

An Empirical study of Banned Advertising in Egypt and Violated Morals

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Abstract:

With the expansion of developing markets and advertising trends, products tend to search for the most creative ideas to achieve and maintain brand identity. In order to stand out among the advertising clutter, some ads push the boundaries of what may be socially and morally acceptable or unacceptable, while most advertisers rely on the “shock value” to achieve the desired output, it mainly leads to the creation of what is known as “offensive advertising”. This research aims to discuss the theoretical framework and regulations for advertising in Egypt, with an analysis of the banned advertising in 2016 and 2017, and setting a framework based on the Moral Foundations Theory to be used as a guideline for advertising ethics. The research uses the qualitative and quantitative methodology, through the analysis of the banned advertising campaigns in relation to the Egyptian Standard Specifications of Advertising Requirements and through interviews conducted with focus groups among the Egyptian Society discussing moral standards of what is accepted or rejected within the banned advertising.

Keywords:

Banned Advertising
Violated Morals
Ad Campaign

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1. Introduction

Advertising in Egypt is considered one of the hardest hit sectors, relying mostly on TV advertising, also known to be the priciest medium for advertising, Egypt’s TV audience equates up to 95% of the population on weekly basis, with a population exceeding 95 million, advertisers rely heavily on TV, spending almost 50% of their budget on TV advertising. Based on the latest Advertising Expenditure Forecasts Report conducted by Zenith ROI in September 2016, Egypt’s TV advertising expenditure holds 41.4% with estimated spending of LE2.7 billion for 2015 (zenithmedia.se, 2016) where a substantial amount of spending is concentrated on the month of Ramadan. TV being considered as the major advertising tactic, and although viewers are increasingly turning to Online Media to watch their content ad-free shows, it is never expected that TV becomes obsolete at any time. With this massive concentration on TV advertising, advertisers seek the most creative and shocking ideas to stand out and maintain brand identity, sometimes pushing the boundaries of what may be socially, religiously and morally unacceptable. In 2016, during the month of Ramadan, four advertising campaigns for four main Egyptian brands were banned (Juhayna, Birell, Cottonil, Dice) after being aired several times during TV shows and series. Being considered as “offensive advertising” violating societal morals and ethics. In 2017, four advertising campaigns for four major

international brands (Sunny, Vodafone, Orange, Uber) were also banned after being aired several times, again for violating morals. The research question hence is, what defines “morals”, and does the Egyptian Standard Specifications of Advertising Requirements clearly identifies what morals are, and what exactly is meant by violation of morals? As members of the Egyptian Advertising Industry state, that the definition of “morals” remains controversial, what is accepted to some maybe rejected by others. Advertising requires innovative ideas that are of interest to the public and relies on ambiguous concepts of what moral means, while imposing limits and restraints on the content of the advertising would only lead to repetitive and boring ideas. A few members stated that a well percentage of ad content and copy writers are not exactly aware of the “Egyptian Standard Specifications of Advertising Requirements”, and that ads are being produced based on the general knowledge and instincts of what could be accepted or rejected by the society. No clear rules explain ethics and morals in this regard, which makes it quite vague.

This research discusses the theoretical framework and regulations for advertising in Egypt, analyzing the 2016-2017 banned TV advertising campaigns in terms of relevance to the moral sensitivity and general societal ethics, and setting a framework based on the Moral Foundations Theory to be used as a guideline for advertising ethics.

Media Regulating Laws in Egypt

Egypt has historically been the region’s leader in

media, politics, and culture. As the most populous and the most politically influential country in the Arab world, Egypt has also led the region in the development of a strong, vibrant, and relatively open print and broadcast media. Historically, Egyptian print and broadcast media have attracted large audiences, transmitting Egyptian culture, dialect and political messages throughout the region (Amin, 2002).

