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# Current and Emerging Ethical Issues in Marketing New Directions and Proposals

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# Current and Emerging Ethical Issues in Marketing New Directions and Proposals

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## I. INTRODUCTION

It is generally established that ethics and social dependability are becoming more vital within the businesses' context and this must be kept in mind by the company owners while marketing their products and services. There should be a strict prohibition of health dangerous products by the government.

Ethics are the decent values and principles that administer the actions and verdicts of an entity or cluster.

They give out as teachings on how to take action correctly and fairly when faced with moral problems, main thing here is that the consumer should not be delude respectably the vendors' rights. Customers' needs and wants must be look upon as essential.

This is the main reason that there are regulations in black and white that should be followed by all the marketing companies, however these codes do not cover all the aspects of the marketing but still they hold good. All the big and renowned companies should promote their marketers to tackle such codes and plans or guidelines those dealing with various marketing techniques ( Houston, 1986:81).<sup>1</sup> Many of them disagree those codes as they do not have official effect so, they are not essential which in fact is not an ethical thing because already there are many concepts

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similar to marketing "the more recent societal advertising concept praises the need for vendors to consider the wants and long term wants of both society and consumers"(Kotler & Armstrong, 2009: 20).<sup>2</sup>

So, we must fulfil our social responsibility by denying the unethical, hazardous and anti-social marketing of the business in any form. Business companies should make their marketing in such a way that both consumer and society does not feel reluctant and ashamed about this rather there should be a frank and free environmental and social relationship among marketers and business companies.

Keeping in mind the things discussed lately, this article is heading for observation of the current and up-and-coming ethical concerns and importance is going to be given to the reality that marketers are not as principled as they should be. This is shown with certain examples from the actual world and an effort of setting certain guideline and new way will be accomplished.

This attempt will engross a proposal of codes of ethics of how an ultimate marketing conduct should be. After having scanned that, more precise guidelines will be projected concerning certain areas of marketing in various industries such as direct selling marketing, baby food children marketing or drug marketing. In all these fields and aspects of business and pre-cuts marketing with the advertisement, there should be a proper code of ethics containing no anti-social or anti human elements. All the rules should be in agreement with the various industrial aspects so that no party could go in loss or unethical ways to get proper marketing.

## II. THEORY AND PRACTICE

Over the past few years, interest in moral issues has grown extremely in commerce and especially in the marketing ground. This has been shown by example; deceptive advertising, misleading packaging and questionable selling performs. As an outcome, there have been a great number of articles, journal, books and research that have been available. But, only a small number of them have recommended on approach to social duty and ethics. They lack an incorporated approach for building social responsibility and ethics element of the strategic marketing planning procedure. Vitell and Grove noticed that as business discipline marketing is mostly vulnerable to disapproval of ethical practices (S.J .Vitell & S.J. Grove, 1987:433).<sup>3</sup>

Ethics had become an important and specific part of marketing and a matter of hot discussion in various fields nowadays. So, the people are trying hard to keep up their ethical values by keeping the marketing rules in accord with it. So, all those proposals should be given legal form that contains ethical rules for strategic marketing. They put forward that the sub regulations of marketing (that is; advertising, personal selling, pricing, marketing research and international marketing) offer wide opportunities for unethical actions.

On the other hand, in recent years consumer movement and ecological lobbies that have come into survival are firmly recognized and monitor unethical behaviour, and have brought alterations in business practice and in the rules, which administer how businesses must function.

Many have willingly responded to the cruel disapproval received and altered the technique they perform (M. Brennan, 1991:3).<sup>4</sup> However, a huge number of marketers are not conscious about the moral sets and even if they are, they do not hold fast to them and take action in an unsatisfactory manner. So, there should be the basic aim or educating the marketers about the ethical rules and social responsibilities in this aspect.

