EXPLORING ACCOUNT MANAGERS' ETHICAL PERCEPTIONS:

WHERE IS THE LINE AND HOW SHOULD WE REACT

_____

A Fall 2019 Project

presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

at the University of Missouri-Columbia

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements of the Degree

Master of Arts

_____

by

MAOYAN WEI

Prof. Jonathan Stemmle, Project Chair

Dr. Brett G. Johnson, Committee Member

DECEMBER 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I'd like to thank my committee, Professor Stemmle and Dr. Johnson. Thank you for your help and patience throughout the process of me doing the project.

A big thanks to Nanova Inc. where I had my first marketing internship this semester, for offering me an awesome opportunity to learn about digital marketing and giving me enough freedom for me to try different things.

Thank all my interview participants for spending time sharing their opinions with me.

Thank you, Mizzou J-School, for teaching me all kinds of things about strategic communication and advertising.

Finally, I want to thank my parents. Although we live in different time zones, you two are always here when I need you. You constantly encouraged me to do my internship and write this report. I couldn't have done this without your continuous support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter One: Introduction

My interest in advertising ethics was first stimulated when I started taking the Media Ethics course at Mizzou. This class mainly discussed ethical issues in journalism. It briefly went through advertising and public relations ethics in one class, but I was still surprised that ethical issues in the field of advertising was much more complex than what I expected. Despite the complexity, I seldom received education on advertising ethics at school during my one year study of strategic communication. However, now I do see the need to stress the importance of this topic.

My project combines my interests in ethics and the ethical theories I learned in the Media Ethics class with my area of study. During the past year, I've spent most of my time focusing on how to create good visual content and how to do marketing. It is now time to transition to a serious examination of ethics in advertising.

In daily life, common discussions about advertising ethics are focused on the possible influence advertisements might have on our society, which are mostly from the viewpoints of consumers and citizens. However, what do things look from the perspective of account managers? What are they thinking about when ethical issues arise?

I gained more insights of account managers' perceptions of ethics through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with account managers to examine their attitudes toward advertising ethics and discover their approaches to such issues. In addition, organizational influence on their decision-making process was also explored.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Billboards on highways, flyers in your mailbox, the slides of buses, TV commercials, internet pop ups… advertisements surround us wherever we go. For a typical American adult, ad exposures range from 600 to 625 per day (Media Matters, 2007). If brand exposures are included (e.g. passing a label in a grocery store), according to a research conducted by the marketing firm Yankelovich, this number could go up to roughly 5,000.

As technology advances, an individual receives a large amount of information daily, undoubtedly making the competition among businesses even fiercer. Under this circumstance, today's advertising companies and their clients are trying all possible methods to win over consumers' limited attention. However, while shouting to be heard, advertisers sometimes neglect the fact that they also need to show their responsibility to stakeholders to ensure sustainability. Several researchers have found that advertising practitioners, at times, fail to identify ethical dilemmas, or they choose not to exercise the ethical reasoning abilities they have (Place, 2015; Drumwright and Murphy, 2004). In addition to that, only 11 percent of the responses rate advertisers highly for their ethics. With industry's moral myopia and the public's distrust of this profession, maintaining a good reputation now seems extremely challenging for many advertising agencies. Today, it is more important than ever to address the importance of ethics in advertising.

Ethics has long been a mainstream topic in advertising research (Hyman, Tansley, and Clark, 1994), yet few studies have directly explored the views of industry

practitioners. Previous studies discussed advertising ethics mainly from two angles: the perspective of law and the perspective of morality (Drumwright, 1993). Lawyers and regulators are concerned about what advertisers can and cannot do. For example, what is the bottom line of online behavior targeting (Nill and Aalberts, 2014). Meanwhile, philosophers and sociologists pay relatively more attention to the possible influences advertising exerts on our society. For example, research about healthcare advertising and discussions about the perpetuation of stereotypes or unbridled materialism (Brenkert, 1998; Zayer and Coleman, 2014; Schenker, Arnold and London, 2014).

Both perspectives – laws and morality – tell the story happening on the macro level, but it is hard to know what things look like on the micro level – to recognize advertising practitioners' perception of ethics and their decision-making process when the ethical problems arise. There are several studies examining advertisers' perceptions of ethics, but most of them used scenario analysis or a survey, which might limit the measurement (e.g. Pratt and James, 1994; Moon and Franke, 2000). One notable researcher interviewed 51 advertising practitioners in person, and discovered that many of them have difficulty identifying ethical problems or seeing them clearly (Drumwright and Murphy, 2004). This research identified the moral muteness in the advertising industry, but how does that look today, 15 years after that original study? Therefore, instead of focusing on social dimensions, my project is going to interview advertisers and discover their perceptions of ethics. In addition, it is also going to examine the organizational impact on an individual's decision-making process.

Theoretical Framework

Business ethics is defined as "moral rules, standards, codes, or principles which provide guidelines for right and truthful behavior in specific situations" (Lewis, 1985). Unlike the study of ethics being an ancient tradition, the study of business ethics did not evolve into a popular discussion until the concept became widespread in the 1970s (De George, 2006).

Previous studies related to advertising ethics have not usually been theory-driven (Hunt and Choko, 1987). However, almost all ethical theories can be classified as either deontological or teleological and studies of ethical action "cannot ignore the classical approaches of deontology and teleology" (Lambeth, 1986). Deontology is a duty-based approach, emphasizing whether the motives behind certain actions are right or wrong, while teleology focus on what is good as an end to be achieved (Vallentyne, 1987; MacDonald and Beck-Dudley, 1994). My project would select one notable theory for each category - Kantianism for deontology and John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism for teleology - to analysis interviewees' responses.

German philosopher Immanuel Kant believed that there was a supreme rational principle that could help us make decisions. He referred to it as the categorical imperative, that one should "act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law (Kant, 2002)." This theory is an example of deontological approaches – omitting an action out of duty, regardless of the purposes to be achieved.

When it comes to the decision-making process in the advertising world, deontology-based values such as Kant's theory strongly support opinions or actions that

strictly restrict conveying deceptive information to consumers (Kim et al., 2017). Strict deontological ethics help practitioners identify the precise boundaries of actions (Michaels et al, 1988). For example, should an advertiser lie to the client? The thinking process would be: If I lie, other advertisers can also lie. If all advertisers are lying to their clients, that'd ruin the reputation of our profession. Therefore, I should not lie to the client. Additionally, Kant believes that we should not treat people as a mere means to an end. This also backs up the decision of not to lie to the client because we do not wish to use people as a tool to achieve our goal of making profits.

However, deontology-based values might cause conflicts when the advertising agencies try to maximize profits. Some researches indicate that the deontological approach is not a preferable choice for advertising practitioners because it is against the reality (Pratt and James, 1994). Besides, German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel once criticized Kant's theory of ethics, saying it does not offer a clear guideline for assessing moral conduct. In the real world, the nature of advertising perpetuates a paradox: practitioners often work in a "grey area" where the boundaries between right and wrong are not clear enough (Dubinsky et al, 1991). For advertisers in the United States, ethics is situational (Fritzsche, 1991). In a survey, 78 percent of respondents said most advertising executives would lie about an update on an account (Pratt and James, 1994).

On contrary to Kant' categorical imperative, John Stuart Mill offered another approach to make decisions, which is utilitarianism. Under this theory, the moral worth of one's action is determined by the amount of happiness, and for the greatest number of good (Elliott, 2007). Mill believes that sometimes it is better for individuals to be harmed

while sometimes not. The only metrics, instead of the motives behind certain actions, is the "aggregate good" – the overall benefits for the community as a whole.

Unlike deontological approaches, teleology-based values support the relaxation of regulations of advertising and allows more controversial subjects appear in advertisements. For example, utilitarianism consider sex appeal and puffery in creative strategy as effective methods to increase consumers' understanding about a brand or increase their happiness index (Kim et al., 2017).

Under this theory, let's go back to the question of if an advertiser should lie to the client. If we walk through this same question using the utilitarian decision tree, we would analyze the specific case and ask ourselves whether the action causes any harm. If so, is the person harmed getting what he/she deserves? How will harming this individual promote the overall good of the community? Under this theory, lying to clients, in some conditions, is not necessarily a bad thing.

Based on deontology and teleology, the first research question was formed:

RQ1: How do account managers make decisions when ethical issues arise?

What is Advertising?

Having defined the ethical framework, the next step is to define advertising. The definition of advertising has been evolving over the years, and various understandings derive from different perspectives: consumers consider all forms of commercial promotional activity as advertising (Schultz, 1995) while industry practitioners say certain actions that help promotions, such as public relations, are not advertising (Rust and Oliver 1994).

Not only have customers and advertising practitioners argued about it, but scholars have also struggled to agree on an exact definition to advertising due to the ever-changing working environment. Advertising has two central functions, that of informing and that of persuading consumers (Santilli, 1983). The defenders of advertising tend to stress the importance of the informative function, which provides the information about products and services to customers. On the contrary, critics of advertising lay their eyes on the persuasive function, saying that the ultimate goal of advertising is to entice customers to buy the product (Santilli, 1983).

Given the ongoing argument, a previous study (Richards and Curran, 2002) tried to identify the steady characteristics of advertising that everyone could agree on. Researchers sent out three waves of questionnaires to both advertising practitioners and scholars, asking their opinions about how we should define advertising. Results found that respondents generally felt the paid element must be retained, and this was essential to set advertising apart from other forms of communication, such as public relations. Eventually, the study provided a definition revised by both practitioners and scholars:

"Advertising is a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future."

Based on the definition, there are two key items involved in the process of advertising: the information from the source to convey and the actual approaches to convey the information. Therefore, advertisers have two types of relationships to deal with: the relationship with clients and that with consumers. For my project, I am going to mainly focus on practitioners working in the account management department.

Ethical dilemmas in advertising

The limited number of studies about advertising practitioners' general perception toward ethics reveal that there is a gap between aspects of advertising ethics the scholars hope to study in the future and the actual dilemmas the practitioners are facing in the real world. For example, a study (Hyman, Tansey and Clark, 1994) mailed questionnaires to advertising researchers to find out what are the best opportunities for research on advertising ethics. Based on the responses, the study identified six important topics for the future research as following:

1) *The need for better measures related to ethics;*

2) *Use of deception;*

3) *Advertising to children;*

4) *Ads for legal vices;*

5) *Negative political ads;*

6) *Stereotyping in ads.*

It is clear that these topics are largely related to the social dimension. Meanwhile, another study (Hunt and Choko, 1987) mailed questionnaires to 3,064 top-level advertising agency executives, and the researchers recognized the most often reported ethical problems facing advertising practitioners:

1) *Treating clients fairly. For example, balancing clients' needs against agency needs;*

2) *Creating honest, non-misleading, socially desirable advertisements;*

3) *Representing clients whose product/services are unhealthy, unneeded, useless, or unethical;*

4) Treating suppliers, vendors and media fairly;

5) Treating employees and management of agency fairly;

6) Treating other agencies fairly.

For this survey, only 24 percent of respondents mentioned things about actual advertisement's content when talking about ethical issues. Most categories that they were concerned about dealt with relationships with stakeholders (Hunt and Chonko, 1987). The problem with this is that ethical studies in advertising have historically been examined from a macro perspective, but the firm-level scenarios has been neglected. (Hunt and Chonko, 1987). Moreover, the American Advertising Federation's code of ethics also failed to match advertisers' needs. Instead of looking at ethical issues related to relationships with stakeholders, the code of ethics focuses on truth telling, and many of its principles stress the importance to avoid bad consequences of advertising on society (Pratt and James, 1994).

Therefore, exploring ethics in advertising from the perspective of industry practitioners is essential to the future development of this profession. Based on this, the second research question is:

RQ2: What are the ethical issues facing account managers?

Organizational impact on individual's decisions

In a previous study (Drumwright and Murphy, 2004), researchers identified moral muteness (people successfully identify ethical issues but choose to

remain silent) and moral myopia (people fail to identify ethical issues) when it comes to advertising practitioners' perceptions of ethics. However, notable exceptions also emerged: there were a group of practitioners who successfully recognized ethical issues and were willing to discuss them with colleges for advice in their daily work. It turned out that those practitioners were encouraged by organizational cultures and climate to share their thoughts about ethics and help each other deal with ethical issues.

Organizational climate refers to the "shared perceptions of organizational policies, practices, and procedures, both formal and informal" (Reichers and Schneider, 1990). An open organizational culture where employees are adequately informed about matters that concern them can help them make decisions (Shadur et al., 1999). However, there are still plenty of advertising agencies that do not provide guidance on ethics. In a survey that drew a sample from Forbes 500 companies, results show that ethics regarding advertising ranked the lowest, with just about 25 percent of the firms indicating they have codes incorporated guidance on ethics in advertising, and a possible reason for the lack of attention to advertising ethics in policy is that creating advertisements that depict high levels of ethics is not a major objective compared to the goal of selling products (Murphy, 1998). Many ad executives have also realized that if ethical misconduct is not sanctioned, it could encourage more ethical issues to occur (Singer, 1992).

Meanwhile, practitioners are expecting ethical guidance from their organizations. In a study (Pratt and James, 1994), researchers provided industry practitioners with four specific ethical dilemmas to test their attitudes towards ethics. Most respondents indicated that their firm did not address these situations formally in a policy to guide its employees, but they do expect to have codes of ethics.

Therefore, it would be interesting to talk to advertising practitioners to see if their firms have related codes of ethics, and whether that influences their decision-making process, which leads to my third research question:

RQ3: Does organizational climate have an impact on an individual's ethical decisions?

Chapter Three: Professional Analysis

Participants

The participants for this study included one senior account executive, three account executives, three assistant account executives, two account supervisors and one account coordinator. All participants were asked 12 basic questions covering career history, job description, ethical issues and solutions, values and organizational culture. Participants' current companies ranged from advertising agencies in Minneapolis, St. Louis, Chicago, Dallas, Tampa, Kansas City and New York City. Participants' work history as an account person varied from five months to five years and their experience level ranged from entry level to senior professionals in the industry. To create a comfortable environment for participants to talk freely and to obtain valid interview data, their real names and other identifiable information including employer names and workplace names were not disclosed in the study. Besides, I did not interview anyone at the agency where I did my project.

Methods

Among all the qualitative methods, interviewing has been a vital one in mass communication research, (Holloway and Wheeler, 2010). For my project, I used semi-structured interviews to directly explore account managers' perception of ethics. The nature of semi-structured interviews gave my study more flexibility. Unlike unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews require the interviewer to have a question list

before the conversation starts, but at the same time, the interviewers can seek new path during the process if he/she wants to (Gray 2004).

I conducted 10 interviews and they were enough to provide me sufficient information. Qualitative research will hit a point of saturation where incoming data produces little new information after a certain number of interviews are conducted (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Researchers discovered that 70 percent of the themes identified turned up in the first six interviews, and 92 percent were covered within the first 12 interviews (Guest, et al., 2006). Other researchers also confirmed similar conclusions, saying that five to six semi-structured interviews can cover most concepts and over 80 percent of themes could be identified within 10 interviews (Morgan et al., 2002; Francis, et al., 2010; Namey, et al., 2016).

As for interview tools, given the fact that the locations of participants' companies varied a lot, I spoke with 10 account managers via phone calls. Research shows that conducting a phone interview increases respondents' perception anonymity, which is good for sensitive topics like ethics (Greenfield et al., 2000).

The 10 interviews were transcribed after they were completed. I managed to keep the conversation authentic while omitting words such as "like", "you know", "umm" or incomplete sentences that were meaningless.

Findings

Analysis of interviews produced three different perspectives to explore account managers' ethical perceptions: ethical issues facing account managers, individual values

and organizational impact on individuals. These elements influenced how account managers viewed advertising ethics and reacted to the ethical issues they encountered.

Ethical Issues Facing Account Managers

RQ1: What are the ethical issues facing account managers?

Account managers work as bridges between their creative teams and the clients. An account executive based in St. Louis described her work routine and indicated that this is not an easy job to do. According to interview #4,

"There isn't really a typical day (in the office), but I can run you through today at least. On a typical day, I will usually have at least two to three calls with a client. Sometimes those are just status calls, checking in on all the projects that we have going on at that time. But sometimes it's presentation. I also coordinate timelines with all of our creatives. Here to make sure everyone's hitting the date they need to hit in order for us to meet our larger deadlines with the clients. So that's like some of the bigger stuff I do throughout the day. And yeah, lots of other little things."

The content of this job determines that account managers are under pressure from both internal and external sources. Therefore, the ethical issues they encounter are also from both creative team and the client.
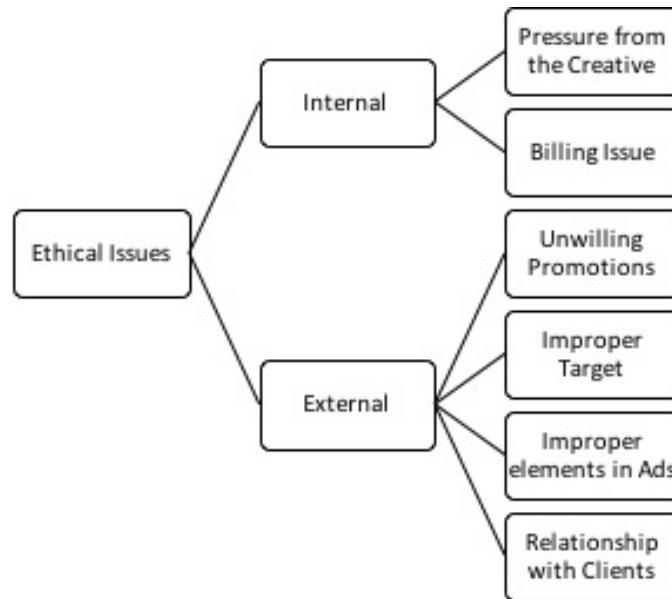
Figure 1. Ethical issues facing account managers

Externally speaking, clients sometimes pay advertising agencies to promote certain product that the account manager feels uncomfortable doing. For example, an assistant account executive working in St. Louis was once asked by the client to promote e-cigarettes. She said in interview #2,

> "I hadn't really thought about it before, but I kind of felt, you know, I didn't feel good about that. I didn't feel good about trying to persuade people to engage with that kind of lifestyle. So that's an example. There's been things like that."

Such pressure is also a game changer for account managers when they are trying to decide whether or not to start a new position at an agency. An account executive located in Tampa once turned down a job offer because the employer she interviewed with focused on pharmaceutical advertising. She stated in interview #5,

"I did not agree with some of what I've been tasked to do or clients that I would have had to work on at that agency. So I expressed my belief in that. Ultimately, I pulled out of that. I'm still young in this industry, but people come across clients that they may not agree with, like having to work for it. Even though I didn't end up working for those clients, you have the possibility of having to work for a pharmaceutical account pushing medicine that may not actually be necessary or beneficial. I just didn't want to put myself in that position."

Undoubtedly, promoting products such as e-cigarettes and medicine can be controversial. However, even if you feel comfortable promoting such products, sometimes the target your client is trying to reach can also make account managers think twice before they say yes. The account executive in St. Louis shared her experience in interview #4. Her agency mainly promotes alcohol and most of the time she is totally fine with it. However, there was an exception. According to her,

"There is one of my brands that is targeted at urban multicultural communities. I kind of felt a little iffy about that because you're targeting poor minorities, which feels very bad. But at the same time, you know, I don't think that there's malicious intent behind it. I think it's more like this is who is drinking it so that is why we're talking to them. But it has crossed my mind before like, Oh, is this right?"

In addition to controversial products and minority targets, elements such as race and ethnicity also needs to be taken into consideration by account managers while conducting campaigns. In interview #2, the assistant account executive said she ran into a situation where the client asked them to promote a dark stain cleaner, but in the

advertisement, two African American babies were featured in a messy kitchen, which made her feel terrible. She questioned if such promotion was perpetuating stereotypes. As an African American herself, she was also concerned about that kind of perception.

Another interesting point indicated by the interview data is that some clients may cross the line while trying to build relationships with account managers. One account executive working in Dallas has experienced this. In interview #3 she said,

> "My client added me on Facebook. I got friend requests from them. I got the responses to my Instagram stories. They were texting me on Friday night at 10 p.m. So there definitely was blurred line."

However, an account coordinator viewed this differently, saying that this shows the level of trust between an account person and the client. According to her in interview #10,

> "I think the reason that some of our internal team has that personal relationship is because they've been working with this client for a very long time. Some people at the agency and that have worked with a client that I work with for over 20 years. So I think it's more of that relationship had time to mature and grow. "

Each individual might have different interpretations in terms of the ethical issue with the relationship between account managers and their clients, but the first three cases are quite common.

Compared to ethical issues caused by clients, the internal pressure mainly from the creative team look even more complicated. A good account manager must be able to

compromise, but the account coordinator in Kansas City said that it was difficult not to ignore everyone's emotions, especially when she got a lot of different opinions and they were all valid. It can be very uncomfortable to be sandwiched between the clients and the creative team. The account person has to be careful when dealing with such issues. According to her,

> "I think the creatives take it very personally because when they create something and the client doesn't like it, you know, that is very personal because they created that. There's a lot of that tension that you have to navigate. You have to understand the emotion that went into the project from the creative side. Sometimes I think the creative team thinks that the account team takes the client side. It can sometimes be tricky."

