

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

Department of Languages



Bachelor Thesis

**Ethics in Advertising: Perceptions in Russian and
English Culture**

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BACHELOR THESIS ASSIGNMENT

Daria Kiseleva

Business Administration

Thesis title

Ethics in Advertising: Perceptions in Russian and English Cultures

Objectives of thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the main ethical aspects of advertising, to outline how they are legally defined, and to identify which elements of advertising are considered unethical by consumers. Additionally, violations of ethical standards in advertising will be examined through individual cases from business practice, along with their impact on the business. Sub-goals of the project include characterizing the impact of unethical advertising elements on the cognitive and emotional levels of consumers, as well as their influence on purchasing behavior within Russian and English cultures. One of the expected outcomes of this work will be practical recommendations for the use of ethical elements in advertising.

Methodology

An overview of the main theoretical knowledge related to ethical principles in advertising in Russian and English cultures will be presented, using literature research to describe the future state of knowledge in this area. The practical part will involve conducting a survey on a selected topic among a group of respondents aged over 16 years. Based on the survey results, conclusions will be drawn, and practical advice will be provided to enhance advertising ethics. Additionally, the practical section will include a description of research aimed at understanding how the ethics of advertising are evaluated by consumers, which can further aid in managing advertising practices in business.

The proposed extent of the thesis

30-40 stran

Keywords

ethics, advertising, code of ethics, Advertising Council, advertising regulation, comparative advertising, consumer behavior, social responsibility, Russian culture, English culture

Recommended information sources

Goddard, A. (2002). The Language of Advertising: Written Texts . Routledge. ISBN 0415278031.

Mann, B. (1993). Advertising: Media Watch. Wayland. ISBN 0750207582.

Scott, W.D. (2005). The Psychology Of Advertising: A Simple Exposition Of The Principles Of Psychology In Their Relation To Successful Advertising. Small, Maynard & Company.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/13645-000>

Snyder, W. (2016). Ethics in Advertising: Making the case for doing the right thing (1st ed.). Routledge. ISBN 9781315641942.

Thompson, M. (2008). Ethical Theory (Access To Politics). Hodder Education. ISBN 0340957794.

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Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my bachelor thesis titled "Ethics in Advertising: Perceptions in Russian and English Culture" by myself and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the bachelor thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break any copyrights.

In Prague on 15.03.2026

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Ethics in Advertising: Perceptions in Russian and English Culture

Abstract

This bachelor thesis examines ethical perceptions of advertising in Russian and English cultural contexts, with a particular focus on how consumers evaluate unethical advertising practices and how these perceptions influence purchasing behavior. The study combines a theoretical review of advertising ethics, cultural differences, and regulatory frameworks with a practical questionnaire survey conducted among consumers in Russia and the United Kingdom. The results indicate that while both groups share a common ethical baseline, significant differences exist in the evaluation of misleading claims, truthfulness, and the role of regulation. Russian respondents demonstrated greater sensitivity toward factual accuracy, whereas British respondents showed higher trust in regulatory institutions and greater tolerance for creative exaggeration. The findings confirm that advertising ethics are shaped by both universal moral principles and culturally specific expectations, highlighting the importance of cultural adaptation in international advertising strategies.

Keywords: ethics, advertising, code of ethics, Advertising Council, advertising regulation, comparative advertising, consumer behavior, social responsibility, Russian culture, English culture

Etika v reklamě a její vnímání v ruské a anglické kultuře

Abstrakt

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá vnímáním etiky v reklamě v ruském a anglickém kulturním prostředí se zaměřením na to, jak spotřebitelé hodnotí neetické reklamní praktiky a jak tyto postoje ovlivňují jejich nákupní chování. Práce kombinuje teoretickou analýzu etiky reklamy, kulturních rozdílů a regulačních rámců s praktickým dotazníkovým šetřením mezi spotřebiteli v Rusku a ve Spojeném království. Výsledky ukazují, že ačkoli obě skupiny sdílejí základní etické normy, existují výrazné rozdíly v hodnocení klamavých tvrzení, důrazu na pravdivost a důvěře v regulační instituce. Studie potvrzuje, že etika reklamy je formována jak univerzálními morálními principy, tak kulturně podmíněnými očekáváními.

Klíčová slova: etika, reklama, etický kodex, Rada pro reklamu, regulace reklamy, srovnávací reklama, chování spotřebitelů, Společenská odpovědnost, ruská kultura, anglická kultura

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1 Introduction

The field of advertising connects commercial objectives with societal values, acting as both a dynamic discipline and a complex industry. In today's globalized economy, advertising is more than just a source of information since it has long become a major social force that reflects and even shapes the cultural standards, as well as the complex identities of ordinary consumers. Meanwhile, companies have aspirations for larger market shares, and they inevitably tend to use communication strategies to build genuine trust since business needs a new and powerful force to balance profit with ethics.

Advertising ethics require businesses to follow standards that stretch far beyond Russian laws or international rules like those set by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). Consequently, a given company's ethical choices inevitably determine its reputational capital and brand identity, which are viewed as one of the most important aspects of modern-day enterprises.

As a result, businesses that are prone to using deceptive and unfair practices, such as false claims or "greenwashing," which is defined as attempts to present the product or service as sustainable on the surface, while it is not so in reality, or those that rely on harmful stereotypes, might see quick financial results. However, these actions effectively undermine brand loyalty and can drive customers to organize boycotts, largely thanks to the advances in civil societies all over the world.

It is nonetheless clear that people from different cultures have very different views on what is ethical, which is partially connected with Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions theory. The former explains how nations value business aspects, such as individualism and power distance, which can equally have implications for how ordinary consumers interpret advertising.

For example, consumers in Western English-speaking cultures value transparency and personal freedom; they tend to react negatively if they feel a brand is trying to control

or manipulate them. On the other hand, Russian society often responds better to emotional appeals and national symbols, which suggests a different set of moral expectations.

This bachelor's thesis aims to demonstrate that advertising ethics is not a static set of rules, but an evolving social perception that changes from one society or community to another. This thesis investigates how consumers in Russia and Western English-speaking countries view ethical consideration in advertising, and to what degree it influences their decision to buy or not to buy. As a partial objective, this bachelor's thesis provides recommendations to multinational brands on how to shape their marketing campaigns in Russia and Western English-speaking countries with respect to ethical considerations.

The bachelor's thesis achieves its goals using a methodology involving the mixed use of qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative methods are represented by the study of secondary sources of data, which is predominantly done in the literature review, assisting in building a solid theoretical background and addressing the current state of the art. Quantitative methods are used in the thesis as well, and they are used as a part of the questionnaire analysis, where some of the questions are assessed using averages. The thesis relies on primary data, as well as on secondary sources of data, and it follows a standard methodology applied in marketing research, where the central tool is the questionnaire analysis.

The bachelor's thesis follows the following structure, which is standard in academic work:

- **Section 2** presents the goals and objectives, as well as the methodology of the bachelor's thesis in closer detail.
- **Section 3** provides a comprehensive overview of the relevant theory, as well as of other theoretical insights into the topic, which will allow one to form a solid understanding of the topic's specificities.
- **Section 4** presents the author's analysis, which is based on the questionnaire analysis. Therefore, the sub-sections of this part of the bachelor's thesis are dedicated to the explanation of the questionnaire analysis procedure.

- **Section 5** provides a deeper elaboration on the results of the own investigation using discussion and comparison of the findings with the assessed theoretical insights.
- **Section 6** summarizes the bachelor's thesis and provides a conclusion by explicitly addressing the original objectives.