In 1975, The first Law defining the functioning of the Office of Censorship was established. The law stated that every cinematic, theatrical or musical work must pass through the censor for licensing prior to being broadcasted, banning anything conflicting with religion, national security or government officials and policies. Under the law, the censor could order the removal of any scene that conflicts with religion, national security or official government positions on issues, such as economic policy, foreign relations, social ethics, and traditional norms. (Amin, 2012)

Speaking about terrestrial broadcast media, the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU) operates under Law 13, 1979. Which was then modified by Law 223, 1989. Known to be the sole authority over all radio and TV channels, operating under the affiliation of the Ministry of Information (which was then dismantled after the 2011 revolution). Most channels which are known to be government controlled rely heavily on advertising revenues from national and international products campaigns.

In 1983, the ERTU issued a set of regulations which state that all broadcast material must be revised by the Office of Censorship before broadcasting, to ensure compliance with the national policies. All broadcast content, form, narration and scripts must also be revised to ensure subjugation to the general morals. Ethics, religious and spiritual values and norms. Any material containing scenes of violence, crime or sex would be banned. These regulations later formed the ERTU Code of Ethics which states the following:

It is prohibited to: broadcast any program that includes negative statements about religions or beliefs; broadcast any program that creates any disputation among different religious groups; broadcast any program that criticizes the state national system broadcast any program that includes statements that encourage violation of the law; broadcast any program that criticizes national heroism; broadcast any program that criticizes Arab nationalism and its struggle, values, and national traditions; broadcast any program that criticizes other nationalities;

broadcast any program that criticizes officers of the courts, military officers, or security officers as well as religious leaders; broadcast any program that criticizes state officials because of their performance; broadcast any program that disparages any legitimate profession; broadcast any program that threatens family ties or disparages its sanctity or condemns family values; broadcast any program that favors divorce as a means to solve family problems; broadcast any program that includes obscenity, vulgar, or indecent pictures; broadcast any program that criticizes the ethics of the society or violates the rules of decency either by sound, picture, or by performance; broadcast any program that encourages indecency either by sound, picture, or performance; broadcast any program that contains materials that may cause depression or spread the spirit of defeat among individuals or communities; criticize the values that come from Egyptian traditions; broadcast any program that creates social confusion or criticizes the principles and traditions of Arab society; broadcast any program that encourages discrimination on the basis of color, race, religion, or social status; broadcast any program that promotes crime or displays it in such a way that may cause imitation; broadcast any program that encourages the use or distribution of illegal substances or activities prohibited by Islam such as the consumption of alcoholic beverages or gambling; broadcast any program that encourages blood revenge; broadcast to portray (sic) violence to humans or animals; broadcast any pictures of horror; broadcast any program that may hurt the feelings of the handicapped or the mentally retarded; broadcast any confidential information; broadcast any scientific, technical, professional, or religious advice or commentary unless it has been reviewed or is broadcast by experts in the field; broadcast what contradicts scientific facts, such as superstition; anyone employed by ERTU to use ERTU equipment for his/her benefit or to use it for personal propaganda. It is also prohibited for anyone employed by ERTU to permit the broadcast or to broadcast any materials that may advertise for individuals, artists, the audience, products, or companies; broadcast any program that criticizes other broadcast programs; anyone employed by ERTU to broadcast or to permit the broadcast of any official materials. It is prohibited to give unearned titles to guests. (The General Communication Plan, Egypt 1989).

In 2005, the Egyptian Standard Specifications of Advertising Requirements was established "ES 4841 (2005) (Arabic): Advertising requirements of

(products and services)” set by the Egyptian Organization for Standardization and Quality. The standards discussed three different sets of rules: Product and logo requirements; Specific Requirements concerning Children Products, Health and Beauty Products; and Advertising Morals and Ethics which consisted of four stipulations:

Stipulation 6/1: Advertising responsibility towards consumers and society; the ads should abide by the general ethics, and should not include any elements degenerating human dignity, or any offensive data, audio or visual scenes which abuses general decency, or generate fear.

Stipulation 6/2: Advertising should respect fair, free and honest competition; ads should be genuine and not copy other ads which may cause confusion to the consumer, no product should be offended or put in doubt by any other competitive product.

Stipulation 6/3: Advertisers should work on keeping the advertising industry in good reputation; members of the advertising industry must abide by the ethical rules when generating ideas and designs, no offensive language should be used and must abide by the general social norms.