> Similar opinions were seen in interview #4,

> "There's obviously a lot of disconnect between what both groups (clients and creatives) are interested in. So it's more like translating it and being careful about how you're setting it up. So I wouldn't go so far as to say I've ever had trouble with it, but I do have to be, you know, careful."

Another ethical issue is about billing clients. Three out of the nine participants mentioned this. The assistant account executive in St. Louis said that they would intentionally increase hours working on a project so they could make more money from the client. She said in interview #2,

"The technical part of account is hours. You know, what kind of time is being put into certain projects. I think that's an area where we've been forced to flub a little bit. Something is taking more hours than it should, and it's artful."

The account executive in Dallas also noticed her old company tended to estimate a billing number way more than they actually spent on projects. In interview #5, the participant expressed similar concern several times.

Personal Values

RQ2: How do account managers make decisions when ethical issues arise?

We all know how important the client is for advertising practitioners, but the interview data shows something different. Ten participants were asked to answer what they value the most while doing their job. Most account managers said they valued their company or their team the most. Only three of the participants answered "clients."
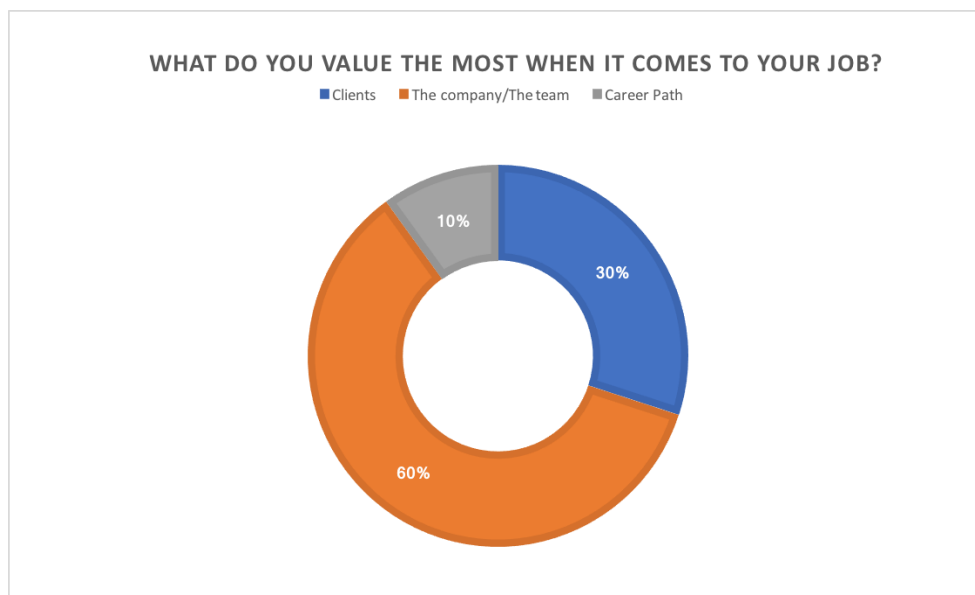

Figure 2. Personal Values Interview Result

The account coordinator based in Kansas City responded to this question in interview #10,

"I think I value the relationships internally the most. I think that's what can make or break a job if you don't like the people you work with, and you're not going to like the work and it's just all going to trickle down. But I think that at least having a good relationship with even a couple of people that you work with, can just make the entire experience."

The assistant account executive in St. Louis expressed different opinions. She said,

"I think as a general rule, we service our clients first. I would say that we're a client-first agency, but I think that we're able to kind of like serve ourselves in a way making sure that, you know, what we're doing is the best for them, but also the best for us and represent us in the best light."

Despite the fact that she put clients before the company, the ultimate goal here was still the best interests and the development of the company. No matter what their choices were, the goal stays the same. This might also be one of the reasons why the billing issues we discussed earlier would occur.

In other cases, account managers who valued their team or company the most were more likely to comment negatively on clients and might be less tolerant towards clients. For example, the account executive working in Dallas stated in interview #3,

"They are people that I work with every day, they are people that I care about. I'm at the agency because of them and the work that we do. And if I feel like at any moment that the work that we're doing and my people are being harmed to the process of it, then that's when I take issue with it. Currently, my client really... I hate my client. Yeah, right now, like literal nightmare. Nightmare. Everyone at the company goes insane. I'm pissed off."

What most account managers eventually want are interests of themselves, not that of their clients. This directly leads to participants' teleology-based decision-making process. They believe that as long as they avoid touching the base line, it is okay to "lie" to a client because eventually the client would be harmed getting what he/she deserves, and it saved the agency several rounds of negotiations and explanations.

When asked about whether or not the participant would exaggerate the speech to make the client accept their campaign ideas, some account managers responded without hesitation that it was normal for them to do so. However, they do this carefully, according to interview #5,

"For creative definitely. I think that it's kind of part of the business which just like getting them (clients) excited about something. I think there is definitely a line between just like kind of exaggerating something and lying about something. I think there is that fine line. So you always have to be careful not to exaggerate too much."

The account executive based in Florida also said that she would make up an excuse to buy her creative team more time if they couldn't meet the deadline. She mentioned that,

> "There have definitely been times when we're not going to meet a deadline. Maybe we exaggerate an excuse, and that was a little bit questionable. But for the most part I don't think of it as an ethical issue because in those cases I'm trying to do what's right for my team. So I'm making sure that they're taking care of time wise and they have enough time to get their work done."

Based on the interview data, what account managers value the most is not necessarily related to their industry experience, but their personal values do have an impact on their decision-making process. Valuing their team or their company the most seems to lead them to say things that were partly true to clients.

Organizational Impact

RQ3: Does organizational climate have an impact on an individual's ethical decisions?

According to OECD data, I defined the size of participants' advertising agencies, and immediately saw interesting results.

Interview #	Company Size	Code of Ethics?	Necessary to have a code of ethics?
1	Large	√	√
2	Medium	Not Sure	√
3	Micro	×	×
4	Small	×	×
5	Small	×	√
6	Medium	√	√
7	Large	√	√
8	Medium	√	√
9	Large	√	√
10	Medium	√	√

Figure 3. Interview information

Micro/small advertising agencies are less likely to obtain code of ethics compared to medium/large organizations. Besides, those who think it is unnecessary to have code of ethics are usually employees of micro/small advertising agencies. Therefore, account managers working at agencies that have a code of ethics tend to realize the importance of it.

Meanwhile, based on the interview data, participants from micro/small agencies encountered way more ethical issues. Their companies did not have a code of ethics so most of them failed to see what kind of guidance they could possibly gain from it. Among the three participants whose agencies didn't have a code of ethics, only one person expressed her preference for the code. She said in interview #5,

"I would prefer to be in an agency that did have a code of ethics. It's kind of more of like a new things that come about because ethics are important to me in my work. It would be ideal to work for a company that also has ethics."

Medium/large advertising companies not only have a code of ethics, they also provide their employees more support from all aspects and are dedicated to building a better environment for people to express themselves freely. The account coordinator in Kansas City said that the organization leader can contribute to the free environment by communicating with employees himself. She pointed out,

"I had my first review with the CEO of the agency a couple weeks ago. After 60 days, or maybe it's after 90 days at the agency, he does an internal review with you and ask what the company is doing well at and what they could do better. And he asked that we'd be very honest and very open. You know, he makes it clear that he's listening. "

An account supervisor based in St. Louis also works at a large advertising organization. He said his company just finished their first mental health week. He kept expressing his satisfaction about his company, as well as the employer, and he stayed optimistic about ethics in the industry in general,

"I actually think that as an industry, we have done a really good job of acknowledging those, making sure that we are doing the right thing a lot of the time. So, you know, it used to be a little bit shady or in terms of good practices, but I think that things are changing quite a bit."

On the other hand, things look different at small agencies. Account managers from such companies tend to obtain negative thoughts about the industry environment. In interview #5, the participant said,

> "I think it (the ethical issue) is ignored or just kind of like hush-hush, don't talk about it. If it becomes more of a problem, then you talk about it."

Despite all the differences, we still found things in common among all advertising agencies, that they would not hold meetings to discuss ethical issues unless problems come up. One participant even said discussing ethics was meaningless for advertisers. She said,

> "Like at my agency, for that kind of thing, I mean, I can have conversations about ethics, but ultimately, it is a business, and a business, isn't it to make money?"

In addition, even though medium/large advertising agencies tend to have a code of ethics and employees also think it is necessary to have that, during the interview, almost no one could recall some of the principles.

Conclusion

This study's findings point out valuable insights from account managers working at different advertising agencies.

Using long-form interviews, the results demonstrate the ethical issues facing account managers internally and externally. They most feel themselves sandwiched between the creative team and the client, having to deal with pressure from both sides. It is clearly presented that account managers today face external ethical issues including

doing unwilling product promotions, handling clients who cross the line and processing inappropriate campaign elements. The external issues are already well-known facts. However, the study also provides both researchers and advertising practitioners a new angle looking at internal ethical issues facing account managers. The billing issue and the disconnect between the account team and the creative team seem more troublesome. It is time to pay more attention to internal conflicts.

Secondly, the study pointed out that account managers' personal values have an impact on their decision-making process while solving such ethical issues. Those who value their team more than clients tend to behave less ethically when working with their clients.

Lastly, speaking on an organizational level, a larger size company can provide better ethical education and resources for its employees so account managers can understand the importance of ethics better. Besides, they will feel more comfortable to discuss ethical issues if the organizational culture is friendly and open. In addition, account managers working in larger agencies have more optimistic view of ethics in advertising industry while those who are from smaller agencies do not. The connection between advertising agencies and their employees is very close, and organizational leaders have to build a healthy company culture in order to better serve the clients.

In general, ethics never cross most account managers' minds unless the problem comes up. Both advertising practitioners and their employers still have a long way to go when it comes to ethics.

Limitations and Future Research

The main limitation in this study was the diversity wasn't ensured when it comes to participants' gender and geographic locatioemonstrate the ethical issues facing account managersns. Only two of the 10 participants were male and more than half of them were based in the Midwest. Therefore, it was difficult to rule out the possible influence of these two factors on the result of the study. Future studies should attempt to get an even ratio of men and women participants, and make sure the locations vary enough.

Another limitation of this study was due to the topic itself. Ethics is a relatively sensitive theme to discuss and sometimes it can get personal. Even though I promised not to reveal participants' information in my report, it was hard to guarantee that they did not hide certain parts of the story in the interviews, especially when it comes to the billing issue. Therefore, it would also be beneficial if future studies figure out a better method to ensure the authenticity of interviews.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1) Could you introduce yourself (name, title, company name, years of service) and tell me about the job you are doing?

2) How do your clients communicate their values to you?

3) What are the ethical issues facing account managers? Which are the easiest and which are the hardest? What concerns you the most?

4) Have you ever been asked to do something that you did not feel comfortable doing? If so, would you mind telling me about an example of one? If not, do you know of anyone who did and how did they deal with it?

5) What were your solutions to address the problems you just mentioned? Have you ever struggled making the decision?

6) What's the source of your value system?

7) How do you think of some people's comments on advertising, calling it deceptive?

8) When it comes to your job, what do you value the most? For example, client? Interest of your company? Or anything else?

9) How would you describe your company culture?

10) What are the things that your company often emphasis to the staff?

11) Does your company have a code of ethics? If so, can you recall the principles? If not, do you think it is necessary to have one?

12) Does your department hold meetings to discuss ethical issues you encountered? If so, is it a regular thing? If not, do you wish there could be one?

Appendix B: Interview Transcripts

Interview #1

Maoyan: Hi, this is Maoyan, the J-school student.

01: Hey, one second while I put on my earphones.

Maoyan: Okay okay take your time.

01: Okay I am back.

Maoyan: Awesome. Thank you again for spending time helping with my project. So my project is about exploring account managers ethical perceptions. So your name and the company info will not be revealed in my final report. So I'd really appreciate it if you could give me your 100% honest answer. Could you please introduce yourself a little bit to me and also tell me about the job you're doing?

01: Yeah, my name is 01. And I work at XXX, which is a public relations firm. It is based out of New York, but I'm in Chicago. I work specifically in the corporate communications space. So I work specifically on executive communications, executive visibility, I work on issues in crisis situations, I work with other issues related to leadership and any kind of corporate initiatives that my clients are working on.

Maoyan: Okay, so how many years have you been doing the account management job?

01: I graduated... Hold on a second. Sorry.

Maoyan: No worries! I totally understand that the job is hectic.

01: Give me just a minute. We have like an open office for plans. So it's not always ideal for, you know, conversations and stuff. So anyway, I'm good now.

Maoyan: Do you want me to repeat the question?

01: Oh yeah. What was your question?

Maoyan: How many years have you been doing account management job?

01: Oh, yes. I've worked here for... like a year and a half now. I graduated in 2018.

Maoyan: So I'd assume that you did not work out somewhere else as an account manager?

01: No, I didn't work as on the account side, you know. And before this, I was an intern at various firms but not before I came here.

Maoyan: I see. So what would your typical day in the office look like?

01: So I had a number of clients and the first thing I do in the morning is support our junior staff and gain what's called a media monitoring report. And that report goes out to company executives for a large retailer, the retailer, so like the c-suite, the Board of Directors, obviously, but basically a report that just has the news of the day. In terms of containers industry, a number of options are a number of trends, markets, HK about the company itself.

Maoyan: So while you're working with these clients, how do they communicate their values to you?

01: Mostly through emails. Through text messages if some of my clients have a better relationship and work closer with. And then also phone calls. We do talk often.

Maoyan: Okay! And you said you write news pieces, like news releases, for your clients. So is that part of the campaign? So your company does advertising campaigns, right?

01: Yeah, we do a number of things, news releases, we create, you know, we take company news and company initiatives and we talk to the media about them. So we'll talk to reporters at various publications about news that one of my clients would like to spread the word about, and we work to secure that in, you know, conversation and media to be reported on.

Maoyan: Okay, so do you ever think about ethical issues while you're doing your job. For example, like, I mean, have you ever been asked to do something by being asked by the clients to do something that you did not feel comfortable doing? Maybe?

01: That's a good question. No, I think that XXX(our company) is, you know, a very ethical company, one of our values is a force for good and I think we always pride ourselves on doing ethical and really, you know, good work advances, you know, our clients mission.

Maoyan: So may I ask how many employees does your company currently have?

01: It's owned by Omnicom, which is a large holding company, but then XXX itself has several thousand employees across the country. I think we have like sixty offices. It's a big company but it's a really big company I think. Very dedicated to you know, its mission, which is you know, providing a being a force for good in the world.

Maoyan: Does your company have a code of ethics?

01: I think it does. I mean, right, I know Omnicom does, which is our holding company, you have an Omnicom code of ethics that we follow up.

Maoyan: Is it is a part of your employee training?

01: It is.

Maoyan: Could you possibly like recall some of the principles?

01: You know, I can't remember the exact verbiage but it'll be, you know, don't take bribes. You know, don't you know, we just had another refresh training recently and you know, I don't see brides. Computer... you know, storing clients information. Being responsible with IT data. Yeah. Those are kind of the core tenants of, you know, what we touched on. You know, not taking stuff off the internet. Just anything conducting ethical work, kind of a general thing.

Maoyan: Okay. Do you think it's necessary to have a code of ethics or do you think it is fine without it?

01: Yeah, I think it provides a framework for how employees are, you know, supposed to behave and supposed to interact with clients, and yeah, I think it's a very important aspect of running a business.

Maoyan: Does your department or your company hold meetings to discuss ethical issues people encountered?

01: No, but we are required to take training every year about it, I believe so. We don't have meetings, but, you know, they do encourage us to talk to our managers and talk to

our supervisors, our account leaders and team leaders about any ethical issues and we may have and they can help direct us in the right way, but the relationship with a supervisor is very much one of mentorships and you know, and guiding if you will.

Maoyan: Okay, so I would assume that if you come across ethical issues, you would feel comfortable discussing it with your colleagues and supervisors, is that right?

01: Yes yes.

Maoyan: So how would you describe your company culture in general?

01: I would say it's one of... I think the culture here in the company is very hard to describe, I would say it's a very good culture, I would say everybody is very dedicated to the work of their clients and everybody's also dedicated to enjoying the people with whom they work. So, you know, being positive, doing a lot of corporate fun events. Everybody spends time with each other outside of work. So I would say it's a very good culture in that, you know, everybody's very down to earth and everybody is very devoted to their jobs.

Maoyan: Okay, so we just talked about that you personally haven't encountered any ethical problems. Did any of your colleagues have experienced such things?

01: No, I don't think so. Like I said, one of our core tenants of the company is to do good work. You know, good moral, the moral in the sense that we want to be a force for good, like I said. I don't think that at least not in my own experience here, there's been any issues in that way.

Maoyan: I see. So what do you value the most when it comes to your job, for example, you value your clients the most? the interest of the company? or anything else?

01: Yeah, I would say probably, my clients come first. I want to make sure that I'm providing them the best service and, you know, attention more appropriate getting them. We're catching the world class agency so I think that we pride ourselves on providing world class work. So, yeah, and then of course, in the company. You know, my clients are kind of equal in that way. You know, I am very proud to work for XXX and I do want to make my colleagues and my managers proud. So it's a combination of the two, I wouldn't say one clients are more important because they had an allegiance to both.

Maoyan: Okay, so what values do you think account managers should have?

01: Encouraging employees to do the right thing, encouraging employees to have an open dialogue with managers leadership in the company. I think those are all very important things.

Maoyan: Okay thank you for your opinions. I think this about my all my questions. Thank you so much and I appreciate your time.

01: Great. I'm actually running out of time here. Thank you so much for sharing your project.

Interview #2

Maoyan: Hi is this 02?

02: Hi. It is!

Maoyan: Awesome. This is Maoyan, the J-school student. Is now a good time to talk?

02: Yes. You're all good.

Maoyan: Okay. Thank you again for spending time to help me with my project. It is about exploring advertising practitioners', especially account managers', ethical perceptions. So I just have a few questions for you. And in my report, your name and your company name will not be reviewed. So feel free to express yourself and no pressure.

02: Okay. Awesome.

Maoyan: Could you please introduce yourself and tell me a little bit about the job you're doing?

02: Yep. I am an assistant account executive at XXX. I have been working here for about two years. Yeah. Just a little bit over two years. And I work on accounts like AT&T, Smoothie King and Spectrum Brands.

Maoyan: That sounds cool. Did you work as account managers at somewhere else or, um, this is your first account management job?

02: So I had internships at different ad agencies, so I was at DDB Chicago before coming here, where I was in account management and then I interned at Wieden+Kennedy, but there as a PR person, like my whole experience of account management I would say about probably two and a half years.

Maoyan: Okay. Sounds good. Could you tell me about your typical day in the office as an account manager?

02: Sure. So I, obviously email is a huge part of it. There are I usually have a weekly status meeting with each client. So that will happen at some point in the week. With Smoothie King specifically, sales are a big part of it. So I do get like daily sales metrics for each location. Let's see what else... you know, just at different points of the year, we're usually either preparing for next year kind of developing what that scope will look

like. And just, you know, just different client needs and the day to day. So Smoothie King is primarily what I work with. So we're usually in the middle of a campaign, preparing like pieces for in store or digital pieces. So usually working with the creative team, at whatever stage we are in the process for those

Maoyan: So you communicate with your clients a lot. How do they communicate their values to you?

02: So we physically communicate like via email sometimes over the phone And it just, it really depends on the urgency of things. Like if you're told and things like that, you know, if something is pretty common and can be solved, you know, easily, it's usually via email and you know, something is a little a little bit more important or maybe a little bit more complicated, we'll talk over the phone.

Maoyan: Okay, so during your two years of being account manager, what are the ethical issues do you think facing account managers? Do you have any examples? Have you thought about ethics?

02: I mean, I don't think it's something I think about daily. But of course, when those things happen, you know, it definitely crosses my mind. I've been offered to work on certain brands that I kind of question. So someone had called me about a position and account management position with like, e-cigarettes and products like that. And I hadn't really thought about it before, but I kind of felt, you know, I didn't feel good about that. I

didn't feel good about, you know, trying to persuade people to engage with that kind of lifestyle. So that's an example of, you know, there's been things like that. We ran into a situation once where we were, it was for a cleaner, for like a dark stain cleaner. And so we had these, the canvas was kind of hard to describe not seeing it, but we had babies, you know, that were really messy and making a mess of element has like the older version of those babies. So one of our images was a baby in a chef costume. And then it was like an older chef, and the baby and the older chef were African American. So, you know, thing of like, are we kind of perpetuating that stereotype? We were just concerned about that kind of perception. You know that Americans are fully in roles like that. I think sometimes internally there are that kind of conflict of, you know, just I think as an entry level person, you know, kind of fighting for the roles that you want and just making sure that work is distributed evenly and that people are getting credited appropriately.

Maoyan: So, can you try to categorize the ethical issues facing you guys? The two examples you just mentioned about are more about the content of campaigns, but have you had issues communicating with yoru clients during the process of conducting a campaign? For example, would you exaagreate things when you're communicating with them?