2 Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the main ethical aspects of advertising, to outline how they are legally defined, and to identify which elements of advertising are considered unethical by consumers. Additionally, violations of ethical standards in advertising will be examined through individual cases from business practice, along with their impact on the business.

Sub-goals of the bachelor's thesis ultimately include characterizing the impact of unethical advertising elements on the cognitive and emotional levels of consumers, as well as their influence on purchasing behavior within Russian and English cultures, where Russia and the United Kingdom (UK) are selected as the basis for the investigation. One of the expected outcomes of this bachelor's thesis is practical recommendations for the use of ethical elements in advertising, which are expected to help firms tailor their marketing campaigns.

2.2 Methodology

An overview of the main theoretical knowledge related to ethical principles in advertising in Russian and English cultures is presented, for which literature research is used to describe the current state of knowledge in this area. The practical part involves conducting a questionnaire analysis on the given topic among a group of respondents aged over 16 years, where the sample is split into Russia-based and UK-based consumers (50 respondents in each category).

Based on the survey results, conclusions are drawn, and practical advice is provided to enhance advertising ethics and marketing effectiveness. Additionally, the practical section includes a rigorous description of research aimed at understanding how the ethics of advertising are evaluated by consumers, which can further aid in managing advertising practices in business. Therefore, the implemented methodology is two-fold and

comprehensive, which eventually ensures that the objectives are met and properly addressed further on.

3 Literature Review

In order to properly frame the investigation, it is essential to start with theoretical concepts. Therefore, this part provides an overview of the key ideas that shape how advertising looks today. This review examines the core concepts of marketing and ethics, with particular attention to the interaction between a firm's profit-oriented objectives and its responsibility toward society. The discussion moves from broad theoretical perspectives to more specific cultural considerations. It explores the evolution of marketing, highlighting the shift from a narrow focus on product sales toward a broader role in influencing social values, norms, and behavior.

The review also addresses the psychological mechanisms underlying advertising effectiveness and considers the potential risks associated with unethical or irresponsible marketing practices. A central analytical framework is provided by Hofstede's cultural dimensions, which are applied to compare and contrast marketing ethics and consumer behavior in Russia and Western countries. Finally, the study examines regulatory frameworks and selected real-world cases to illustrate the ethical challenges and gray areas that characterize contemporary business practice.

3.1 Advertising – definition and implications for business and society

Advertising, according to a conventionally accepted definition, is a dynamic public forum where business interests, creativity, consumer needs, and government legal regulation eventually meet (Goddard, 2002, p. 12). Despite the fact that advertisers in nearly all corners of the world constantly face pressure in the form of legal regulations with respect to advertising activities, it is impossible to clearly identify every issue or settle every claim that may arise when issuing a particular appeal to the consumer.

Advertising has long been an integral part of modern economic and cultural life. Goddard (2002, p. 13) defines advertising as a linguistic and social phenomenon that not only reflects but also shapes the values of society. Through language, images, and symbols, advertising does not just communicate information about products; instead, it creates social meanings and shapes consumer identity. It acts as a discourse that supports social hierarchies

and expectations, while simultaneously offering the audience desirable, idealized lifestyles. Thus, advertising can provide for new visions and set trends in society.

From a sociological point of view, Mann (1993, p. 8) argues that advertising has a powerful influence on public consciousness, forming ideas about what is considered desirable, successful, or acceptable in culture. In the scholar's opinion, advertising messages often blur the boundaries between information and manipulation, encouraging consumers to make choices not out of pure necessity, but under the influence of created ideals. According to Kotler and Keller (2016, p. 23), advertising manifests itself through three main functions: i) it informs, ii) it convinces, and iii) it reminds. However, the function of persuasion always carries an ethical risk, since it involves influencing human perception and behavior, as the authors clearly point out.

Thus, advertising performs a dual function, economic and cultural. It stimulates the market, creates competition, and strengthens brand awareness, but at the same time reflects and shapes social norms. As Polley (1986, p. 53) noted, advertising is a "distorted mirror" of society, reinforcing materialistic values and supporting stereotypes. This dual meaning-economic necessity and moral responsibility-underscores the importance of studying the ethical aspects of advertising.

Continuing the chapter, it is essential to see how this function is integrated within the larger marketing landscape. According to Kitchen and Burgmann (2010), advertising is an essential element that forms the concept of integrated marketing communication or marketing communication mix. Integrated marketing communications is a concept responsible for describing the main channels of communication that enterprises and sellers use to interact with potential customers. Based on Kotler and Armstrong (2010), these channels traditionally include:

- 1) **Direct marketing** – a self-explanatory term that refers to all actions taken on the part of companies to directly engage with potential consumers (Housden & Thomas, 2012).

- 2) **Interactive marketing** – a form of marketing that does not just inform consumers but also interacts with them and provokes a particular type of consumer behavior, depending on the objective (Wang, 2021).
- 3) **Word-of-mouth marketing** – marketing campaigns aimed at ensuring that information about them will be spread by consumers, similar to the snowball effect (Meiners et al., 2010).
- 4) **Personal selling** – direct engagement with consumers through sales agents. Needed to constantly remind consumers about the company's presence and increase the turnover (Peterson and Wotruba, 1996).
- 5) **Advertising** – widely discussed in the chapter already. Unlike the definition of Goodard (2002), Kotler and Armstrong (2010) define it more as a way of using open communication channels, simultaneously informing, convincing, and reminding consumers.
- 6) **Sales promotion** – provision of coupons or sales that are expected to engage consumers in purchase behavior (Peattie & Peattie, 2012).
- 7) **Events and experiences** – organization of events, which are expected to help build a solid connection between consumers and the brand, such as the generation of positive memories (Wood, 2009).
- 8) **Public relations and publicity** – also known as PR- are used for improving the image of the company and ensuring good relations with one of the key stakeholders, i.e., local or state government, as well as municipalities (Theaker, 2017).

Figure 1 summarizes the discussed elements of the marketing communication mix.

Figure 1. Marketing communication mix.



Source: Business Jargons, 2026

3.2 Ethics in advertising

Ethics in advertising is a set of moral principles governing the behavior of advertisers, agencies, and the media, according to various scholars (Snyder, 2016; Drumright and Murphy, 2009). According to Snyder (2016, p. 12), advertising ethics goes beyond just following the law and includes honesty, decency, and social responsibility. Effectively, ethical advertising respects the truth, avoids deception, and considers the well-being of its audience. Snyder (2016) further emphasized that "doing the right thing" in advertising means aligning business goals with consumer confidence and the interests of society, which is far from being realistic and feasible, especially when companies aim to maximize their profits. The author further mentions the main ethical concerns that can emerge in advertising, which, among others, include greenwashing and playing with the feelings of people by demonstrating symbols and elements to which consumers from a given community can be especially sensitive (Mann, 1993; Drumright and Murphy, 2009).

The ethical standards of advertising are enshrined in official codes and legislation. In the UK, the ASA oversees compliance with the CAP Code, which translates as the UK Code of Non-broadcast Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing, which prohibits misleading, harmful or offensive advertising. In Russia, similar norms are contained in the Federal Law on Advertising No. 38-FZ (2006), which bans false information, discriminatory materials, and the use of fear or superstition in advertising. However, the actual implementation of these principles varies markedly due to differences in cultural and legal traditions.

Drumright and Murphy (2009, p. 24) consequently note that most ethical problems in advertising arise not from malicious intent, but from a conflict between creativity, profit, and public expectations. Thus, ethical decision-making in advertising depends on corporate culture, public sentiment, and the degree of government regulation. Ethics in advertising is becoming not only a moral guideline, but also a strategic tool for sustainable business communications.

