Ethical Issues in Advertising in Pakistan: An Islamic Perspective

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Abstract: This research paper attempts to explore ethical issues in the contemporary advertising campaigns of controversial products in Pakistan from *Shari'ah* perspective. The paper aims to see the offensive behavior towards these advertisements and how it is affected by the religious perceptions, gender differences and nature of advertising appeals. A survey of 200 graduate students was conducted at COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Lahore, Pakistan. Questionnaire used for survey was consisted of three sections; first section contained a list of five controversial products, second contained a list of five advertising appeals and third section contained a list of fifteen items that tend to measure the religious perceptions of the respondents. Data was coded into SPSS and tested for its validity and reliability. Descriptive statistics as well as correlations and t-tests were applied to analyze the data. Level of offensiveness towards advertisements of controversial products was found to be significantly associated with religious perceptions and nature of advertising appeals. Nudity and sexist images as advertising appeals were found to have significant association with the level of offensiveness of the consumers. This research leads to important managerial implications and identifies important ethical issues in advertising that are contradictory to the injunctions of Islam.

Key words: Controversial products % Advertising appeals % Ethical issues % *Shari'ah* % Religious perceptions

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive world, success of any organization much depends on the effectiveness of its advertising practices. That's why local as well as multinational organizations heavily invest in advertising campaigns to promote their products. Advertising agencies use various kinds of attractive advertising appeals such as sexist images, adventures, romantic language etc. to lure the consumers and capture maximum market share [1, 2]. In doing so, they often make use of such advertising appeals that may not conform to the norms and cultural values of a particular country. Such advertisements are considered controversial as general public cannot freely and openly discuss them. This creates a sense of offensiveness in the eyes of consumers towards that particular advertisement and associated product.

International marketers and advertisers excessively attempt to use psychological or emotional appeals in their advertisements to attract customers who actually have no need to purchase their products. Under Islamic ethical system, it is not permissible to use emotional appeals, sex appeals, use of romantic language, use of half skirt women and young model girls in advertising campaigns to please and attract customers to maximize profits and increase market share. Such types of promotional activities are fraudulent, deceptive and unethical in nature and are repugnant to the spirit of Shari'ah [2, 3].

This research paper attempts to explore the ethical issues in the contemporary advertising campaigns of some of the controversial products in Pakistan from *Shari'ah* perspective. First it discusses the essence of ethics in business and its importance from Islamic perspective. Then it studies the contemporary advertising practices in the light of Islamic ethical system. The paper aims to see the offensive behavior of consumers towards advertisements of some selected controversial products and how it is affected by the religious perceptions of consumers, their gender differences and the nature of advertising appeals used in the advertisements of controversial products. At the end, it draws some important managerial as well as social implications from this study.

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Why Ethics in Business: Ethical crisis is quite evident in both private and public sectors. Politics, governance, management, services, finance, banking, stock exchanges, manufacturing, advertising, selling name any field, you will find some stunning examples of ethical crisis [4]. There are three reasons to justify ethics in business because many times laws are insufficient and don't cover all aspects or "gray areas" of a problem [5]. How could tobacco companies in US have been protected by the law for decades until the settlement in 1997, when the industry agreed to pay $368.5 billion for the first 25 years and then $15 billion a year indefinitely to compensate US for the costs of health care for tobacco related illnesses.

Second, free-market and regulated-market mechanism don't effectively inform owners and managers about how to respond to complex issues and crisis that have far-reaching ethical consequences. Should companies legally prohibit, as American Cyanamid did in the late 1970s, pregnant women from working in toxic areas to protect their unborn fetuses, even though the firm's policy had the effect of pressuring several women into choosing unemployment or sterilization? Later, in the 1980s, the same firm faced unanticipated discrimination charges and lawsuits from several interest groups. In 1991 US Supreme Court ruled, in a six-to-three vote, that such "fetal protection" policies are a form of sex bias and prohibited by civil rights law. American Cyanamid may have acted legally in 1970s, but did it act ethically? Are women and men are still coerced to work in unsafe health environment [5].