02: I don't think that we... I don't think I can think of a time where I've ever been put in a position where I have to lie to my clients. I think there are some times where certain things come with a disclaimer maybe of like, you know, we can't guarantee that sales will increase. Sometimes I would say like the technical part of account is hours, you know,

what kind of time is being put into certain projects. So I think that's an area where we've been forced to, you know, flub a little bit. If something is maybe taking more hours than it should, and it's artful, yes. Those are, you know, kind of things that navigate. So that might, that might be a kind of an ethical issue that we face.

Maoyan: I see. So does your company has a code of ethics?

02: I don't know if it's an outright code. I do think that we have values that we try to obtain in our work. You know, one being integrity and being transparent with clients. So those are Just the way things that we talked about across the company.

Maoyan: Are any of those directly related to specific ethical aspects?

02: I don't think so. I mean, I don't, I don't know if there's like certain pieces of business, you know, that we would necessarily turn down. I think and just in general, we tend to keep, like a commitment to integrity and transparency. I can't think of any, I mean, you know, just for under a general principle, you know, we do try to abide by a code of ethics, but I don't know that it's explicitly published anywhere.

Maoyan: Do you think it is necessary to have a code of ethics?

02: Definitely. Yeah. I think that different companies have to stand for something. So yeah, I do think there's a creed that advertising advertisers in general that we should be

following. I do think that's important. I think that it's important to feel proud about the place that you work, and, you know, feel proud about the work that you're doing.

Maoyan: So, so you have come across some ethical issues. How about your colleagues? Do they do they come across similar issues, like being asked to do something that doesn't feel comfortable doing?

02: Yes. I'm trying to think of an example. I definitely say, you know, that they come across that and I'm sure there, you know, I don't think that there's any, like, client requests that were just always, you know, 100% you know, whatever the client asks will do, I think there is a lot of thought that goes behind it. You know, thinking about if that's what's best for the client, but also if it abides by like, our, our morality and code of ethics.

Maoyan: Do you guys talk about this if you have something that you don't feel comfortable with? Would you talk with your colleagues?

02: Definitely. If I had a situation like that where a client was coming to me with something I didn't feel comfortable with, I would definitely be able to tell a supervisor.

Maoyan: Do you hold regular meetings to discuss those issues?

02: Um, I do not nothing regular. But I do feel like I have access to my boss where I could guys. Right? Okay.

Maoyan: So when those problems arise, what were your solutions to address the problems you just mentioned?

02: I think that usually if there's a situation where something is going to go against my personal ethics or my company's ethics, 90% of the time is probably not good for the client either. So I will probably address it first in a way that it's not going to benefit the client. And if they continue to push, then probably would get into, you know how this isn't something that my myself or my company believes in.

Maoyan: So when it comes to your job, what do you value the most, for example, clients interest of your company or anything else?

02: I think as a general rule, I think we service our clients first. I would say that, you know, we're a clients first agency, but I think that we're able to kind of like serve ourselves in a way making sure that you know, what we're doing is the best for them but also the best for us and represent us in the best light.

Maoyan: Absolutely. In general, what's the source of the volume system?

02: For me personally, it's my, I would say, like my morality and my integrity. And just, you know, the person that I'm putting out every day for my company, I think it's probably

the legacy of the company and the network that they belong to. So I think that there is a standard that is set because of, you know, those associating.

Maoyan: So does the value of your company has a impact on your personal value after you started working there?

02: Definitely, yeah. The company I specifically work for is XXX. I would say so for me, I think I perform at work, you know, for my own personal pride, but to contribute to that the company as well and to put the company in the best platform.

Maoyan: So what would be the thing that your company often emphasis to the staff?

02: Definitely integrity. Service, you know, servicing the needs of our clients. I would say there's like an internal value of, you know, just, you know, being kind to one another and caring for the people that you work with. I think that because advertising is so competitive, it's easy to get wrapped up in, you know, just doing whatever a client asks to keep a business and to maintain a business. But I also think it's important to realize that you're a partner to whatever client you're working with. So it has, you know, if you're feeling like something goes against your ethics, you should voice that because it helped the client as well.

Maoyan: So based on what we talked about earlier, so I would say that most ethical issues you came across are like the clients offer something you don't feel comfortable doing, but it's not the problem with the communication with your clients right?

02: Right, I think it's sometimes like a client trying to solve an issue instead of coming to us versus their partner to help them solve an issue. So like they're trying to come up with their own solutions, I guess.

Maoyan: And I have one last question for you. Okay. So when it comes to like advertising, many people call it deceptive. How do you think of this?

02: I think the industry itself, I think people are very suspicious of advertising and thinking that we have to use, you know, manipulative ways to persuade them to buy something. So I think there's that perception of the industry and then those within it. I think there's a perception of being very competitive and possibly being really cutthroat. So I think that there is definitely a perception of like poor ethics within advertising. My experience hasn't done that at all. It's actually been the complete opposite. So it's kind of interesting to think about.

Interview #3

Maoyan: Hey is this 03?

03: Yes. Hi.

Maoyan: Awesome. This is Maoyan, the J-school student.

03: How are you?

Maoyan: I'm good. Thank you for your time and is this a good time to talk?

03: Yeah, absolutely.

Maoyan: Okay, so my project is about exploring account managers' ethical perceptions. So your name and also the information about your company won't be reviewed in my final report. So I'd really appreciate it if you could give me like 100% honest answer. Could you start by introducing yourself a little bit and tell me about the job you are doing?

03: Yeah. I graduated from Mizzou Journalism School in 2017. And when I graduated, I went to work for a public relations company in Dallas. And then about a little over a year ago, I started working for a company called XXX which is a small ad agency in Dallas.

Maoyan: So how many years have you been doing account management jobs?

03: About two and a half years.

Maoyan Wei: Cool.Can you tell me about your typical day in the office?

03: Yeah, I check emails and I set a daily call list to both the clients and then my team. like, everything that we need to do for the day. And then making sure you're to answer any questions that they may have.

Maoyan: So how would you communicate with your clients?

03: Mostly by emails.

Maoyan: So, do you think about ethical issues while you're working?

03: It's interesting that there was a time period when I started working there. My first job we had very large separation from our clients, like didn't have any social media, only had a handful of their phone numbers. That kind of stuff. And then when I started out my new job, my client added me on Facebook. I got friend requests from them. I got like the response to my Instagram stories. They were, you know, texting me on Friday night at 10 p.m. So there definitely was way more blurred line.

Maoyan: Okay. So have you ever been asked by the clients to do something that you did not feel comfortable doing?

03: I mean, not like an ethical perspective, maybe because I don't feel comfortable with their decisions for their brand, but not necessarily from an ethical perspective. Like if they wanted to do a campaign and remove some creatives for some purpose or whatever or change something.

Maoyan: How would you try to convince them to change their ideas?

03: I would always try to handle it first by saying, you know, getting my rationale, saying like I, you know, for XYZ reasons, I don't believe it's a choice. If that didn't go over, I'll definitely talk to my bosses.

Maoyan: When you're trying to convince your client to accept your ideas, would you sometimes exaggerate your speech maybe a little bit just to achieve your goal?

03: Yeah.

Maoyan: So here's another situation: What would you do if your team could not meet the deadlines? So how would you communicate with a client about that?

03: Oh, welcome to my life haha. My clients have ridiculous deadlines. And basically we go internally and we're like, all right, can we actually do it? If not, all right, let's see what we got. And then we typically will get them to either sacrifice something else they have in queue with us. So say like, saying if you if you really want is done now, okay, we can

do it. We have to pause this other project. So like, no on that we're like, all right, then we can't do it. And then you will always be bringing it back to the budget conversation. You pay it for X number of hours. This takes us over and out of scope.

Maoyan: Okay, yeah. So, even though you personally haven't encountered any ethical issues, can you think of the ethical issues facing account managers?

03: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I experienced a lot with my old company. Not even with my clients, like, my old company. I noticed when we were doing estimates and billing clients, we were estimating a billing number way more than we actually spending on projects.

Maoyan: So it's about the financial, like the billing issue.

03: Like, I mean, I literally, there was one project we only used 30% of the funds we would be paid for, and the normal ethical practice is how... instead of getting the report to the clients saying, like, hey, you're missing out on Earth. Wow, would you like to spend the money and instead, they didn't do it and they just lie so that we were hired from the project and the profits of the money. It happens. I can't even begin to tell you how many times.

Maoyan: Okay, so my next question is, what values do you think account managers should have?

03:I think that you should be empathetic. You've got clients who have goals. And they're just trying to reach them. So when they're being a pain in the butt, you know they have their goals, and they're trying to get you to help them reach that. Then on the other standpoint, you have creatives who want to do the best work, who want to do the best job they can. You're dealing with a bunch of people, and different personalities and different goals are just my skills set. All, like having to work together for the most part. But you're the one who communicates on behalf of all if that makes sense.

Maoyan: So, when it comes to our job, what do you value the most? Do you value your client the most? The interests of the company the most? or anything else?

03: Definitely the interest of the company and my team. They are people that I work with every day, they are people that I care about. I'm at the agency because of them and the work that we do. And if I feel like at any moment that the work that we're doing and my people are being harmed to the process of it, then that's when I take issue with it. Currently, my client really... I hate my client. Yeah, right now, like, literal nightmare. Nightmare. Everyone at the company goes insane. I'm pissed off. I have been speaking up for months to people in my company who make decisions saying like, you know, the work isn't good because they they go down. We put together a really great show for them and they shoot it down, or they're not nice to our people. They're not nice to me. I will also say like I am given way more responsibility and autonomy compared to my old company, like actually see the difference versus being a cog in the machine before. So I

had problems with my clients before and I had problems with the way the agency was run, the way that my team was doing billing, etc.

Maoyan: How would you describe your new company's culture?

03: Oh, it's wild. XXX is a very scrappy, hardworking, creative yet wild and signing culture means also like late nights. I work way more than I used to, but I care about it more.

Maoyan: So does your company have a code of ethics?

03: No. We don't even have an HR person.

Maoyan: Do you think it is necessary to have one or you think it is fine without it?

03: I think it's fine without it. I mean, it's like, it's because we're so small. It doesn't matter.

Maoyan: So if you say if you encounter something if you'd be asked by the clients do something you don't feel comfortable with, do you think it is okay or you feel comfortable talking, discussing them with your colleagues?

03: Oh yeah I will definitely talk to my colleagues. They're always on the side. There was on the side of us

Maoya: Does your department meetings to discuss such issues you encountered?

03: Not necessarily but like the meetings between the department or like me and my friend and my boss because we're relatively small.

Maoyan: So basically you can talk about it if you want to.

03: Yeah, absolutely.

Maoyan: Awesome. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

03: No, I don't think so. But if there's anything else that you need or any other questions you have as you continue the project, let me know okay?

Maoyan: Awesome. Thank you so much.

03: Of course. Thank you too. Bye.

Interview #4

Maoyan: Hi, this is Maoyan, the J-school student.

04: Hi, how are you?

Maoyan: I'm doing great. Thanks for asking. Is now a good time to talk?

04: Oh yeah, things are winding down. So this is perfect.

Maoyan: Awesome! Thank you again for spending time to help them with my projects. My project is about exploring the ethical perceptions of account managers. I also mentioned that in the email, so let's get started by introducing yourself a little bit and tell me something about your job?

04: Sure. So I am an account executive on a couple of brands here at XXX. We work mostly on spirits brands, or at least that's one of our specialties, I would say. So both of the brands that I focus on as well as some of the smaller ones that I work on, are owned by ENJ Gallo, which is, you know, well known for wine, but they have a small spirits division that we work on all of the products for. So the brands that I work on are ENJ brandy, which is a brand that's been around since 1975. And I work on rum Haven, which is a coconut rum similar to Malibu and a couple other things here and there. So, that's, that's how I spend my time.

Maoyan: So how long have you been working as an account executive?

04: I have been so I started as an assistant account executive at XXX in May of 2017, and I was promoted to account executive, the following April.

Maoyan: Okay, so have you ever worked somewhere else as an account manager, including internships?

04: So I worked as an account manager at a magazine. So obviously, that's slightly different than an account manager role at an agency, but I did hold that position, full time for at least six months, and I interned there before I took that position full time.

Maoyan: Okay, can you tell me about your typical day in the office?

04: Sure. There isn't really a typical day but I can run you through today at least. So, on a typical day, I will usually have at least two to three calls with a client. Sometimes those are just status calls, checking in on all the projects that we have going at that time. But sometimes it's presentation. So for example, today, I had a presentation for key art for a program that we're doing in point of sale next year for one of my brands. So we presented that art to them in order to get their feedback so we can ensure we're aligned and everything moving forward. I also, you know, coordinate timelines with all of our creatives here to make sure everyone's hitting the date they need to hit in order for us to meet our larger deadlines with the clients. And yeah, so that's like some of the bigger stuff I do throughout the day. Obviously, I'm also just doing basic client communication. So anything they have questions on any small requests for, You know, files, logo files,

anything they need, they would come to me for that. And yeah, lots of other little things, but those are some of the basics.

Maoyan: So it sounds like your job is like a bridge between the creative team and the clients.

04: Yeah, that's a good way to describe it.

Maoyan: So have you ever come across some situations like you're having trouble communicating your team's opinions with your clients?

04: Um, I don't know about having trouble. I wouldn't say I've ever had trouble with it. But I do often have to be careful with it. Um, because, you know, a lot of times the opinions from my creative team are, you know, more involved with the art side of it, what is pleasing and what makes sense to them. It's very different than what makes sense to someone on the client side who is very business minded, more focused on pleasing upper management or pleasing people in the sales field who are going to be seeing the materials that we put out. So there's obviously a lot of disconnect between what both groups are interested in. So it's more like translating it and being careful about how you're setting it up. So I wouldn't go so far as to say I've ever had trouble with it, but I do have to be, you know, careful.

Maoyan: Yeah. So did you ever have a, like a client that they have terrible ideas, but it's hard to tell them the truth. How would you would you communicate with them about that? Or you just go with their ideas?

04: Yeah, we have had that situation quite a bit. So we never, you know, we're very focused on being strategic here. So we would never, just like accept a bad idea, obviously in the end, in the end, the clients word, you know is what goes. But we also aren't going to put ourselves in a situation where something we put out isn't going to be successful. So a lot of times if they come to us with an idea that isn't great, first of all, we'll push back by like, telling them our own ideas or maybe finding parts of their idea that would work but you know, setting it up in a different way, just so we're like compromising a little bit. But honestly, if that doesn't work, if that doesn't work to convince them, that their idea isn't the best option. Well, maybe dive into the research a little bit and then come back with some metrics or some findings that kind of back us up a little more. So I've rarely been in a situation where I felt like we were really forced into anything by a client because we improved those conversations very strategically. I think that we're so strategically focused, that that's never really a problem for us. Like, we wouldn't come to an idea in the first place if we didn't have something to back it up. So I've not felt that way. Um, I definitely have been in situations where, you know, maybe you're exaggerating metrics a little bit just to get them kind of on your side. Like, I mean, for example, like if there was something, you know, we deal with a lot of social media here. So let's say we wanted to do a particular post and one of the brand managers said, you know, I don't think our fans want to see this, like, I don't want to move forward with this

post, we might say like, Oh, well, as we've seen, as we've been observing our social communities, they've been talking about this a lot. Well, that is probably true. You know, it's probably an observation we've made, but maybe we don't necessarily have, like the significance of it to actually back that up.

Maoyan: I see. So what do you think are the ethical issues facing account managers? Can you think of any examples?

04: Um, so let me think. Give me just one second to start talking. Ethics has rarely crossed my mind. Like I have, I haven't thought about it very much. There have definitely been times where, you know, when we're like, not going to meet a deadline or something where, you know, maybe we exaggerate an excuse, and it's kind of like, Oh, that was a little bit questionable. But for The most part I don't think of it as an ethical issue because in those cases I'm you know, trying to do what's right for my team. So I'm making sure that they're taking care of time wise and they have enough time to get their work done so so no I haven't encountered any like many issues where I I thought there was an ethical side to it weren't unethical I should say.

Maoyan: Have you ever been asked to do something that you did not feel comfortable doing?

04: That's a good question. I don't think so. I've never been asked by you know, my bosses or anything. We work mostly on alcohol. So, I've never had a problem with

working on alcohol in general. However, there is one of my brands that is targeted at urban multicultural communities.I kind of felt a little iffy about that because you're kind of targeting poor minorities, which feels very bad. But at the same time, you know, I think that like, I don't think that there's malicious intent behind it. I think it's more like this is who is drinking it. So that is why we're talking to them. But it has crossed my mind before like, "Oh, is this right?"

Maoyan: Have any of your colleagues encountered ethical issues before?

04: No, not I am aware of.

Maoyan: So you guys, like, don't talk about those often?

04: No, you know, I think that part of that is, you know, being at a smaller agency we have much like being in very personal relationships with a lot of our clients. So I think that it's something like that were to happen, it would be like kind of a big deal. And I haven't heard anything like that before.

Maoyan: Okay, how would you describe your company culture?

04: Everyone is very friendly. It's an open workspace. Everybody knows each other very well. You switch teams for each brand. So I work with like a different group of people on every brand that I work on. So pretty much everyone knows everybody else. It's very fun,

very open. Not very stuffy at all, you know, like, you know, you're not going to see someone in a suit.

Maoyan: Sounds like a good place to work.

04: Yes, it is. And it's fun. You know, there's snack time. Happy hours. I love happy hours. So no complaints for me.

Maoyan: So what are the what are the things that your company often emphasize to the staff?

04: So like when they're talking about, like about just morale in general. You know, something that our CEO talks about a lot is like working outside of your job title. So he never wants us to just like, do exactly what's expected of us. He wants us to be finding things that we're interested in, even if they aren't within our department so we can learn about them. And like, just openness is also very important here. Because, like, in the same vein, you know, sometimes people feel stuck in the jobs that they've chosen. And so, like our leadership is very clear about, like, if you're feeling stuck, we can move you somewhere, but we want you to stay, we want you to stay here, even if you're not doing what you're doing right now.

Maoyan Wei: Okay, so does your company have code of ethics?

04: Not that I know of, no.

Maoyan: So do you think it is necessary to have one or it is okay, without it?

04: Um, you know, I wouldn't say that it's necessary. I would say that it would be helpful. You know, I think everyone likes structure like that. So while I don't think that my company is one that would like have or you know, talk about that too much. I don't think anyone would dislike it either. But I definitely don't think it's, it's mandatory for an agency setting just because of how casual it is.

Maoyan: Okay. So when it comes to our job, what do you value the most, for example, the clients, the interests of your company, or anything else?

04: I'll tell you most like the comfort of my team. So, you know, well, obviously my job requires me to take care of the clients. What I care about most is not putting anyone on my team in a situation where they are going to have to work late or work over the weekend, or, you know, you know, put themselves in, like a bad situation in order to get something done. So, that's, that's what's most important to me. But what's most important for my technical job description is keeping clients happy, of course.

Maoyan: Have one last question. So how do you think how do you think of some people's comments on advertising call it calling it deceptive?

04: You know, I understand where that's coming from. Um, I do think though that like deceptive advertising doesn't really work so like you could say you know if we're talking about like truly deceptive advertising like almost like not delivering what you're saying that you're selling. I think that in that definition of deceptive advertising, like we all understand that if you are lying to consumers, then you're not going to have them long term and our priorities always keeping people long term and I think that anyone who is like successful in this industry or wants to be successful in this industry is probably on the same page and thinks that as well so I don't I don't do anything that we do here as deceptive advertising. I would say that like, at the very least, you know, maybe it's like I said, like slightly exaggerated. We're making it look a little bit better than it looks when you see it on a shelf, but I don't think we're doing anything that's misleading.

Maoyan: Okay, so that's all my questions. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

04: I don't think so. If you think of anything else you want me to answer through email or you want to give me a call again, feel free but I hope that helps.

Maoyan Wei: Thank you so much.

04: Yeah, no problem. Bye.

Interview #5

05: Hello!

Maoyan: Hi! This is Maoyan j-school students.

05: Yes. How are you?

Maoyan: I'm doing good! Thank you again for spending time helping with my projects. So my project is about exploring account managers' ethical perceptions. So your name and your company information will not be revealed in my final report. So feel free to express yourself you know, no pressure, and I'd really appreciate it if you could give me your 100% honest answer.

05: Okay, for sure.

Maoyan: So can we start by introducing yourself a little bit and tell me about the job you're doing?

05: Yes, give me one second. I'm gonna grab my headphones. Sorry.

Maoyan: It's okay. Take your time.

05: Okay, sorry about that. Great to find a room more quiet than the previous one.

Maoyan: Sure. I appreciate everything you did for this interview. So could you introduce yourself to me and tell me more about the job you're doing?

05: Sure. So yeah, I'm 05. I am currently an account executive. The agency that I work for in Florida. And we specialize in like travel and tourism and hospitality. Like advertising, marketing and PR, but we also have other clients outside of that round. So I don't actually travel as much. The accounts that I'm responsible for, there are two destination clients and a research lab and aquarium that's based in Sarasota. And the St. Pete here, which they've been rebuilding the pier and it opens next year. So it's like a big deal. We're doing stuff for that.

Maoyan: Okay, so how many years have you been doing the account management job?

05: Like, two and a half.

Maoyan: Two and a half years at your current company?

05: Yes. I've been in my current company for almost two years. Right after college, I think interned with VML in their national office. And I worked on Bridgestone and the Tennessee Department of Tourism Development.

Maoyan: Okay, can you tell me about your typical day in the office?