Gender stereotypes are another persistent problem. Advertising often supports unrealistic beauty standards and traditional gender roles, which contribute to discrimination and psychological problems. According to Goddard (2002, p. 19), linguistic and visual advertising techniques often portray women as objects of desire rather than as independent individuals. Similar problems arise in advertising aimed at children who are not able to critically perceive advertising messages (Kankel et al., 2004, p. 10).

Social responsibility is also an important aspect. Polley (1986, p. 2) believed that the emphasis of advertising on material values can destroy social guidelines, while Snyder (2016, p. 4) pointed out that ethical advertising can build trust and respect. The main challenge for advertisers is to find a balance between creativity and honesty. Unethical advertising can generate short-term sales, but in the long run, it undermines the reputation and trust of consumers.

3.3 Cultural Differences in ethical perceptions

Cultural values significantly influence the perception of the ethics of advertising. According to Hofstede (2001, p. 15), who developed the Cultural Dimensions Theory, national cultures differ in six parameters, including individualism, power distance, and avoidance of uncertainty. These differences shape not only communication style but also moral assessments. Over the years, the original framework was further expanded to other dimensions that are, however, not treated as the canonical six, and they are, therefore, not addressed in this section.

In the UK, advertising is often based on humor, individualism, and freedom of choice, values characteristic of a culture with a high level of individualism. The focus is on equity, inclusivity, and transparency, which are viewed as the driving forces of British society (Kotler and Keller, 2016, p. 52). Consequently, British consumers tend to react negatively to ads that appear to be discriminatory or manipulative, as evidenced by numerous ASA rulings prohibiting sexist or misleading campaigns, predominantly due to the multicultural nature of English society, where half of the population of the capital is represented by people not born in the UK.

In Russia, where culture is characterized by greater power distance and collectivism, advertising is more often based on emotional and patriotic motives. Research performed by Alawi and Suikashvili (2022) shows that the Russian audience more often values an emotional response and national symbols than strict adherence to formal ethical codes. This explains why international advertising campaigns, which are perceived as ironic in the UK, may seem offensive or inappropriate in Russia. Also, many advertising projects in Russia are based on patriarchy, which can greatly alienate the English audience, which has different moral expectations from advertising and its presentation.

Cross-cultural studies, such as the ones from Praesi et al. (2021) and Hofstede (2001), confirm that the perception of the ethics of advertising is determined by general norms and historical context. Therefore, it is important for companies operating in the international

market to adapt advertising messages not only by taking into account the language, but also the moral expectations of the audience.

3.4 Ethical advertising and business

Ethical principles in advertising directly affect consumer trust, brand loyalty, and long-term profitability. Snyder (2016, p. 42) emphasizes that ethical advertising forms reputational capital, an intangible asset that enhances trust and strengthens relationships with stakeholders. On the contrary, unethical practices lead to boycotts, legal sanctions, and reputational crises.

According to Phill and Turnbull (2019, p. 9), brands that exhibit ethical behavior achieve higher customer retention and positive feedback because consumers associate ethics with authenticity. Ethical communication is becoming part of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and a sustainable marketing strategy. Transparency, honesty, and cultural sensitivity of advertising strengthen the company's position and competitiveness.

Empirical studies (Drumright and Murphy, 2009, p. 13) show that the ethical behavior of advertisers positively correlates with consumer satisfaction and brand quality perception. In both Russia and the UK, honesty and authenticity are key factors of trust. Although ethical advertising does not always provide immediate profits, it creates long-term stability and a positive image of the company.

3.5 Operationalization of the key concepts

The previous sections demonstrate that advertising ethics is discussed in two main ways in the literature. One approach views ethics as a requirement linked to truthfulness, decency, and social responsibility, which should protect consumers from deception and harm (Snyder, 2016; Drumright and Murphy, 2009). The second approach highlights that ethical judgments do not form in isolation; they are influenced by cultural expectations, communication styles, and trust in institutions (Hofstede, 2001; Goddard, 2002). For this thesis, these two perspectives need to be combined into a single analytical framework that allows for a focused comparison between Russia and the United Kingdom. The comparison

cannot rely on general impressions about “Russian” or “British” advertising. Instead, it must connect specific ethical issues discussed in theory to measurable perceptions reported by consumers and explain why differences might plausibly arise across the two cultural contexts.

A useful starting point is to view consumer evaluation of advertising ethics as a structured judgment with three connected layers. The first layer is the perceived severity of unethical practices. This reflects how strongly consumers condemn actions such as misleading claims or targeting vulnerable groups. This aligns with the idea that persuasion carries ethical risk, especially when information and manipulation overlap (Kotler and Keller, 2016; Mann, 1993). The second layer is perceived institutional protection. This refers to whether consumers believe that rules and regulators actually reduce unethical advertising in practice. Here, the UK is often associated with stronger self-regulation through bodies like the ASA and the CAP Code, while the Russian context is linked with formal legal rules like the Federal Law on Advertising, which may come with different public expectations about enforcement and effectiveness. The third layer is tolerance for creative license versus literal truthfulness. This captures whether consumers accept exaggeration, humor, or metaphor as normal advertising techniques or view them as ethically problematic when they compromise factual clarity (Goddard, 2002; Snyder, 2016). These layers are important for cultural comparison because they distinguish between what people consider wrong, what they think the system prevents, and what they accept as part of advertising style.

The cultural dimension is not included as a decorative background but as an explanatory tool. Hofstede’s framework suggests that societies differ in how they value individual autonomy, uncertainty avoidance, and authority relations, which can shape interpretations of persuasive communication (Hofstede, 2001). In cultures with higher uncertainty avoidance, consumers may respond more negatively to unclear claims, hidden conditions, or vague promises, as such messages raise perceived risk and reduce predictability. In cultures with higher institutional trust, consumers may view questionable advertising as less personal risk, assuming that regulators or complaint mechanisms will address severe cases. Additionally, cultures differ in how much they accept irony, humor, and symbolic language as legitimate persuasion. This is significant for the ethics discussion

because the same message can be seen as harmless exaggeration or unacceptable deception, depending on cultural expectations about advertising roles. The implication for this thesis is that the Russia-UK comparison should focus on specific ethical issues where cultural interpretation is likely to be crucial, instead of labeling one culture as simply “more ethical” than the other.

To shift from theory to analysis, the concepts in this framework must be turned into measurable variables that can be captured through a questionnaire. Perceived severity can be measured by asking respondents how ethically serious they find concrete practices discussed in the literature, particularly misleading product claims, targeting vulnerable groups, and promoting harmful products (Drumright and Murphy, 2009; Pollay, 1986). Perceived institutional protection can be measured through reported trust in national advertising regulations and the belief that advertisers take ethics seriously. Tolerance for creative license can be measured by agreement with statements contrasting truthfulness with creative expression and through reported acceptance of mild exaggeration and emotional appeals as normal advertising techniques (Goddard, 2002; Kotler and Keller, 2016). Lastly, exposure to questionable content can be measured by self-reported frequency of encountering ethically problematic advertising. This is important because frequent exposure can shape sensitivity, skepticism, or normalization, depending on the context (Mann, 1993). These variables allow for the cultural comparison to be conducted in line with the literature review while remaining clearly testable in the practical part.

On this basis, the thesis can formulate research questions and expectations that directly follow from the literature. The first research question is:

- 1) Do consumers in Russia and the UK differ in how severely they judge common unethical practices, especially misleading claims and transparency?**

The second is:

- 2) Do institutional trust differ across the two contexts, and if this trust is linked to different levels of personal ethical vigilance?**

The third one is:

3) Does tolerance for creative exaggeration differ, and if so, does this difference help explain variations in what is labeled as “questionable” advertising?

