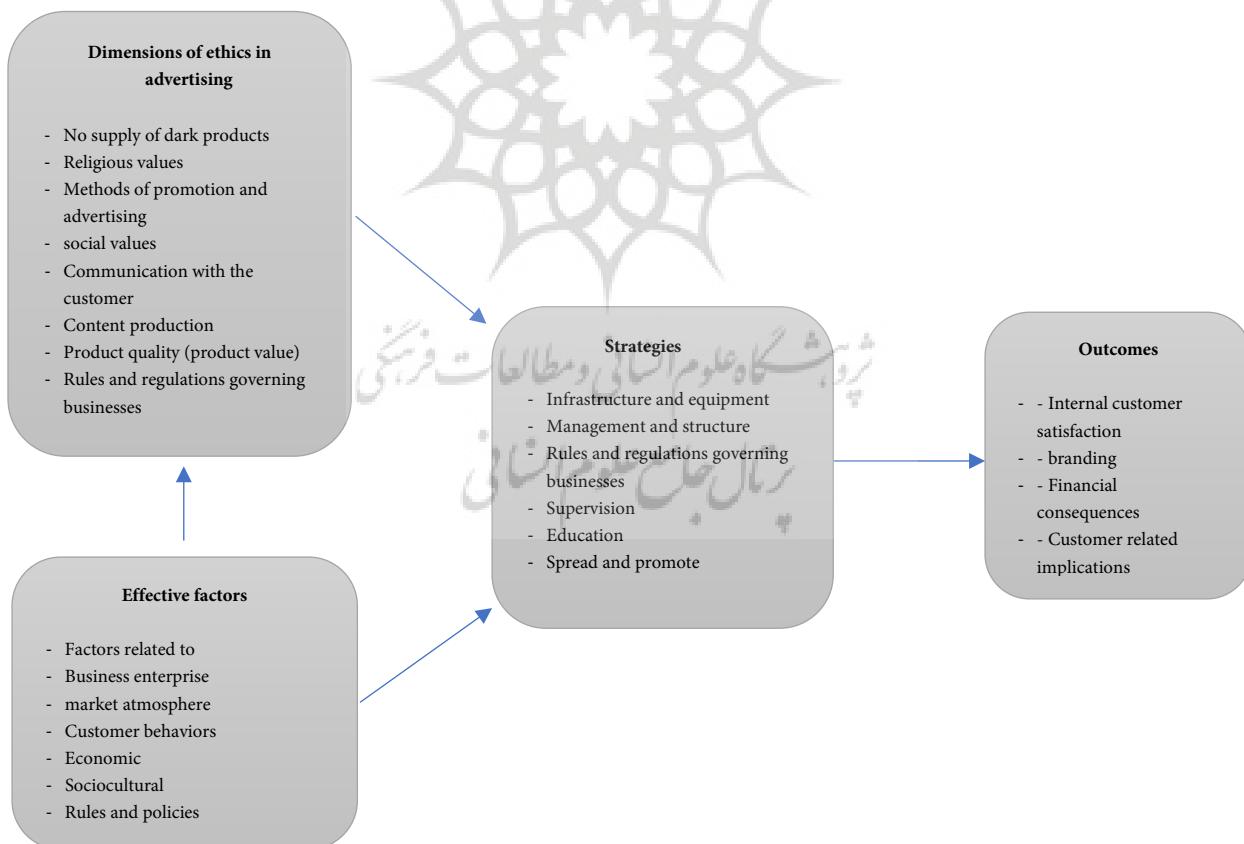


Figure 1. Ethical dimensions in sports business advertising

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to investigate the ethical dimensions in sports business advertisements.

The results indicated that influential factors encompassed aspects tied to the Business Company, market environment, customer conduct, economics, socio-cultural elements, laws, and regulations. A survey of the existing literature demonstrates that multiple factors play a role in shaping ethical standards in advertising. This section's results align with previous research findings [25-32]. The introduction of new laws not only offers more specific regulations to address past issues and broaden governance but also rectifies inconsistencies and imposes additional constraints on advertising [26]. Advancements in technology and socio-cultural factors have led to the emergence of new advertising propositions disseminated through novel bidirectional communication channels and fresh formats that continue to favor a direct advertising approach [27]. Advertising is intricately linked to economic activities [28]. Regarding the market environment and competition among firms, Researchers suggest that the market ambiance and business competition can influence the ethical standards of advertising [29]. Advertising permeates every aspect of life and cannot be ignored. Advertisers blend cultural norms to leave a lasting impression on audiences. A nation's cultural heritage greatly affects organizations and individuals, boosting brand recall [30]. Brand image significantly impacts consumers, who are less influenced by consumer culture or lifestyle [31]. The appeal of emotional and rational advertisements markedly shapes brand perception and consumer actions [32]. Another aspect of the findings highlighted that ethical dimension in advertising involve refraining from promoting dark products,