Stipulation 6/4: Advertising should commit to honesty, truthfulness and integrity; no financial abuse should be used as a way to manipulate media and advertising channels and outlets.

The rules and regulations set by ERTU and the Egyptian Standard Specifications of Advertising Requirements, has stated several times that any broadcast material must abide by the general

ethics, morals and social norms, which still does not answer the question of “what is the definition of morals”, which leaves the decision on what is socially accepted or not to the personal opinion and general knowledge of the ad makers, which leads to the creation of controversially moral ads.

In 2016, The Supreme Council for Media Regulation had been established by Law 92 of 2016, to regulate and supervise all broadcast and print media in Egypt. Since the establishment of the council, while several ads were banned in 2016 and 2017, the problem still remains, that due to lack of censorship existence and proper definition of “general ethics and morals”, the ads were banned after being aired several times, which means that the society were already exposed to the “unethical content”.

Analysis of the 2016 Banned Ads

In 2016, during the month of Ramadan, four main campaigns were banned by the Egyptian Consumer Protection Agency, the ads were seen as breaching public morality and promoting harassment.

Juhayna “Dondoo” Ad

Juhayna, known to be the leading national dairy products company, produced a campaign during Ramadan 2016, promoting its milk products. The ad featured toddlers talking, comparing the bottled milk to mother’s breast milk. The dialogue has been perceived as having sexual innuendos, as one of the toddlers mentions that “I want the Dondoo.. I will never forget the Dondoo”. While “Dondoo” has no meaning in the Arabic language, it was used to refer to women’s body parts.



Fig (1) Screenshot of Juhayna “Dondoo” Ad. Youtube.com/Juhayna Official

The Egyptian Consumer Protection Agency, had decided to ban the ad, stating that the ad has misleading information stating that bottled milk is better than breast milk. The Agency stated as well that the ad has violated the consumer protection

law of 2006, and the 2005 Egyptian Standard Specifications of Advertising Requirements, which stipulates that advertising must respect religious customs, traditions and values, the ad in relation to the requirements contains audio and

visual content that violates public morals, dignity, and deceives children.

The ad was still seen controversial, a Facebook page dedicated to woman rights in Egypt stated that only those with sick mentalities who view a woman's body as a sex object would have an issue with the concept of the ad, otherwise no violation has occurred. (bbc.com, 2016). While other Egyptian social media users describe the ad by being creepy and oversexualizes breast feeding, stating that the word "Dondoo" would probably be used by men on the streets to sexually abuse, humiliate and harass women. (washingtonpost.com, 2016)

TV Director, Karim Imam, states that the decision of banning ads only pushes advertising ideas to be more mundane and dull, as it frustrates creativity and innovation. He states that the Agency is not doing its job professionally, as its main job is to protect consumers from fake products and to prevent prices of goods to be manipulated, and that no prohibition should be applied anyhow on ads, except only if the ads deceive children or humiliate a specific social group. Based on his opinion, and referring to the 2005 requirements, the ad has not violated any of the laws. (al-monitor.com, 2016). Egyptian Advertising Copywriter, Hazem Hassan, mentions that general morals is a very vague word, the diverse cultures of any society leads to different point of views, while some may not accept that ad, others believe it is totally accepted. The standards need to be redefined as no clear rules explaining what "ethics" or "morals" exist. The ad although banned, has been available on digital media.

Birell "Man Up" Campaign

In 2016, Al-Ahram Beverages company, a

national company for producing non-alcoholic beer and other beverages, created a campaign titled "Man-Up", as a continue to its previously started campaign in 2009. The ads show men engaging in stereotypically non- masculine acts, describing them by being unmanly, and immortalizing other gender stereotypes. Each ad ends up with the slogan of "Be a man, drink Birell". In one of the ads, a man seen looking at a black and blue woman dress that was highly shared on social media, the ad tells the man to "forget about the color of the dress, focus on the body wearing it", the ad was considered as an encouragement to sexual harassment. One ad implying that manhood only lasts for a set of few years, and another showing one man taking a glance at another man at the urinal, had a strong concept of encouraging homophobia.