05: Sure. So every day like varies, of course, but it typically like lots of like emails with both clients, as well as like internal agency teams, whether that be like Creative Media, PR, finance. My role involves a lot of project management as well for making sure that open projects are on time that the truth Media Team has everything they need from me and the client, into the media, making sure that things are starting on time that we have specs. And we have everything for the media buys. Project Management is a big part of it. Also budget management, or we have budgets to make sure that we aren't going over budget on a certain project or just like the client's budget as a whole. And then just like keeping up with our clients, we typically have like weekly calls, like project status sheet. The client is aware of everything that opens in but we're working on and we also do like marketing plans, strategic plans. That's usually But for us, it usually happens in the summer, because most of our clients are on in October fiscal year. And we actually just started a new fiscal year for most of our clients. So we do planning in the summer to the next year leading up to that. So we just finished wrapping that up. And specifically for like, travel, like tourism clients and destination clients. We present our PVC meetings, which is a branch of like, county or city government, its tourist Development Council. So there's happen every month, but we don't necessarily have to go to every single one of them but it does involve going to PVC meetings and meeting with like county commissioners and that kind of thing as well. Account management is where liaison between the client and the internal agency team.

Maoyan: Okay. So when you communicate with your clients like a well they communicate like most of them communicate their values to you or you guys talk more about metrics?

05: It really depends client by client. So for some clients, especially working with government clients, it may be more about like, the politics involved, you know, having to feature a certain partner or something over another because they bring in more tax dollars or that kind of thing. Whereas with some other clients, it may be more like, well, this is what matters to us. So this is like what we want to see. So it really just varies by client. And also, I mean, like personality types within our clients. Definitely. There's a lot of different types of clients.

Maoyan: Yeah, so do you do think about ethical issues while you're doing your job or you only think about ethical issues when the problems arise?

05: Okay. So one thing that ethical why's that often debated and like the agency realm for billing your clients, basically to be on billing to actual versus billing to estimate so whether a project is worth a certain amount. Do you bill because the project is worth that or, if not all of the hours were used by agency teams, or do you simply bill to estimate or bill to actual and only charge the client for the work that we've actually done even though it's under budget from all been estimated, and that's a big thing that is carried agency by agency and even a case by case situation. So, have to like take that into effect or into consideration.

Maoyan: So have you have you ever been asked by your clients to do something that you did not feel comfortable doing?

05: Not necessarily by clients. More so like internal agency stuff. I mean, there's definitely been stuff that a client ask I don't agree with but I don't know that'd necessarily be considered as ethical. Okay, a question of ethics more is just like, Is it the right thing to do for the client strategically, and that kind of thing.

Maoyan Wei: What would you do and you don't agree with your clients?

05: If a client comes to me, and I don't agree with the direction that they're wanting to go, you know, we, ultimately we do have to do what the client says. But we like to have an educated discourse with them to you know, they pay us to do the job of being their strategic thought leaders. So if there's something that we don't think would be the best for them, we do voice our concerns. And we do try to give them reasoning as to why we feel that their direction wouldn't be the best and why we feel they should go in a different direction or something. And we share them out as well. You know, it's not just one sided, you know, we have something that they want or whatever. But yeah, it's really just having conversations. Just having, you know, hearing each other out to solve the problem.

Maoyan: So when you're communicating with them, you know, trying to convince them. So would you sometimes, like, exaggerate your speech maybe a little bit just to sell your ideas?

05: For creative definitely. I think that also, it's kind of part of the business which just like getting them excited about something. I think there is definitely a line between just like kind of exaggerating something and lying about something. So I think there is that fine line. So you always have to be careful not to exaggerate too much.

Maoyan: Yes. You just mentioned that like, you have been ever you have been asked by the in house team to do something you did not feel comfortable doing. Can you tell me more about that? Okay.

05: Yeah, when it comes to like, billing and that kind of thing, I just I didn't feel comfortable with charging a client for something that I didn't work on. That I didn't have as much as a part in as originally planned. So that was something that I really struggled with. Especially as A new account person when I was like first starting out, I voice my concern and why I saw that it wasn't right. And ultimately, like, if someone isn't comfortable doing something, you can't force them to do anything. So I know in one of the things just because I didn't feel comfortable doing it, it just basically had someone else do it. So at least it wasn't on my conscience.

Maoyan: Okay, so what are the ethical issues that's facing account managers? Like generally speaking, yeah.

05: Like financially, okay. You charge the client. Other ethical issues, I think it varies by industry. I know when I was interviewing before I got this job, my internship was up. I interviewed with an agency that they did like pharmaceutical advertising. And I did not agree with some of what I've been tasked to do or clients that I would have had to work on at that agency. And so I expressed my belief in that. Ultimately I pulled out of that. I'm still young in this industry, but people come across clients that they may not agree with, like having to work for it. And so even though I didn't end up working for those clients, you have the possibility of having to work for a pharmaceutical account pushing medicine that may not actually be necessary or beneficial. That was something that I just didn't want to put myself in that position.

Maoyan: So let's talk something about the organization. So how would you describe your company culture?

05: Um, overall, it's pretty good. Like I I definitely work with like my best friends into makes going to work, you know, not too terrible. Lots of young people. A pretty young culture. People are very talented and everything that they do we have great people. It can be kind of like a family, you don't always get along with everyone, but in the end, you're still a family.

Maoyan: Yes. Could you could you tell me how many employees your company has?

05: We have like 34 employees.

Maoyan: Okay. So does your company have a code of ethics?

05: No.

Maoyan: Do you think it's necessary to have one? Or you think it is totally fine without it?

05: I would prefer to be in an agency that did have a code of ethics. I know. It's kind of more of like a new things that come about because ethics are important to me in my work. It would be ideal to work for a company that also has ethics.

Maoyan: So you don't have code of ethics but would you think it would be easy if you, for example, if you come across some ethical issues so you can easily get help and advice from other people, like colleagues and supervisors? Do you think the help is accessible?

05: Like at my agency, for that kind of thing, I mean, I can have conversations about ethics, but ultimately, it is a business, and a business, isn't it to make money? So...

Maoyan: Okay. So would you feel comfortable discussing those issues with your colleagues if you want to talk about it?

05: Depending on the issues, yes, but it's also looked down upon eithcal issues.

Maoyan: What is so what are things that your company often emphasis to the staff? Like? What would the group leaders, like the department managers often emphasis to the staff like what are the most important thing for the company?

05: Honestly just producing good work for the client, and doing what we can and doing our best for clients and producing good work being good people. I mean, even though like ethics may not be a huge chapter, but they want people to be mindful of each other and to be kind and to be good to each other and to client.

Maoyan: What what do you value the most personally?

05: My professional career path. I definitely value transparency a lot. I think that is something good. It doesn't always come naturally. And it's not that common, especially in like corporations and that kind of thing. So that's something that I very much value and I always want to be transparent with my clients. Just like I want them to be transparent with me. I want you know, my I want the agency to be transparent with me about things. Like, I also want to be transparent if my supervisors and my bosses So, yeah, I definitely say professionally, that's a big thing that I value.

Maoyan: So right now, do you think like in the industry of advertising, so, are those values like integrity, honesty, are those values hard to be achieved?

05: It depends on the agency, the client and the situation. Integrity is also a thing that I very much value and treasure. You know, you can't really bounce back from that. So I think it's definitely becoming more of a focus of agencies.

Maoyan: I see. So that's all my questions, I guess. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

05: Yes. Ethics in advertising people often don't really put those together especially to people not involved in advertising. You know, people often see advertising as You know, just going after money like capital is that, that kind of thing. But there's, there's so much more than just making money, particularly in like travel and tourism, like, yes, we want to make the client money, but the thing is making the client money that impacts the community that we're in. So it creates, the more tour it the more visitors they get to a destination, the more jobs that create the bigger impact it has on the local economy. So there's so many factors and things besides just, you know, the bottom line of making money. So, looking at ethics and advertising. Yeah, I think there's work to be done in the industry. Definitely. I think it's it's a process that is happening. At least, you know, there are agency thought leaders that are doing more than others I think we should learn, be able to look at that and learn, you know, quiet across the board.

Maoyan: Does the ethical problems like in this industry have been neglected?

05: I think it's ignored or just kind of, you know, like, Kind of like hush-hush. Don't talk about it.

Maoyan: Okay. So then people ignore such issues. Is that correct?

05: Yeah, yeah. If it becomes more of a problem, then you talk about it.

Maoyan: Yeah, I think that's all my questions. Thank you so much for the talk. I really appreciate the talk with you. Your opinions really help a lot with my project.

05: Okay. I'm glad I can provide some insights. Feel free to email me if you have any other questions or need clarification on anything I said, and I'll be happy to get back to you.

Maoyan: Thank you so much.

Interview #6

06: Hello?

Maoyan: Hi is this 06? I'm Maoyan, the J-school student.

06: Hi. How are you?

Maoyan: I'm good. How are you doing?

06: Good. I completely forgot that you were gonna call me.

Maoyan: Haha that's okay. Is now a good time to talk?

06: Yes. Good. Perfect.

Maoyan: Awesome. So my project is about exploring the account managers ethical perceptions. Could you please introduce yourself and tell me about the job you're doing?

06: Yeah so I am a WAE and assistant account executive at XXX in Chicago. Um, I don't know if you're super familiar with their work but like some of their biggest clients are like Wrigley, they fill on like extra gum commercials. They also have like, a lot of Bayer brands so like Aleve, aspirin, a few, you know, medical over the counter.

Maoyan: It's pretty cool. Is your company big?

06: Yeah, so it's a part of the XXX network and XXX is like a global network. So they have like, a whole bunch of offices, but this is just the Chicago location. So internet

agency, is probably about 200 people. So it's kind of more mid-sized. But I think it's like perfect because it's like not too small, but not overwhelmingly large. So you could feel like a number and I definitely feel that energy. Everyone's really nice. And if I ever like move teams, I feel like I'd be welcome you know, with warm welcome.

Maoyan: Definitely. So how long have you been working there?

06: So I've only been in this role full time for technically a month, but I interned there this summer. And so I feel like it's been like three months, but I guess my hire date was a month ago.

Maoyan: Okay, so have you worked somewhere else as an account person?

06: Yeah, I worked the summer before at XXX. It's in a multicultural agency in Chicago and I was an accountant intern there as well.

Maoyan: So how long have you been working there?

06: That was like two months. So I feel like total on the professional industry has been like, for like five months total, I guess you could say. Okay,

Maoyan: Can you tell me about your typical day in the office?

06: Yeah, so typically, so it's like a 9 to 5 like a lot of jobs. Typically I start my day, just reading through emails, because right now we are in the process of like, sending finalized spots to networks and stuff for the different like campaign I'm working on. Emails to see what my account executive who's kind of my supervisor, what she's been dealing with, usually she'll send me emails and things to handle so like, sometimes I'll reach out to the global networks like I've been in contact with the Italy team and the Mexico team and the German team as well because they like reapply a lot of the spots that we have here in the US. So I'll talk to the email them. I will save things down in our like internal server which is like kind of think of it just like a major folder I guess you could say of things for you know to keep in case other people need to reference. I do a lot of competitive analysis. So seeing what you know, because I worked on the Aleve brand, the Aleve pain pill. So usually I'll check out Tylenol, Advil, excedrin and a few other global brands to see like if they have new workout, and if so I'll make like new PowerPoints to show like, you know what they're doing?

Maoyan: Okay. My next question is how do your clients communicate their values to you?

06: Um, I feel like I guess my clients don't really I wouldn't say it outwardly they communicate their values. I don't think I've ever heard and I know they wouldn't necessarily say like our values are x, y&z but like, I don't really think that comes up in conversation a lot.

Maoyan: so you guys can talk about like the metrics and stuff.

06: Yeah.

Maoyan: Okay, so it's like more practical.

06: Yeah.

Maoyan: So have you ever come across some ethical issues while you are working?

06: Um, no, I don't really feel like it.

Maoyan: What would you do if your team could not meet the deadlines?

06: If we don't meet deadlines, or if the... because usually like with my client, they're kind of difficult. Like, for example, we've had like, I'll just to make it simple, like 10 days, but we it was more than that. But like 10 is just an easy number, like 10 days to like, do all the deliverables, you know, edited and gone through rounds of revisions with the clients for them to look at and let us know what they don't like and we should change and things like that. And the clients have taken like 15 to 16 days to do that when they knew that they had 10 days. So it's kind of like they're kind of messing up their own budget so I feel like my team lets them know like we're very open with them and honest and let them know before we even go into an additional round of feedback and editing that what

they're doing is going to cost them more and more money. So I feel like I've never really seen an ethical issue I feel like honestly my team will let the client know ahead of time and any push backs and deadlines or anything have been because of the client and then also when it comes to like marketing practices, I feel like my product is you know, is a pain medicine and I don't know, I don't really notice it but like I've noticed now there's like users directed and disclaimers like there's LM Our team is like super spot on. So I feel like in terms of like even trying to like you know, suede the consumer or whatever, they don't do that. They're very upfront because of legal issues. And I just think because of the industry that I'm in.

Maoyan: Would you say that the account managers like seldom think about ethical things while they're working?

06: I feel like we do. I feel like we kind of have to in terms of, or I guess it depends on what agency you work at, but I'll speak for my own, I really do feel like my agency makes it, you know, up, you know, to the top of their priority list to make sure that they are being ethical. Like, I feel like they don't want a lot of clients. They don't want to lie to each other. Like they really make it a point and again, you know, I've only been there for like, a few months, but I can I feel like if you walk into a situation, it kind of feels a little shady, you can kind of feel it. And I feel like XXX really is like honest, like I don't feel like I'm being like lied to or just you know what I'm saying? Like, I don't feel like there's a facade so if I if there were ethical issues I probably wouldn't know about it but I still don't feel it if that makes sense.

Maoyan: Okay. Have you ever been asked by clients to do something that you did not feel very comfortable doing?

06: No, I don't think so. I haven't yet.

Maoyan: Did your colleagues experience such things?

06: I don't think so. I feel like honestly with my team like it's a very normal like, you know, account if like what you're learning in school is like what we do basically.

Maoyan: Okay, so um, when it comes to your job want to value the most?

06: I guess I would say that I value like my company the most. I definitely valued clients because that is a part of our company values. But I do feel like XXX, like, they're pretty accommodating. And I feel like people are friendly and honest and we have a female CEO. So that might be like, part of it. But I definitely feel like if I ever had an idea of how I wanted to impact the agency in a good way that I thought really strong about and I had a lot of data to back it up honestly, like I could go to the CEO and talk to her about it and she would either implement it or not, but she would listen.

Maoyan: So your company culture is like open and friendly.

06: Yeah.

Maoyan: So what are the things that your company often emphasize to the staff?

06: Um, we emphasize a lot of... definitely the idea that we are in service of our clients, but they also emphasize that we are not our client servants and so like we are here to present There are creative ideas and work with them in terms of their business objectives. But that doesn't mean that we're going to not you know, give them pushback if we think their business objectives don't make sense or the creative that we know will fix their business problems that the clients not really liking. We're going to let them know Okay, we understand that you might not understand the creative or you know, maybe there's there's a disconnect that we can connect but this is what we really believe that creativity is going to fix your problems.

Maoyan: When you guys are trying to convince your client to do the campaigns in your way, like, would you be a little bit exaggerated on the process?

06: Um, I don't, I don't think we would exaggerate. No, I thought we were just told the client like, our honest opinions and thoughts.

Maoyan: So you guys provide specifc facts. It's a fact-based process.

06: Yeah, definitely.

Maoyan: Cool. Does your company have code of ethics?

06: Yeah, we do.

Maoyan: Okay. Can you recall some of them?

06: Um, Haha. I took a code of ethics like online training. And we also had this, like, I think they're called like, bilards or whatever, but a lot of some of them are like, the hand razor not a finger pointer be like me, not we like you know, things like that. So we definitely have those values that I feel like are emphasized, you know, throughout the culture, I mean, company.

Maoyan: Okay. Are those ethics like special specific or is more like general?

06: They're more general, but they could be specific because I haven't read them yet.

Maoyan: If you come across some ethical issues in the future, would you think you've feel comfortable talking with your colleagues and easily find guidance?

06: Yeah, I definitely think it would be and then I mean, I'm also just type of person to where something was unethical, I would bring it up regardless because I feel like at the end of the day, like, if I knew that something was unethical, and I just let it happen, like

that's not a good thing, but I definitely feel like if I brought it up, and I really showed them like, Hey, I don't think this is right. The client is doing this or even if it was someone on my team Yeah, I think it might be a little weird, but like I would because I like I said, I'm not comfortable personally with like, Something I know, is wrong happening around me.

Maoyan: So I would assume like, based on our previous conversation, I would assume that your company, your department, doesn't hold regular meetings to discuss ethical issues. Is that correct?

06: Not since I've been there, but I know that we do like these quarterly training.

Maoyan: Um, so let's talk about value system. So what's the source of your value system?

06: It would be in the handbook, but of course with those values that I was telling you like the via hand razor, not a finger pointer, those are kind of posted all over the office. Like there's different posters by like the different print stations and on different columns we have in the office, they'll be all over.

Maoyan: Okay. And I have one last question. How do you think of some people's comments on advertising, calling it deceptive?

06: Um, I think that there can be some deceptive advertising advertisements, like, you know, with juul. Um, I guess people could say that however, I feel like that might be in my opinion and an ueducated comment is because if we're we're talking about jewel, from the ads that I've seen that people call deceptive from jewel. They there were warning signs in the advertisements. I've seen people say like, Oh, well, the talent in the ads are young teenagers like it's going to make teenagers think it's healthy, which I mean, I I could see but the ads from what I've seen have always said like warning, this product has nicotine in it. So I think people just didn't really look or care. So I feel like a lot, especially with the day and age that we're in with, like, you know, media and digital being so at our fingertips. Nothing, it doesn't happen, but I feel like people are more comfortable calling out advertisements that are deceptive. So it's like it's a little bit harder for companies to be blatantly deceptive with their consumers.

Maoyan: Is there anything else you would like to add?

06: No, I like this is a fun interview. I appreciate that you called me becasue I was excited.

Maoyan: Thank you. Thank you for talking with me.

06: Of course, have a great evening.

Interview #7

Maoyan: Hi, this is Maoyan, the J-school student.

07: Hey. How are you?

Maoyan: I'm doing great. How about yourself?

07: Well thank you for reaching out for this.

Maoyan: Yeah thank you for your time also. let's just get started. Could you introduce yourself a little bit and tell me about the job?

07: Sure. So my name is 07. I am an account supervisor at XXX. So I've been here for about four and a half years working in both the corporate reputation and brand marketing groups. So I have quite a lot of different roles. And that kind of started out as a media relations specialist, meaning that when our clients had news that they wanted to share, everything from, you know, Energizer announcing new products, to something a little bit more basic, like, you know, an organization involved in any factor and wanted to, you know, make an announcement to their industry, working with reporters to ensure that ended up you know, hitting the right reporters at news that out properly so, I kind of started out there and then expanded since then to during a lot of executive visibility, meaning working with a client c-suite level or just below level, the colleagues, getting them in place, you know, different conferences, the speed, helping them write their, you

know, their op eds or their pieces for LinkedIn, helping them with, you know, their talks

with those conferences, running their social media presence, so kind of the full array of

ways that executives communicate with all of their key audiences. So those are two

different things that I've been doing. also do a lot of social media work and just you

know, finding content for and creating content for our clients to post. There's a lot that

goes that goes into this job will say they never really have the same day twice. So I you

know, from everything from high level strategy and planning for clients, whether it's for

one campaign or for an entire year's worth of campaigns to knee deep in the weeds

working with reporters kind of work. I really do kind of touch a little bit of everything

here.

Maoyan: Have you worked as somewhere else as an account manager?

07: No, this isn't the only place I've worked. I interned here before my senior year of

college and then came back full time after after I graduated.

Maoyan: Yeah, your company is very huge. Can you tell me about your typical day in the

office?

07: Sure. There really is never a typical day, to be completely honest with you. You

know, there's some things that never change, you know, having to post on social media

for certain executives and things like that. Those are the consistent things. But it can be

anything from, you know, traveling to a client for a day's meetings to discuss strategy and

how they want to handle something to, you know, brainstorms for clients that I've never touched and giving them a fresh perspective on what they can do differently. You know, those kind of internal brainstorm within the agency. You know, a lot of what I do on a daily basis is listening for things that impact my clients so that I can, you know, either tell them how to respond to it or make sure that they're aware. And then a lot of content development. So for one of my clients, we help with a lot of their employee communications. And so making sure that we, you know, are working with all of their folks internally who are on top of what's relevant what their employees need to know whether it be a warden they receive or relevant business news.

Maoyan: So when you communicate with your clients, do you guys talk more about the metrics? Or they communicate their values to you?

07: Well, it certainly depends. So, we do have a lot of clients that are very metric driven, and they're focused on things like impressions. We try to move them away from that though, because it's a very random number a lot of the times just based on how many clicks a website generates, and it's not a real indication of, you know, the impact that your story might have had on somebody. So, you know, we look for much bigger things like perception. You know, we work to, we're kind of introducing a new offering here soon around behavior change and the idea that you can use PR to actually change people's attitudes towards the company and might be able to drive purchase decisions. So, for us, the metrics aren't nearly as important is authenticity. Authenticity is certainly, you know, the most crucial things successful PR because if you aren't living out, honestly what your

brand is intending to say, then there's consumers in today's day and age, you're going to send the disconnect with that.