The majority marketing behaviours have ethical substance yet they inadvertently put words that may be cruel and unethical for many people and this may put them in danger (M.Brennan, 1991:5).<sup>5</sup>

Ethical conflicts in marketing can mainly arise in two contexts; firstly the difference between the needs of company, industry, and society. Secondly, the conflict arises when the interest of individual and organization vary (L.England, 1998).<sup>6</sup> Like for example the first case applies to the car manufacturing companies that is dangerous for environment but at the same time owning a car is necessity. However, this impacts the oil price and environment but yet manufacturing of cars cannot be stopped because 70% of the households own cars. Similarly, the companies that produce cigarettes have adverse affects on society but yet the produce it and make people addicted to it. Though they put a warning on the packet but what do you think is that enough?

Even government has no proper answer to it. Government is silent about this issue because the main responsibility lies on the society who pays heed to their social need like a car as a necessary and required object in their life and they can't omit cars out of their lives and cannot work without it. Rather they should think about the upcoming consequences because of the cars only and its related issues too (N. Jacques & W.A. Weeks 1996:17).<sup>7</sup>

Similarly tobacco companies complete their possibility only by warning people and do not take any serious and practical step to help people to get rid of this dangerous think. Government should also take keen interest in this aspect.

May be people can forbade the companies on showing the advertisements of cigarettes on TV. . The other example is for second point, many of the time people do false marketing of their product at the expense of truth and that is devastating. People just wish to make money by selling thing that is rubbish; once Pat Boone marketed a product for acne treatment and that cause more pimples (D. Benady, January 19, 1996).<sup>8</sup>

People sometimes give bribes to the doctors so that they do not sue them for using their names while advertising their product by saying that you may consult a doctor. Also there are pharmacy that sells false medicines by offering perks and prizes. Like antipsychotic Zyprexa marketers did by offering scholarships but that was nothing more than a press release. Marketers generally attract the people to sell their product y misusing the drug word and the product is not medicine in reality. Drug shows "ultimately the trouble caused and solved on the base of provided facts" (J.F. Kahn, August 9, 1999).<sup>9</sup>

Zyprexa (Olanzapine) is prepared in market by the Lilly pharmaceuticals and their false man of promotion showed their bad intention of deceiving the people by selling their product. Their scholarship program was similarly an ordinary way of attracting and promoting the product. This unethical attitude completely destroys the moral values of society. As people buy the product to cure their disease and the product is an ordinary object not a medicine to get the proper treatment ([www.schizophrenia.com](http://www.schizophrenia.com)).<sup>10</sup>

Most of the time business ethics is conflicted with two of the philosophies the utilitarianism and deontology, this was proposed by the philosopher Beauchamp. Utilitarian deals with the effects of the action taken so one needs to take positive actions. While on the other hand deontology the work affected of the individual. As per Emmanuel Kant the consequences of an act as the manner in which that happened is not that much? So, there must be a keen eye on the ultimate results after promoting the products so that the improvement or changing can be made properly. Deontology and utilitarianism should be properly understood to get the awareness regarding the marketing process and positive steps should be taken to meet the needs of the aspect properly (N. Jacques & W.A Weeks, 1996:19).<sup>11</sup>

In business, utilitarianism is favoured as it goes with economic and philosophies of capitalism. Chartered Institute Marketing put forth a definition that says; Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably. This shows that the first and the most important thing is the customer satisfaction and within this the marketing performed is considered to be ethical and having moral values. the satisfaction of consumer is the main aim to get the

required results whereas which product dissatisfy the consumer must be improved properly so that its perfect working and good results make people happy.

On the contrary, Deontology id was favoured by people those are marketing critical as a way of justification for their attacks. In a nut shell, deontology is said to have individual concern and the utilitarianism is said to have welfare for the whole society. Let's take an example of deontology that is set by Nestle; they started a campaign that focused the people in third world country. In South Africa they targeted the infants that were infected with HIV virus. They forced mothers to stop feeding their children their milk and feed them with the bottle milk so to avoid HIV virus they introduced formula milk powder that they said when mixed with water can destroy the infection due to the acidity it has in it. But the point here is that in third world countries people do not find clean water to drink all they have is contaminated water that is of no use to them (J. Sparks, April 23, 1979:137).<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, they are propelling mother to stop breast feeding their children that is nature's gift for children and that is free of any infections. But most of the people that are supporters of Nestle said that it was individual's fault. And this is why it is said that deontology argues in favour of the individual. This brings out the fact that Nestle attracts the people towards bottle feeding by showing the favouring and advantageous factors of the formula milk and they also educate the people in such a way that breast feeding is not a good way to feed baby now and also disfigures the women. So it is better to feed baby with bottles. In reality mother feed is the best way to feed the baby and keep them healthy whereas bottle milk in third world countries is not hygienic and clean way of feeding the babies in any form.