These focuses lead to a set of testable expectations: Russian respondents may be more likely to prioritize literal truthfulness and view misleading claims as more severe, while UK respondents may show higher trust in regulation and greater acceptance of creative license, without necessarily having lower ethical standards overall. Importantly, this does not assume that one group is morally superior. It assumes that the same ethical principles, like honesty and harm avoidance, can be weighted differently based on cultural communication norms and perceived institutional safeguards.

By outlining this framework, the literature review becomes more than just a summary of concepts. It justifies what is measured and why, clarifying how the latter findings should be interpreted. If differences emerge, they can be discussed as variations in ethical sensitivity, institutional reliance, or communicative tolerance, rather than as superficial cultural stereotypes. If no differences emerge, that result is also significant, as it would suggest a common ethical baseline in areas like harm prevention, supporting arguments that some ethical boundaries in advertising are widely recognized across societies (Pollay, 1986; Snyder, 2016). In this way, Chapter 3 builds a clear bridge to the practical analysis and lays the groundwork for coherent interpretation in the discussion section.

4 Practical Part

4.1 Overview of the questions and sampling

The first part of the practical part addresses how the questionnaire analysis functions in the context of this bachelor's thesis. Given the objective of illustrating the differences between the perception of ethics in advertising between the UK and Russia, the first step involved the creation of the questionnaire. The questions integrated into the questionnaire are available for inspection in the appendix to this bachelor's thesis, where they were tailored in such a way as to address the key objectives and cover the necessary domains.

The second step involved sampling, which became the hardest part. The complications of sampling originate from the fact that the author of the thesis is from the Russian Federation, which allowed her to easily capture just one part of the sample. On the other hand, getting in touch with respondents from the UK was complicated due to the lack of acquaintances and channels of communication with the target group.

Nevertheless, the author was able to use means of internet communication, namely Facebook, where she sent a particular message to random people above 16 participating in thematic groups related to the UK (for instance, football fans of given British clubs and people commenting on publications on major enterprises' public pages, such as Sephora and McDonald's). Figure 2 demonstrates the message that was distributed to British people.

Figure 2. Engaging message to British people.



Source: own processing on Facebook

Therefore, the type of sampling used in the case of the British audience was convenience sampling. Consequently, the type of sampling used in the case of the Russian audience was the snowball sampling, which initially involved engaging with a group of acquaintances, who later on redistributed the original questionnaire link. The analysis was taking place in February 2026, and 100 participants were selected as the cut-off for investigative purposes. The survey is, therefore, not representative since it cannot represent the entire population of people in Russia and the UK over 16 with just 50 participants each, but it illustrates important insights and tendencies, which can lay a foundation for further work, potentially by the same author on her master's studies.

Google Forms became the main platform that allowed the collection of the responses, and Figure 3 presents a glimpse of the collected data. The collected data was then analyzed using Google Sheets, which was equally used for visualizations. The subsequent sub-section continues with the gradual breaking down of all the answers of the respondents to the provided questions.

Figure 3. Part of the dataset with answers.

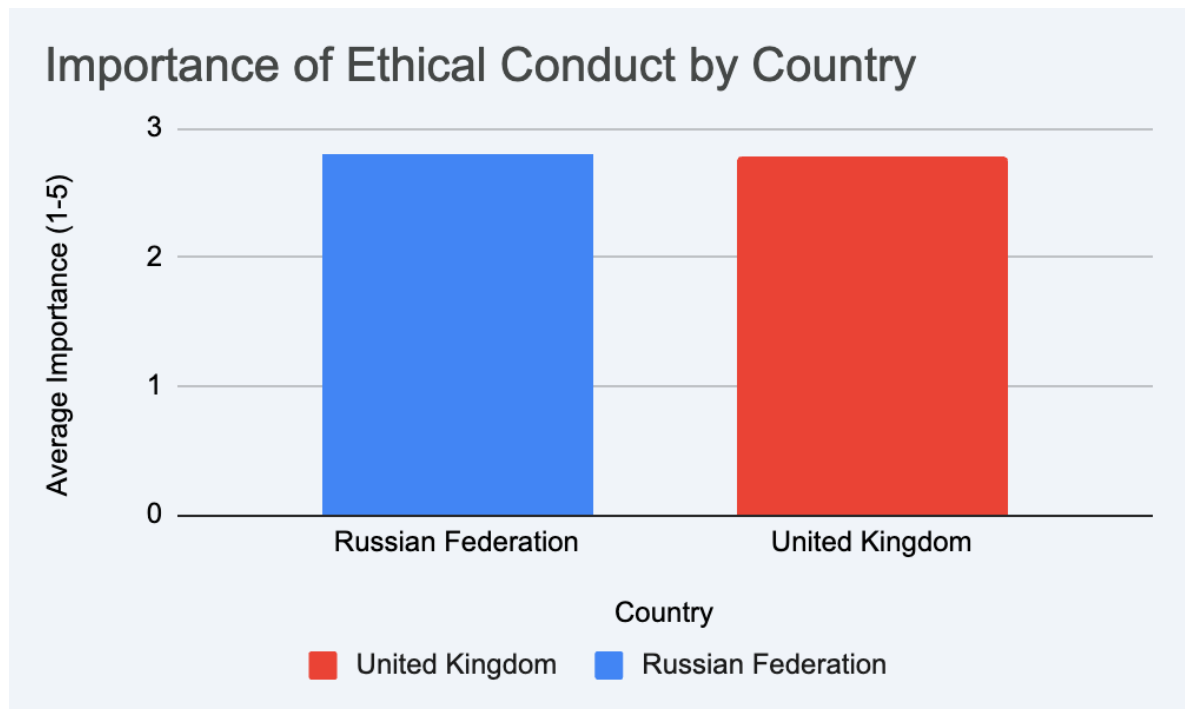
In which country do you currently reside? ▾	What is your gender? ▾	What is your level of education? ▾	What is your age range? ▾
Russian Federation	Female	Elementary/Middle/High School education	25-39
Russian Federation	Female	Elementary/Middle/High School education	39-55
Russian Federation	Female	Elementary/Middle/High School education	>55
Russian Federation	Female	Elementary/Middle/High School education	>55
Russian Federation	Female	Elementary/Middle/High School education	39-55
Russian Federation	Female	Elementary/Middle/High School education	39-55
Russian Federation	Female	Elementary/Middle/High School education	17-24
Russian Federation	Female	Elementary/Middle/High School education	39-55
Russian Federation	Male	Elementary/Middle/High School education	39-55
United Kingdom	Male	Elementary/Middle/High School education	>55
United Kingdom	Male	Elementary/Middle/High School education	17-24
United Kingdom	Male	Elementary/Middle/High School education	25-39
United Kingdom	Male	Elementary/Middle/High School education	25-39
United Kingdom	Male	Elementary/Middle/High School education	25-39
United Kingdom	Male	Elementary/Middle/High School education	39-55

Source: own processing in Google Sheets

4.2 Questionnaire analysis

Figure 4 starts the questionnaire analysis with the introduction of the answers of the respondents from the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom to the question about the importance of ethical conduct.