Third point is that moral and ethical problems require learned understanding and concern for fairness and justice. Therefore ethics play important role in business because laws and the enforcement of laws are many times insufficient to guide action [5].

Business Ethics in Islam: The concept of ethics in business has its origin in al - Qur'ân, the sayings of and practices of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) [6]. Ethics may be defined as a set of moral principles that distinguish what is right from what is wrong. It is a normative field because it prescribes what one should do or abstain from doing [3]; the term most closely related to ethics in the al-Qur'ân is *Khuluq.* The al-Qur'ân also uses a whole array of terms to describe the concept: *Khayr* (goodness), *birr* (righteousness), *adl* (justice), *haqq* (truth and right), *taqw~* (piety) and so on.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "You are not better than people with red or black skins unless you excel them in piety." Once a Bedouin asked the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) "When would the Hour (Doomsday) take place?"

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) replied, "When honesty is lost, then wait for the Hour (Doomsday)." Bedouin said, "How will that be lost." Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "When the power or authority comes in the hands of unfit persons, then wait for the Hour (Doomsday)" [3]. In Islamic business ethics no businessman is allowed to do dishonesty. In al-Qur'ân it is mentioned that

Give just measures and cause no loss (to others by fraud). And weigh with scales true and upright. And withhold not things justly due to men (al - Qur'ân 26:181-183)

Islam does not tolerate interference in the market system by hoarding or other forms of manipulations. Allah's Messenger said: "He who hoards is a sinner." In Islamic business ethics deceiving a buyer is a sin. Businessmen are not allowed to increase the sales through false oaths. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "The swearing (by the seller) may persuade the buyer to purchase the goods but that will be deprived of Allah's blessing" [3]. Islamic business ethics do not allow anyone to purchase stolen goods knowingly either for him or future resale. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "He who buys the stolen property, with the knowledge that it was stolen, shares in the sin and shame of steeling" [3]. Islamic values are set of beliefs and morals, a social doctrine and a call to righteousness among all members of organization [7]; it is a complete, self-contained ideology which regards all aspects of our existence – moral and physical, spiritual and intellectual, personal and communal – as parts of the indivisible whole which we call "Human life" [24]. Islam covers the entire course of life; it is the puissance and motivation for life. Islam differentiates between right and wrong, separates good from bad and extricates righteousness from turpitude. Islam strengthens the morality of individual. Islam not only deliberates the relation between Creator and Human being, but also discusses the relation between man and man and also man and the entire universe [8]. This discussion clearly indicates that in Islamic business ethics there is no room for dishonesty, manipulation, deceiving and other malpractices prevailing in contemporary advertising world.

Contemporary Advertising and Islamic Ethical System: In the twentieth century, the world has witnessed and experienced two major economic systems i.e. Capitalism and Socialism. Capitalistic system emphasizes on free market economy where actions are governed by individuals' own efforts. Where profit maximization is the central objective and economic development is the ultimate goal of human life. On the other hand,

communistic system empowers the state and bureaucracy and gives rise to unequal allocation of resources and results in individual inefficiency [1], [26].

In contrast with the above two systems, Islamic economic system stresses on the ethical character of man in all spheres of life including business and trade. Under this system, economic progress and materialistic development is a necessity and not the ultimate objective of human creation. The ultimate goal is to achieve highest standards of ethics and morality and to achieve success in the world hereafter [21], [26].

In contemporary business environment, corporations are involved in such promotional activities that adversely affect social and cultural norms of Islamic ethical system. For example, most of the businesses use consumer vanity, sex appetite and envy as their main advertising appeals to promote their products [1]. In Islam, individuals are not free in their own actioins, yet they are bound to act within the boundaries of Shari'ah. To monitor the individuals' actions, Islam puts a 'moral filter' on the individuals who are accountable before Allah for their own actions [1]. Islam defines ethical behavior by putting some viable restrictions on human actions that are detrimental to society. For example, it categorically prohibits interests in all its forms. Similarly, gambling, deception, adultery as well as free mixing of males and females is not allowed in Islam [12].