As stated earlier marketing has many sub portions and examining all of them is just impossible. So, few of the categories will be examined to see the ethics in marketing issue currently. The small illustrations of the sub categories will clearly show the main problem regarding this issue and will also define the suggestions and solutions.

Advertising and promotion is quite a vast part of marketing that largely targets children. A child specialist Dr. Allen Kanner said that he has observed that children are more diverted towards material goods this is the result of advertising and promotions that companies use to sell their products and play with human psyche. Children do get pocket money and they are free to spend it on their desired product thus by making them future consumers. A psychologist who specialized in materialism study Dr. Tim Kassell said that people who are materialistic are less satisfied and they are not happy with their life, they are much more into drugs and alcohol and they tend to contribute less to their communities ( M.H.Zoll, April 5, 2000).<sup>13</sup>

Those companies who advertise their product in such a way that there capture the psychology of the consumer and attract them in such a wonderful way that they had no option but buying of the product remain successful if we left beside the ethical values and rules adopted during marketing by the company. Such advertising plan not only affects the current promotion of the product but also its future selling and attitude of people towards the products.

The best example of this advertising and promotion is that a candy was introduced that looks as if a real cigarettes and children hold that candy in a way that portrays that they have real cigarettes in their hands and they are grown up. Though, one cannot find them commonly in market now but the idea behind this is still here, many of the foods and drinks for children have given shapes of wine coolers and liquor flasks. Whereas, the company man said that there were no such intentions it was just an incident that created such a shape (H. Walshak, 1996:11).<sup>14</sup>

Though we know that children are impressed by the looks of the products too, but yet the consumer was treated sarcastically and in an insulted manner. One more example is of the business that got criticism of the public; the brand was brewer Whitbread that introduced a new product line including alcohols with a new brand name. The product was misleading as it was considered as children drinks as associated with soft drinks but unfortunately it was not. There was confusion because the product contains alcoholic drinks but the label showed that there is nothing inside the bottles but only the soft drinks and the marketing was also done in the way that it was soft drink. So the children might attract and drink the soft drink which is actually nothing but alcohol only. This confusion was made because of the label and marketing of the alcoholic drink in the form of soft drinks by the company marketers (D. Bendy, January19, 1996).<sup>15</sup>

This issue of advertising and promotion is not limited to a certain age but to all. It was much in propaganda that just to make money the ethical standards are not taken into considerations. Recently body shop was in propaganda John Entine said that "The Body shop is sleazy and bullying, and hides behind a veneer and manipulative propaganda. They are nothing more than a group of thugs" (J. Entine, August 29, 2001).<sup>16</sup> as they use no natural products but petrochemicals and Anita Roddick the owner claimed that it is just a preservative. This bring out the reality that body shop was deceiving the people by selling petrochemicals in form of natural preservatives. But the main deceive they give is not shoeing the name or telling the consumer about the petro chemicals present in their products. Companies should pay a heed to the moral values to improve their ethical code of conduct. David Brook, the employee in environmental department of body shop said that the company never realized the

budget for the environmental purposes however; there were many ideas that they could have applied (National Public Radio Morning Edition, September 7, 1994).<sup>17</sup>

This shows that they do not care about the environmental and recyclable materials. Moreover, she said that they didn't give a penny to charity over the first 11 years. Entine said these words: "body shop first branch in France was opened by me. Whereas they gathered plastic bottles in Paris and dig them in land" (J. Entine, August 29, 2001).<sup>18</sup> This showed that they were not properly aware or committed to the environment healthy conditions and ignored them directly without knowing that what consequences this would put on the recycling and the environment friendly conditions. Therefore, the company owners and workers should also know and take care about the recycling material and those dangers that may harm environment.