respecting religious values, utilizing appropriate promotional methods, emphasizing social values, fostering positive customer relationships, creating relevant content, ensuring product quality, and adhering to relevant laws and regulations. This section's results align with previous research findings [33-41]. Sports betting marketing positively influences attitudes, intentions, and behaviors related to sports betting [33]. Gambling ad offers may attract viewers, but without heightened arousal, they are unlikely to spark a desire to gamble [34]. The support for women's rights in advertising is crucial, especially considering Iran's lack of a comprehensive law despite strong jurisprudential and constitutional foundations. Additionally, the current law fails to provide effective enforcement mechanisms [35]. Deceptive advertising represents a breach of marketing ethics due to its vague targeting and ability to go unnoticed by the public [36]. Effective marketing to consumers can be achieved through various strategies. Organizations today utilize advertising to meet social, communication, and sales objectives, emphasizing the need for a deep understanding of the market and customer needs for success. Consequently, the role of advertising in business has grown significantly [37]. Ethical communication is vital for organizations, as it affects consumer decision-making and necessitates responsible engagement [38]. The deceptive use of humor in advertising can mislead consumers, particularly through certain humorous tactics in misleading claims. It's important to understand that humor is merely one method used to distract consumers from a product's real value [39]. Some advertising practices violate societal norms by showcasing inappropriate body parts, using offensive language, or incorporating dangerous elements. These actions can be particularly harmful to

Muslims [28]. Researchers emphasized the importance of considering product quality and price [1]. Quality of an advertisement can either attract or deter consumers from a product or service [40]. Researchers stressed the need to evaluate laws protecting the dignity of women in commercial ads and ensure their enforcement, as well as the importance of diversity, repetition, and formality in these laws. Overall, cultural differences between countries can lead to varying perspectives on ethical standards in advertising. For instance, what may be deemed unethical in our country, such as disregarding cultural values in sports ads (like not featuring hijab or revealing female body parts), could be acceptable in Western nations [41].

The study revealed that strategies for fostering ethical practices in advertising encompass infrastructure, management, laws, supervision, training, dissemination, and promotion. This section's results align with previous research findings [42-48]. New technologies necessitate new languages, particularly in media-related contexts [42]. Social media offers a fruitful opportunity to explore recent advancements in communication and advertising. In this realm, technology acts as a means to monitor and manage different facets of advertising [43]. Online marketers can overlook gender when developing strategies, as research indicates it has little impact. Therefore, social media advertisers can use similar approaches for both male and female audiences [44]. Adhering to ethical guidelines in business, especially in marketing campaigns, is crucial for boosting customer morale, trust, and acceptance [39]. Overwhelming consumers with daily advertisements suggest that monitoring the sources of persuasive messages could help prevent manipulation [45]. Developing advertising literacy training that emphasizes content, grammar, and structural components. Content literacy focuses on understanding

themes and ideas in advertising, grammatical literacy involves recognizing persuasive visual techniques, and structural literacy pertains to social comprehension [46]. The educational system may perpetuate gender inequality in advertising; thus, aligning university advertising education with socially responsible advertising practices is crucial [47]. Government organizations cannot solely address advertising violations; thus, collaboration with other regulatory bodies is essential to promoting ethical advertising practices [48].

The study revealed that enhancing ethics in sports business advertising leads to seller satisfaction, branding, financial implications, and customer-related outcomes. This section's results align with previous research findings [49-54]. The main objective of advertising is to elevate a product's value and boost consumer confidence, encouraging the choice of quality goods. Additionally, using mythological narratives can strengthen brand loyalty and consumer belief [49]. The importance of rational, emotional, and ethical appeals in advertising significantly influences brand image [50]. To achieve effective marketing communications, it is essential to focus on strategies like authority, commitment, and liking [51]. Advertising variables, brand image, brand trust, and product pricing collectively influence purchase intent [52]. Advertisement design and customer satisfaction play pivotal roles in shaping purchase intent [53]. Establishing sustainable, profitable customer relationships while ensuring value and satisfaction is paramount [54].

According to the research findings, it is suggested Sports businesses should prioritize identifying key factors like customer behavior and market conditions to enhance the ethical aspects of their advertising. This can be accomplished through data analysis and market research. Additionally, companies should create advertising strategies that align with social and cultural values to attract

more customers and foster a positive brand image. Investing in technology and training is crucial. Developing online platforms and social networks can accelerate the dissemination of ethical advertising messages. Furthermore, training employees in ethics and communication will enhance service quality and strengthen relationships with customers. Businesses should ensure their advertising campaigns do not promote inappropriate or harmful products. In the sports industry, it is crucial to transparently present the quality and health benefits of products. Establishing effective communication with customers, being transparent about raw materials, and highlighting the positive effects on physical and mental health can enhance social trust. Supporting the community's religious and cultural values in advertising is crucial. This can be done by offering materials that honor their culture and highlight human principles. Promoting social responsibility should also be a key strategy, as it strengthens brand image and attracts like-minded customers. Companies should implement regular training programs to educate employees on industry-specific laws and regulations. This training can involve case studies, practical workshops, and updates to ensure compliance and effective enforcement. Additionally, establishing a monitoring system for advertising activities and an independent body to review compliance with laws can help companies adhere to regulations and prevent future legal issues.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study shed light on a new perspective on the diverse aspects of ethics in sports business promotions. As a result, within the academic realm of sports marketing, particular emphasis needs to be placed on these aspects (such as respect for religious, social, and cultural values, truthfulness in advertising, and adherence to laws and regulations). Furthermore,

the mechanisms for overseeing and regulating sports enterprises by various entities and tools should be considered, while keeping in mind the legal framework and leveraging technological capabilities. It is also recommended that as part of the licensing process for sports businesses, educational programs and orientation sessions on ethical standards in advertising should be included.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues (such as plagiarism, conscious satisfaction, misleading, making and or forging data, publishing or sending to two places, redundancy and etc.) have been fully considered by the writers.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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