In Islamic marketing ethics, it is unfair for a salesperson to persuade the customers to purchase products by overstating their attributes which they do not possess in reality. It is also unfair for him to manipulate information or hide some defect or to exaggerate some information related to the product. If he tells a lie or hid something, then blessing of Allah will be lost upon the transaction [2], [13].

Advertising of Controversial Products: Controversial products are the products which, when advertised, create a sense of offence, distaste or disgust in the eyes of the customers. They are also called "un-mentionables" and "socially sensitive products" [9-11].

Controversial products have been broadly categorized in three types i.e. products, services and concepts. Products include alcoholic products (drugs), cigarettes, condoms, female contraceptives as well as male and female under wears. Services include venereal diseases (STD, AIDS) tests, pregnancy tests and artificial insemination. Concepts include political ideas, acts of terrorism, unconventional sexual practices and religious prejudices [14].

Waller surveyed 125 students (70 male students and 55 female students) of a business school in Australia [15]. He presented before them a list of 15 controversial products and services and asked reasons for their offensiveness. The results indicated that female respondents significantly differed from their male respondents by their level of offensiveness towards controversial advertisements. Further, female students were offended for two reasons i.e. advertisements were sexists and contained indecent language.

A study conducted to see the influence of religion on people's attitudes towards advertisements of controversial products surveyed four main religious groups (Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism) across six different countries (Malaysia, Turkey, China, Taiwan, Britain and New Zealand) and found that significant differences of attitudes exist across different controversial products as well as different religions [11].

Waller *et al*. [14] extended the study of Waller [15] by adding "Pharmaceuticals and Charities in the list of controversial products that are usually considered not offensive at all. They also added US/Western images as a possible reason for offensiveness of Asian respondents. They derived some significant results that have following implications for international marketers:

C   Advertisements of controversial or socially sensitive products can clash with the traditional and cultural values of a country, create negative impact in the minds of general public and damage the brand name or image of the company.

C   International marketers need to develop some important ways that could make their advertising campaigns less offensive and capture greater target market.

Attitudes Towards Offensive Advertising: There is increasing interest of researchers to assess the attitude of the consumers towards advertising practices. Researchers and scholars have conducted studies related to offensive attitudes of consumers towards advertising campaigns that do not conform to the norms and values of the society. A study on Malaysian Muslim attitudes towards offensive advertising found that religiosity significantly affects the views of respondents on those advertisements which are religion sensitive and controversial in nature [17]. A study to exploring Muslim consumers' information sources related to fatwa rulings on smoking and listening to music found that respondents differ significantly in their sources of fatwa information on smoking and listening music [16]. A study conducted to observe
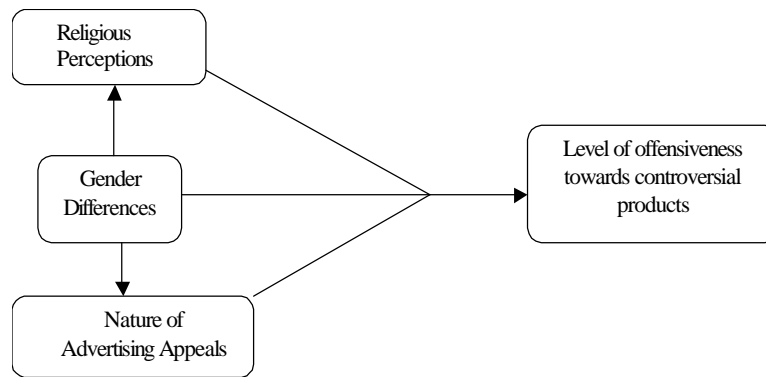
Fig. 1: Theoretical Model

Shari'ah rulings in advertising campaigns of Bank Muamlat of Malaysia suggested that Shari'ah based promotions will help to capture the attention of Muslim customers and increase their awareness [18]. Religiosity has significant impact on new product adoption (NPA); consideration of religious perceptions of consumers in designing of a product can play an important role in acceptance of that product in the market [19].

