

Stealth Advertising Awareness, Knowledge, and Perceived Ethicality in TV Patrol and 24 Oras News Programs Among Select Communication Students

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Abstract

Stealth advertising (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004) is seemingly becoming prevalent in Filipino television shows and news broadcasts are no exemption. Stealth ads are characterized by covert promotional messages embedded within media content. The quantitative study investigated the news and ad literacy level of communication students towards the presence and ethicality of stealth advertisements in the identified primetime news programs in Philippine media which are TV Patrol and 24 Oras. An online survey was applied in determining the correlation of advertisement placement knowledge (APK) and stealth ad awareness (SAA) with the perception of ethicality (PE) in news advertising through a Pearson correlation test. A One-way ANOVA was conducted to analyze gender and year-level group comparisons of student-respondents' online and offline news exposure frequency and duration. A univariate analysis was employed to identify the online and offline news exposure, advertisement placement knowledge and awareness as nuanced with the Ads Standards Council Guidebook, and perception of ethicality in news and advertisements of the communication student-respondents. Findings reveal that online news exposure frequency is higher than offline viewing. APK is at the middle level. A big majority of the respondents readily recognized stealth ads in 24 Oras indicating that the identified sneaky ads are placed intentionally while there is skepticism whether the identified stealth ads in TV Patrol are placed intentionally or accidentally. Both news programs are still deemed ethical in terms of trustworthiness, competence, and goodwill. Given this, there should still be a call for stricter adherence to ethical guidelines in media practices.

Keywords: Stealth Advertisements, Philippine Primetime News Programs, TV Patrol, 24 Oras, Communication Students

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Introduction

Broadcasting is one of the most effective ways to reach multitudes of people in a short span of time. Such is especially true in the archipelagic Philippines, where the citizens have utilized and maximized existing broadcast media: from radio sets that were considered “a friendlier medium since even illiterate people who could not read nor write were able to understand news and information being “told” them by the radio broadcast,” (Elcolumbus, n.d.) to the television that “became a status symbol” (The Journalistic View, 2018), Filipinos went with the flow. Thus, it is unsurprising that Filipinos have caught on with the trend of worldwide interest in digital content. Despite limitations in network infrastructure, they are among the biggest audience of online or digital media that in 2020, the country was among the top five with the highest online media market value (Statista, 2023).

Philippines News Landscape

In a Pulse Asia national survey in 2021, it was found that a big majority of the adult population get their political news from television, with 82% citing national television and 25% mentioning local television. Chua (2023) affirms this information, noting that Filipinos access news at least three days per week. Despite the shift to online content consumption, however, Statista Research Department (2023) noted that a large portion of viewers still consumed news and entertainment through television: as of June 2023, a considerable 70% of the respondents tapped for a survey on digital news in the Philippines said their source of news was still the TV. Dependence on offline platforms is still prevalent, dominantly from news programs of GMA Network, and its counterparts in rival channel ABS-CBN’s TV (Statista, 2023). Prior to the suspension of its franchise to operate, ABS-CBN and GMA were the country’s media giants that went head-to-head in engaging audiences with their entertainment and news and public affairs programs. The suspension did not keep ABS-CBN from making itself felt, however, as the network tapped the digital realm via social networking sites and the development of its own over-the-top (OTT) platform, iWantTFC (Statista, 2023). They also partnered with other local channels such as TV5 to ensure the continuity of their flagship programs (Adobo Magazine, 2022).

This unprecedented move of previously-rival companies sharing frequencies and the continuous growth of the digital media pushed networks to ensure their presence in all possible platforms. This is particularly apparent in news programs, which are simultaneously delivered in radio, TV, and the networks’ preferred social media sites. Primetime news, traditionally shown in the early evening, can now be viewed at a time most convenient to the audience as video recordings are curated and conveniently located in YouTube. Regardless of the platform, audiences get the same viewing experience: the usual news show format that starts with the program’s stimulating opening music, the anchors’ introduction of themselves, and the news stories pursued from all over the metro, the nation, and the globe. Latest and relevant reports on politics, economics, livelihood sectors and industries, lifestyle, sports, entertainment, and world events are delivered to the audience to ensure they are kept informed about key happenings. It is expected that journalists provide the audience with the basic information about local society and international whereabouts.

