Ethical Perceptions on Cigarette Marketing: An Abstract

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ABSTRACT

How do people conceive of an ethically good action? How do people link their perceptual arguments which is compelling? Do people not simply line up reasons for a specific course of action? Many of us will say differently, and it somehow depends on the situation they are in. Ethics refers to the moral principles and standards that guide individuals or groups as they obtain, use and dispose of goods or services. What is perfectly legal, could possibly violate the ethical standards of a society. No exception, marketing activities could become unethical when they market products that are considered as harmful to vulnerable consumers who are susceptible to physical, economic, or psychological harm. For example, while the cigarette industry is considered legal, the health, safety and social problems associated with cigarette consumption lead to intense public discussion. In this context, the present paper contributes to our understanding about ethical perception.

Responding to the above questions, the study conducts an inquiry into people's perceptions on key cigarette marketing activities that exist in a society where cigarette industry plays a significant economic role. The ethics model of this study consists of four constructs – one extraneous antecedent of perceived freedom of business enterprise (PFBE); one intravenous antecedent of perceived reputation (PReput); and two pure consequences of perceived ethics of advertising (PAdv) and perceived ethics of company's social responsibility (PCSR); with five hypotheses. Convenient sampling was adopted in this study with a total of five hundred questionnaires were distributed face-to-face in participating urban villages.

Analysing a data set of 491 respondents, the findings reveal the significance of perceived freedom of business enterprise influencing societal perceptions on cigarette business' reputation and tobacco advertising, but not on perception of cigarette firms' corporate social responsibility (CSR). Nevertheless, perceptions on reputation mediates perception on freedom to impact perception on CSR. The mediated influence of perceived freedom toward perceived CSR indicates a virtuous aspiration of society about how cigarette firms should run their CSR activities. Future research may examine the perceived ethicality of specific reputation building activities over specific advertising and CSR. Another route can explore how freedom of business enterprise influences other marketing communication mix such as promotion and sponsorship.

Keywords: Cigarette marketing, ethical perception, CSR