In the 2010 ads, the ads depict women constant whiners and naggers, the ads slogan states that "being a man is not easy, be a man, drink Birell". In the 2012 Ramadan ads, Birell declares that men should not be sitting with crossed legs like women, and men should never be sensitive or cry, again ending with the same slogan. The whole campaign was banned in 2016, being considered as a sexist in content, containing strong ideas of sexual innuendos, violating public morals. The campaign's Copywriter states that it is the problem of the society how they perceive the advertising ideas; the society are always lending themselves to being macho and sexiest, the campaign only reflects the societal standards. The campaign has not violated any morals, based on his opinion. The campaign although banned, has been available on digital media.



Fig(2) Birell ad showing a man seen looking at a black and blue woman dress that was highly shared on social media, the ad states "forget about the color of the dress, focus on the body wearing it"



Fig (3) Birell ad stating “30 years of masculinity... be a man”

Cottonil and Dice Underwear Ads

In 2016, an ad for Cottonil, a major national company producing cotton wear, has been banned by the Egyptian Consumer Protection Agency. The ad showing a group of women in their underwear using sexually distinct sound effects. The CPA stated that the ad has violated general morals. Dice, another national company producing cotton wear, shows a naked woman appearing in her underwear. The Ad was also banned by the CPA, stating that it promotes immorality and justifies infidelity. The two ads were also removed from all digital media platforms.

Analysis of the 2017 Banned Ads

In 2017, four major company’s campaigns were banned by the CPA and The Supreme Council for Media Regulation, the ads were seen as breaching public morality, demeaning women, and encouraging sexual harassment.

Sunny Cooking Oil Campaign

In 2017, outdoor ads created for International Cooking Oil Company Sunny have been banned by the CPA. The campaign titled “You are the Example” consisting of several billboards seen on highways within Cairo, has used several Egyptian

proverbs which are considered a humiliation for women, and encourages the normalization of gender-based violence. The decision of banning was a response to a complaint filed against the campaign from the National Council for Women. Based on the CPA, the campaign violates the 2005 requirements, humiliating and encouraging hatred against women, as it negatively reinforces stereotype perceptions about women rather than eliminating them.

The company had commented on the decision that the campaign’s aim was to resist local proverbs that are considered as a humiliation to women. Nader Khalil, spokesperson of the advertising agency behind the creation of the campaign (HUB), stated that the campaign was based on the psychological strategy of the “sharp shock” which basically relies on attracting the audience through shocking them, and that is how the campaign achieved its aim. Khalil stated that the existing ads were only teasers, the advertising agency was working on the launching of the second part of the campaign which would reveal the main message behind it. (madamasr.com, 2017)



Fig(4) Sunny Billboard reading “Are you a Spinster?.. share your story”

Orange Telecom Campaign

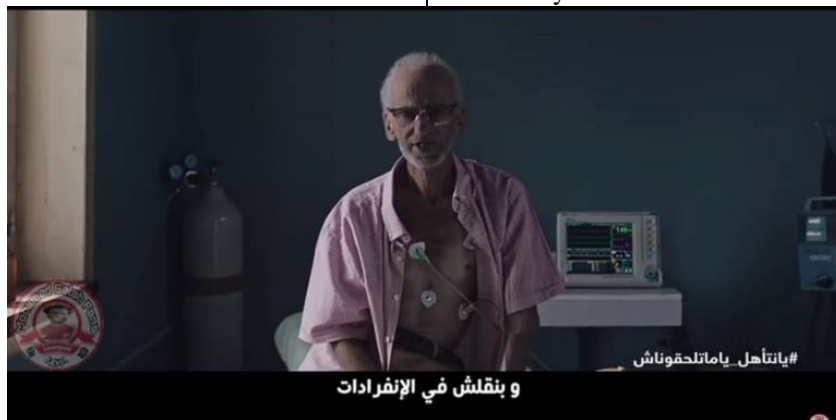
In September 2017, Orange Telecom, a major