A Cicero said that we tend to live in a society where we require mutual cooperation but yet we cannot find it because at the expense of truth we try to take advantage by doing unethical things. Though one can make profit but is certainly not for long run and has no advantage to us.

Mutual relationship in a society is thus always strengthened by the mutual action and respect whereas bad or poor ethical values bring harmful actions the society. The wrong deed by any person will prove wrong to him though instantly its looks good (Cicero, 1971:117).<sup>19</sup>

### III. IMPACT ON CONSUMER AND SOCIETY

By the above conduct we see that there are two main folds that have impact first has direct on consumer and the second has on society. People think that they pay high prices because the companies use high marketing camping for the products. When they see that product is heavily priced for promotion and advertising so the excessive price is paid by the consumer though, in reality consumer is the one paying all the expenses incurred (P.Kotler & G. Armstrong, 2009:38).<sup>20</sup>

Some marketers even use deceptive marketing saying that they offer product on low prices as of wholesale however, they do not, and on comparison consumer find a huge price difference just because they see few of the difference in packaging and labelling of the product. So, the mode of marketing does affect the price of the product as the expensive and better the marketing of a product is the high its price is. So the consumer and the buyer have been known to be directly affected by the way of marketing and the expenses spent on the promotion of the product. Similarly, packing of the product also effects the directly the price of the product and the consumer ultimately. The consumer mind always remain thinking about the fact that highly price product must be good in result and working than the low price product but actually this is not so but marketing shows this fact ultimately.

The good marketer always tries to come up with the marketing trick that the person think product is important for him and his family. For example, an encyclopaedia is important for gaining general knowledge is something that makes a person buys what he has never thought of. Sometimes the product lack the things that are claimed this is what a clever and marketers do, but sometimes before the product can be improved it lost it place. The general information about the products and its elements can highly help out the buyer.

Marketing has changed the people's nature by turning their desires and wants into their needs. It has made people materialistic and has created many problems for the society. People judge other by their possessions and not by their nature and behaviour. Each country has a different culture, values, and norms but advertisement that sent messages related to sex power and mater ials goods are changing minds of people. The unethical way of marketing has polluted our social values and added a big deal of the poor and weak moral values and high crimes to our society at all. The adult marketing style has increased the attention of people towards the sex and sexual actions whereas other bad ways of marketing has highly weakened the good social elements.

One may say that the marketing effect on the people is exaggerated because as a matter of fact people make up their mind and purchase what they want to and that does not rely on the advertisement but also on the quality of the product this can be proved by the fact that most of the new products still enjoy the edge over the others just because they give what they promise to. Advertisement of the product is not the key to success but the perfect working and excellent result is the main thing which brings about the high demand of the product and buyers demand the product again and again happily.

Some of the people think that the business has created this issue and the two main reasons that are; consumerism and environmentalism, consumerism is said to have concerns with the needs and wants of consumer while the environmentalism is related to the effects that the marketing has on environment (P.Kotler & G. Armstrong, 2009:51).<sup>21</sup>

They are not against it but want marketers to work in an ethical and moral full way. The main attention is towards the mutual relationship and balance among the marketers and the environment so that no loss could be found in both the fields rather a healthy and proper relationship could be brought about.

### IV. NEW DIRECTIONS AND PROPOSALS

After going through all the issues and concerns that exist in the marketing field today, we need to come up with some rules and regulations that all the companies must follow. AMA (American Marketing

Association) has set some of the rules and that the marketer should be responsible for the actions he takes and the reactions and effects of that. He must work in a way that the individual, society, and environment all are satisfied; this means that marketer has;

- To act in a way that does not harm anyone.
- To follow the rules and regulations.
- To get proper training.

