

# The Impact of Ethics on Marketing

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## Abstract

The issue of ethics has been a long standing one in marketing and efforts to treat it were dressed over but the fact that it has been attempted in the past is there for all readers to see. Aristotle was at the forefront of marketing ethics and as of recent Williams also write on the issue. The study seeks to examine the connection between ethics and marketing. It shall also address the issue of ethics in marketing to see if there is relationship between the two concepts. The objective of the paper is to evolve an outlook of interface between ethics and marketing such that it is possible to pin point direction to which the two are heading. This shall provide a platform such that if one concept is taken the expectation on the other can become predictive. This is an epistemology paper using descriptive method. The study is employing qualitative and quantitative approach such that no hypothesis shall be formulated. However, the paper shall use past literature to form the fulcrum of assertion such that other work shall be

explained in this study using explanatory approach. The study concludes by establishing a co habitual relationship between the concept of ethics and marketing such that it depends on the approach of the perception. The established relationship is that of a fluctuating oscillation with no constant direction as time, fashion, spiritual, civilization and culture play important roles on the study.

Key words: Ethics, Marketing, Marketing Management

## Introduction

The pervasiveness of complains on corporate sex workers employed by banks, insurance institutions, health worker facility providers and other give room for concern. One tends to examine is marketing associated with any ethics standard or it is just a field without professional ethos.

This study intends to examine the relationship that exists between ethics and marketing. It shall look at the past incidence to trace the relationship associated with the two concepts. Past literatures in marketing

seem not to have appreciated the import of the relationship between the two concepts safe for such works from Aristotle ( ), Williams (2006) and Williams and Murphy (2015).

The study shall examine the relationship that exists between the concepts of ethics and marketing such that how it relates to marketing management can be evolved. It shall also examine the imperative of ethical issues on marketing. From this position, the following questions were raised and efforts were made to proffer solution to them in the course of this study. Is ethics of any relationship to marketing? Can marketing possible with good ethical practice? What will be the benefit of ethical issue to marketing management?

The objective of this study is to look at the issues of ethics as it pertaining to marketing. It shall also relate ethics and marketing management in the contest of planning marketing programmes. The impacts of Corporate sex worker and marketing is of interest to this write up. Thus, the overall objective is to provide the basis of assessing the desirability or otherwise of unethical issues relating to marketing in the practice nowadays. Ethics or ethical issues as related to marketing need to be focused much better than it was done previously. This issue as to do with professionalization of the profession of marketing and it is one of key method of shifting the chaff from the wheat. Marketing professional body emphasizing fair practice and good working ethics shall have sympathy of the populace rather than fighting of the intruders from other position.

The research methodology is combination of qualitative and quantitative approach. The desk research method is employed. The researcher relied on past literature to serve as the spring board of launching this research study.

This study is divided into three sections with the section one consist of introduction whereby background to the study, problem of the study, objective of the study and research methodology were examined. The section two looks at literature review with concept, theoretical and empirical framework in that other. Section three considers summary of the study, conclusion and recommendation.

### **Literature Review**

This study reviews literature as to find meaning to the concepts under study most especially, marketing, marketing management and ethics. Various perceptions of differing authors were employed for this and the researcher takes a position from aggregation to give a working definition for this study. The theoretical framework this work is hinged upon is that of Williams (2015) ethical theories of marketing which in itself is hinged upon Aristotle theory of marketing ethics. Other empirical evidences from various writers were examined and used to form the discourse upon which this study take its position on the impact of ethics on marketing management.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The relationship between the marketing academy through the conduct of marketing scientific research and marketing practice has been at the centre of a series of debates throughout the 1980s and carried on into the early 1990s. The main outcome of these debates has been a heightened attention to academic and practitioner orientations to marketing research, while conspicuously leaving unexplored how both academics and practitioners theorize upon their observations as well as deal with, evaluate and use marketing theory. An extended example illustrates the divergent orientations to the development and use of marketing theory by academics and practitioners (Cornellison, 2015). This is so that the theories of marketing and even got worsen if attempt to evaluate ethics is examined. Ethics and marketing were not given attention as if not part of marketing so much so that grounds began to shift from these important concepts.

### **Appraisal of Ethics**

Ethics from dictionary perspectives simply means a system of moral principles and can equally be interpreted as the rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group, culture, etc.: medical ethics; Christian ethics; marketing ethics. It can go further to incorporate that branch of philosophy dealing with values relating to human conduct, with respect to the rightness and wrongness of certain actions and to the goodness and badness of the motives and ends of such actions. Thus, the need to investigate the philosophical perspectives on

ethics further and see how it affects this study.

**Ethics**, or **moral philosophy**, is the branch of [philosophy](#) that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong [conduct](#)( *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). The term *ethics* derives from the [Ancient Greek](#) word ἠθικός *ethikos*, which is derived from the word ἦθος [ethos](#) ([habit](#), “custom”). The branch of philosophy [axiology](#) comprises the sub-branches of Ethics and [aesthetics](#), each concerned with concepts of value (Random House Dictionary). The three major areas of study within ethics are:

1. [Meta-ethics](#), concerning the theoretical meaning and reference of moral propositions, and how their [truth values](#) (if any) can be determined
2. [Normative ethics](#), concerning the practical means of determining a moral course of action
3. [Applied ethics](#), concerning what a person is obligated (or permitted) to do in a specific situation or a particular domain of action (*Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*) The ethical issue raised here can be viewed from different perspectives but of interest to this writeup is ethics as it affects marketing.

The major concern of this study is to look at ethics as it affects marketing function and provide ground of theorising on the subject matter such that effect and direction of relationship between marketing and ethics can be discussed.