The present study attempts to identify factors that are responsible for offensive attitude of consumers towards various advertising campaigns of controversial products. It is based on the insights taken from previous studies [15] and [19]. On one hand, it attempts to assess the level of offensiveness of consumers towards advertising campaigns of various controversial products; while on the other hand, it attempts to measure their religious perceptions and nature of advertising appeals that create offensiveness in the minds of the consumers. It also aims to see whether gender differences exist in the level of offensiveness and religious perceptions of consumers. The theoretical model is depicted below:

Hypothesis Development:
H1: Religious perceptions of consumers are positively associated with their level of offensiveness towards controversial products.

H2: Offensive nature of advertising appeal is positively associated with the level of offensiveness towards controversial products.

H3: Offensive nature of advertising appeals significantly affects the religious perceptions of the consumers.

H4: Males and females significantly differ in their perceptions towards nature of advertising appeals.

H5: Males and females significantly differ in their religious perceptions.

H6: Males and females significantly differ in their level of offensiveness towards controversial products.

METHODOLOGY

This research aims to investigate how level of offensiveness towards controversial advertisements is affected by the religious perceptions of the consumers, their gender differences and the nature of advertising appeals used in advertisements.

For this purpose, a survey of 200 graduate students including males and females was conducted at COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Lahore, Pakistan. Out of 200, 168 completely filled questionnaires were received. Being the authors' affiliated institution, it was easier and more convenient to collect data and ensure its reliability. As the campus consists of students from different back grounds who come from urban as well as from surrounding remote areas, the sample was considered to be the representative of general public mindset of the Pakistani society.

The rationale for using university students as target sample has already been proved by several researchers in the field of consumer marketing and advertising research. International researchers prefer university students for their easy accessibility and homogeneity as a group. Moreover, they can also be used for cross cultural comparison as well as to see gender differences [9], [14], [15], [19], [20].

Questionnaire used for survey was consisted of three sections in addition to the demographic profile of the respondents. First section contains a list of five controversial products, second section contains a list of five advertising appeals used in advertisements to attract

customers and third section contains a list of fifteen items that tend to measure the religious perceptions of the respondents. First two sections are based on previous studies [14] and [15] on advertising of controversial products. Third section is developed based on the work conducted in the same field [21] and [19].

Data was coded into SPSS software and tested for its validity and reliability. Descriptive statistics as well as correlation and t-tests were applied to analyze the data. Cronbach's alpha is considered the best measure to assess the reliability of responses [22]. Value of Cronbach's Alpha for standardized items of religious perceptions was found to be 0.813 that ensured the reliability of the measures.

Data Analysis: This section presents the analysis of data and consists of three parts: descriptive statistics, correlations and t-test for mean differences. Descriptive statistics covers first three tables that contain frequency distribution of each item, its mean, standard deviation (S.D.) and co-efficient of variation (C.V.). Table 4 shows the correlation and assesses the level of association among the variables under study. Last three tables assess the mean difference between males and females. t-test has been applied to judge gender differences with respect to other variables.

According to the results of the study depicted in Table 1 more than 70% response showed offensiveness towards cigarettes, condoms, female and male underwear. Offensiveness towards advertisement of these products suggests both dislike towards products like cigarettes and condoms; and dissatisfaction with the advertising campaigns of undergarments (because utility of undergarments is established). Therefore advertisers need to reconsider the theme of their advertising campaigns of undergarments.