This means that if there is any sort of complain then the company must find that out and that must be resolved so that the customer is pleased and satisfied. So, the awareness among the marketers could be developed properly so that their ethical values and their moral responsibilities should be developed in the way which could bring out the good relationship and the good ways to get the desired results and the wanted outcome accordingly. This would properly take into account the marketers as they bear the backbone place in this field and their all the responsibilities would be properly managed (Direct Selling Association, 2012).<sup>22</sup>

The AMA has also asked marketers to be honest while making a deal so that no one is harmed or hurt, all the clients, suppliers, vendors, distributors and the society must be pleased with the marketer. They must avoid conflicts and they should price the product according to the quality, value, quantity, and the availability of that product.

Those participating in the marketing exchange process are expecting that those product or services that are offered are safe, alleging that they were deceptive as to communicating a product but they have done it in good faith. This should not discharge them from taking the responsibility of their actions, so they must be aware that no such kind of misleading marketing is done otherwise the Trade Descriptions Act takes that into consideration (F.D.Rose,2010:93).<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, there must be a clear price and no hidden cost or something like that. Every single area regarding the marketing of the product should follow the specific rules and regulations so that a proper method of marketing gets active into form and there should be a non-violent and good way to promote the products. Any confusion about the ingredients, price and the form of the products could be removed so that the proper relationship and development of mutual interest should be actively got.

There should be no influence on the customer imposed by marketer in distribution sector, and no manipulation should be there in the product availability. Development and managerial activities must disclose all the materials that are used and that in any way affect the performance. Risks, side effects and disadvantages of the products should be mentioned so that people may not get deceived by buying the unwanted product and get at the wits end about this style of marketing which hide the dangerous aspect of product.

Any sort of additional cost and charges must be clearly shown with the price so that consumer is not misled. And the research department must also represent it clearly without omitting anything. So that the buyer should not feel reluctant or confused regarding the increased or changed price and quality of the product in case of the alternative price tags.

If there is any sort of unethical activity going on around marketer must control it so that it has a good effect on the overall organization. The codes set by AMA must be followed if not then there is legal action for that and it may suspend the company that can affect the image. Some people think that those codes must be mandatory so that they are more willingly adopted.

However, there must be rules keeping in mind that marketers are human beings and therefore as marketers are business people it could be useful those certain guidelines should be drawn concerning business people. Business requirements and needs should be kept in mind while making the marketing and ethical rules and regulations so that the markets could feel free and easy to follow these guidelines practically. This will suppress the violent attitude of people and bring the good values too.

Company must be responsible for corporate conscience (L.B.Chonko & S.D. Hunt,1985:339).<sup>24</sup> There must be some new rules for modern business people for ethics (W. L.Weis, 1986:243).<sup>25</sup> Hosmer proposed that there should be normative principles that are based on utilitarianism which means that might is right (L.T. Hosemer, 1988:9).<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile the companies go for the non-deceptive attitude they will be having an ethical basis for marketing this is also argued that humanistic way can expose people to alternative ways by involving them in that instead of taking them out of it like departure from conventional approaches to more ethical ones. The companies have a high and serious responsibility on their shoulders to educate and aware people and advertise or do the marketing of their product in a proper social and ethical ways so that their product may not become the source of danger for any kind of people whether young or old. there should be a high appreciation to their marketers and companies that prepare and bring out the alternative and good ways to promote their products instead of carrying out wrong and bad means to increase the promotion of their products in the society. This healthy attitude of ethical marketing will bring the respect in the mutual relationship of consumer and the marketing companies (E.C. Hirschman, 1986:237).<sup>27</sup>

All the above stated things are considered to be general ethical rules; however, there must be rules for certain areas like baby food marketing, direct selling, and that of the pharmaceuticals industries. As all the companies have different understandings of ethics and it meanings for others. So, a proper rule and regulatory ministry would held the issue of making such factors

and rules that would be acceptable to all kind of industries simultaneously without creating hurdles for any specific industry.