International Telecommunications Company, created a campaign which was released before the

Egypt-Uganda football match, the match which would qualify the Egyptian team for the World Cup. The ad features a group of elders singing a rap song saying that this is their last chance to see Egypt head for the World Cup before they die. The song states “This time or no other time, infirmity is eating us alive, and we are watching from the intensive care, many of us have Alzheimer’s and can’t recall who is playing against who, focus we won’t be living until the next time the team qualifies”. The CPA banned the campaign and ordered for all billboards, banners and social media ads to be removed within 24 hours, which came after a complaint filed by the Minister of Social Solidarity against the campaign, yet again, the ads were viewed and seen several times before banning occurred. The banning call came after the ad was detected dissenting from the 2005 requirements for advertising, which states that the ad must commit to general ethics and not include any insulting elements for humanity or dignity. The CPA stated that the ad had violated

the law, by making fun of the elderly, their suffering and their sickness. The ad appeared with the hashtag “either we qualify now, or we will be dead by next time”.

Orange on the other hand had a different opinion, in a press release on September 4th 2017, Orange stated that the idea was to use hard core football fans who are getting older without seeing Egypt being qualified for the world cup, they also stated that the song is a humorous creative execution from elders who are suffering illness and aging problems and who have been through stress and pressure for the past 28 years not seeing their national team playing for World Cup. The idea is that these elders to do not have the luxury of time to wait for another four years. (orange.eg, 2017). The campaign backlashed in several ways, while some considered it to be a very offensive one, violating our cultural values and societal standards that would sure hurt the feelings of the elder, others thought the idea is very creative, realistic and funny.



Fig(5) Orange Campaign, showing old sick man with the hashtag “either we qualify now, or we will be dead by next time”

Press Release Details	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Company Overview Company Profile Vision & Mission Shareholders Board of Directors' Members Executive Management Our Subsidiaries Social Responsibility - Investors Relations Details of Listing Material Information & Disclosure Forms Financial Reports Corporate Governance Annual Reports Investor Relations 	<p>Monday, September 04, 2017</p> <p>Orange Egypt Campaign to Support the National Team In the World Cup Qualifiers Orange announce its corporate ad under the slogan of #يا متأهل يا متلقوناش</p> <p>Orange have just launched its new Campaign to support the World Cup qualifier, they have taken a bold, differentiated and unexpected route in order to stand out through the clutter of brands supporting the National team.</p> <p>Egypt have not qualified to the World cup since 1990, its all Egyptians' dream to make it to the World Cup this time.</p> <p>The campaign idea is using hard core football fans who are getting older as the years are passing by without seeing Egypt making it to the World Cup so it's either now or never #يا متأهل يا متلقوناش</p> <p>The creative execution is a cool humorous rap song sang by old football fans who are really getting old and are suffering from aging problems as well as stress and pressure from wasting chances to qualify to the World Cup for the last 28 yrs. They ask our national team to man up and make it this time as they don't have the luxury of time to wait for another 4 years. It's their literal last chance to see our national team in the World Cup</p> <p>The campaign is also supported by a commercial proposition through launching the "Egyptians' Dream bucket" where customers are requested to dial #2016# and get 90 units to be used as minutes/megabytes plus the chance to attend the upcoming matches</p> <p>On this occasion, Orange Egypt's CEO, Jean Marc Harion, said, "Football is the number one passion of our customers in Egypt, and we are delighted that we will be able to bring Egyptian football fans even closer to the events and things they love the most by going beyond slogans. These flagship competitions in World Cup qualifiers generate an incredible spirit of unity across communities and people, and unite fans behind their flag with a strong sense of patriotism. In fact, the sport itself is a powerful agent of peace, and shows how we can cherish and embrace our rivals while also treating each other with respect."</p>

Fig(6) Press Release by Orange, defending and supporting their World Cup campaign <https://www.orange.eg/en/about/media-center/press-kit/orange-egypt-campaign-to-support-world-cup-qualifiers-624-event>