Results of this study mentioned in Table 2 provide evidence that indecent language, nudity, anti-social behavior; sexist and western images have no room in Pakistani market. More than 70% response weight towards offensiveness on these elements shows significant discontentment to ads using nudity and sexiest images. Advertising agencies should remain conscious about these elements while developing or airing ads in Pakistani markets, otherwise it can seriously harm the image of their brand. Co-efficient of variation (C.V) is an important measure to assess the relative variation in the variable. Its value was found to be the least one in case of sexist images (0.26) while highest one in case of indecent language (0.35). It means that responses have highest concentration across the mean value in case of sexist images representing their strong

Table 1: Offensiveness towards Controversial products (Descriptive Statistics)

| Item name | | Frequencies | | | | | | | | |
		N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	S.D.	C.V=(S.D/Mean)
1.	Cigarettes	168	13	24	36	36	59	3.62	1.30	0.36
2.	Condoms	168	10	13	27	26	92	4.05	1.25	0.31
3.	Female Hygiene products	168	21	31	37	43	36	3.25	1.32	0.41
4.	Female underwear	168	10	11	26	25	96	4.11	1.23	0.30
5.	Male underwear	168	17	21	28	36	66	3.67	1.37	0.37
6.	Female Weight Loss Programmes	168	45	33	51	22	17	2.60	1.29	0.49
7.	Religious Denominations	168	113	12	22	6	15	1.80	1.31	0.73

Scale: 1 = not offensive at all, 5 = extremely offensive

Table 2: Advertising appeals for Controversial products (Descriptive Statistics)

Item name		N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	S.D.	C.V=(S.D/Mean)
1.	Anti-Social Behaviour	168	13	16	33	44	62	3.75	1.26	0.34
2.	Indecent Language	168	12	24	27	50	55	3.67	1.27	0.35
3.	Nudity	168	10	9	28	51	70	3.96	1.16	0.29
4.	Sexist Images	168	10	7	11	24	116	4.36	1.16	0.26
5.	Western/US Images	168	15	11	34	45	63	3.77	1.27	0.34

Scale: 1 = not offensive at all, 5 = extremely offensive

Table 3: Religious Perceptions (Descriptive Statistics)

Item name	N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	S.D.	C.V.
1. Resort to Allah	168	9	4	11	18	126	4.48	1.08	0.24
2. Sunnah of Holy Prophet	168	22	28	29	27	62	3.47	1.46	0.42
3. Pray five times a day	168	19	23	55	44	27	3.22	1.21	0.37
4. Forgo prayer in urgent matter	168	33	48	31	26	30	2.83	1.39	0.49
5. Pay zakat every year	168	19	7	32	13	97	3.96	1.40	0.35
6. Every month donate some money to poor	168	7	14	42	40	65	3.85	1.15	0.30
7. Regularly fast in Ramadan	168	9	7	5	18	129	4.49	1.10	0.24
8. Do not fast in summer	168	19	17	11	13	108	4.04	1.46	0.36
9. Regularly recite the Holy Quran	168	22	35	67	21	23	2.93	1.19	0.41
10. Honest and fair with others	168	9	3	8	38	110	4.41	1.05	0.24
11. Avoid humiliating others	168	7	8	26	40	87	4.14	1.11	0.27
12. Away from earning through prohibited means	168	5	3	14	29	117	4.49	0.94	0.21
13. Feeling of being punished by Allah	168	8	4	5	30	121	4.49	1.03	0.23
14. Try to avoid major and minor sins	168	8	7	31	62	60	3.95	1.07	0.27
15. Try to avoid hurting others	168	8	1	11	38	110	4.43	0.99	0.22

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree,

Note: Items 2, 4, 8 are reverse order questions.

Table 4: Correlations

	Anti-Social Behavior	Indecent Language	Nudity	Sexist Images	Western/US Images	Religious Perceptions	Offensiveness
Anti-Social Behaviour	1.000						
Indecent Language	0.330**	1.000					
Nudity	0.400**	0.331**	1.000				
Sexist Images	0.313**	0.473**	0.578**	1.000			
Western/US Images	0.253**	0.241**	0.379**	0.437**	1.000		
Religious Perceptions	0.077	0.253**	0.237**	0.356**	0.074	1.000	
Level of Offensiveness	0.088	0.212**	0.183*	0.131*	0.177*	0.139	1.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

N=168

offensiveness for it. While they have least concentration in case of indent language indicating their least offensiveness for it as compared to other advertising appeals.