Companies should not try to promote products in public especially when it comes to baby product. Going to hospitals or maternity wards for promoting products and giving presents to health worker is not ethical and that mislead them. This however, is forbidden but some of the marketers do so and create a direct connection between the mothers and company. The info given on the product must be about the product not about creating a need for the product. Also avoid using baby images on the baby milk products. These precautions should be adopted because it will promote the healthy and proper adopting and buying of the products instead of the more adorned, labelled or pressurized selling of the product. Similarly, the marketing should also be in the way that must aware the people instead of attracting them to buy the product (WHA 34.22, 1981).<sup>28</sup>

A marketer should keep in mind that what information is to be disclosed in front of whom. If the product is for adults then make sure that it is not promoted in front of children as this is unethical and not a suitable way of promoting a product. The information to the marketer should be given about the thing that is related to him as of promotion, sale, and delivery of goods they should try to gather info for children too (M.H.Zoll, April 5, 2000).<sup>29</sup> This means that the proper products should be offered and presented to proper age group people so that one might not get confused or adopt any unwanted, illegal or useless product according to his age.

One more ethical conduct set by the DMA (Direct Marketing Association) is that when direct selling product there must be clear offers for the consumer, the price, additional cost, any terms conditions all should be stated clearly. The products that have warranties and guarantees must be stated clearly and the name of the company and brand should be told. The privacy of the customer should be kept and they should be treated in a convenient manner. Do not ask consumers to cancel any deal with other company if they wish to deal with you too. If there is a trial version of your product so make sure it the authentic one. Direct marketing and selling of objects needs the proper outcome and shoeing of all the factors about the products and this also vanish the confusions or dangers regarding the products instead there is a clean and fine dealing among the consumer and seller and a good ethical environment is developed that bring out a healthy and happy society with all the good moral values. Salespersons have also a high responsibility of fir dealing so that they might not get trapped or deceive any other person or company only for financial advantages (DSA, 2012).<sup>30</sup>

Information must be accurate and therefore not misleading some companies play with human psyche such as pharmaceuticals by advertising drugs and claiming that it can make you live a healthy life style. This is unethical as the use of drug is injurious to health and asking a doctor for taking a drug can create a problem as well.

These drugs must be advertised clearly means the effects should be illustrated and the salesman must not take the advantage of consumer's limited knowledge and should make everything clear to him before selling that drug. If companies act according to the above rules then they are said to be on the right track that is ethical (J.P. Kahn, August 9, 1999).<sup>31</sup>

## V. CONCLUSION

Generally, ethical issues arise due to the difference between the individual and company's values and norms. When the products are not disclosed properly then they are unethically marketing their product. Sometimes the competition also makes you and propels you to go for unethical means when you see you competitor doing so like false publicity, using wrong statistics, biased situations, etc. these situations also lead you to unethical marketing and related issues. So, the marketers should always shoe the side effects, usage and the components of the products so that people may not get deceived or buy a wrong product only because of the hiding of certain factors. This will also shoe the good ethics of marketers and society.

The only way these unethical behaviours can be stopped is by enforcing them properly and then by making sure that everyone follows it. And if someone does not then the proper actions must be taken against them for breaching the codes of conduct. Moreover, the company can offer rewards for those who act in the way that is desired and this can help boost the morale of the employees. The moral values are required in this regard to strengthen the social values and ultimately the ethical code of conduct. If moral values of the society are weak then there will be no ethic and strong moral values will strengthen the ethics (A.Macintyre, 2007:3).<sup>32</sup>

Now, here comes the main point that is companies cannot control all around them from consumers to the employees and therefore they should allow them to set a target that is to satisfy the customers but being in the limits, and if those limits are not followed then there are some actions against them. Also, there must be a positive competition to get new and good products. Healthy competition brings out things that flourish the market and makes customer happy by gaining the long term satisfaction. But the awareness should be given to the buyer so that they can help out themselves and better judge the quality and quantity about the products. This can also help the people to satisfy their requirements and needs to get the

required results and perfect working (P.Kotler & G. Armstrong, 2009:61).<sup>33</sup>

The two common terms marketing ethics and social responsibility are used interchangeably and they must be clearly understood so to remove any sort of confusion.

Marketing ethics means that there should be a clear understanding of what is right and what is wrong means what should be done and what should not. On the other hand, social responsibility means that if there is any sort of harmful affects on the society then they must be removed so to get the positive behaviour. Companies that work on both are the one that are seen as working for the whole society's well-being.

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