Ethics in News Reporting

Media, as the fourth estate and watchdog of society, is assumed to be critical and credible. In the Philippines, news media outfits like ABS-CBN and GMA are expected to adhere to the

Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP / *Association of Broadcasters of the Philippines*) Code (2011), whose preamble indicates that “broadcasting, because of its immediate and lasting impact on the public, demands of its practitioners a high sense of responsibility, morality, fairness and honesty at all times” (p. 5). Its Article 2 Section 7 states that “personal bias or prejudice shall not be allowed to distort facts” (p.11). The virtue of truthfulness transcends beyond the subjective stand of the journalists but should extend with the news and information presented free from marketing propaganda.

Thus, covertly inserting product placements in news content obscures the agency of news media outfits and journalists. In fact, “TV viewers have the right to know which side the broadcaster represents and what the motivation behind the message is...(but) the evening news are appealing to stealth marketers because the audience expects greater independence, hence, persuasion is easiest where the audience is most credulous and least defended against promotional messages” (Georgieva, 2013, p.6). Yet, in keeping with the similar experience that television and social media viewers would have, commercial breaks are also observable in shows that are transmitted, recorded, and curated in YouTube. This has forced Filipino audiences to adopt an anti-advertisement behavior, demonstrated by the way they sift through channels and programs with their remote controls. Although a limit of 18 minutes of commercials per hour has been prescribed for local advertising in the Philippines – a level that is already highest in Asia – a content analysis study done by De La Salle University students found that GMA has a commercial load of 30 minutes per hour while ABS-CBN has 15 to 20 minutes per hour (Castro, Jr., 2008). GMA withdrew its membership from the KBP in September 2003 after a tiff over commercial loading limits set by the association (The PCIJ Blog, 2011), and is thus no longer bound by the regulatory body’s guidelines.

Research Problem and Objectives

This analyzed communication students’ association of knowledge on advertisement placement, awareness on stealth ads, and their perception of its ethicality in news advertisements observed in the country’s two leading primetime news shows: GMA’s 24 Oras and ABS-CBN’s TV Patrol. The researchers measured the duration, frequency, and consistency of communication students’ online and offline news exposure; determined their advertisement placement knowledge as nuanced with the Ads Standards Council (ASC) Guidebook and the level of their awareness on stealth advertising; and distinguished the respondents’ level and dimensions of perception of ethicality in news and advertisements.

Framework

Anchored on the tenets of Media Agenda and Social Responsibility, this study extends from the Agenda Setting Theory, which has ever since lent its ideals to various explorations in the way media and other institutions prime and frame issues and events for their audiences (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

The media, as the gatekeeper, decides what information should be disseminated and what information should not (Lighare, 2021). The value assigned to the information being shared with the public thus sets the agenda – under the hope and premise that the gatekeeping team of news editors, research staff, and broadcasters have their loyalties anchored on the truth. A critique of the media's capacity to shape perception is that this capability is also open to abuse and misuse. This led to the development of media effects as a field of study focusing on the scrutiny of media agenda vis-a-vis media credibility.

Schauster, et. al. (2016) share Altschull's (1997) observation that despite the shifts in the press' system to continually find funding, journalists have continued to advocate for and retain a semblance of autonomy. Quoting Christians, et. al. (2009), they further that media personalities often shielded themselves from financial pressures and pursued the production of news that informed the citizens and strengthened democracy. However, advertisers, public relations professionals, and all those whose interests lie in securing resources for the press' operations, digress from journalists' objectives.

Moreover, Schauster, et. al. (2016) noted that threats to the accuracy and objectivity of news reports have been recorded since the prevalence of yellow journalism of the late 19th century, leading to the development of a set of standards that upheld the roles and responsibilities of the press vis-a-vis a concern for the public good. Thus the birth of social responsibility theory, which served as an ethical guide for what needs to be done in response to changing media practices.