Table 3 describes religious intentions of the respondents, majority of the respondents showed above average score to the religious intentions. In society with strong religious intentions it is quite possible to have significant offensiveness to indecency and nudity in ads. These findings are proving the fact which is described in Table 2, where respondents have strong offensiveness towards indecency and nudity. These finding give opportunity to advertisers and media managers to be understand the fact that what Pakistani consumers / viewers like and what they do not like. Creative departments should create advertising campaign keeping

religious offensive in mind for better impact on end users. Low percentage in response to *Zakat* and donation is probably due to the fact that most of the respondents were students, which are already dependent. Questions 2, 4 and 8 in Table are reversely coded because respondents' disagreement with these questions shows their higher religious perceptions.

Table 4 shows correlation results among different variables used in the study. It indicates that religious intentions have significant correlations with indecent language, nudity and sexiest images, thus providing the evidence that these elements have little potential for effective advertising in Pakistan. These finding endorse that pervasiveness of Islam influences every sphere of Muslims' life [23]. A significant correlation between these elements and offensiveness proposes that ads with such

Table 5: Gender Differences in Offensiveness towards Controversial Products

Sr. #	Controversial Products	Male (104)	Female (64)	Mean Difference	t	Sig
1	Cigarettes	3.5865	3.6719	-0.08534	-0.411	0.681
2	Condoms	3.8462	4.3906	-0.54447	-2.942**	0.004
3	Female Hygienic Products	3.2596	3.2344	0.02524	0.12	0.905
4	Female Underwear	4.0096	402656	-0.25601	-1.309	0.192
5	Male Underwear	3.3269	4.2344	-0.90745	-4.395**	0.000
6	Female weight loss Programmes	2.6442	2.5312	0.11298	0.552	0.582
7	Religious Denominations	1.8365	1.7344	0.10216	0.512	0.609

**. Difference is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

N=168

Table 6: Gender Differences in Advertising appeals for Controversial Products

Sr. #	Reasons for offensiveness	Male (104)	Female (64)	Mean Difference	t	Sig
1	Anti-Social Behavior	3.7308	3.7812	-0.05048	-0.251	0.802
2	Indecent Language	3.5865	3.7969	-0.21034	-1.047	0.297
3	Nudity	3.9904	3.9219	0.06851	0.373	0.709
4	Sexist Images	4.2019	4.625	-0.42308	-2.447*	0.016
5	Western/US Images	3.6442	3.9844	-0.34014	-1.767	0.079

*. Difference is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

N=168

features should be avoided in Pakistan for better business returns through advertisements. These correlations strengthen the view that religiosity significantly affect views of respondents towards advertisements with such characteristics of offensiveness [17]. This study ascertains that Islamic values are a set of beliefs and morals, a social doctrine and a call to righteousness across the board. Islam is a complete, self-contained ideology which regards all aspects of our existence – moral and physical, spiritual and intellectual, personal and communal – as parts of the indivisible whole which we call "Human life" [7].

Table 5 shows to what extent male and female consumers differ in their offensive attitude towards controversial products. The results indicate that offensiveness for the advertising of cigarettes, condoms and undergarments is higher among female respondents of this study. This study includes respondents from mainstream education system. Results suggest that advertising of such products in Pakistan significantly offends the entire society, because majority of both male and female respondents show offensiveness towards these products except female weight loss programs, which is probably because of more awareness towards healthcare initiatives.

Table 6 shows to what extent male and female consumers differ in their offensive attitude towards various advertising appeals. Majority of the respondents from both genders feel offensive towards nudity, sexist images, anti social behavior, indecent language and westernized ads. Interestingly nudity which is usually considered an attraction for male audience has been reported offensive more by male respondents than female. Findings of this study are important indicators for advertising industry to avoid these components while preparing ads for Pakistani markets for better acceptance and penetration.

Table 6 shows to what extent male and female consumers differ in their religious perceptions. The above result indicates that male and female respondents differ significantly in their religious perceptions from each other. Moreover, female respondents were found to have higher level of religious intentions as compared to their male counterparts. It indicates that organizations and marketing agencies should pay extra care to this fact while marketing female hygiene related products.