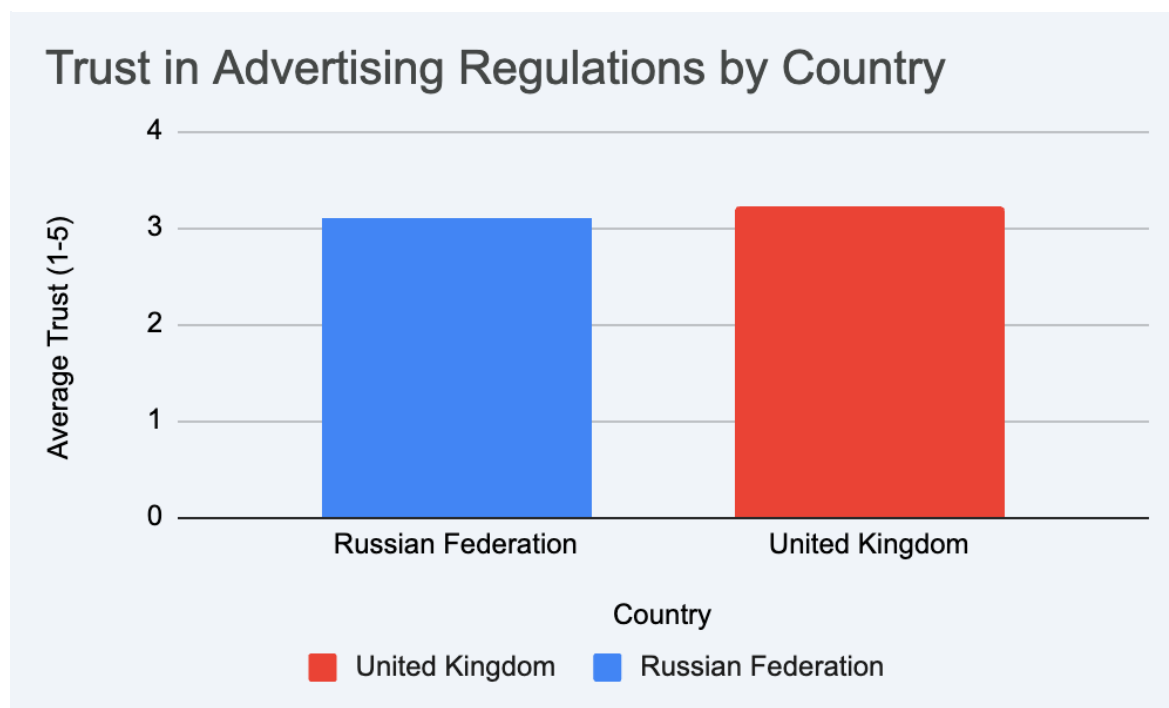
Figure 4. Importance of ethical conduct in advertising by country.



Source: own processing in Google Sheets

The first chart shows a stricter view in the Russian Federation with respect to ethical considerations, compared to the United Kingdom. In the UK, the most common response is "Moderately Severe" at 38%. In contrast, responses in Russia lean more toward higher severity. Thirty percent see misleading claims as "Very Severe," while only 8% in the UK share this view. This indicates that Russian consumers may not tolerate exaggerated product benefits as much, which can be tied to the more traditional standard of living in the Russian Federation. Figure 5 continues the overview of the trust in advertising legislation by country.

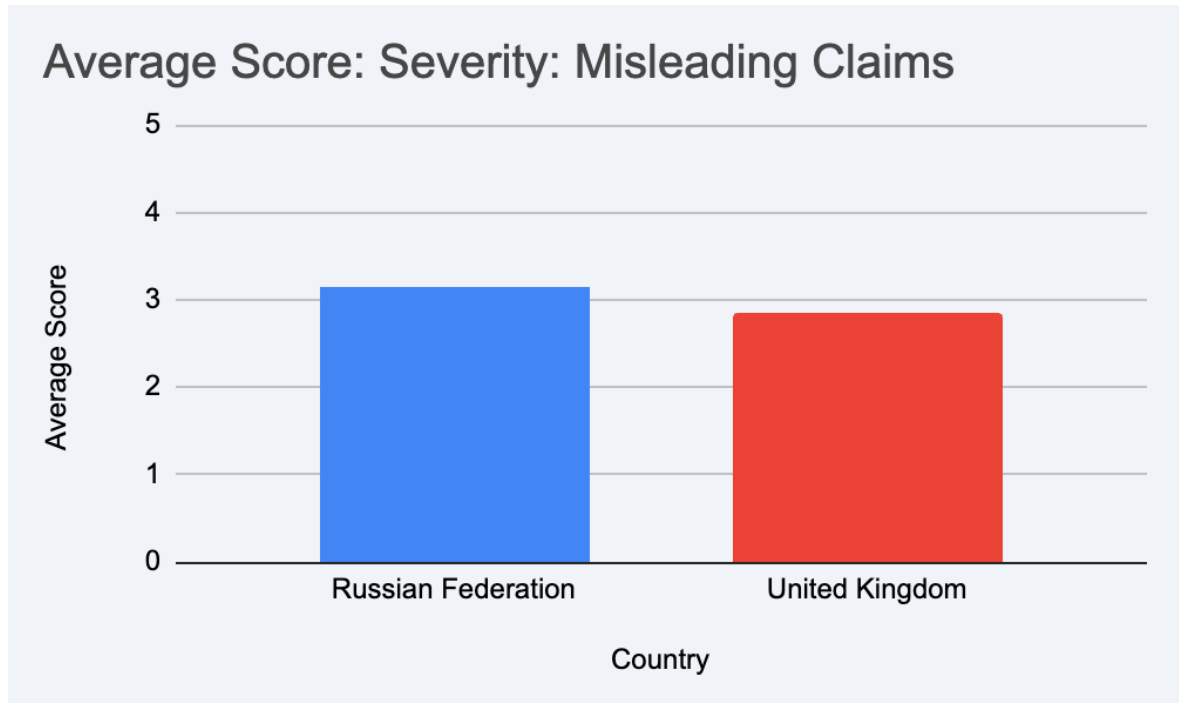
Figure 5. Trust in advertising regulations by country.



Source: own processing in Google Sheets

Similar to the earlier presented finding, trust levels are quite comparable. The UK (3.22) shows a marginally higher level of trust in its current advertising regulations than the Russian Federation (3.10). This indicates that respondents in both countries have a "cautiously optimistic" to neutral stance toward the effectiveness of their national regulators in protecting consumers. Figure 6 continues the presentation of the evaluation of the personal severity of misleading claims in advertisements by country.

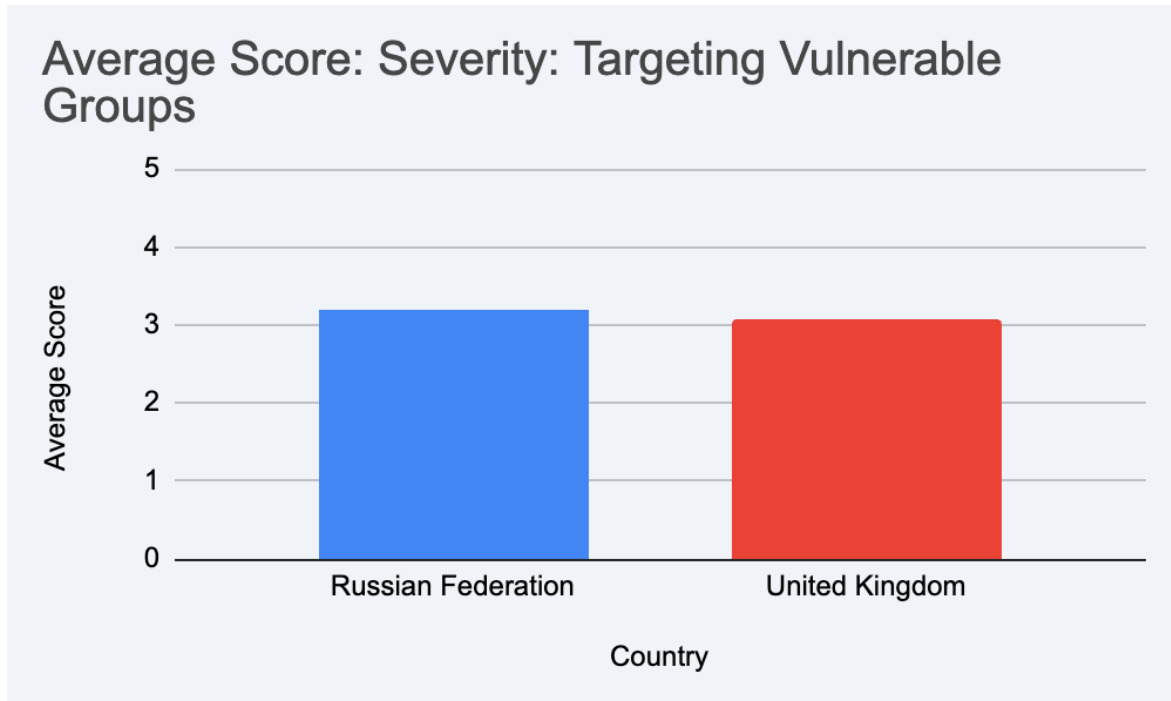
Figure 6. Evaluation of the severity of misleading claims by country.