Vodafone Telecom Campaign

In December 2017, Vodafone Telecom a major International Telecommunications Company, launches its campaign for the new internet offers. The campaign featuring popular puppet TV star “Abla Fahita”, a puppet who appeared in 2011 having her own Egyptian TV show “El-Duplex” which is also described as inappropriate for the obscene language used and which has been condemned by the society, was banned from all media outlets. The campaign was promoting the new internet bundles offered by Vodafone, using a song sung by the puppet repeating the phrase “really, the internet is unfair, and the bundle that ends never comes back”. The campaign also stresses on the willingness of the Egyptian men and women to constantly view scandalous and sex videos, which unfortunately they cannot because of the internet bundle, and which can be solved by subscribing to Vodafone’s new offer.

The campaign contained scenes of “Abla Fahita” sitting in the bath tub, while a man is sitting on the toilet; men with revealing and very tight clothes at the gym; and scenes of men and women frustrated for not being able to watch the scandalous videos on the internet.

The decision was taken by the Supreme Council for Media Regulation, again after the campaign had been aired and viewed several times, the council stated that the campaign contains sexually aggressive gestures which violates the 2005 requirements, cultural norms, values and general ethics. The campaign has played with words giving the words a different meaning with sexual gestures. The company had met with the CPA and agreed to change the content of the campaign, stating that the campaign will resume once the content has been changed. (Daily News Egypt, 2017)

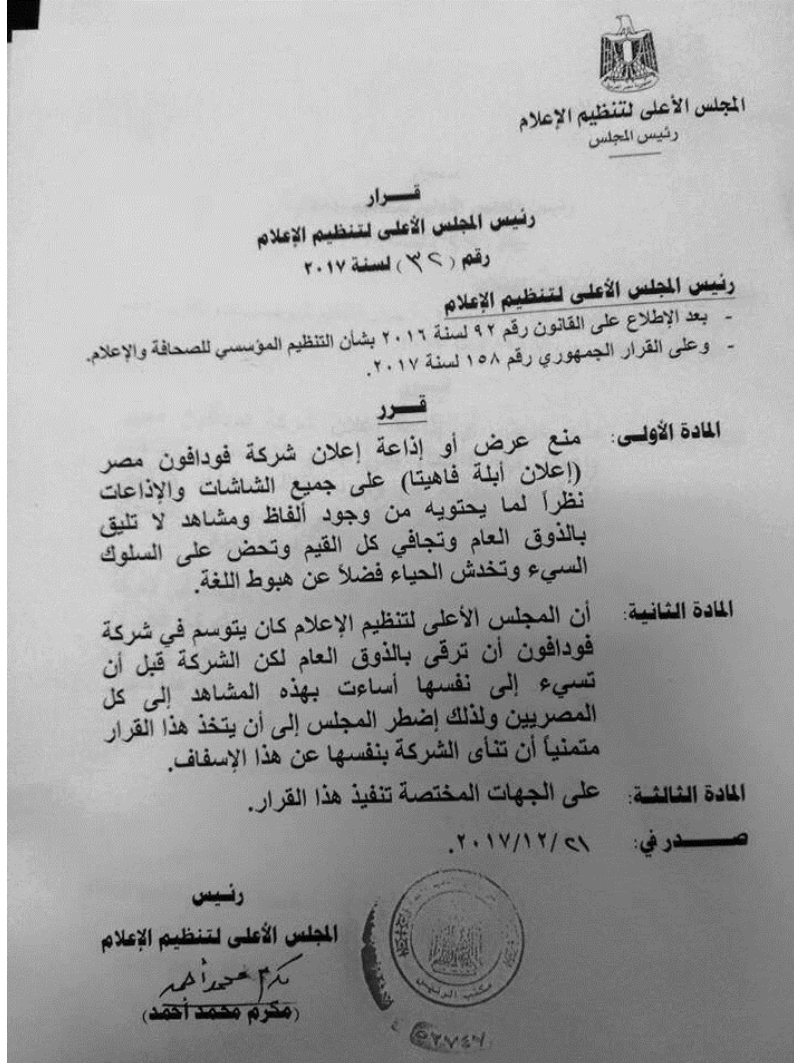


Fig (7) The Supreme Council for Media Regulation decision on banning the Vodafone campaign, stating that the campaign contains obscene language and scenes that violate the general morals and ethics, encouraging immoral behavior and scaring shame.