Maoyan: If you are trying to convince your client, would you exaggerate your speech maybe a little bit just to convince them or it's all based on facts?

07: Oh, it's always based on facts. Um, you know, We we never would want to convince something that either goes against our clients standards or goes against our ethics. That's, that's not the business that we're in. We're certainly focused on doing things the right way and you know, doing things naturally. So, you know, if there's something that we think is really beneficial for our clients and pushing back on us will continue to use facts to explain to them why they need to do you know what we're convincing them to do.

Maoyan: Okay, sounds great. Do you ever think about ethical issues while you're working?

07: Absolutely. It's something that's super relevant in our industry. We focus a lot on the current news media cycle and how there's a major distrust of journalism today. And we focus on the fact that it's important for us to make sure that in an era where truth is challenged and the idea that alternative facts should be considered, which I think is egregious that we stick to the truth. We stick to, you know, democratic principles that founded this country. And, you know, don't let a lot of the hubbub that's going on get in the way of that.

Maoyan: So it looks like your company do have a code of ethics.

07: Yes, absolutely.

Maoyan: Can you recall some of them?

07: Yes, I mean, I don't, I can't say specifically. It's the absolute... Hang on, I'm on it up. Just don't spit balling and saying slightly correct answers one second. Um, you know, we have a culture integrity and values. It's what we were raised on and so we're focused on essentially just coaching our clients to remain ethical. We have an ethics hotline there forever concerned about, you know, a colleague or a client in that in that realm, we can call them and get advice on how like that. And that's connected directly to our senior leadership, our overall credo of ethics is to, we were committed to being responsible stewards of our clients resources. So we want to make sure that the information and the assets that give us are protected, and they're also used in the right way to convey the right messages. We also, you know, isn't just something for our clients for our employees as well. So we like create the best opportunities for employees to grow and then, you know, foster respectful work culture. And then we also have a parent company that we have to adhere to in terms of excellent union fiscal responsibility. So those are kind of the core ethical principles that we focus on.

Maoyan: So does your department hold meetings to discuss ethical issues? Is it a regular thing? Does it happen at all?

07: Um, it has. It's not something that is a recurring meeting, but when it's relevant, it comes up. And it's also something that is so ingrained in the culture here that it's just part of our everyday work.

Maoyan: So have you have you ever been asked by the clients to do something that you did not feel comfortable doing?

07: No, I haven't. I'm lucky to say that so far. I think it's something that a lot of folks find themselves in over the years but at this point, I'm lucky to say that, you know, we haven't had to endure one of those kinds of challenging moments, so to speak.

Maoyan: Okay. How about your colleagues?

07: I'm sure that it happens but not that I know of, you know,

Maoyan: So what would you do if your team could not meet the deadlines? How would you communicate with your client? Did this happen before?

07: Yes, absolutely. Deadline is something that we always try to adhere to. But when it doesn't happen, it's important to be as upfront about that as possible. I will say that we're

much better at pulling additional resources from our own sides to hit a deadline than having to compromise a deadline and tell a client that we aren't going to be able to make it. So that's one of the benefits of being at such a large agency is that we do have a large number of people who can help out in a tight situation.

Maoyan: So we just say the culture of your company has an impact on the way you do your job, and to what degree did it have an influence on your job?

07: Yeah. I would say that the overall culture here is that it breeds hard work and entrepreneurialism in the sense that we can kind of create our own destiny here. And the more that you put into this experience, the more that you'll get out of it. So it's an amazing place to work. And the more good work that we put out, the more it motivates all of us to continue to do so.

Maoyan: So what values do you think account managers should have? In reality, are those values hard to be achieved?

07: That's a good question. I think that it's important to always keep a pulse on your clients industry so that you can keep up with trends and recognize an industry is shifting when there's an opportunity available. Because the more reactive you are, the less opportunities your client has to succeed. The more proactive you are, the more they can be out ahead of things and they can be a leader in their own industry. I think that that is certainly our newest gear too especially when we're already pressured to perform a day to

day work and go above and beyond to actually stay proactive and keeping keep an ear on the industries that we work in. It's definitely not the easiest thing to do but it's something that I really, you know, think is crucial. I also think that client service is the most important thing, making sure that your clients are happy at the end of the day, they're the ones signing your checks. So giving them you know, the utmost robust service is incredibly crucial in today's era where you know, PR is fighting to stay a part of the marketing mix in a lot of companies budgets.

Maoyan: So when it comes to your job, what do you value the most?

07: I would say the people here. The people here are absolutely incredible. You know, we we have ended upon that we call it a family. Everybody here is super close, you know, we can lean on each other, in inside of work and outside of work. You don't get that everywhere. But that's, you know, that is created by having an office that does such good work for their clients, you start to form relationships with people that go beyond the typical work relationship. They're also incredibly transparent, you know, we focus, you know, everybody from the top down knows about how our performance as a company is a, you know, any point in time. So, you know, if we're having a down month here, that's going to be communicated to the employees. And it's going to be, you know, something that motivates us to do better. But at the same time, they also want us to focus on ourselves. So we just got done last week, having our first ever Mental Health Week here. And so, you know, just as important as it is to, you know, make sure that your billing and make sure that you're providing great client service, you can't do that you yourself are

100% and so that's become a big focus of the agency moving forward. So that's something that I'm really excited about is hot first high performing as we are, we also recognize that this is a very high stress environment so they're getting up every opportunity to succeed.

Maoyan: And how do you think of some people's negative comments on advertising?

07: You know, there certainly are cases of that. And it's a case by case basis, like we discussed earlier, we really adhere to our ethics here. And that's always, you know, our top line priority. And so while clearly there have been instances where PR and advertising was deceptive, or downright false, in the way that they're claiming things, that's not the industry that we're in, we're in the industry of doing things the right way. You know, I think that there's always opportunities for reform and cleaning up the industry. I'd love to see that on certain fronts because I know that there's a lot of dishonesty out there, but you know, I can go home every day and I'm proud of the work that I did.

Maoyan: So I think your company does not ignore the ethical issues that are happening around. But do you think in general, the industry of advertising is neglecting such issues?

07: You know, I actually think that as an industry, we have done a really good job of acknowledging those, making sure that we are doing the right thing a lot of the time. So, you know, it used to be a little bit shady or in terms of good practices, but I think that

things are, you know, changing quite a bit. I think I tend to see a lot more of the dishonesty comes from folks who keep their PR in-house, because agencies, you know, had an obligation to call out when they're when they're seeing things that are unethical, and so It's a lot easier to, you know, keep things hidden when you're not sharing that information with outside sources like an agency. So to me, I think a lot of the more deceptive practices that are going on companies that can be keep their PR in-house.

Maoyan: Yeah, I think that's all my questions. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

07: No, I really appreciate your time here. Good luck with the project. And please let me know if you need anything else.

Maoyan: Thank you so much.

Interview #8

Maoyan: Hi.

08: Hi. How are you?

Maoyan Wei: I'm doing good. Is now a good time to talk?

08: Yes it is. Thank you.

Maoyan: Okay, so thank you again for spending time helping help me with my projects. So my project is about exploring account managers ethical perceptions, so your name and the information about your company won't be revealed in my final report. So please feel free to express yourself and I will really appreciate if you could give me like 100% honest answer. Can we start by introducing yourself to me and tell me about the job you're doing?

08: Okay. I work at XXX. We have a sister advertising agency called XXX. We are housed in the same building together. And we have some clients that crossover between both agencies. So I do some work on the PR side of things. So anything from your relationship to events, new product launches, crisis communications preparedness, anything like that. And then I also work to bridge over to the advertising side of the business. Also works for their media planning and buying and also their paid search. So I worked in both realms and then also for social media.

Maoyan: So how many years have you been doing the account management job?

08: Five years.

Maoyan: Oh, that's a long time. So have you worked at somewhere else as an account manager before?

08: Nope. I've been here my entire career.

Maoyan: Okay. Can you tell me about your typical day in the office?

08: Um, you know, there is a lot. Usually I start my day with my email seeing if there's anything urgent, especially from the clients to respond to. I work with clients in the home design industry. So a lot of different newsletters revolving around that industry that I just like to go through and, you know, stay updated on what's going on in the industry and what you know, things that might be relevant to my clients. And I usually have meetings throughout the day, you know, whether it's a client status meetings or checking book projects, things like that. Sometimes I travel for my job to go to different events for clients or in person meetings. All of my clients are based in other cities. I'm in Minneapolis, but most of my clients are on the east coast. So there's occasional opportunities to travel and work with them directly. And staff events for them as well.

Maoyan: Is there a certain type of products that you work with?

08: Oh, yeah. I work with clients in the home-design industry so anything from paint to countertop or surfacing material, things like that.

Maoyan: Do your clients communicate their values to you mostly through emails?

08: Mostly email, but we do have usually at least a weekly status check in. And then of course schedule additional meetings as needed for various projects, we felt a little bit more complex where we need to discuss it over the phone.

Maoyan: So have you encountered any ethical issues while you're doing your job?

08: In terms of like if I don't think I've encountered anything, that's turned into a problem, but I do all the time. We have ethics in mind. And we're thinking about what's the best way to go about this. You know, data privacy is obviously a big thing that we keep in mind, especially as we're working for the social media world. You know, you're targeting certain individuals with paid advertising or in some cases, we work with email lists that our clients have collected emails and we need to reach out to those people or target those people, but we really have to be conscious of, you know, how are we sharing data between us and the clients are sharing only what is absolutely necessary to get the job done. I'll be storing the data securely. You know, that kind of thing is always in our mind.

Maoyan: So in addition to the production of the data, so have you ever been asked to do something by your clients that you do not feel comfortable doing?

08: Yeah, I mean, I, we've had instances, and it's usually not where they're deliberately trying to be not ethical. It's usually where they just don't understand there is an ethical concern. You know, for example, maybe the client is photoed in a certain publication and they want to take pictures of that publication and show it on social media. There are some

ethical considerations there have actual permission or privileges to be able to share that content and, you know, repurpose another brand and so, we've had conversations. You know, thinking about this the right way, if we're truly concerned here, how big is the concern, and then we go back to our clients with a recommendation is, you know, hey, here's some of the red flags that we're encountering. And you know, our recommendation would be to do it a different way or, or not do this at all because of XYZ and we try to be very upfront with them about that. And you know, they look to us to be the, the people that you know, have a pulse on all of that and in the current recommendations, especially when it comes to ethics. And so I've never encountered a situation where the client has not wanted to accept our recommendation or you know, has deliberately been forcing them to do something useful comes from just, you know, that not being completely aware and able to go back.

Maoyan: So what while you are trying to convince your clients to accept your commendations, would you exaggerate your speech maybe a little bit just to convince them?

08: I don't think so. I think we're usually pretty upfront about you know, here's the risks, you know. We try to be very upfront about, you know, what we think the actual risk is and if it's a low level of concern for these reasons, however, these are the possible implications. You know, Especially when you're sending organizations through email, it really is our job to make sure that it has been clearly outlined, if anything should ever, you know, come back to us on that it's always good to be able to point to well, we did lay

out, you know, clearly all of the potential concerns and risks and he was evidence of it, but certainly something that we have in our, in our minds that, you know, for some reason they should ever become a bigger issue. We certainly want evidence that we did our best to provide, you know, as accurate as possible regarding the issue and the possible concern.

Maoyan: so, um, let's talk about deadlines. So have you ever encountered a situation where your team could not meet a deadline? Under this situation, how would you communicate with your client?

08: We'll tell them that we don't feel like we could get them the full answer in the timeline they're looking for, we do our best to, to be a part about that at the start of a project and say, you know, this is certainly something that we can help with or advise with, but we don't know that we can do it in this exact timeline here is what we can provide you in the timeline you've asked for. But if we could have, you know, an extra, however much time to deliver exactly what you're looking for. So we usually try to look for solutions like that, where it's like, Hey, we can't necessarily get you absolutely everything that you needed, but maybe we could get you, you know, part of the information would that help to, you know, at least for your needs in the short term or you know, spend more time exploring it. We do try to get in touch with our client, whether it's on a status call, or emails, whatever the client's preference is, and just say, you know, hey, would it be possible as we had a couple more days to work on this, you know, these things have come, you know, come to our attention and, you know, with give us more

time to explore those or, you know, for example, you know, the other urgent things came up for you, that took our attention. And so it would be great to have a couple more days on this particular project. You know, let us know what works for you. That's usually how we handle that sort of situation.

Maoyan: Yes. it's about the billing issue. I don't know if this happens in industry very often. I heard some companies sometimes would go ahead and give the clients billing that's way more than they want they actually spent on the process.

08: So the way we handle billing is that we agree to a budget upfront on any projects and we have a signed scope of work that outlines the agreed upon amount for the project. And then the way that we handle it internally, and I think agencies handle things differently but you know, jobs that people will essentially fill a timesheet to and we have agreed agreed upon budget, but we only bill the client to the actual hours that the team is working. And we keep track of that, we can keep track of that basically in real time as needed. But at the very minimum, we're checking in on, on how we're progressing on things monthly. And, you know, budgets are starting to run high. We feel like there's a need to address it with the clients, you know, we will go back to them and say no, to these things. We're actually spending more time on this project and we originally anticipated and we can come to an agreement on, you know, do we need to take some things out of the original scope of the project, or if the client willing to invest a little bit more budget, to get everything covered. To get ahead of it, have conversations early,

that's something that's going to happen and honestly, usually, it doesn't happen very often.

Maoyan: What size is your company?

08: Yeah, 50 to 70 employees for the PR agency. And then the advertising agency, I believe is 150 to 200. together the two agencies are around 300.

Maoyan: What values do you think account managers should have?

08: I think you're always looking out for the best interests of the clients. You know, it's an interesting role, because you're also trying to balance your internal team, trying to make sure that you have people who actually have found to work on certain things and can do it to the best of their ability. Well, you know, making sure that what we're making the best recommendations possible for the clients and yeah, so I think our priorities are always focused on delivering and over delivering when we can for the client on what they need. You know, even if they haven't asked for the recommendation, but we see a clear opportunity to advance their business or do something slightly different that would really pay off for them. You know, we really think it's important for us to view ourselves as the experts, and they hired us for a reason. And you know, we can make smart recommendations to them. That helps us be more valuable to them and more beneficial to them. So I think those are things that we always have in mind.

Maoyan: So personally speaking, when it comes to your job, what do you value the most?

08: I certainly value my clients the most.

Maoyan: How would you describe your company culture?

08: In terms of company culture, right. I feel like I work at a company that's very open. You know, I think it's an interesting dynamic having both the PR and advertising sides of the business. I think there's a lot of opportunity for collaboration and a lot of other disciplines which is, you know, have a good understanding of what other teams do across the company. It is a very inclusive company. We have lots of initiatives for employees to make them feel comfortable working here and outside of work. We have a lots of groups dedicated to different things. You know, we have a team for diversity and inclusion. team focused on sustainability. Just different things that really help us feel more like a family in some ways.

Maoyan: If you come across certain type of like ethical issues, would it be easy for you to get help from colleagues, or would you feel comfortable discussing such issues with them?

08: Yeah, I think so. I mean, I know I certainly would feel that way. I can't speak for everyone, of course, but I think that they have worked very hard to create an environment where people feel comfortable to speak up to a supervisor.

Maoyan: Does your department hold meetings to discuss ethical issues?

08: They do have periodic meetings when necessary, and that there's also you know, we're part of a larger holding company and they do have, you know, compliance type trainings that they have everyone go through on a computer every year related to different issues of privacy. Sometimes it's about Yeah, proper conduct in the workplace, but everyone is required to go through those trainings as well.

Maoyan: So do you hold like meetings to discuss those issues?

08: There isn't necessarily a designated meeting for it. But yes, the things come up, they're more than willing to, you know, sit down with a group of people. It seems necessary to have a conversation with a group or if there's a larger issue that seems to be affecting the whole agency. There's not like a regularly scheduled meeting to discuss ethics.

Maoyan: Does your company have code of Ethics?

08: Yes.

Maoyan: Can you recall some of the principles?

08: I mean, it is very long. I mean, generally it's you know about ethics and how We're handling beta how're, you know, looking at things from a legality perspective, you know, ethics in terms of how, you know, gifts are accepted or not accepted. Ethics in terms of, you know, hiring practices.

Maoyan: Awesome. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

08: I don't think so.

Maoyan: Okay. Thank you for your time. Really appreciate your answers.

08: Okay, yeah, best of luck with your project.

Interview #9

Maoyan: Hi, is this Ashley?

09: Hello.

Maoyan: This is Maoyan, the J-school student. Is now a good time to talk?

09: Yeah.

Maoyan: Okay, so thank you again for spending time helping with my project. So my project is about exploring account managers' erthical perceptions. So your your name and your company information will not be shown in my final report. So I really appreciate it if you could express yourself freely. Could you introduce yourself a little bit and tell me about your job?

09: Sure. So my name is X, I work as an account supervisor at XXX, which is a creative advertising agency in New York. We do work on all different kinds of clients. We don't have a house style. So we have quite a few different files on the roster. And we do a lot of different projects for them ranging from you know, TV to events and landing pages and other digital transformation.

Maoyan: Okay, so can you tell me about your typical day in the office?

09: Sure, I mean, it varies by day, but I think overall, you know, coming in and doing different meetings and helping kind of move projects along, based on the stage that they're in. So You know, we go from creative development to our strategy to creative development to production, and it kind of varies between each of those different phases.

Maoyan: Okay, how many years have you been doing account management job?

09: Three and a half.

Maoyan: So have you worked somewhere else as an account manager?

09: No.

Maoyan: So how do your clients communicate their values to you? Do they talk about metrics more than values?

09: I mean, it kind of depends on each client. I think a lot of the brands that we work on here are really proud of the values that they have and the way that they communicate does the world but you know, some, I think are more excited than others. So for example, recently, I went to a and if you don't mind me going to withhold a client names, that I went to a client all agency meeting where we had a whole day of workshop, talking about their values, versus other clients where they will kind of just give us those values in a brief, so it really depends on the company. All of them are, no matter how they disseminate the information to us are very excited about their values and want us to be aware of them. I don't think we talked about metrics more than values. A lot of the work that we do here is to communicate the company values. I mean, there is a business goal tied behind it, but a lot of the time, you know, they're coming to us to help visually and experientially show how they what they stand for as a company. And so I think that definitely comes at the forefront over metrics.

Maoyan: Okay, so do you think about ethical issues while you're doing your job?

09: Depends on the client. Some of the clients are a little bit safer. You know, they don't, I can't think of one. I think all of the clients I've worked on have had some kind of ethical concern. But I worked on a nonprofit that was promoting gun safety in the home, and that could be considered an ethical issue. So I feel like it depends on what vertical you're in for sure. Like some are riskier than others. You know, if you work in finance, if you're working on credit cards, you know, there's obviously a risk and ethical risk that comes with getting a credit card, right? Like if you're promoting for somebody to get a credit card, you shouldn't have one, that it creates more for that. So what does that say about you?

Maoyan: So have you ever been asked by the clients to do something that you did not feel comfortable doing?

09: No, I don't. I mean, nothing like, you know, nothing like, I guess, like legally wrong. No. And actually even, even in the work that we do, like I said, a lot of our clients are huge corporations, they know better than anyone that if they mess up, you know, these today, we live in an age where people are out and canceling people doing right. So I think that everyone's really cognizant of that. And even the companies that I've worked on that have a little bit more risk of being cancelled, if you will. You know, they're they're more they're super familiar with their values. And I think that they, you know, to try to do the best they can. I don't think anyone has ever come at least to me. Usually people have a choice. I think our agency does a good job of making sure that their employees are comfortable with the stuff that they're working on.

Maoyan: So even though you don't come across ethical issues but what are you the ethical issues do you think that account managers may encounter?

09: I mean, I guess I don't really know, I feel like in terms of the industry today, like I said it, I continuously see themes through and through that companies are just very afraid of the culture that we live in and social media and people being able to very quickly get information, how about them that they don't want to be seen, but like, let's say, you know, if you're looking at an example, I think it's something that we deal with a lot. And, you know, maybe this would be ethical or unethical. It's like the use of celebrities, right, and the use of talent, and how, you know, how, if that client does something bad, for example, let's say they get canceled and culture, how does the brand respond and that I think is something common that I've seen happen across the board, but usually that's not the agency choice. You can be upset about what the client is doing. But at the end of the day, like, it's not the agency is not making the choice to call them. It's the clients' money paying for a celebrity, for example, those are very expensive. It usually, you know, they'll have kind of the last word on that.

Maoyan: So now I'll give you like two situations. And I just want to know, how would you act under those situations? So the first one is, so if you are trying to convince your client to accept your ideas about a campaign, sometimes would your team exaggerate your speech maybe a little bit just to convince them?

09: I have never seen that happen, at least at my agency. We have a lot of strategy. We have different kinds of strategies that are working to make sure that what we're putting forward is, is truthful and honest. I think we all live in a world right now where if something's wrong, it's going to be called out immediately.

Maoyan: What would you do if your team could not meet the deadline? So how would you communicate with your client about?

