The Anatomy of Controversial Advertising: A Systematic Literature Review

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This Bibliometric Systematic Literature Review synthesizes 45 studies on controversial marketing to resolve fragmentation and integrate theoretical insights. Through bibliometric coupling and thematic analysis, we identify five clusters: Cultural Context, Psychological Processing, Content & Channel, Identity & Ethics, and Strategic Outcomes. Findings demonstrate that controversiality is a dynamic construct shaped by cultural norms, cognitive processing, emotional arousal, and identity-based morals. Provocation captures attention, but persuades depending on execution, audience, and context. The review integrates ELM, Arousal Theory, and Disidentification into a framework, offering theoretical clarity and practical tips for balancing creativity with ethics.

Keywords: controversial marketing, taboo advertising, shockvertising, offense, systematic literature review