Achieving social responsibility meant that the media maintained the following criteria (Siebert, et. al., 1956; Schauster, et. al, 2016):

- a) serve the political system with information, and with forums for debate and discussion;
- b) assist the public in self-governance;
- c) act as the government watchdog;
- d) serve the economic system with advertising;
- e) provide entertainment; and
- f) maintain sufficient financial independence, free from the pressure of special interests.

With the changing times, media practices, platforms, models, and journalists' duties are also egged to shift. Expansions of the tenets of social responsibility became concerned with aligning its guiding principles with global perspectives that include respect for "human dignity, truth telling, and nonviolence" (Schauster, et. al., 2016). The importance of social responsibility and the concept of credibility also came into the picture, with Deuze (2005) suggesting that without both an industry-wide credibility and a specific organization's credibility, the press cannot uphold the tenets of social responsibility theory.

This study is anchored on the understanding of the media's capacity to set the public agenda that operates within the tenets of social responsibility theory to evaluate stealth advertising in news broadcasts.

Methodology

The study implemented a news and ad literacy survey on communication students' news exposure, advertisement placement knowledge, and perception of ethicality on stealth ads in news programs. It is vital to understand the audience' recognition of their moral agency and stand on a particular moral issue such as stealth advertisements in news programs. The tenets of reception analysis were referenced in the formulation of this survey.

The news and ad literacy survey pre-data gathering preparations included the construction of the survey instrument, table of specifications for part three, and letters of approval. The online survey was pre-tested with students who are taking different majors aside from advertising. The actual data gathering and survey roll-out commenced within a three-week duration. Post-data gathering tasks included the downloading of information from online

forms, transforming, and cleaning the data for statistical analyses through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The study utilized both descriptive and inferential statistics to address the research's objectives. All the demographic characterization and variables were analyzed through frequency and distribution count. Analysis of the association of variables ad placement knowledge, stealth ad awareness, and ethical perception, were conducted through the Pearson Product Moment Correlation test with a confidence level of 95% ($\alpha=0.05$).

Findings

The total number of respondents was 133. After data encoding and cleaning, the study collected a total of $n=131$ valid responses. The discussion details the univariate, group comparison, and correlation statistical analyses applied.

Part 1. Demographics of Communication Student-Respondents

Majority of the survey respondents identify themselves as females (59.50%). Far second are those who identify as males (21.40%), while the rest label themselves as part of the LGBTQIA+ group (19.1%). Notably, those who selected "Other" (3.10%) in the gender category identify themselves as non-binary. More than half of the respondents were second year students (68.70%). This is akin to the fact that the survey invite was disseminated in advertising classes in FEU which was offered during communication students' second year. The researchers welcome this figure as, more than any of the communication students, those with advertising classes are expected to be more knowledgeable about the ethicality of advertisements in various programs.

Majority of the respondents (54.20%) came from one of the study's pre-testing sites, FEU. As the institute of employment of one of the researchers, networking was much easier and the desired number of participants was reached. In contrast, only a quarter of the responses (25.20%) came from UPD, the original study site. Survey responses from FCPC, PSAU, and MSU – universities outside Metro Manila – totalled to 17.50%, drastically more than the 3.10% from PUP, which served as another pre-testing site.

In summary, from the total of $n=131$ survey respondents, the majority of the communication student-respondents are in their second year level (68.70%), have identified their gender as female (59.50%), and are from FEU-Manila (54.20%).

Part 2. Univariate Analyses

In addressing the research objectives one to four, this section elaborates the univariate data results on the following variables: (1) the levels of offline and online news exposure in terms of frequency and duration; (2) student-respondents' ad placement knowledge; (3) stealth ad awareness in conjunction with perception on identified product placement and brand or product recall enhancement, and (4) perception of ethicality of news programs in terms of trustworthiness, competency, and good will.

Objective 2.1: Online and Offline News Exposure.