Fig (8) Screenshot of the Vodafone “Abla Fahita” Campaign



Fig(9) Screenshot of the Vodafone “Abla Fahita” Campaign

Uber Campaign

In 2017, Uber Technologies, a global taxi technology company, launched its billboard campaign across the streets of Cairo. The ads reading “Uber has saved me from driving my mother-in-law home 64 times” as well as referencing to emailing while driving and avoiding the hassle of finding a parking spot. The CPA had banned all Uber ads, and the company was ordered to remove all billboards from the streets. According the CPA, the ads were found to violate the cultural values, common feelings, traditions and norms. The head of CPA stated that the ads violate Article 2 of the law for the protection of consumers, number 67 for 2006, which stipulates the consumer’s rights to dignity and respect for religious values, customs and community traditions (egyptindependent.com, 2017).

The campaign sparked several negative reactions and comments from social media users, complaining that the ads are inconsistent with Egyptian traditions, spreading hatred and passiveness, comments stated that the mother-in-

law is considered as a mother, and serving her is always an honor.

Research Methodology

To accomplish the aim of the research, semi-structured directive interviews were conducted with focus groups, to collect information on their acceptance or rejection to the concepts upon which the discussed banned advertising were created, as well as to reach an understanding concerning their objective definitions of “general morals and ethics”. The sample subjects selected to participate were based on the purposive sampling method, participants must have been previously exposed to at least five out of the eight banned campaigns. Six focus groups each consisting of five members were selected, three of the groups consisted of university students, of ages 18 – 22, the other three groups consisted of members of age groups 30 – 50. The scope of the interviews focused on investigating how “general morals and ethics” are being defined and perceived through different generations, what is socially accepted and what is not.



Fig (10) Uber Ad stating “Uber has saved me from driving my mother-in-law home 64 times”

The data is then analyzed based on moral psychology theories, which focuses on the emotional and intuitive processes, providing an understanding of differences in the perception of immoral advertising. The theory used in this research is the Moral Foundations Theory by Haidt and Graham 2007, which bases the perceptions of what is considered morally accepted or rejected on an intuitive judgment with no need to provide a rational evidence or to identify distinct reasons. The theory which evolved from the Theory of the Three Ethics (autonomy, community, divinity) by Richard Shweder relies on five foundations: Care and Fairness (corresponding to ethics of autonomy), Loyalty and Authority (corresponding to ethics of community), Purity (corresponding to ethics of divinity).

The semi-structured interviews had three questions: Do you agree with the decision of banning the mentioned campaigns? How do you perceive the campaigns in relation to the Egyptian cultural and societal morals? What cultural morals did these campaigns violate?

Data Analysis and Findings

Based on the data collection and analysis, the three focus groups consisting of university students, had slightly different opinions than the other adult groups:

60% of the university students do not agree with the banning of the campaigns, stating that the campaigns are culturally acceptable, very catchy and funny, and they do not see any violation of any morals.

40% of the university students agreed on the banning, stating that the campaigns contain elements that are shameful to watch, but could not clearly identify what morals were violated. They

all agreed they the campaigns are against the Egyptian traditions and values, no clear definition of “general morals” was defined.

85% of the adults agreed on the banning of the ads. Stated that these campaigns totally contradict the Egyptian values and ethics. The violated morals were stated as the “sexual gestures”, “homosexuality”, “obscene language”, “revealing clothes”, “obvious non-marital sexual relationships”, “unfamiliar family relationships contradicting religious values”.

15% of the adults did not agree on the banning, stating that although the campaigns may seem not quite compatible with our culture, but they are quite innovative and funny. Explaining that “general morals” is a very controversial statement, it is not guaranteed that all campaigns would be accepted by everyone, what could be accepted to some, may be rejected by others. There is no strict definition to it.