Source: own processing in Google Sheets

Russian respondents rate the severity of misleading claims higher at 3.14 compared to their British counterparts at 2.84. This difference of 0.30 suggests that Russians may be more sensitive to, or perhaps more cynical about, deceptive marketing practices. Historically, Russian consumers have had to deal with rapidly changing markets where transparency wasn't always certain. This could have led to greater wariness about "fake" claims. In contrast, the UK's lower score might come from a strong regulatory system. This could make consumers believe that most claims are already checked, reducing the seriousness of any specific misleading advertisement they come across in their daily lives. Figure 7 proceeds to the visualization of the evaluation of the severity of targeting vulnerable groups by country.

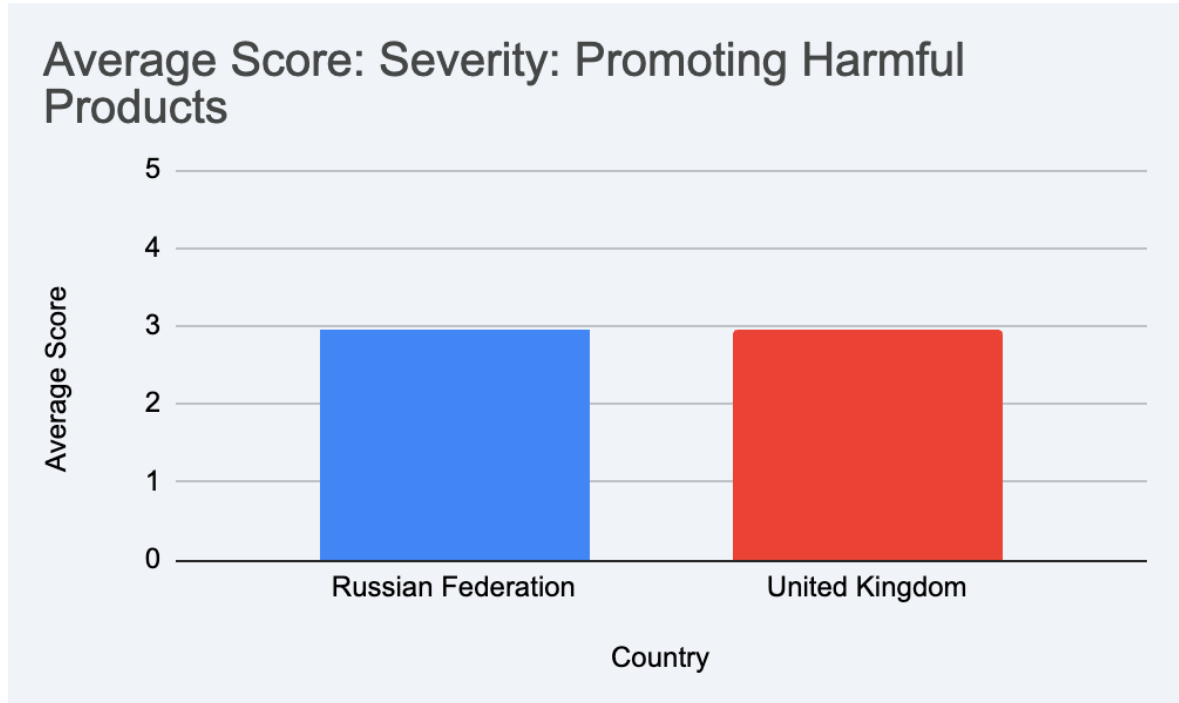
Figure 7. Evaluation of the severity of targeting vulnerable groups by country.



Source: own processing in Google Sheets

The perceived severity of targeting vulnerable groups is somewhat higher in Russia at 3.18, compared to 3.08 in the UK. Both nations consider this a moderately severe issue, but Russia's focus may show stronger traditional values about protecting children and the elderly in families. In the UK, although ethical standards are high, a more individualistic culture tends to place more responsibility on the consumer or guardian, which slightly reduces the perception of systemic severity. However, the narrow gap of 0.10 shows a wide cross-cultural agreement that exploiting those who are less able to defend themselves is a serious ethical violation in advertising. Subsequently, Figure 8 presents the evaluation of the severity of promoting harmful products by country.

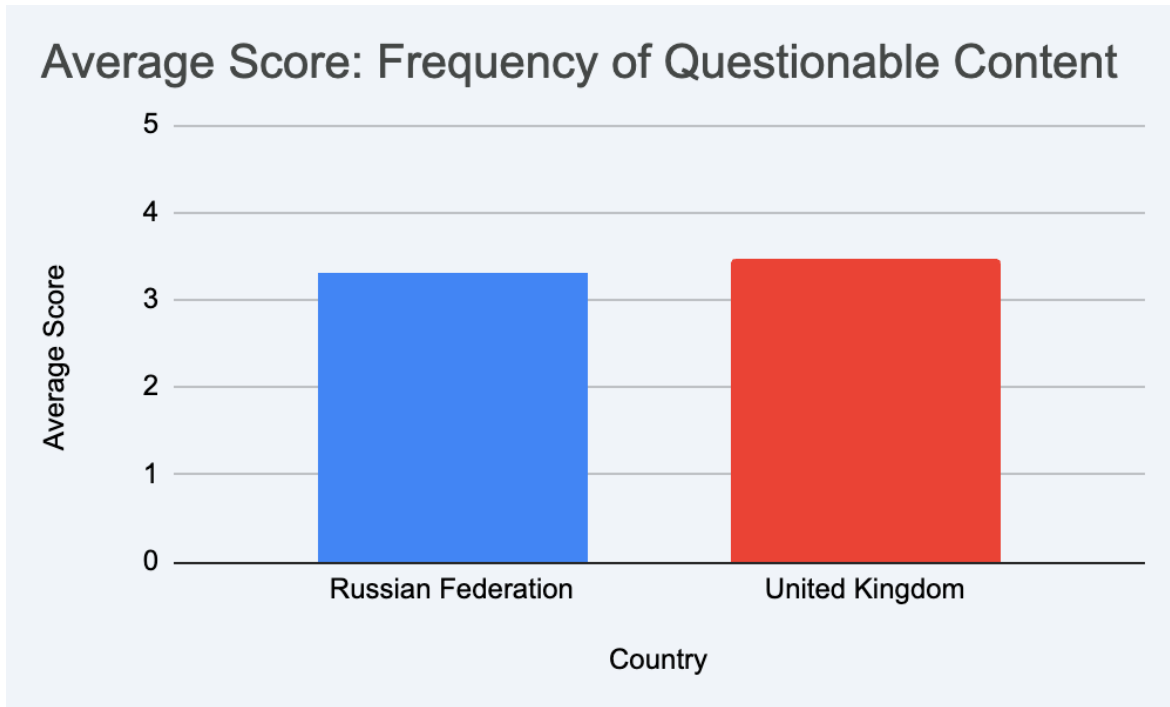
Figure 8. Evaluation of the severity of promoting harmful products by country.