Respondents' frequency of exposure to online news shows how the student-respondents are heavily reliant on the internet. With often (34.40%), sometimes (32.10%) and always (26.00%) being the students' recurring choices, these digital natives are indeed hung up on

their smartphones as it lets them do practically anything they want, including catching up on the latest headlines (Knit, n.d.). Directly contrasting the students' frequency of exposure to online news are their responses to the recurrence of their offline news utility. Sometimes (37.40%) and rarely (36.60%) make up almost three quarters of the responses combined, reiterating their dependence on the internet.

Interestingly, more than tenth of the respondents admitted to never using traditional media as their news source – somehow depicting the foreboding decline of the utility of these mediums in the coming years. Grundy (2022) writes that the rise of digital media and technology has transformed the way we access news. This confirms that the student-participants exert effort to get information about current events: almost half of the respondents (44.30%) said they immerse themselves in online news for less than an hour weekly, while those who consume news online for a couple of hours (29.80%) and up to four hours (15.30%) come in second and third spots. Interestingly, almost a tenth of the respondents affirm that their online news exposure could take five to more hours in a week – which could imply that some youngsters have news viewing as part of their online habit.

Despite the respondents' receding frequency of offline news exposure, the duration of their news consumption via traditional media remains fairly high. More than half (57.30%) of the respondents say they spend less than an hour a week getting current events information from legacy media. Reuters Institute's qualitative research on "How Younger Generations Consume News Differently," noted that most young consumers "have an 'anchor news brand' that they will turn to when a major story breaks and needs verifying" (Kalogeropoulos, 2019, par. 18). While the preferred anchor brand is influenced by their parents, the format remains to be digital.

Objective 2.2: Ad Placement Knowledge.

The study sought to identify the level of ad placement knowledge of communication student-respondents through the crafted 10-item multiple choice objective questions based on the guidelines of Ad Standards Council (ASC) (2019) and *Kapisanan ng Brodkaster ng Pilipinas* (KBP) (2011). This part of the survey questionnaire resembles an objective quiz, in which the difficulty is distributed and planned based on the identified table of specifications. The greatest number of student-respondents garnered a score of four and seven points (17.60%). Second to the greatest percentage is eight points (16%) and least number of garnered scores are one point (3.80%) with a frequency count of five and nine points (3.10%) with a frequency count of four. The average score of ad placement knowledge of respondents is 5.32 points (SD=2.14). This indicates that the average of 5.32 points is barely passing to an almost fail score that may be referred to as poor performance and needs improvement in terms of studying the ASC and KBP guidelines.

In summary, student-respondents' advertisement placement knowledge is at the middle level with the mean score is 5.32. In fact, 17.60% of respondents scored seven and four equally. The least number of scores attained was nine points (3.10%). Based on the item analysis, items seven (80.9%) and two (74%) garnered the most correct answers, which centers on ad placement knowledge. Items five and four are the questions that respondents answered incorrectly that focus on advertisement definition based on the ASC guidelines.

Objective 2.3: Stealth Advertisement Awareness.

In identifying the level of communication student-respondents' awareness of stealth advertising, respondents were prompted to view and analyze two news clips from 24 Oras and two from TV Patrol. Videos A and C are from 24 Oras and videos B and D are from TV Patrol. After each clip, respondents were asked if they have recognized a stealth ad in each of the four news clips. A big majority of student-respondents reported that they have recognized stealth advertisements in 24 Oras videos SAA_A1 (70.20%) and SAA_C1 (75.60%) while 22.1% reported that they are 'not sure' with SAA_A1 and 12.2% with SAA_C1. Student-respondents' answered 'no' with A1 are 7.6% while C1 has 12.2%. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents reported that they have recognized stealth advertisements from TV Patrol news clips, particularly video D (57.30%). Moreover, less than half of the communication student-respondents recognized stealth ads in video B with the frequency count of 51 (38.90%) and 47 (35.90%) student-respondents reported that they did not recognize stealth advertisements in video B. This reveals that stealth ad recognition is more evident in news clips from 24 Oras rather than TV Patrol.