09: Just call them and let them know kind of what's going on and why we didn't meet the deadline. And if there's anything that we can do to get extensions to buy us some more time.

Maoyan: Okay, so what values do you think account managers should have? So in reality, are those values hard to be achieved?

09: I mean, I think the biggest thing that account managers that have is honesty, both internally and with clients. You know, I think a lot of times I see, you know, account managers will try to like, soft in the truth, especially to the internal team on bad news, and it just never goes over as well. So I feel like honesty is kind of the biggest value for for us and making sure that you know something going on with a project, for example, or an optimistic deadline was communicated with clients directly. I think that's probably the biggest one.

Maoyan: When comes to your job, what do you value the most, for example, client interest, company or anything else?

09: Definitely our companies, I think, we in particular, are run by our creative thinking and our strategy. And if we believe in an idea, and we think it's the right thing to do, like we're going to push for that, especially if it's the right thing to do and it's the right thing for the client.

Maoyan: So does your company have a code of ethics?

09: I'm sure we do somewhere. I wouldn't be able to tell you what that was.

Maoyan: Do you think if one day you come across some ethical issues, would you easily get help from, for example, like your colleagues or supervisors?

09: Absolutely. Immediately. Yeah.

Maoyan: So does your department hold meetings to discuss ethical issues?

09: No.

Maoyan: I guess that's all my questions. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

09: No, I think that's it.

Maoyan: Thank you so much for your time.

09: Of course, thank you and let me know if you need anything else.

Maoyan: Okay. Thank you. Have a good day.

Interview #10

Maoyan: Hey, Is this 10?

10: Hello! Sorry. I'm so sorry. I thought we were talking tomorrow. I guess I misunderstood from our conversation but I'm happy to talk now.

Maoyan: Oh right because yesterday we talked about the interview after midnight. My bad! But thank you for calling me back. Could you introduce yourself a little bit and tell me about the job you're doing?

10: Yes. So, um, I am an account coordinator at XXX. And I work on the GHA account, which is the agency's largest account, the National Insurance Company.

Maoyan: What kind of insurance do they offer?

10: Medical and dental insurance, for federal employees and military retirees. So a lot of what I do is I communicate internally with our creative teams. and I will tell the creative team, but the client is envisioning, and a lot of my job is creating a situation where the client can be pleased, and the creative team can be pleased. And so a lot of the time, that means having a compromise, a lot of the times we don't just immediately do what the client asks. And we don't get to just immediately do what the creative team wants, we kind of have to merge both of those sets of ideas together and come up with something that everybody can be happy with. So that's really a lot of my job is managing that relationship between what the agency envisions for the project and then what the client is wanting. And with that, I would say that it's really important to be able to compromise, because that is inevitably what happens with every single project, it doesn't end up going exactly as you envisioned it. Because there's just so many members, so many players in this game, and everybody has to be pleased with the outcome. So, I would say that being able to compromise is a huge, huge skill that is important. And then also being very aware of everyone's emotions and everyone's intention. I would say that's very important because you get a lot of different opinions and they might all be very valid. And just being aware of, you know, where people are coming from that kind of makes it easier to compromise. But yeah, I would say it's really important to be self aware. And it's really important to have some level of emotional intelligence in this role.

Maoyan: So um, is there any other accounts that you're working on or are you mainly focused on the medical insurance company?

10: No , I only work on one account.

Maoyan: So how long have you been working there as an account manager?

10: I've been working for about six months. I graduated in May. The past May.

Maoyan: Okay. Sounds good. I forgot to mention that your name and information about your company will not be shown in my report. I'd appreciate it if you could give me like 100 honest answer

10: Oh yeah.

Maoyan: Okay, have you ever been asked by the clients, either by the clients or by your creative teams, to do something that you did not feel comfortable doing?

10: Well, yeah. So I remember at one point we were working on a project and our creative team wanted to be a little more progressive with the approach. We were actually brainstorming a TV commercial, and wanted to include a homosexual couple. but the client did not want that because they didn't think it would be well received by their audience at the time and they were really trying to establish themselves and said, you know, now it's not the time for us to do that. Maybe when we're better known, we can we can put that out there. And so that was kind of that was one that was really hard to come to a compromise on because you know, it's something that people feel passionately about,

or at least, you know, have an opinion about. So, we ended up taking the client side in that situation because they pretty much put their foot down and said, You know, we're not we're not taking that route. But that was one where it was like, Yeah, I kind of I see, you know, the benefit that it would have had and going the other way. But, you know, it just didn't work out that way.

Maoyan: Um, can you tell me about the details that what were you thinking when you saw the conflicts between your creative team and your client? Can you walk me through the whole process of how you solved the problem?

10: Yeah. So this was probably about the third time that we've had this conversation with the client. And so honestly, it was going through my head that we don't want to offend the client. Because they've made it clear what their position is. But then it's very valid that our creative team felt this way, because they had an opinion as well. And this is kind of an issue that is larger than the project. And so you know, it's fair that everybody had their opinion on that. But kind of my thought, I was hoping that our creative team would not overstep and offend the client and make it seem like we weren't listening to them because they had given us the chance to voice our concern with the direction and kind of given us the chance to give up opinion and so I want to make sure that we also show that same level of respect to the client. And it worked out well. They said they understood our viewpoint but it just wasn't the direction they were comfortable going in. And then after that, it was okay. But yeah, that was kind of my thought process.

Maoyan: Under such situations, would you say that you would mostly accept the ideas of your clients?

10: Yeah, I would say that's the way that normally goes. I mean, a lot of times, we will bring our creative teams opinions to the client. And sometimes it's not even a creative team. Sometimes the account team doesn't agree with the clients direction as well. And so anytime anyone on our team disagrees with the direction we always bring that to the client, and we provide an alternative solution and sometimes the client does accept the solution and say, okay, we can move forward with that. And so it's not like we always do what the client one. But, you know, if we catch our idea, and the client still doesn't like it, then you know the project has to get done. And so in that case, we go with what the client wants.

Maoyan: So when you guys are trying to convince your clients to accept your ideas, would you sometimes like exaggerate your speech a little bit just to convince your clients?

10: Well, it's kind of hard to say because a lot of what we do is really subjective. I mean, we never negotiate like statistics or with insurance, like we would never negotiate the benefits of an insurance plan because there's so many legal issues with it. But ours is more like design elements. And a lot of our negotiations, negotiations are surrounding the creative. So, you know, it's hard to say what is right and what is wrong in this situation because it's so subjective. But a lot of, you know, our recommendations that we try to

bring to the client are based on the work that's already out there and we try to keep the work very consistent as far as design and message and so normally you know, that's one of our supporting points as to why we want to do what we want to do to keep the brand and the creative consistent.

Maoyan: So have some of your colleagues encountered ethical issues?

10: I mean, no like crazy ethical issues, but there is definitely tension when our team, you know, doesn't get our way I'll say. And I think the creative take it very personally because when they create something and the client doesn't like it, you know, that is very personal because, you know, they created that. And so I think there's a lot of that tension that you have to navigate, especially on the account team, you have to understand the emotion that went into the project from the creative side. And you sometimes you don't always tell the creative team word for word, what the client said, because the client doesn't really always understand that emotional side of it. But I would say like the biggest ethical issue, I guess, is just, you know, the creative team and the account team being able to be respectful to one another because sometimes I think the creative team thinks that the account team takes the client side, because they're the client, so just like understanding that compromise does have to exist, and they were not always going to get our way and like finding that mutual respect between the account and the creative team. It can sometimes be tricky.

Maoyan: Would you say the pressure from the creative team is bigger than the pressure from the client side? Is that right? at least from the account managers' perspective?

10: Yeah, I mean, I think the pressure from the creative team is a lot more personal. It feels a lot more personal to an account manager. But I wouldn't say the pressures more, I would say it's more personal. It's easier to kind of be taken to be offended, I think by the creative team.

Maoyan: Okay, let's talk about the relationships between you and your clients. So I talked with like several AEs and some of them mentioned that sometimes their clients, they reach out to them on social media, they send them like Facebook friend requests or talk to them after work hours. Did that ever happen to you?

10: No. That has never happened to me and I'm so new, I'm kind of hesitant to cross that line with the client. I know that certain people in our agency have that type of relationship with the client, but I don't.

Maoyan: Do you know how they deal with such clients?

10: I think the reason that some of our internal team has that personal relationship is because they've been working with this client for a very long time. Some people at the agency and that have worked with a client that I work with for over 20 years. And so I think it's more of that relationship had time to mature and grow. And so I think there's

just kind of a level of trust there. And we always at our agency, if we have, like, for instance, we had a little cocktail party at the Plaza. And whenever we throw those types of things, we always invite the client just to show that hospitality and kind of open that up to a relationship. And so it kind of depends on the client wants that relationship as well.

Maoyan: So another thing they talk to me about is the billing issue, so I noticed that this is very interesting because some of them actually mentioned that their companies they work at estimate a billing number way more than they actually spending on a project. So have you seen situations like that?

10: I personally have not seen that.I don't really touch billing that much so I can't really speak to that.

Maoyan: Okay. Does your company have a code of ethics?

10: Yeah. We don't really call it a code of ethics but we have kind of some standards that we live up to, and we're updating those internally to make sure that they reflect where we're at and where we want to be. And I would say that my agency really does try to treat the people very well internally.

Maoyan: So is that standard thing, part of your employee training?

10: I had to do some sort of Title IX training? Actually, you know, I don't think it was. Well, I mean, I think we have, like, our HR department has a standard like Title IX sheet that you sign, which is, I mean, that's not very impactful. You know, it's just like the legal stuff. But then I remember the first two days of my job was orientation, and that just consisted of going around and meeting every single person in the agency. And just kind of touching on some of the main values of the agency. So, I guess values and ethics are kind of two different things. But I would, I would say that the agency that I'm at presses a lot of emphasis on on the values

Maoyan: So can you recall some of the values?

10: So the agency is owned by a family. So family is one of the values, that you treat everyone like family. And sometimes that means that you call somebody out if they're out of line. And that also means that you know, you're there and you understand that the person is coming from a good spot, you know, whether or not I mean, that's, that's the idea. I wouldn't say that that always happens, but it is the idea that we would treat each other like family and that's certainly very ingrained in agency culture, it's on fire. You know, we've got t-shirts that say you know, member blah, blah, blah of the family and our staff meetings are called monthly family meetings. So that's definitely a part of value that they're really trying to ingrained in the day to day life. I've been told everybody lives it out. But I think that most people do try to take that to heart.

Maoyan: So I would assume that your company culture is also about family, love and openness. Is that correct?

10: Yeah, yeah, I think that's the goal.

Maoyan: So does the company culture has an impact on you when you're dealing with your clients, does those values impact you in some way?

10: Yeah, well I mean, I don't know, I think I would, I would treat the client with the same level of respect, even if that wasn't a value. I don't know that really affects like, how I personally do my job. But I think it impacts how the client sees our agency as a whole. Okay? When we kind of put that label as a family on ourselves as a whole, I think that that protects more of like the agency image versus like, you know, an individual's image.

Maoyan: So, does your department or your company hold meetings to discuss ethical issues people encountered, if any?

10: Yeah, so I actually had my first review with the CEO of the agency a couple weeks ago, but after 60 days, or maybe it's after 90 days at the agency, he does an internal review with you and ask what the company is doing well at and what they could do better. And he asked that we'd be very honest and very open. You know, he makes he makes it clear that he's listening.

Maoyan: So if one day you encountered like ethical issues, would you feel comfortable discussing it or talking about it with your colleagues or supervisors?

10: Yeah, I definitely would.

Maoyan: So when it comes to your job, what do you value the most?

10: I think I value, you know, the relationships internally the most. I think that's what can make or break a job if you don't like the people you work with, and you're not going to like the work and it's just all going to trickle down. But I think that at least having a good relationship with even a couple people that you work with, can just make the entire experience.

Maoyan: May I ask what size is your company? Is it big?

10: We have about 80 people.

Maoyan: Sounds good. I guess that's all my questions. Thank you for your time.

10: Good luck. Thank you.

Appendix C: Field Notes and Work Samples

Field Notes
Week 1: Sep. 2-6, 2019

I started working at Nanova Inc. on July 29. In the past month, I got familiar with all my coworkers and learned a lot about this company as well as our marketing team.

Nanova is the fastest-growing medical device startup company in Columbia, Missouri. Working in such a company gives me a strong feeling of involvement: everyone plays a critical role given the fact that we have so many tasks to do, but there are not enough hands. The team is like a family. I communicate freely with everyone and they take my ideas seriously. The brand manager loves sharing his decision-making process with me and he is good at guiding me back on the right track when I make mistakes. Sometimes the whole team have lunch break together and we chat about marketing, too.

The first few weeks I mainly took care of managing contacts and following up with our brand influencers. It took me a whole week to get used to the job. I use HubSpot CRM to manage thousands of contacts, which is not an easy thing to do. I also help the manager with Instagram. The way we are doing influencer marketing is very unique. We reach out to people on Instagram, YouTube and TikTok on a daily basis, and we follow up with almost every one of them regularly. As the contacts sheet grows longer, it takes more and more work, of course. I heard about the story of how our team tried to raise brand awareness two years ago when they first started and now I deeply understand how many emotions one person can be attached to a brand that he/she has been working on.

They have tried tons of methods and today our social media consistently gain followers of quality. In the past month, nearly 10,000 follows came in. This is really something to a small brand.

Regarding my graduate project, recently I have been busy with both my internship and my RA job at J-School. However, I want to get it started next week and find potential participants to interview.

Week 2: Sep. 9-13, 2019

The other intern left the team last week and we have two new interns coming in. One of the two leaders will be off for vacation soon and she said she would count on me to train the new coworkers and do many other things. I learned more about how to offer campaigns and handle payments for influencers. With extra hands, I do feel my job is getting easier.

Other progress I made this week was that I officially started to create graphics for the company. I used Photoshop to create labeling for one of our products. It would be placed on packages we send out to medical facilities. Everyone was happy about my design. After that the HR person came to me and asked for my help to create two banners for her to take to the career fair happening at the MU School of Engineering.

For my project, I have reached out to several advertisers both in and outside of Columbia, but unfortunately none of them replied to my message. It bothers me because It is hard to find email addresses online. I reached out to advertisers solely via LinkedIn DMs and it did not work out well. I will ask more people and tried to complete my list next week.

Week 3: Sep. 16-20, 2019

This week we launched our toothpaste. It's a new product, adding to our business line. The manager told me the research team has spent a whole year developing the formula.

I took one home and tried it. It has a similar taste to Doublemint gum, but something's not right. As a marketer, I quickly asked myself "why Sam chose Old Gold instead of Lucky Strike?" This is from the first episode of Mad Men. I have Colgate and a Sensodyne at my apartment so I took them out and suddenly realized the differences. Our toothpaste feels cheap even though its price is much higher than those two brands. I assume it's because the aluminum tube skin is a bit thin and soft. Besides, given the fact that small companies usually don't have enough of a budget to hire a professional team to do design work (our manager basically designed most things, including the product packaging and official website). Personally speaking, the toothpaste packaging is not very attractive to me. I think it might be a font issue. I remember the manager said he wanted our brand to be a community instead of just a brand. I was not sure if that was the reason why he chose the font. However, the design style is consistent with that of our face mask.

I asked my roommates to try out the toothpaste and give me feedback. They agreed on the good taste, but still they said it did not feel so good to squeeze it. The next day I went to my manager and chatted about it. He said he has negotiated with the manufacturers many times, but they already offered us the hardest tube skin they could

possibly make within our budget. My guess turned out to be correct – it is too soft and we could do nothing about it because we are a small brand.

The manager doesn't believe in paid ads with Google, Instagram or Facebook. He thinks it would interrupt the analysis of our natural post performance. We are not on the same page about this one, but I do believe in his skills. Our brand gained 110,000 Instagram followers within two years without spending money on advertisements and buying followers. The way we promote our products is mostly influencer marketing. I use HubSpot CRM to manage thousands of influencers. It's a complex process and we have a way to keep most people on track. For the toothpaste, we sent out many to our influencers and the first day of the launch we got more than 60 orders just from our own website. It was a decent number for a small brand.

The launching of the new product is the biggest event for this week and I am so glad that I have started thinking like a real marketer when I observe things surrounding me.

Week 4: Sep. 23-27, 2019

The main product we are selling right now is a tooth whitening kit and we usually have a gel sale at the end of every month. This month we managed to bring the strawberry-flavored gel to the market. Customers can order it separately or they can buy it as an add-on item. We did this also with other side products. This trick worked really well and many first-time buyers got the new refill even though the gel within the kit could last at least a month. Old customers came back for it and they also got our teeth whitening pen or face mask at check-out.

Also this week, the payment girl went on vacation and the manager assigned me to handle payments for influencers. It is such a hard task. We communicate with influencers via Instagram DMs and sometimes people just don't know how to fill out an invoice correctly, so I have to check manually. Other times PayPal won't allow influencers under 18 to collect their money and it causes some problems. Handling payments is a task that requires lots of patience and attention. This internship, in general, helps to improve my interpersonal communication skills because most of the time I deal with influencers from all walks of life. It's basically a fun mind game to negotiate with them.

For my project, I feel like I get stuck in the process. This week I reached out to 10 account managers on Linkedin, but no one replied to my message. This is upsetting, but I will keep going next week.

Week 5: Sep. 30–Oct. 4, 2019

This was a regular week. We had a monthly gel sale and nothing exciting at work. However, thanks to Professor Stemmle's help, my project is going well. I scheduled three interviews per week for the next three weeks. This week I did the first three. I can't believe it's already September and I am about to defend my project in 60 days. I will keep working hard on my project.

Week 6: Oct. 7-11, 2019

My company sometimes releases stickers for people to order online and sometimes we give away a few. This week I was assigned to make a new sticker. I am good at Photoshop and InDesign, but I can't draw well. Designing a banner for the career

fair is much easier than drawing an illustration. My manager explained what he wanted - the text should be "get your shine on," it should include the sun symbol and he liked the rainbow color. I spent roughly two hours making several drafts. I personally liked a simple one, but he preferred the most complex look. We put two versions on Instagram and asked our followers to vote. More than 1,200 people acted and the complex one won, but the number of votes was very close.

It was not an easy thing to do but the result was exciting. Usually we did not get such high engagement, according to my colleagues. This time people really loved my sticker, so our department decided to make 100 free stickers and give them to some of our customers.

The manager knows how to get our followers engaged on social media. He's good at observing people and reading their minds. I remembered there was one day he came to me and said I had three tics while working. He was absolutely right and I did not even notice myself doing these things. I guess a good marketer has to be like him, always paying attention to the details. He opened a Twitter account in high school (@cheerbible) and wanted to try how many followers he could possibly get. The number turned out to be 86,500. He said the first year not many people were reading his posts, but one day he suddenly gained a ton of followers. Marketing is just this, he said. The point where the social media account started to gain followers dramatically is called critical mass. However, it is difficult to determine exactly when that point will be reached or where exactly that point is. A lot of content creators choose to quit because they currently don't see any breakthroughs, but the truth is the point might be the next minute. If they hang in there for a longer time, they might make it.

Week 7: Oct. 14-18, 2019

We launched our toothpaste nearly a month ago. The sales report of the product looked okay, but we felt like we could've gotten better results. After a meeting, we decided to send out more toothpaste for our influencers to promote. Meanwhile, I was asked to gather media contacts, write a piece about our toothpaste and send it to editors/bloggers.

The story is more like a press release. I never learned how to write such stories and most of the time I did not enjoy writing stories in English. When I was at the J-School, I focused on visuals. I read some samples the manager sent me and spent about one hour finishing the piece. Then I sent it out to over 15 media outlets, mostly online magazines. I hope they would get back to us so the toothpaste could get more attention.

For my project, I interviewed 3 people this week. The total number is nine now. One thing that bothers me is that most of them said they did not encounter ethical issues at all and they feel like the industry is doing well when it comes to ethics. I got some interesting findings and hope I can explain them well in the final report.

Week 8: Oct. 21-25, 2019

I am always ready to challenge myself if I get a chance. Halloween is just around the corner. I offered to make a pumpkin gif and a sticker. The result of the last sticker I made turned out to be great, so I was very confident in making another one. I came up with five ideas but eventually chose two of them. For the sticker, I wanted it to be simple. However, the IG gif had to be more creative.

Our teeth whitening kit requires users to connect the mouthpiece to the USB attachment and it would light up. This inspired me. I made a Novashine pumpkin that used the light. It showed the process of how our product lit up the Halloween pumpkin. People loved it and I saw them started including my work in their Instagram stories. I even got some appreciation from our influencers. It was a fun project and I felt like I was getting better at designing.

For my project, I am still transcribing the interviews I did in the past few weeks and it is very time-consuming. I plan to finish it next week and see if I have any follow up questions to ask people.

Week 9: Oct. 28-Nov. 1, 2019

Our product (mainly the teeth whitening kit) not only sells in the United States, but we also work with a Chinese company to promote it in China. As the only intern in my department who speaks and writes Mandarin, obviously I take on all Chinese campaigns.

Last year the company pushed hard to open the Chinese market, but now they've shifted their focus onto the North American market. Therefore, I mainly work on sales and promotions in the states but occasionally check our Weibo account, or go to the Dealmoon app to reply to messages posted by Chinese customers if we have campaigns.