Source: own processing in Google Sheets

Both the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom have the same average score of 2.96 for how serious they think promoting harmful products is. This strong similarity suggests that there is a common ethical baseline about promoting goods that may cause physical or social harm. This agreement likely goes beyond cultural differences and comes from a basic human concern for safety and health. Whether it involves tobacco, alcohol, or other restricted items, people in both countries seem to expect advertisers to meet the same standards of responsibility. They view the promotion of these products with a steady level of moderate concern in both societies. Figure 9 demonstrates the respondents' frequency of coming across questionable content.

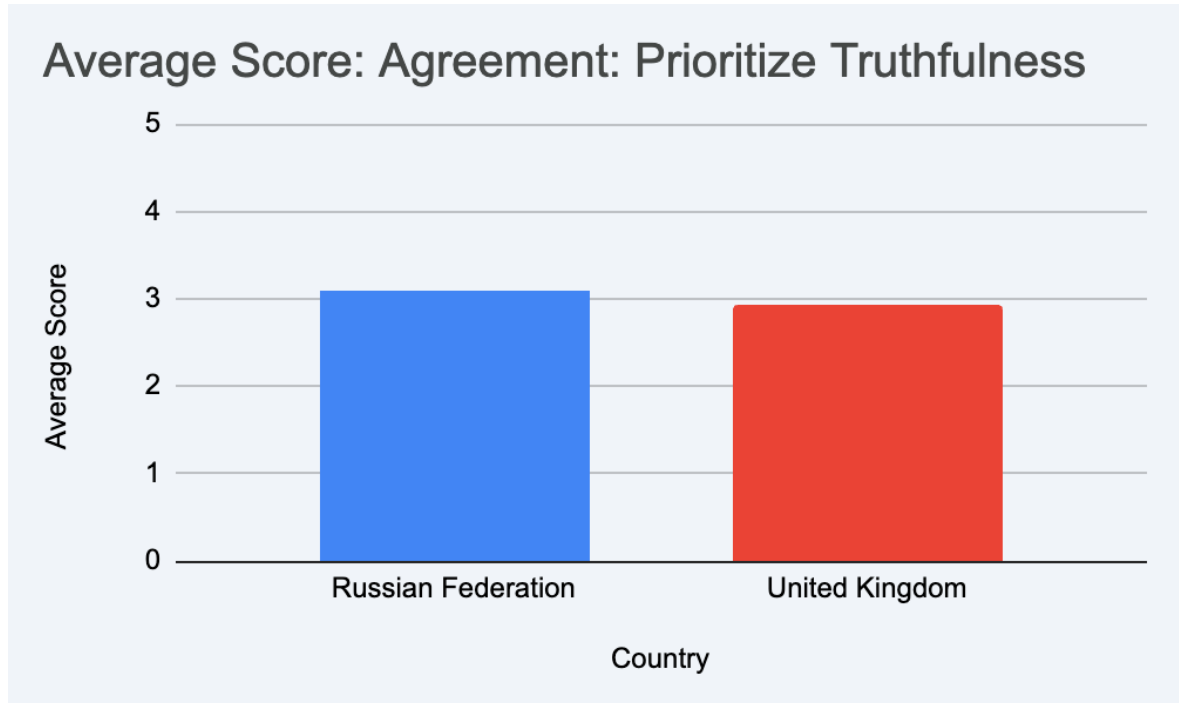
Figure 9. Frequency of coming across questionable content by country.



Source: own processing in Google Sheets

Respondents in the United Kingdom report encountering questionable content more often, with a score of 3.46, compared to those in Russia, who have a score of 3.30. This could mean two things: either the UK market has more unethical ads or British consumers are better at spotting them. The UK's crowded and varied media landscape may result in more frequent exposure to "gray area" content. Additionally, the British tendency for critical thinking and skepticism might also influence their perception, causing them to consider an advertisement "questionable" more than the Russian audience does with similar content. Figure 10 shows the average score for the prioritization of truthfulness in advertising.

Figure 10. Prioritizing truthfulness over creative license by country.



Source: own processing in Google Sheets

Russia shows a higher agreement score of 3.10 for prioritizing truthfulness over creative license compared to the UK score of 2.92. This suggests that Russian consumers may place a greater value on literal accuracy, possibly as a defense against historical propaganda or misleading marketing practices. In contrast, the UK's lower score might indicate a cultural appreciation for wit, irony, and exaggeration in advertising. British consumers may find creative exaggerations entertaining, as long as they aren't blatant lies. Meanwhile, the Russian audience seems to favor a more direct, truth-first approach to brand messaging and product marketing.

Subsequently, Table 1 presents the summary of the visualized questions for a better comprehension of the analytics.

Table 1. Summary of the averages by country.

Metric	Russian Federation	United Kingdom
Importance of Ethical Conduct	2.8	2.78
Severity: Misleading Claims	3.14	2.84
Severity: Targeting Vulnerable Groups	3.18	3.08
Severity: Promoting Harmful Products	2.96	2.96
Trust in Advertising Regulations	3.1	3.22
Frequency of Questionable Content	3.3	3.46
Agreement: Prioritize Truthfulness	3.1	2.92

Source: own processing in Google Sheets

The summary table shows an interesting picture of ethical perception. Both nations are close to the neutral midpoint across most metrics. No single category has extreme scores, which suggests a balanced, though somewhat cautious, view of advertising ethics. Russia scores higher on perceived severity and the importance of truth. In contrast, the UK has higher trust in regulation and reports more encounters with questionable ads. This indicates that Russian consumers are more vigilant and literal, while the British audience is more exposed to various content and depends more on regulatory structures to handle ethical boundaries. Lastly, Table 2 shows the differences between the countries in their averages, which finalizes the analytical part of the bachelor's thesis.

Table 2. Summary of the differences between the countries.

Metric	Russian Federation	United Kingdom
Importance of Ethical Conduct	2.8	2.78
Severity: Misleading Claims	3.14	2.84
Severity: Targeting Vulnerable Groups	3.18	3.08
Severity: Promoting Harmful Products	2.96	2.96
Trust in Advertising Regulations	3.1	3.22
Frequency of Questionable Content	3.3	3.46
Agreement: Prioritize Truthfulness	3.1	2.92

Source: own processing in Google Sheets

Table 2 shows that the biggest gap is in how misleading claims are seen, with a score of -0.30, and the importance of truthfulness, at -0.18. Russia ranks highest in both areas. This highlights a strong cultural need for factual integrity in the Russian market. In contrast, the UK experiences more questionable content, with a score of 0.16, and has more trust in regulation, at 0.12. This suggests a more crowded and regulated advertising landscape that is also ethically complex. The equal score in the "harmful products" metric reminds us that some ethical standards are shared, despite the different social or historical backgrounds of these countries.