Brand placements in 24 Oras news clips as perceived by respondents are mostly intentional with 65 frequency count for video A (49.60%) and 97 frequency count for video C (74%). It was reported that these stealth ad placements in 24 Oras, such as video A (38.9%) and video C (52.7%), are perceived to have improved the brand or product recall. Meanwhile, TV Patrol news clips are perceived to be intentional to a point accidental. Video D is deemed intentional with the count of 58 (44.3%) while 45% or 60 respondents have 'no opinion' about video B; 46 or 35.1% have shared that ad placement in the TV Patrol news clip was placed accidentally. With video D, the perceived ad placement in TV Patrol news clips is deemed to have improved the brand or product recall by a thin margin of 48 count (36.6%) as compared to those who reported 'no opinion' with 45 count (34.4%). TV Patrol video B coincides with the opinion that the accidental product placement did not improve the brand or product recognition and recall with a thin margin of difference of those who said 'no' with 55 frequency count (42%) and those who reported of having 'no opinion' with 52 frequency count (39.7%).

Stealth advertising awareness is more evident with news clips from 24 Oras as reported by the big majority of the student-respondents based on videos A (70.20%) and C (75.60%). These ad placements are deemed to be intentionally placed, in which the intention is to improve brand or product recall and recognition. Student-respondents are skeptical of their stealth ad recognition on TV Patrol news clips. Accidental ad placements as observed in TV Patrol are perceived to have no improvement in terms of brand or product recognition and recall.

Table 1: Stealth Ad Awareness

Program	Video		No	Not Sure	Yes	Total
24 Oras	A	<i>f</i>	10	29	92	131
		%	7.60	22.10	70.20	100
	C	<i>f</i>	16	16	99	131
		%	12.20	12.2	75.60	100
TV Patrol	B	<i>f</i>	47	33	51	131
		%	35.90	25.20	38.90	100
	D	<i>f</i>	33	23	75	131
		%	25.20	17.60	57.30	100

Looking at the perception of stealth ad awareness between TV Patrol and 24 Oras clips, the latter was revealed to have easier recognition of stealth ads as reported by the student-respondents. This may be attributed with the fact that 24 Oras under the GMA-Global Media Arts Network is not affiliated with KBP. GMA Network has withdrawn its KBP membership since 2003 (Philstar, 2003). Severing ties with KBP spurs critical inquiry on the regulation of GMA content and ad placement in forwarding the best interest of its audience instead of its capitalistic cause.

Objective 2.4: Respondents’ Perception of Ethicality.

Despite the participants’ recognition of intentionally-placed stealth ads in 24 Oras and TV Patrol, their perception of the news programs’ ethicality remained generally positive as scores on trustworthiness, competence, and decency accumulated on ratings five and up. In fact, there were null instances of responses for ratings zero and one for all three categories.

The participants consider 24 Oras and TV Patrol as ethical vis-a-vis their perceptions of the news programs’ trustworthiness ($M = 7.36, SD = 1.69$), competence ($M = 7.44, SD = 1.72$), and goodwill towards their audiences ($M = 7.50, SD = 1.76$). Given these data, the student-respondents think the news programs are ethical despite the recognized presence of stealth advertisements in the shows. According to The Media Insight Project (2022), local news media remain to be the key sources of information that this generation makes use of to get information about news they can use. In the Philippines, these news programs are shown on free TV and YouTube, thereby being more accessible to the respondents’ age group.

Part 3. Group Comparison Analyses

Objective 3.1: Determining the Student-Respondents’ Online and Offline News Exposure.

To further determine and characterize the news exposure of student-respondents in terms of online and offline viewing through the aspects of frequency (how often) and duration (how

long), the researchers applied group comparison analysis through a One-Way ANOVA test. The grouping variable, which are the respondents' gender and year level statistically analyzed with test variables of online and offline news exposure in terms of frequency and duration.