This week we had a new campaign in China going on. It was a customer review campaign. We worked with Dealmon.com, which is a website that provides discount info for mainly Chinese customers. I wrote up a text piece to be posted on the website and emailed it to a Dealmoon editor. Basically what we wanted to do was doing giveaways

and invited customers to participate in it. After they received the product for free, they had to post thorough product reviews on the website. We did not ask them to say good words about the product. We just said we wanted their honest answers. Eventually, thanks to the quality of our product, more than 50 people participated in this and none of them revealed negative attitudes towards our kit.

For my project, I finished transcribing the interviews, but I felt like I needed to ask follow up questions. I sent out some questions but I haven't heard back from people yet.

Week 10: Nov. 4-8, 2019

Holiday season is almost here and we have been pretty busy preparing for campaigns and sales. I offered to make several Black Friday gifs and Christmas gifs. Most of them included Christmas elements or Christmas color. A tricky thing was that the color of our product did not really match with the holiday colors. Bright blue and red? I did not enjoy seeing these colors go together. Therefore, I either made the product a small part of the design or I used text instead. I can't wait for Instagramers to use my work on their stories.

In China, there is also a big sale coming up. Double-11 Shopping Carnival is such a big date for all marketers. It's a national celebration of e-commerce. This event was launched by Alibaba, the owner of Taobao in 2009 and eventually developed into a yearly event. On Nov. 11, almost every seller on Taobao would provide huge discounts for customers. It's a bit like Black Friday but different because this only happens when you shop online, specifically speaking, on Taobao. But everyone in China uses Taobao,

you get the idea. Last year the sale number was 213.5 billion Chinese yuan. It was so crazy. I still think it would be awesome to do marketing in China. Anything could happen.

For my project, I started writing my final report. I thought it would be easy, but it took me such a long time to finish transcribing interviews and other things. I hope I could get it finished by this weekend.

Work Samples

1. **Label Design**

NANOVA™
Better Life Through Innovation

2.75mm X 10mm

Nanova DualFunction
Coronary Stent System

REF DF-2710M

2.75mm   10 mm   2.7F/0.90mm   1.9F/0.69mm

Consult Instructions for Use (IFU): Physical copy of IFU, US only meaning for US market

EO Sterilization	LOT LOT 190830-01
P ≥ 5F (0.056"/1.42 mm)	Manf 2019-08-30
3 Year Shelf Life	Exp 2021-08-30

MADE in the USA

Nanova, Inc., 1601 S. Providence Road, Columbia, MO 65211

Pressure (bar)*	ø 2.75 (mm)
5	2.45
6	2.49
7	2.54
8	2.59
9	2.65
10	2.70
11 NP	2.75
12	2.81
13	2.86
14	2.91
15	2.96
16	3.01
17	3.06
18	3.11
19 RBP	3.15
20	3.19
21	3.22
22	3.29

1 Bar = 100 kPa

NP: Nominal Pressure
RBP: Rated Burst Pressure

Barcode

(01) 1 8901072 00015 0 (17) 190831 (10) LM123

2. Career Fair Posters

3. **Toothpaste Story for Online Magazines**

Novashine Brings Teeth Whitening Toothpaste to Market

With over 500 five-Star reviews and 50,000 users, Novashine is the fastest growing teeth whitening brand everyone is talking about on Instagram. In addition to teeth whitening kit and facemask, their new product, Novashine Teeth Whitening Toothpaste, finally enters the market.
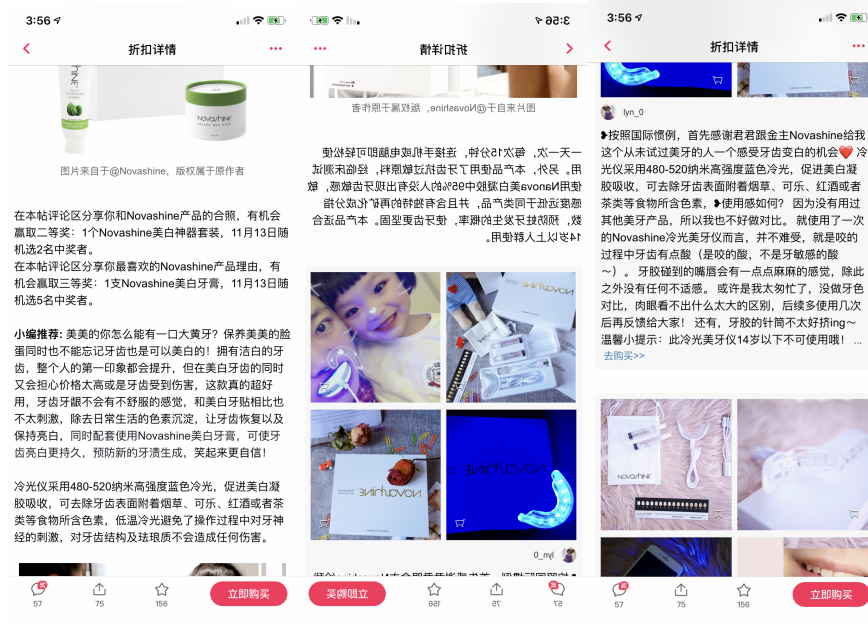
The toothpaste is the latest addition to the brand's product line. It comes with everything people need to naturally lift stains, provide a balanced oral-care essential, and taste better than any toothpaste ever. It features a blend of calcium-minerals that are specially formulated to gently whiten teeth while also being safe on enamel and gums. It's made in the USA with all-natural ingredients including organically sourced peppermint and coconut oil.

Novashine has been aiming to co-develop a better solution to teeth whitening with its users ever since the creation of the brand. The all-natural toothpaste was created after Novashine's 115k Instagram followers cried out for it after loving their Teeth Whitening Kit, the first product of the brand. The brand finally set out and formulated their very own teeth whitening toothpaste this fall.

It's all about attitudes. Novashine always wants to give customers the results they deserve. The team carefully source their ingredients and meticulously test the formula before going into production. They never test on animals. They use real volunteers to make sure the products' efficiency.

In 2017, the brand proudly launched their teeth whitening kit with only a few Instagram followers. Now with over 3000 brand ambassadors and 50,000 users, the brand is even more dedicated to customer satisfaction and co-creating the products with their followers. "Novashine is not a community, Novashine is family" says Landon Wolf, the brand manager. There are no other products like the kit Novashine is selling that works eight times faster and causes much less sensitivity. The product is now a social media darling and Novashine's Instagram page followers has also grown from 4 to over 115,000 within just 2 years. With all this support, the company has been able to expand and create a teeth whitening pen and the matcha mud mask. Now the all-natural whitening toothpaste has set off another wave of premium oral care.

4. **Customer Review Campaign and double-11 Campaign in China (Cooperated with Dealmoon.com)**

5. Free Halloween Stickers for Customers

Novashine Sticker! (Sold Out)
$0.00

☆☆☆☆☆ No reviews

Quantity

| 1 ⌄ | ADD TO CART |

Novashine Sticker for putting on Laptops, Mirrors, anything!

You picked it! This design won our poll for the sticker we should launch next and here it is!:) The sticker will be launching Saturday at 5 PM and only 100 will be available for FREE!

(Like 100% free even shipping :))
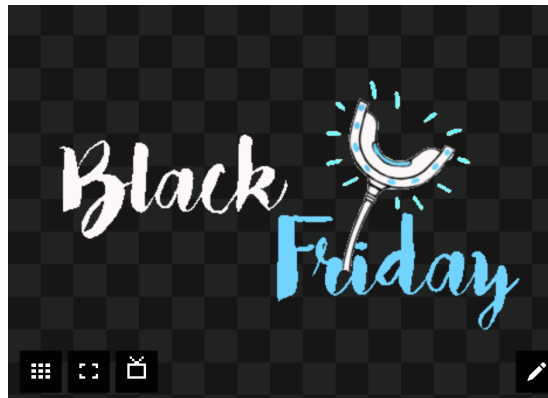
Thanks for always being so supportive of us:)

Be sure to follow us on Instagram @Novashinesmile for more fun and more stickers!:)
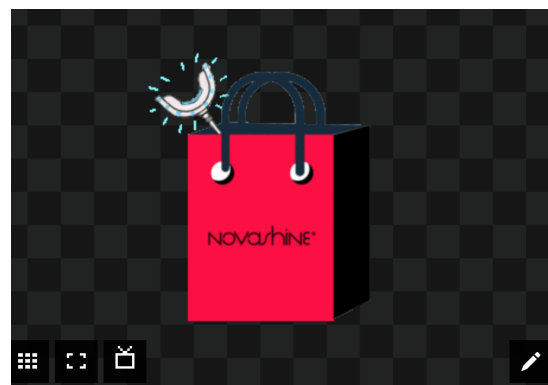
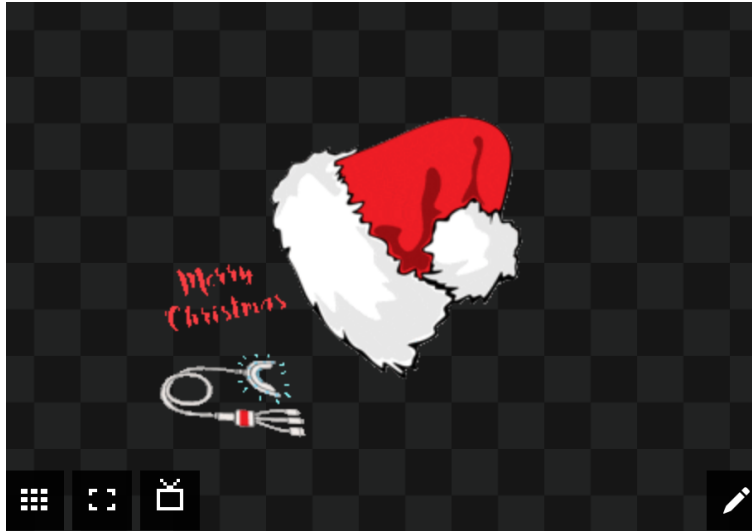**(Limit 1)**

132

6. Holiday and Sale Gifs for Instagram

https://media.giphy.com/media/XfyDZB4Jy2IENtCHgG/giphy.gif

https://media.giphy.com/media/Q60Suir8RVuXOM7A2Y/giphy.gif

https://media.giphy.com/media/chgonomK1H6GUAuke6/giphy.gif

https://media.giphy.com/media/WtVPLG2HwmXtmQAght/giphy.gif

https://media.giphy.com/media/IeMBT7fuHOljy187TL/giphy.gif

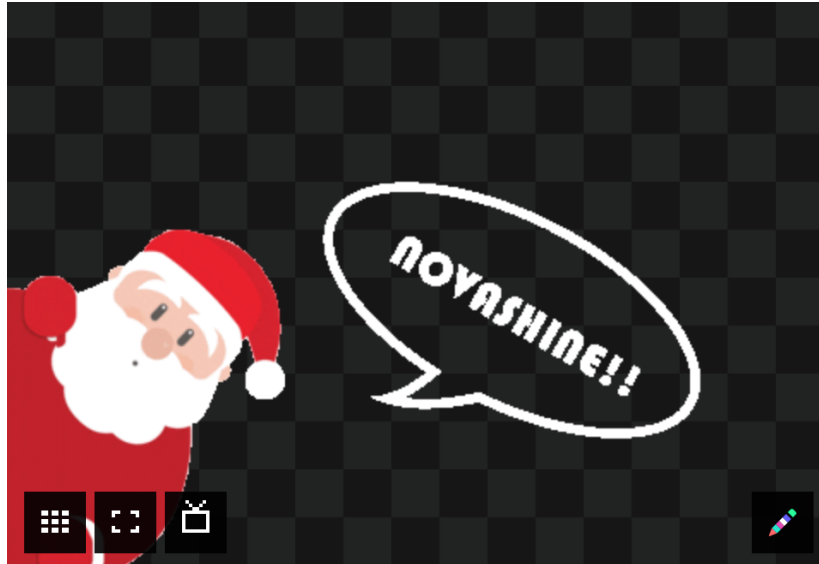https://media.giphy.com/media/QshIp1TUqgk1siUK9l/giphy.gif

Copyright Permission

NOVASHINE®

Copyright Permission Letter

We understand Maoyan is reproducing the above work products for purposes of

her professional project, and that we give permission to use them in the report.

Yi Gan
Director of Marketing and Sales

Appendix D: Evaluation

Evaluation by Supervisors

NOVASHINE®

Internship Evaluation of Maoyan Wei

Maoyan has demonstrated strong work ethic and professionalism while she worked here with our team from August through December this year. I was mostly impressed by her wide range of skills, including copy writing, graphic design, and PR outreach. She is diligent with any tasks assigned to her and I can always count on her to deliver an excellent outcome.

Here are some specific instances that Maoyan contributed to our digital marketing tasks and projects that we would like to highlight:

- Maoyan was a tremendous help to our daily influencer marketing work. From reaching out to YouTubers, Instagram, TikTok influencers, to following up with influencers, constructing following up schedule and offering campaigns. Her work has helped generate over one-million dollars in revenue and an increase of over 50,000 followers on Instagram, helping our team achieve excellency in influencer marketing with the brand.
- Maoyan was also the go-to person on our team from any graphic design needs. If we have an idea for a graphic/project, she would never say no to it! She created new graphics for our website to demonstrate specific technical comparisons between competing products. She also created a set of gifs that include our brand logo, product images, text, characters etc. which have been used by influencers for 10,000+ times in their Instagram stories. Our limited-edition stickers were sent to over 500 customers and they loved her design. She also created a professional sell sheet for our products, and it will be used for talking to potential retail chain buyers such as Ulta, Nordstrom, Sephora, Urban Outfitters etc.
- In addition to her exceptional technical skills, Maoyan is also a strong team player and communicator. During her internship, she was eager to learn our brand history and personality and apply appropriate design principles to the projects. When we hired new interns, she provided instructions for them, demonstrating strong leadership.
- As a young brand, we struggled to get news coverage. Maoyan took initiative in creating a press release and identified over 50 potential media outlets during our PR outreach for a new product launch.

Overall, Maoyan is one of our best interns that we've hired. Her work will continue to be used by our brand in the future!

Yi Gan
Director of Marketing and Sales

Landon Wolf
Brand Manager

Self-Evaluation

Interning at Nanova Inc. as a digital marketing intern was an amazing experience for me. This internship is perfect for a first-time advertising practitioner. I studied Convergence when I was an undergraduate student and just switched to Strategic Communication last year. Nanova is a small startup in Columbia, but given the fact that I didn't have any related work experience in the industry, this actually benefited me. In the past few months, I've had enough freedom and opportunities to try out different things.

As an intern, I was responsible for assisting the marketing manager with Instagram and other social media accounts. I gained a sense of accomplishment seeing that we have grown our Instagram community to over 119,000 strong from just a humble beginning. Besides, I learned how to use HubSpot CRM to manage contacts and how to conduct influencer marketing, reaching out to and communicating with influencers and customers in a proper manner. Finally, I had opportunities to create visual contents such as stickers and gifs.

The company culture was very friendly. Everyone in my department was patient and considerate. I got guidance from my colleagues everytime I encountered difficulties because I was the only intern there for the first two months. Being the only intern in a department, obviously, had its advantages. I was able to chat with the manager every day just to learn from him. I was given more than enough time and opportunities to do things that I wanted to do. Most importantly, my company has been trying to open the Chinese Market and I speak Mandarian. Therefore, I got to do marketing in both the United States and China. It was a fun experience.

Appendix E: Original Project Proposal

Introduction

My interest in advertising ethics was first stimulated when I started taking the Media Ethics course at Mizzou. This class mainly discussed ethical issues in journalism. It briefly went through advertising and public relations ethics in one class, but I was still surprised that ethical issues in the field of advertising was much more complex than what I expected. Despite the complexity, I seldom received education on advertising ethics at school during my one year study of strategic communication. However, now I do see the need to stress the importance of this topic.

For this project, I want to connect the ethical theories I learned in the Media Ethics class with my area of study. First, I'd love to get more insights of advertising practitioners' perceptions of ethics through in-depth interviews. Second, this research will serve as an extra lesson I give to myself before I leave campus and start my career in the advertising world. During the past year, I've spent most of my time focusing on how to create a good advertisement or how to optimize my clients' search results. It is now time to transition to a serious examination of ethics in advertising.

In daily life, common discussions about advertising ethics are focused on the possible influences advertisements might have on our society, which are mostly from the viewpoints of consumers and citizens. However, what do things look from the perspective of advertisers? What are they thinking about when ethical issues arise?

My research is going to use semi-structured interviews with advertising professionals to examine their attitudes toward advertising ethics and discover their

approaches to such issues. In addition, organizational influence on their decision-making process will also be explored.

Professional Skills Component

To complete my professional skills component, I will find a placement in either an advertising agency or in-house agency in Columbia, Missouri. I am looking forward to an internship related to digital strategy or visual content production (video/photo/graphics).

While pursuing my degree, I have been passionate about visual content and had several related internships. At the same time, I've also developed a strong interest in digital marketing and I am hoping to dive deeper into that.

I've reached out to several companies, and am waiting for their fall internship application to open. I will work 30 hours a week for 14 weeks beginning late August.

Literature Review

Introduction

Billboards on highways, flyers in your mailbox, the slides of buses, TV commercials, internet pop ups… advertisements surround us wherever we go. For a typical American adult, ad exposures range from 600 to 625 per day (Media Matters, 2007). If brand exposures are included (e.g. passing a label in a grocery store), according to a research conducted by the marketing firm Yankelovich, this number could go up to roughly 5,000.

As technology advances, an individual receives a large amount of information daily, undoubtedly making the competition among businesses even fiercer. Under this circumstance, today's advertising companies and their clients are trying all possible methods to win over consumers' limited attention. However, while shouting to be heard, advertisers sometimes neglect the fact that they also need to show their responsibility to stakeholders to ensure sustainability. Several researchers have found that advertising practitioners, at times, fail to identify ethical dilemmas, or they choose not to exercise the ethical reasoning abilities they have (Place, 2015; Drumwright and Murphy, 2004). In addition to that, only 11 percent of the responses rate advertisers highly for their ethics. With industry's moral myopia and the public's distrust of this profession, maintaining a good reputation now seems extremely challenging for many advertising agencies. Today, it is more important than ever to address the importance of ethics in advertising.

Ethics has long been a mainstream topic in advertising research (Hyman, Tansley, and Clark, 1994), yet few studies have directly explored the views of industry practitioners. Previous studies discussed advertising ethics mainly from two angles: the perspective of law and the perspective of morality (Drumwright, 1993). Lawyers and regulators are concerned about what advertisers can and cannot do. For example, what is the bottom line of online behavior targeting (Nill and Aalberts, 2014). Meanwhile, philosophers and sociologists pay relatively more attention to the possible influences advertising exerts on our society. For example, research about healthcare advertising and discussions about the perpetuation of stereotypes or unbridled materialism (Brenkert, 1998; Zayer and Coleman, 2014; Schenker, Arnold and London, 2014).

Both perspectives – laws and morality – tell the story happening on the macro level, but it is hard to know what things look like on the micro level – to recognize advertising practitioners' perception of ethics and their decision-making process when the ethical problems arise. There are several studies examining advertisers' perceptions of ethics, but most of them used scenario analysis or a survey, which might limit the measurement (e.g. Pratt and James, 1994; Moon and Franke, 2000). One notable researcher interviewed 51 advertising practitioners in person, and discovered that many of them have difficulty identifying ethical problems or seeing them clearly (Drumwright and Murphy, 2004). This research identified the moral muteness in the advertising industry, but how does that look today, 15 years after that original study? Therefore, instead of focusing on social dimensions, my project is going to interview advertisers and discover their perceptions of ethics. In addition, it is also going to examine the organizational impact on an individual's decision-making process.

Theoretical Framework

Business ethics is defined as "moral rules, standards, codes, or principles which provide guidelines for right and truthful behavior in specific situations" (Lewis, 1985). Unlike the study of ethics being an ancient tradition, the study of business ethics did not evolve into a popular discussion until the concept became widespread in the 1970s (De George, 2006).

Previous studies related to advertising ethics have not usually been theory-driven (Hunt and Choko, 1987). However, almost all ethical theories can be classified as either deontological or teleological and studies of ethical action "cannot ignore the classical

approaches of deontology and teleology" (Lambeth, 1986). Deontology is a duty-based approach, emphasizing whether the motives behind certain actions are right or wrong, while teleology focus on what is good as an end to be achieved (Vallentyne, 1987; MacDonald and Beck-Dudley, 1994). My project would select one notable theory for each category - Kantianism for deontology and John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism for teleology - to analysis interviewees' responses.

German philosopher Immanuel Kant believed that there was a supreme rational principle that could help us make decisions. He referred to it as the categorical imperative, that one should "act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law (Kant, 2002)." This theory is an example of deontological approaches – omitting an action out of duty, regardless of the purposes to be achieved.

When it comes to the decision-making process in the advertising world, deontology-based values such as Kant's theory strongly support opinions or actions that strictly restrict conveying deceptive information to consumers (Kim et al., 2017). Strict deontological ethics help practitioners identify the precise boundaries of actions (Michaels et al, 1988). For example, should an advertiser lie to the client? The thinking process would be: If I lie, other advertisers can also lie. If all advertisers are lying to their clients, that'd ruin the reputation of our profession. Therefore, I should not lie to the client. Additionally, Kant believes that we should not treat people as a mere means to an end. This also backs up the decision of not to lie to the client because we do not wish to use people as a tool to achieve our goal of making profits.