5 Results and Discussion

The main goal of this thesis was to examine how consumers in Russia and the United Kingdom view the ethical aspects of advertising and how these views shape their attitudes toward advertising practices. The questionnaire results show that ethical issues are moderately important in both cultures, with only slight differences in how much importance they place on ethical conduct. This finding matches Snyder's (2016) argument that ethics in advertising is now seen as a basic expectation rather than something extraordinary, especially in developed advertising markets. While neither group held extreme views, Russian respondents rated ethical issues as slightly more serious. This suggests they interpret advertising ethics more literally, reflecting the historically lower level of consumer trust in market communication noted by Mann (1993).

One key research question focused on how people perceive misleading claims in advertising. The findings indicate that Russian respondents viewed misleading claims as more serious than their British counterparts. This aligns with Drumwright and Murphy's (2009) observation that previous exposure to deceptive practices shapes ethical sensitivity. In transitional economies like Russia, where market institutions have developed quickly and unevenly, consumers may approach advertising with skepticism. In contrast, British respondents found misleading claims to be less serious, supporting Kotler and Keller's (2016) idea that strong regulatory environments can lower perceived risks by shifting responsibility from individual consumers to institutional oversight.

Another objective was to assess attitudes toward targeting vulnerable groups in advertising. Both groups found this practice ethically concerning, with Russian respondents showing slightly higher severity. This alignment supports Kankel et al. (2004), who argue that protecting children and vulnerable audiences is a nearly universal ethical standard across cultures. The small difference in responses suggests that, despite cultural differences, some ethical boundaries in advertising are widely recognized. However, the slightly stronger reaction from Russian respondents may relate to collectivist cultural values highlighted by Hofstede (2001), where social responsibility toward family and dependents is more emphasized.

The views on promoting harmful products were almost identical in both countries. This indicates a shared ethical stance on health and safety issues, regardless of cultural background. Polley (1986) noted that advertising becomes ethically controversial when it seems to contribute to social harm. The current findings show that such concerns cross national lines. The lack of differences in this area implies that ethical judgments regarding physical well-being might be less influenced by culture than those related to persuasion style or emotional appeal.

Trust in advertising regulation emerged as another vital research topic. British respondents displayed slightly more trust in regulatory bodies than Russian respondents, reflecting the established role of the Advertising Standards Authority and the CAP Code in the UK, as Snyder (2016) discussed. This higher trust might explain why British consumers reported seeing questionable content more often while still having confidence in the system. As Drumwright and Murphy (2009) note, being aware of ethical violations doesn't necessarily harm trust if consumers believe that corrective measures work. In Russia, lower trust in regulation might make consumers more vigilant, leading them to evaluate advertising content more strictly on a personal level.

The UK reported a higher frequency of encountering questionable advertising content. This finding can be understood in two ways. First, the British advertising landscape is very saturated and diverse, increasing exposure to borderline content. Second, as Hofstede (2001) and Praesi et al. (2021) suggest, individualistic cultures often promote critical evaluation and open expression of ethical concerns, which might lead respondents to label content as questionable more easily. In contrast, Russian respondents may accept certain practices within culturally recognized emotional or symbolic frameworks, as Alawi and Suikashvili (2022) point out.

Lastly, the preference for truthfulness over creative expression highlighted a significant cultural difference. Russian respondents were more likely to agree that factual accuracy should come before exaggeration, while British respondents were more accepting of creative expression. This supports Goddard's (2002) observation that British advertising

often uses humor, irony, and metaphor, which are culturally accepted persuasive tools. On the other hand, the Russian preference for directness and clarity might stem from a historical focus on ideological messaging, leading to a greater demand for literal truth in commercial communication.

6 Conclusion

The main goal of this bachelor's thesis was to explore the ethical aspects of advertising. It aimed to clarify how ethical standards are defined and regulated, and to identify which advertising practices consumers view as unethical. Another goal was to examine how unethical elements in advertising affect consumers on cognitive and emotional levels, and how these perceptions influence purchasing behavior in Russian and English cultural contexts, specifically in Russia and the United Kingdom. Additionally, the thesis aimed to provide practical insights that could help companies create advertising strategies sensitive to different cultural environments.

The theoretical part showed that advertising works not just as a business tool but as a cultural and social phenomenon that reflects and shapes societal values. Ethics in advertising go beyond legal compliance; they include honesty, social responsibility, and respect for the audience. Cultural differences, particularly those explained by Hofstede's cultural dimensions, were identified as a key factor affecting how ethical boundaries in advertising are perceived. The literature review also emphasized that ethical advertising builds consumer trust and long-term brand value, whereas unethical practices might yield short-term gains but harm reputations.

In the practical part of the thesis, a questionnaire survey was conducted among Russian and British consumers to address these objectives. The results revealed that ethical considerations are viewed as somewhat important in both countries, indicating a shared expectation that advertising should meet certain moral standards. However, clear differences emerged in how specific ethical issues were assessed. Russian respondents consistently rated misleading claims, targeting vulnerable groups, and the importance of truthfulness more harshly than British respondents. These findings suggest a stronger demand for factual accuracy and transparency in the Russian market, likely influenced by historical experiences with unreliable information and lower trust in institutions.

On the other hand, British respondents showed a bit more trust in advertising regulation and reported encountering questionable advertising content more often. This may

reflect the UK's diverse and saturated advertising environment, as well as greater reliance on regulatory bodies like the Advertising Standards Authority to uphold ethical standards. The British audience also appeared more accepting of creative exaggeration, aligning with cultural norms that value humor, irony, and expressive freedom in communication.

A key shared outcome from both groups was their similar assessment of the seriousness of promoting harmful products. This finding highlights that concerns about health and safety create a common ethical ground that crosses cultural boundaries. It supports the idea that certain ethical principles in advertising are universal, regardless of national or cultural context.

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8.3 List of abbreviations

UK	United Kingdom
ASA	Advertising Standards Authority
PR	Public Relations

Appendix

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. **In which country do you currently reside?**
 - Russian Federation
 - United Kingdom
2. **What is your gender?**
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other / Prefer not to say
3. **What is your level of education?**
 - Elementary / Middle / High School education
 - University or higher
4. **What is your age range?**
 - 17-24
 - 25-39
 - 39-55
 - >55

Section 2: General Perceptions

1. **How important is ethical conduct in advertising to you personally?**
 - *Scale: 1 (Not important at all) to 5 (Extremely important)*
2. **How much do you trust the current advertising regulations in your country to protect consumers?**
 - *Scale: 1 (Do not trust at all) to 5 (Trust completely)*
3. **To what extent do you believe advertisers in your country take ethical concerns seriously?**
 - *Scale: 1 (Not seriously at all) to 5 (Extremely seriously)*

Section 3: Severity of Unethical Practices

For the following practices, please rate the perceived severity in your country (Scale: Not Severe, Slightly Severe, Moderately Severe, Very Severe, Extremely Severe):

- 1. Misleading claims about product benefits**
- 2. Targeting vulnerable groups (e.g., children, elderly)**
- 3. Use of excessive fear or shock tactics**
- 4. Unclear or hidden terms and conditions**
- 5. Promoting harmful or illegal products/services**

Section 4: Advertising Acceptance and Frequency

- 1. In your opinion, which of the following is most often acceptable in advertising?**

(Select all that apply)

- Mild exaggeration (puffery)
- Emotional appeals (e.g., sentimentality)
- Use of aspirational imagery (luxury, status)
- Sexually suggestive but non-explicit content
- None of the above are acceptable

- 2. How often do you encounter advertising content that you consider ethically questionable?**

- Do not encounter at all
- Couple of times per year
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Daily

Section 5: Ethical Statements Agreement

Please rate your agreement with the following statements (Scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree):

1. **Advertising should prioritize truthfulness over creative license.**
2. **Cultural sensitivity should always be a primary consideration in international advertising.**
3. **Advertisements targeting children require stricter ethical oversight.**