Main Findings of the Research:

C Descriptive statistics indicate that respondents perceive the use of indecent language as the least offensive advertising appeal whereas they perceive sexist images as the most offensive ones. (Table 2)

C Use of indecent language, nudity and sexist images as advertising appeals were found to have significant association with the religious perceptions of the consumers (p < .01, Table 4)

Table 7: Gender Differences in Religious Intentions

	Male (104)	Female (64)	Mean Difference	t	Sig
Religious perceptions	3.859	4.0865	-0.22748	-2.426	0.016

*. Difference is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

N=168

C Western/US images, indecent language, nudity and sexist images as advertising appeals were found to have significant association with the level of offensiveness of the consumers towards controversial products (p < .01, p < .05, Table 4).

C Male and female respondents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of offensiveness towards Female Hygienic Products, Cigarettes, Female weight loss Programs and Religious Denominations. Moreover, they were found to have least level of offensiveness towards Female weight loss Programs and Religious Denominations (p < .05, Table 5).

C Male and female respondents differ significantly in their perceptions of offensiveness towards two controversial products i.e. condoms and male underwear. Females consider them more offensive than their male counterparts (p < .01, Table 5).

C Male and female respondents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of offensiveness towards anti-social behavior, nudity and indecent language as advertising appeal. They perceive all of them equally offensive (p < .05, Table 6).

C Male and female respondents differ significantly in their perceptions of offensiveness towards sexist images as advertising appeal. Females consider it more offensive advertising appeal than their male counterparts (p < .05, Table 6).

C Male and female respondents differ significantly in their religious perceptions. Females were found to be more religious than their male counterparts (p < .05, Table 7).

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to assess the level of offensiveness of consumers towards advertising campaigns of some selected controversial products and their advertising appeals. It has also seen its relationship with religious intentions of the consumers and their gender differences. The results of this study are of great importance to the organizations marketing their products in Pakistan as well as to the advertising agencies that prepare and launch advertising campaigns for their

clients. This study highlights the fact that cultural norms and values of a society play an important role in shaping the attitudes of its people. Organizations that are making use of indecent language, nudity and sexist images as advertising appeals while marketing their products in Pakistan are creating offensiveness in the minds of consumers for their products. Although this study is restricted to selected controversial products, yet its spillover affects might spread into other products that are of common use of the people and are not considered controversial. Extra care should be taken while marketing male or female related products as well as using advertising appeals as significant differences were found in the perceptions of male and female consumers towards products and advertising appeals. It is imperative to market the product in a way that does not contravene the norms, values, ethics and religious perceptions of the target market.

Managerial Implications: Customer loyalty always remains a prime concern for business organizations [25]. International marketers need to know about Muslim cultures, their ethical system in order to become successful in Muslim countries. A case study of Egypt concludes that an Islamic appreciation of products and services offered by international marketers can acquire greater acceptance in Muslim majority countries of Asia and Middle East [1].

International marketers and managers need to be aware of the religious perceptions of the consumers in their target country in order to become successful in marketing their products and to gain public acceptance. They must be aware of some important and sensitive ethical issues (if they exist) which may make their products controversial in the eyes of the consumers and create offensiveness.

Social Implications: This research identifies some important ethical issues in advertising that are contradictory to the injunctions of Islam and have adverse impact on the mindset and behavior of the new generation by putting them away from Islamic moral values. In the long run, it might have an impact on the lifestyles and cultural values of the people in such a way that may not be acceptable to *Shari'ah*.

Limitations and Future Directions: This research study was limited to Lahore city of Pakistan only due to time and cost constraints. A larger sample covering all the four provinces and major cities of Pakistan could produce more reliable results. This research has adopted a general approach by taking the opinion of the respondents about some products that are considered controversial among masses. A more focused approach may be adopted in future to judge the opinion of consumers about some particular advertisement.

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