In summarizing the group comparisons of gender and year level with news exposure, student-respondents' year level has no significant difference with news exposure frequency and duration may it be online or offline viewing. Additionally, gender groups means comparison is not significant with their news online exposure frequency and duration. With offline or traditional news viewing duration, gender group comparisons between (a) female and male ($p = .042$); (b) female and pansexual ($p = .007$); (c) male and pansexual ($p = .058$); (d) gay and pansexual ($p = .053$); and (e) pansexual and 'other' gender including lesbian ($p = .008$).

Part 4. Correlation Analyses

Objective 4.1: Analysis of the Association Between Stealth Advertising and Perceived Ethicality.

To better analyze and describe the association between the student-respondents' knowledge and awareness of stealth advertising and their perceptions of ethicality of 24 Oras and TV Patrol vis-a-vis their ratings on the shows' trustworthiness, competence, and goodwill towards audiences, the researchers employed Pearson Product-Moment Correlation test.

The result of the Pearson correlation test between advertisement placement knowledge (APK) and perception of ethicality with dimensions of trustworthiness and goodwill indicated no significant correlation. In particular, APK and trustworthiness yielded $r = 0.12$, $r^2 = 0.01$, $p < 0.186$; while APK and goodwill towards the audiences resulted in $r = 0.13$, $r^2 = 0.02$, $p < 0.126$. On the other hand, there was a significant weak positive relationship between ad placement knowledge and ethical dimension of competence, $r = 0.23$, $r^2 = 0.05$, $p < 0.009$. Albeit very weak, only competence has a significant positive correlation among the three variables. This indicates that as communication student-respondents increase their ad placement knowledge, there is also a small or weak possibility of increase with their perceived ethical competence ($M = 7.44$, $SD = 1.72$) of the news programs in focus, which are 24 Oras and TV Patrol.

This could imply that the participants could or would tolerate the presence of stealth advertisements in news programs provided they are competent and effective at what they do. Surprisingly, younger viewers have a much higher tolerance for advertising, with the Gen Zs considering 10.61 minutes per hour of ad breaks just fine (Friedman, 2019). This aligns with the previous exposition about the respondents' belief that 24 Oras and TV Patrol are ethical despite the sneaky ads in the news segments since they perceive them as experts in their field.

Table 2: Correlation of Advertisement Placement Knowledge and Ethical Perceptions

	Variables of Ethical Perception	Correlations
Stealth Advertising Awareness	Trustworthiness	$r = 0.12, r^2 = 0.01, p < 0.186$
	Competence	$r = 0.23, r^2 = 0.05, p < 0.009$
	Goodwill Towards Audience	$r = 0.13, r^2 = 0.02, p < 0.126$

Association of Stealth Ad Awareness and Perceived Ethicality in 24 Oras.

Student-respondents' stealth advertisements awareness, or to be referred to as SAA, in news segments of 24 Oras and TV Patrol yielded varying results. The Pearson correlation test between 24 Oras's first clip (SAA_A1) and perceived ethicality, with dimensions of trustworthiness, competence, and goodwill, are not significant, The results indicated that with SAA and trustworthiness yielded $r = 0.09, r^2 = 0.01, p < 0.298$; SAA and competence with $r = 0.08, r^2 = 0.01, p < 0.383$; and SAA and goodwill to audiences with $r = 0.13, r^2 = 0.02, p < 0.135$.

Similar results were gathered from 24 Oras' second sample clip (SAA_C1), with neither trustworthiness ($r = 0.12, r^2 = 0.01, p < 0.174$), competence ($r = 0.11, r^2 = 0.01, p < 0.232$), nor goodwill towards audiences ($r = -0.01, r^2 = 0.01, p < 0.953$) having significant correlations with the recognition of stealth advertisements.

Association of Stealth Ad Awareness and Perceived Ethicality in TV Patrol.

No significant correlations can be deduced between the detection of sneaky ads and trustworthiness (SAA_B1 with $r = -0.10, r^2 = 0.01, p < 0.247$ and SAA_D1 with $r = 0.11, r^2 = 0.01, p < 0.204$) or competence (SAA_B1 with $r = -0.16, r^2 = 0.03, p < 0.061$ and SAA_D1 with $r = 0.10, r^2 = 0.01, p < 0.246$).

