

The Effect of Marketing Ethics on Consumer Trust Among Selected Food and Beverage Brands

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Abstract: This study investigated the effects of marketing ethics, specifically transparency, fair advertising, and product quality, on consumer trust within the food and beverage sector. Employing a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design, the study analyzed how ethical dimensions influence local consumer perceptions. The findings indicate that brands are generally perceived to practice ethical marketing, with transparency and product quality consistently meeting consumer expectations. Consumer trust was found to be high, and a strong positive correlation exists between marketing ethics and trust, suggesting that improved ethical practices significantly bolster consumer confidence. However, regression analysis showed that no single ethical factor acts as an isolated predictor of trust, implying that consumers evaluate brands based on a holistic perception of ethical consistency. The study concludes that ethical behavior is a vital strategic tool for brand credibility and recommends that marketing professionals adopt integrated ethical policies to maintain long-term consumer loyalty.

Keywords: *Marketing Ethics, Consumer Trust, Transparency, Fair Advertising, and Product Quality.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Consumer trust in the food and beverage sector is increasingly challenged by issues related to marketing ethics. Consumers are becoming more aware of unethical practices such as false advertising, misleading claims, and inadequate product safety standards (Nekmahmud et al., 2016). These issues erode consumer confidence and lead to skepticism toward brands. Recent studies indicate that consumers are more likely to scrutinize marketing messages and demand greater transparency from brands. For instance, a survey found that 70% of consumers reported they would stop buying from a brand if they discovered it engaged in unethical marketing practices (Ingram et al., 2005).

This research lies in its potential to explain the relationship between marketing ethics and consumer trust, specifically within the food and beverage industry in Koronadal City. By understanding the dynamics at play, brands can better navigate the ethical landscape, enhance their marketing strategies, and ultimately foster stronger relationships with consumers. The general purpose of this study is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing insights that can guide both practitioners and policymakers in promoting ethical marketing practices that align with consumer expectations.

II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The research utilizes a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationships between marketing ethics and consumer trust without manipulating any factors. The study was conducted in Koronadal City, South Cotabato, targeting a sample of 68 regular consumers of food and beverage products determined through the Cochran formula. Data was collected using a researcher-made survey questionnaire structured into sections for ethical marketing awareness and consumer trust, utilizing a 4-point Likert scale. Sampling was performed using a combination of random sampling to ensure representativeness and convenience sampling for accessibility. For data analysis, the researchers employed weighted mean for descriptive data, Pearson R to test relationships between variables, and multiple regression analysis to determine the influence of specific ethical factors on trust.

III. RESULTS

The findings from the study on food and beverage brands in Koronadal City reveal that consumers generally perceive these brands to be practicing ethical marketing. Overall mean scores for key dimensions were positive, with transparency and product quality both rated at 3.30 and fair advertising at 3.27, all of which fall within the "Agree" range. Consumer trust was found to be high, earning an overall mean of 3.36,

with respondents placing the highest importance on honesty in marketing. A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.757$) exists between marketing ethics and consumer trust, confirming that as ethical practices improve, consumer confidence increases correspondingly. However, regression analysis indicated that when analyzed simultaneously, no individual ethical factor significantly predicted trust, suggesting that consumers evaluate brands based on a holistic perception of their overall ethical consistency rather than isolated attributes.

252 (2005). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-005-1899-0>

IV. DISCUSSION

The study demonstrates that ethical marketing practices, particularly transparency and product quality, serve as the primary drivers of consumer trust within the food and beverage sector of Koronadal City. A strong positive correlation confirms that as brands elevate their integrity and honest communication, there is a statistically significant increase in consumer confidence and brand credibility. Notably, the regression analysis reveals that no single ethical dimension acts as an independent predictor of trust, suggesting that consumers utilize a holistic evaluative process based on the overall consistency of a brand's ethical behavior. Consequently, the research concludes that adopting a comprehensive ethical framework is a vital strategic necessity for businesses aiming to foster long-term consumer loyalty and maintain a competitive advantage in the local market.

V. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that food and beverage brands in Koronadal City are generally perceived to uphold ethical marketing standards, particularly in transparency, fair advertising, and product integrity. While a strong positive correlation confirms that higher ethical perceptions directly enhance consumer trust, regression analysis indicates that no single ethical dimension—such as transparency or quality—acts as an independent predictor of trust. This suggests that consumers in this market utilize a holistic evaluative process, basing their confidence on the overall consistency of a brand's ethical behavior rather than isolated practices. Consequently, the research establishes that ethical marketing is not merely a moral obligation but a vital strategic tool for sustaining brand credibility and long-term competitiveness. To effectively strengthen consumer trust, businesses are encouraged to adopt an integrated approach that ensures ethical standards are consistently practiced across all operations.

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