In an analysis of the feedback received, and based on the Moral Foundation Theory foundations, the findings are:

1. Collectivistic cultures tend to emphasize on the foundations of loyalty, authority and purity. Whilst all cultures share what is known to be the first draft of morality, the cultural differences and moral perceptions emerge when individuals start reshaping their first draft, which leads to considering some moral frameworks as more or less important than others.
2. Millennials of ages (18-24) are not fully aware of what general morals, cultural norms and traditions are. This is considered as a big threat to the community and societal standards, as they tend to perceive “immoral and offensive content” as acceptable, catchy and funny.

3. 57.5% of the interviewed could not clearly identify what “general morals and ethics” are, based on the Moral Foundations Theory, audience tend to yield a perception of what is offensive or morally acceptable based on emotions not on a rational explanation. This process relies on the phenomena of Moral Dumbfounding, which is characterized by audience providing moral judgement without proper or rationale reasoning.
4. Every group of target audience have a set of ingrained morals and values that have been engraved based on their cultural backgrounds, environment, content and material being exposed to, leading to the establishment of diverse measures of decency and appropriateness. No existing framework provides a formal definition for understanding the mental or motivational background behind the diverse perception of offensiveness.

Conclusion

Advertising in Egypt is one of the hardest hit sectors. With a population exceeding 95 million, Egypt’s TV audience equates up to 95% of the population on weekly basis. As TV advertising is being considered as the major advertising tactic in Egypt, advertisers usually seek the “shock value” in creativity and content to stand out in the clutter of advertising, which leads in some cases to the production of content that violates morals, ethics, cultural standards. Although several laws have been defined since 1975 by the ERTU reaching to the 2005 Egyptian Standard Specifications of Advertising Requirements set by the Egyptian Organization for Standardization and Quality to regulate the broadcast and advertising content, a few definitions still remain vague to some advertising members, especially stipulations discussing “general morals”, “general decency” and “offensive data”.

Although In 2016, The Supreme Council for Media Regulation had been established to supervise and regulate all broadcast and print media in Egypt, the problem remains that the decision to ban certain campaigns is usually implemented after the advertisements had been aired and viewed several times, which means that all segments of the society had been already exposed to the offensive and indecent content. The members of the advertising industry still face a challenge trying to define what “general morals” actually is, no crisp definition exists which they can follow to avoid any violation. As for a segment of the audience especially with millennials, being exposed to this type of content, has made it somehow believed that indecency is

catchy, funny and interesting, which is considered as a major threat to the community and societal standards.

Recommendations

1. A guided and well defined theoretical framework must be established to help identify and decipher advertising content that is morally, culturally and socially accepted.
2. Stipulation 6/1 of the Egyptian Standard Specifications of Advertising Requirements which states: “Advertising responsibility towards consumers and society; the ads should abide by the general ethics, and should not include any elements degenerating human dignity, or any offensive data, audio or visual scenes which abuses general decency, or generate fear.” Is a very general statement, the statements (general ethics, offensive data, and general decency) leaves the door open to diverse and controversial perceptions and uses.
3. Stipulations must specify exactly what should not be violated in the content of the adverts, such as:
 - No scenes or statements showing/promoting/implying non-marital sexual relationships.
 - No scenes or statements showing/promoting/implying homosexuality.
 - No scenes or statements showing/promoting/implying the defaming of women, mothers, fathers and parental relationships.
 - No unusual statements/words used to describe male or female body or body parts.
 - No scenes or statements showing/promoting/implying sexual gestures.
 - Language used must be decent, the words used must be part of the Arabic/Egyptian formal language.
 - Children must not be used to promote adult products.
 - No scenes containing revealing/tight/underwear clothes.
4. All new Advertising laws, regulations and stipulations must be discussed clearly with all advertising agencies heads and CEOs. The laws and regulations must be made clear, visible and fully comprehended by all members of the Egyptian Advertising Industry. This can be done through a conference to be held by The Supreme Council for Media with the Advertising Agencies and members.
5. All advertisement campaigns must be submitted and presented to The Supreme

Council for Media Regulation, before any form of exposure to the audience, and receive an approval on the content.

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