Meanwhile, a significant correlation was recorded in the ethicality variable goodwill towards audiences in both TV Patrol clips (SAA_B1 and SAA_D1). Despite the significant correlations, however, both the holiday traffic news clip ($r = -0.17, r^2 = 0.03, p < 0.050$) and Philippine air traffic maintenance work news clip ($r = 0.20, r^2 = 0.04, p < 0.022$) clips have very small positive associations. This indicates that the increase or positive upward movement with communication student-respondents stealth and awareness, there would also be a small or weak movement and increase with their perceived ethicality particularly with their perceived good intention of TV Patrol new program towards their audience.

Aside from the slim instances of perceived goodwill towards audiences, the student-respondents' recognition of stealth advertisements in news programs do not affect their perception of 24 Oras and TV Patrol's ethicality. Probably associated with how public relations helps shape and enhance reputation, students assume that news programs could "create narratives to advance their agenda" (Wynne, 2016, par.6).

Although student-respondents perceive news programs 24 Oras and TV Patrol as ethical despite the prevalence of stealthy advertisements, the majority of them still advocate for the concealment of these ads. At 80 frequency counts, this is 61.10% of the total participants. This implies that as future media practitioners, these communication students understand that abiding by ASC and KBP's regulations for responsible advertising and broadcasting is vital in maintaining news and news programs' integrity, and cultivating transparency and trust.

Synthesis

News exposure frequency is higher than offline viewing, while in terms of length of news viewing, offline (57.30%) and online (44.30%) reported news exposure is 50 minutes or less. Ad placement knowledge (APK) is at middle level ($M = 5.32$), in which the student-respondents are adept with ad placement protocols as indicated by the KBP and ASC guidelines. In terms of stealth ad awareness, a big majority of the respondents readily recognized stealth ads in 24 Oras indicating that the identified sneaky ads are placed intentionally to improve product and brand recall. In TV Patrol, respondents were skeptical whether the identified stealth ads are placed intentionally or accidentally, in which no product or brand recall was elicited. Both news programs are still deemed ethical in terms of trustworthiness ($M = 7.36$), competence ($M = 7.44$), and goodwill towards their audiences ($M = 7.50$) on a scale of one to 10, with the latter as the highest.

Through One-way ANOVA test, findings reveal that offline news exposure duration differs significantly with the groups of (a) female and male ($p = .042$); (b) female and pansexual ($p = .007$); (c) male and pansexual ($p = .058$); (d) gay and pansexual ($p = .053$); and (e) pansexual and 'other' gender including lesbian ($p = .008$). With Pearson correlation test, significant correlation was found with APK and competence. Significant correlation was found in TV Patrol news clips and ethical dimensions of competence and goodwill, in which stealth ad placements in one of the videos is deemed as placed accidentally.

Conclusion

It was found that respondents were more likely to consume online news than offline news, illustrating their dependence on digital news media. Despite its lower utility, legacy media are still patronized by the respondents as more than half (57.30%) of them say they spend around an hour a week securing current events information from traditional means. Kalogeropoulos (2019) ascribes this to the 'anchor news brand' notion, which are the participants' go-to sources when they need to verify something. Respondents possess a moderate level of understanding regarding product placements and show a clear recognition of stealth advertising, particularly through the snippets of 24 Oras episodes. It was much easier for the participants to detect stealth ads in GMA's primetime news program, possibly due to the number of placements that were allowed to air. It should be remembered that GMA Network has been out of KBP membership for a decade now. The respondents still deemed 24 Oras and TV Patrol to be ethical despite the presence of hidden commercials, and a correlation between ad placement knowledge and perceived ethical competence was also detected. As the most accessible and available local news sources where the respondents can get information for immediate use, it could be said that they are more tolerant of stealthy advertisements as long as the news programs remain competent and effective at what they do.

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