However, deontology-based values might cause conflicts when the advertising agencies try to maximize profits. Some researches indicate that the deontological approach is not a preferable choice for advertising practitioners because it is against the reality (Pratt and James, 1994). Besides, German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel once criticized Kant's theory of ethics, saying it does not offer a clear guideline for assessing moral conduct. In the real world, the nature of advertising perpetuates a paradox: practitioners often work in a "grey area" where the boundaries between right and wrong are not clear enough (Dubinsky et al, 1991). For advertisers in the United States, ethics is situational (Fritzsche, 1991). In a survey, 78 percent of respondents said most advertising executives would lie about an update on an account (Pratt and James, 1994).

On contrary to Kant' categorical imperative, John Stuart Mill offered another approach to make decisions, which is utilitarianism. Under this theory, the moral worth of one's action is determined by the amount of happiness, and for the greatest number of good (Elliott, 2007). Mill believes that sometimes it is better for individuals to be harmed while sometimes not. The only metrics, instead of the motives behind certain actions, is the "aggregate good" – the overall benefits for the community as a whole.

Unlike deontological approaches, teleology-based values support the relaxation of regulations of advertising and allows more controversial subjects appear in advertisements. For example, utilitarianism consider sex appeal and puffery in creative strategy as effective methods to increase consumers' understanding about a brand or increase their happiness index (Kim et al., 2017).

Under this theory, let's go back to the question of if an advertiser should lie to the client. If we walk through this same question using the utilitarian decision tree, we would analyze the specific case and ask ourselves whether the action causes any harm. If so, is the person harmed getting what he/she deserves? How will harming this individual promote the overall good of the community? Under this theory, lying to clients, in some conditions, is not necessarily a bad thing.

Based on deontology and teleology, the first research question was formed:

RQ1: How do account managers make decisions when ethical issues arise?

<div align="center">What is Advertising?</div>

Having defined the ethical framework, the next step is to define advertising. The definition of advertising has been evolving over the years, and various understandings derive from different perspectives: consumers consider all forms of commercial promotional activity as advertising (Schultz, 1995) while industry practitioners say certain actions that help promotions, such as public relations, are not advertising (Rust and Oliver 1994).

Not only have customers and advertising practitioners argued about it, but scholars have also struggled to agree on an exact definition to advertising due to the ever-changing working environment. Advertising has two central functions, that of informing and that of persuading consumers (Santilli, 1983). The defenders of advertising tend to stress the importance of the informative function, which provides the information about products and services to customers. On the contrary, critics of advertising lay their eyes on the persuasive function, saying that the ultimate goal of advertising is to entice customers to buy the product (Santilli, 1983).

Given the ongoing argument, a previous study (Richards and Curran, 2002) tried to identify the steady characteristics of advertising that everyone could agree on. Researchers sent out three waves of questionnaires to both advertising practitioners and scholars, asking their opinions about how we should define advertising. Results found that respondents generally felt the paid element must be retained, and this was essential to set advertising apart from other forms of communication, such as public relations. Eventually, the study provided a definition revised by both practitioners and scholars:

"Advertising is a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future."

Based on the definition, there are two key items involved in the process of advertising: the information from the source to convey and the actual approaches to convey the information. Therefore, advertisers have two types of relationships to deal with: the relationship with clients and that with consumers. For my project, I am going to mainly focus on practitioners working in the account management department.

Ethical dilemmas in advertising

The limited number of studies about advertising practitioners' general perception toward ethics reveal that there is a gap between aspects of advertising ethics the scholars hope to study in the future and the actual dilemmas the practitioners are facing in the real world. For example, a study (Hyman, Tansey and Clark, 1994) mailed questionnaires to advertising researchers to find out what are the best opportunities for research on advertising ethics. Based on the responses, the study identified six important topics for the future research as following:

1) *The need for better measures related to ethics;*

2) *Use of deception;*

3) *Advertising to children;*

4) *Ads for legal vices;*

5) *Negative political ads;*

6) *Stereotyping in ads.*

It is clear that these topics are largely related to the social dimension. Meanwhile, another study (Hunt and Choko, 1987) mailed questionnaires to 3,064 top-level advertising agency executives, and the researchers recognized the most often reported ethical problems facing advertising practitioners:

1) *Treating clients fairly. For example, balancing clients' needs against agency needs;*

2) *Creating honest, non-misleading, socially desirable advertisements;*

3) *Representing clients whose product/services are unhealthy, unneeded, useless, or unethical;*

4) *Treating suppliers, vendors and media fairly;*

5) *Treating employees and management of agency fairly;*

6) *Treating other agencies fairly.*

For this survey, only 24 percent of respondents mentioned things about actual advertisement's content when talking about ethical issues. Most categories that they were concerned about dealt with relationships with stakeholders (Hunt and Chonko, 1987). The problem with this is that ethical studies in advertising have historically been examined from a macro perspective, but the firm-level scenarios has been neglected.

(Hunt and Chonko, 1987). Moreover, the American Advertising Federation's code of ethics also failed to match advertisers' needs. Instead of looking at ethical issues related to relationships with stakeholders, the code of ethics focuses on truth telling, and many of its principles stress the importance to avoid bad consequences of advertising on society (Pratt and James, 1994).

Therefore, exploring ethics in advertising from the perspective of industry practitioners is essential to the future development of this profession. Based on this, the second research question is:

RQ2: What are the ethical issues facing account managers?

Organizational impact on individual's decisions

In a previous study (Drumwright and Murphy, 2004), researchers identified moral muteness (people successfully identify ethical issues but choose to remain silent) and moral myopia (people fail to identify ethical issues) when it comes to advertising practitioners' perceptions of ethics. However, notable exceptions also emerged: there were a group of practitioners who successfully recognized ethical issues and were willing to discuss them with colleges for advice in their daily work. It turned out that those practitioners were encouraged by organizational cultures and climate to share their thoughts about ethics and help each other deal with ethical issues.

Organizational climate refers to the "shared perceptions of organizational policies, practices, and procedures, both formal and informal" (Reichers and Schneider, 1990). An open organizational culture where employees are adequately informed about matters that concern them can help them make decisions (Shadur et al., 1999). However, there are still

plenty of advertising agencies that do not provide guidance on ethics. In a survey that

drew a sample from Forbes 500 companies, results show that ethics regarding advertising

ranked the lowest, with just about 25 percent of the firms indicating they have codes

incorporated guidance on ethics in advertising, and a possible reason for the lack of

attention to advertising ethics in policy is that creating advertisements that depict high

levels of ethics is not a major objective compared to the goal of selling products

(Murphy, 1998). Many ad executives have also realized that if ethical misconduct is not

sanctioned, it could encourage more ethical issues to occur (Singer, 1992).

Meanwhile, practitioners are expecting ethical guidance from their organizations.

In a study (Pratt and James, 1994), researchers provided industry practitioners with four

specific ethical dilemmas to test their attitudes towards ethics. Most respondents

indicated that their firm did not address these situations formally in a policy to guide its

employees, but they do expect to have codes of ethics.

Therefore, it would be interesting to talk to advertising practitioners to see if their

firms have related codes of ethics, and whether that influences their decision-making

process, which leads to my third research question:

RQ3: Does organizational climate have an impact on an individual's ethical

decisions?

Research Methods

Many previous researchers looking at ethics used surveys to get

practitioners' insights on their attitudes toward ethics in advertising (e.g. Hunt and

Chonko, 1987; Hyman, Tansey and Clark, 1994; Pratt and James, 1994; Murphy, 1998).

One researcher reviewed 94 business ethics studies and found that 81 percent used the method of survey (Randall and Gibson, 1990). Conducting a survey is effective at identifying which practices are generally accepted or rejected on ethical grounds, yet it is not the best tool to analyze thoroughly how advertising practitioners think about, approach and deal with ethical issues (Drumwright and Murphy, 2004). Survey research used either a direct question format or scenarios, but survey questions are typically very vague and scenarios forced participants to give responses to pre-defined categories (Randall and Gibson, 1990). In addition, it is hard to guarantee the validity of the findings. Researchers noted the presence of a social desirability response bias in ethics research – differences occur between what people say and they actually do. Participants tend to show attitudes valued by general social norms, regardless of their true feelings, and such bias is difficult to counter (Nederhof, 1985; Randall and Fernandes, 1991; Randall and Gibson, 1990).

Ethics researchers are about exploring viewpoints. When the goal of research is to examine opinions, attitudes, views, beliefs or preferences, qualitative methods are the most appropriate methodology for researchers to adopt (Hammarberg, Kirkman and Lacey, 2016). Among all the qualitative methods, interviewing has been a vital one in mass communication research, (Holloway and Wheeler, 2010). For my project, I will use semi-structured interviews to directly explore advertising practitioners' perception of ethics. The nature of semi-structured interviews gives my study more flexibility. Unlike unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews require the interviewer to have a question list before the conversation starts, but at the same time, the interviewers can seek new path during the process if he/she wants to (Gray 2004).

I will attempt to conduct interviews in person. By doing so, I will be able to obtain the most up-to-date information directly from the subjects. Meanwhile, real-time communication allows both researchers and interviewees give instant responses and there is no significant time delay between question and answer (Opdenakker, 2006). Besides, a face-to-face interview can also take its advantage of social cues, including voice, intonation, body language, etc. Such items can provide researchers with extra information, which help in the analysis (Opdenakker, 2006). If in-person interviews are not possible, alternative interviewing tools such as Skype calls, phone calls or emails will be adopted. These alternative methods have their own strengths and limitations. Research shows that conducting a phone interview is most appropriate for short-time discussions (Harvey, 1988), yet it increases respondents' perception anonymity, which is good for sensitive topics like ethics (Greenfield et al., 2000). When it comes to email interviews, although non-verbal cues cannot be observed, email is a great tool that allows in-depth interviews to happen, for it gives the respondents more time to think and write without the pressures of face-to-face interaction (McCoyd, J., & Kerson, T., 2006).

I will interview 8 to 12 account managers at advertising agencies as the subjects of my study. Qualitative researches will hit a point of saturation where incoming data produce little new information after a certain number of interviews are conducted (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). To discover how many interviews are enough for a study, researchers conducted an inclusive thematic analysis of 60 in-depth interviews for one topic. They discovered that 70 percent of the themes identified turned up in the first six interviews, and 92 percent were covered within the first 12 interviews (Guest, et al., 2006). Other researchers also confirmed similar conclusions, saying that five to six semi-structured

interviews can cover most concepts and over 80 percent of themes could be identified within 10 interviews (Morgan et al., 2002; Francis, et al., 2010; Namey, et al., 2016).

A semi-structured interview usually lasts 30 minutes to more than an hour, based on the situations (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). To identify the ethical issues while advertisers interact with both clients. To eliminate confounding factors and get a full picture of this issue, equal number of males and females, diversity when it comes to races and practitioners at all levels (entry/mid/senior) will be assured.

For recruiting participants, I will reach out to them through various platforms such as LinkedIn and Twitter utilizing a convenience sample. To minimize the possible influence participants might have on one another, snowball sampling would not be adopted. This method was first introduced in 1961 and it asked existing subjects to recruit more people to participant (Goodman, 1961). Snowball sampling is usually used in studies that focusing on hard-to-reach groups or groups with low social visibility (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). Since advertising practitioners do not fall into this category, it is not necessary to use this method. In addition, research shows that interviewers need to earn the trust of their respondents to get high quality data (Harvey, 2011). Therefore, while reaching out to them, I will be as transparent as possible to let them know all necessary information such as who I am, why I am conducting this study, and how I am going to use the work.

Before the interview starts, I will make it clear to the participants that first, this study might be published; second, I will record the conversation to ensure the accuracy of my analysis. However, to obtain valid interview data, the interviewees will need to feel comfortable enough to express themselves without having concerns or feeling coerced

(Harvey, 2011). Therefore, their real names will be replaced with pseudonyms, and other identifiable information including employer names and workplace names would not be disclosed in the study. Besides, I will not interview anyone at the agency where I do my project.

After interviews, I will upload the data to my laptop and transcribe them. I will review each interview, compare them with one another, and take notes. Eventually, a report will be produced based on the analysis.

I will start to set up interviews in August 2019. I have prepared 12 questions for the interviews which will provide data to answer the three research questions. The first is to understand their perceptions of advertising ethics and identify the ethical issues they are facing. The second is to explore their thinking process when ethical issues arise. Finally, to examine if organizations have an impact on their decisions. Unlike structured interviews, during semi-structured interviews, the interviewer is allowed to change the order of questions or change the working freely (Power et al 2010). To conduct successful semi-structured interviews, it is also important to discuss the interview questions with a potential participant, co-researcher or supervisor to see if the wording and manner is appropriate (Smith et al, 2009). Therefore, the current questions might be modified, or new questions might be created, based on how the interviewees react and how the conversation goes.

Target Publications

Several publications have published works on similar topics or related concepts. This research would be suitable for publication in any of the following: Journal of

Advertising, Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of Consumer Marketing, Journal of Mass

Media Ethics, Journal of Advertising Research, Journal of Media Ethics, Journal of

Marketing Research, Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising.

References

Biernacki, P., and D. Waldorf (1981), ''Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling,'' Sociological Methods and Research, 10(2):141–63.

Brenkert, G. (1998). Trust, morality, and international business. Business Ethics Quarterly, 8, 293–317.

De George, R. T. (2006). 'The History of Business Ethics', in M. J. Epstein and K. O. Hanson (eds.), The Accountable Corporation. Vol. 2 Business Ethics (Praeger Westpoint, CO/London), pp. 47–58.

DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. Medical Education, 40, 314-321.

Drumwright, Minette E. (1993), "Ethical Issues in Advertising and Sales Promotion," in Ethics in Marketing, N. Craig Smith and John A. Quelch, eds., Homewood, IL: Irwin.

Drumwright, Minette E. and Patrick E. Murphy (2004), "How Advertising Practitioners View Ethics," Journal of Advertising, 33 (Summer), 7–24.

Dubinsky, A. J., Jolson, M. A., Kotobe, M., Lim, C. U., 1991. A Cross-National Investigation of Industrial Salespeople's Ethical Perceptions. Journal of International Business Studies, 22 (4), 651-670.

Elliott, Deni (2007). "Getting Mill Right," Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 2 2 (2-31, 100-112).

Francis, J. J., Johnston, M., Robertson, C., Glidewell, L., Entwistle, V. Eccles, M. P., & Grimshaw, J. M. (2010). What is an adequate sample size? Operationalizing data saturation for theory-based interview studies. Psychology and Health, 25, 1229-1245.

Fritzsche, D. J. (1991). A model of decision-making incorporating ethical values. Journal of Business Ethics, 10, 841-852.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967) The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies of qualitative research. London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson.

Goodman, L. (1961) "Snowball Sampling." Annals of Mathematical Statistics 32245-268.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. Field Methods, 18(1), 59-82.

Gray DE (2004) Doing Research in the Real World. First edition. Sage Publications, London.

Greenfield, T.K., Midanik, L.T. and Rogers, J.D. (2000) 'Effects of Telephone versus Face-to-Face Interview Modes on Reports of Alcohol Consumption', Addiction 95(20): 277–84.

Hammarberg, K., Kirkman, M., & de Lacey, S. (2016). Qualitative research methods: When to use them and how to judge them. Human Reproduction, 31, 498-501.

Harvey, C.D. (1988) 'Telephone Survey Techniques', Canadian Home Economics Journal 38(1): 30–5.

Harvey, W. S. (2011). Strategies for conducting elite interviews. Qualitative Research, 11, 431-441.

Holloway I, Wheeler S (2010) Qualitative Research in Nursing and Healthcare. Third edition. Wiley-Blackwell. Oxford.

Holloway I, Wheeler S (2010) Qualitative Research in Nursing and Healthcare. Third edition. Wiley-Blackwell. Oxford.

Hunt, S.D. and Chonko, L.B. (1987), "Ethical problems of advertising agency executives", Journal of Advertising, Vol. 16, pp. 16-24.

Hyman, Michael R., Richard Tansley, and James W. Clark (1994), "Research on Advertising Ethics: Past, Present, and Fu- ture," Journal of Advertising, 23 (3), 5–15.

Kant, I. (2002) Groundworks for the Metaphysics of Morals, trans. A. W. Wood. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Katie R. Place (2015) More Than Just a Gut Check: Evaluating Ethical Decision Making in Public Relations, Journal of Media Ethics, 30:4, 252-267.

Kim et al. (2017) Three Perspectives about Ethical Value in Advertising Business, International Journal of Journalism & Mass Communication, 3:124.

Lambeth, E. B.: 1986, Committed Journalism: An Ethic for the Profession (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind.).

Lewis, P.V. (1985). Defining business ethics: Like nailing jello to the wall. Journal of Business Ethics, 4: 317-383.

Macdonald, J. E., & Beck-Dudley, C. L. (1994). Are deontology and teleology mutually exclusive? Journal of Business Ethics, 13, 615-623.

McCoyd, J., & Kerson, T. (2006). Conducting intensive interviews using email: A serendipitous comparative opportunity. Qualitative Social Work, 5(3), 389-406.

Media Matters (2007), "It's Not as Oppressive as Some Think," Media Matters, February 15, 2007.

Michaels, Ronald E., William L. Cron, Alan J. Dubinsky and Eric A. Joachimsthaler. (1988). "The Influence of Formalization on the Organizational Commitment and Work Alienation of Salespeople and Industrial Buyers," Journal of Marketing Research, 25(November): 376-383.

Moon, Y. S., & Franke, G. R. (2000). Cultural influences on agency practitioners' ethical perceptions: A comparison of Korea and the US. Journal of Advertising, 29(1), 51–65.

Morgan, M. G., Fischhoff, B., Bostrom, A., & Atman, C. J. (2002). Risk communication: A mental models approach. New York, NY, US: Cambridge University Press.

Murphy, Patrick E. (1998), "Ethics in Advertising: Review, Analysis, and Suggestions," Journal of Public Policy in Marketing, 17 (Fall), 316–319.

Namey, E., Guest, G., McKenna, K., & Chen, M. (2016). Evaluating bang for the buck: A cost-effectiveness comparison between individual interviews and focus groups based on thematic saturation levels. American Journal of Evaluation, 37, 425– 440.

Nederhof, A.J. (1985). Methods of coping with social desirability: A review. Journal of European Social Psychology, 15, 263-280.

Nill, A. and Aalberts, R. (2013), "Legal and ethical challenges of online behavioral targeting in advertising", Journal of Current Issues in Research and Advertising, Vol. 35 No. 2, pp. 126-146.

Opdenakker R (2006) Advantages and disadvantages of four interview techniques in qualitative research. Forum: Qualitative Social Research 7(4).

Power Z, Campbell M, Kilcoyne P et al (2010) The hiperemesis impact of symptoms questionnaire: development and validation of a clinical tool. International Journal of Nursing Studies. 47, 1,67-77.

Power Z, Campbell M, Kilcoyne P et al (2010) The hiperemesis impact of symptoms questionnaire: development and validation of a clinical tool. International Journal of Nursing Studies. 47, 1,67-77.

Pratt, Cornelius B., and E. Lincoln James (1994), "Advertising Ethics: A Contextual Response Based on Classical Ethical Theory," Journal of Business Ethics, 13 (June), 455–568.

Randall, D. M., & Fernandes, M. F. (1991). The social desirability response bias in ethics research. Journal of Business Ethics, 10, 805–817.

Randall, D. M., & Gibson, A. M. (1990). Methodology in business ethics research: A review and critical assessment. Journal of Business Ethics, 9, 457-471.

Reichers, A. E., & Schneider, B. (1990). Climate and culture: An evolution of constructs. In B.

Schneider (Ed), Organizational climate and culture (pp. 5-39). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Richards, J. I. & Curran, C. M. (2002). Oracles on "Advertising": Searching for a Definition. Journal of Advertising, 31(2), 63-76.

Santilli, Paul (1983), "The Informative and Persuasive Functions of Advertising: A Moral Appraisal," Journal of Business Ethics, 2 (February), 27–33.

Schenker, Y., Arnold, R. M., & London, A. J. (2014). The Ethics of Advertising for Health Care Services. The American Journal of Bioethics, 14(3), 34–43.

Schultz, Don E. (1995), "What Is Direct Marketing?" Journal of Direct Marketing, 9 (2), 5-9.

Singer, A. W. (1992), "The Ultimate Ethics Test", Across the Board, 18-22.

Shadur, M. A., Kienzle, R., & Rodwell, J. J. (1999). The relationship between organizational climate and employee perceptions of involvement. Group and Organization Management, 24, 479–503.

Smith JA. Flowers P. Larkin M (2009) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research. Sage Publications, London.

Smith JA. Flowers P. Larkin M (2009) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research. Sage Publications, London.

Vallentyne, P. (1987). The Teleological/Deontological Distinction. Journal of Value Inquiry 21: 21-32.

Zayer, Linda Tuncay and Catherine A. Coleman (2015), "Advertising Professionals' Perceptions of the Impact of Gender Portrayals on Men and Women: A Question of Ethics?" Journal of Advertising, 44 (3), 1–12.