## Review of Marketing

**Marketing** is a form of communication between you and your customers with the goal of selling your product or service to them. Communicating the value of your product or service is a key aspect of **marketing**.

**Marketing** is about [communicating](#) the value of a product, service or brand to [customers](#) or consumers for the purpose of promoting or selling that product, service, or brand. The oldest – and perhaps simplest and most natural form of marketing – is 'word of mouth' (WOM) marketing, in which consumers convey their experiences of a product, service or brand in their day-to-day communications with others. These communications can of course be either positive or negative. In recent times, the internet has provided a platform for mass, electronic WOM marketing (e-WOM), with consumers actively engaged in rating and commenting on goods and services.

"the organization's marketing task is to determine the needs, wants and interests of target markets and to achieve the desired results more effectively and efficiently than competitors, in a way that preserves or enhances the consumer's or society's well-being." (Kotler, 2004).

## Marketing Management

**Marketing management** is the organizational discipline which focuses on the practical application of **marketing** orientation, techniques and methods inside enterprises and organizations and on the **management** of a firm's **marketing** resources and activities.

## Theoretical Framework

The moral theory of virtue ethics holds much promise for guiding the behavior of marketers. Although the origins of this theory can be traced back to Aristotle, it has not received as much emphasis as the teleological and deontological theories within marketing. In the ethics of virtue, traits such as compassion, fairness, loyalty, and openness shape a person's and an organization's vision. Several marketing situations confronted by Johnson & Johnson are used to illustrate the theory of virtue (Williams and Murphy, 2015)

Almost all the theoretical efforts in the area of marketing ethics have been normative, not positive. That is, almost all theoretical works have focused on developing guidelines or rules to assist marketers in their efforts to behave in an ethical fashion. In contrast, the model developed in this article is descriptive, not prescriptive. It attempts to explain the decision-making process for problem situations having ethical content. The article begins with a discussion and evaluation of the two major normative ethical theories in moral philosophy. deontological theories and teleological theories. Although these theories are normative, to the extent that people actually follow their prescriptions, any positive theory of marketing ethics must incorporate them (Hunt and Vittel, 2014)

The reflexivity theory of marketing observes that as objects are put under observation and its focus such objects tends to change. The perception will hold to a thing tends to change as a result of our observation over a period of time and as such will reflect positively on the result pattern of the observed material since it is behavior and human behaviors for that matter (Clark, 2014).

## Empirical Framework

### The Impact of Ethics on Marketing Management

It has been observed that time, fashion, spiritual, civilization and culture play significant roles in ethics and as such it evokes emotion and passion hence it has both positivism and normative approach as cited in Hunt and Vittel (2014).

Similarly, the proponents and antagonists of social or health marketing have field days on ethical issues such that it is often strike one the alarming claim of sponsorship of health facility on the premises of efficacy without recourse to integrity testing.

On each of these counts, the analysis suggests that the purported benefits of social marketing might not be as great as proponents claim. There are also some problematic unintended consequences that arise from the use of social marketing methods. The narrow focus on individual behavior change and the potentially manipulative techniques for inducing behavior change are of particular concern (Bruchana, Reddy and Hossain, 2014)

Likewise, theory of lexivity impinged that observation are proned to change from inclusive perception and as such it evokes that continue theorirising on ethics and per adverture marketing ethics may yield good fortune (Clark, 2014).

Form this, it can be observed that over the time, the issue of ethics on marketing management will be resolved in favour of ethics if continuous effort were made to raise the acceptable bar since this is a human behavious what need to bring about change is observation. However, the paradigm

involves in this case is the issue of culture that it is included in the ethics discourse. We can have a construct as this;

$$E = f(m) \text{ and}$$

$$E = f(b_f, b_v, f_s, s, c_v, c)$$

Where:

E is ethics;

F is function of;

M is marketing;

$b_f$  is belief;

$b_v$  is behavior;

$f_s$  is fashion;

s is spiritual;

$c_v$  is civilization; and

c is culture.

This is just a relationship depicting that ethics is a function of marketing and also a function of its adjoint factors. However, a relationship can be established if such exist for ethics factors and we have it thus,

$$E^2 = c^2 + c^2$$

$$E = \sqrt{c^2 + c^2}$$

This is so, since c that represents culture also contain other subsets of the equation. In essence, culture contains all the elements of fashion, civilization, spiritual behavior, and belief. It means it transform itself. It cannot be asymmetrically sum and therefore the

introduction of square. This made the whole elements to be cyclical since we have a circle equation.

Interestingly, the equation represent a true life paradigm of ethics as relates to marketing, it do not follow a discern relationship but fluctuating oscillation is the observable pattern depend on the area of research. However, we have combined both positivism and normative process in this study and it earn two things.

We have directional relationship which may have not been pinpoint in other previous work. The cyclical relationship depicted by this work as a result of oscillation pattern observable in real life relationship. This highlights a starting point for further study on ethics and marketing.

The significance of this finding equally shows that ethics may be addressed to issue of marketing as time goes on but it shall be a process since its observe pattern.

### **Summary of the Study**

This study has shows the intersection between ethics and marketing and it has been verified that marketing only impacts on ethics to the extent that the practitioner present its case to the world view simply in a manner consistence with practice such as ordained in the environment of presentation. As a result of variation in cultural values from region to region and ideals uphold by human being as relates to belief, attitude, behavior, orientation and others, standard on ethical issues are far from being general such with the level of globalization. It often shows that what entice passion and emotion in one region may be subject of references in other region such that one man meat is another man poison.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is better to embrace conditional ethics in marketing and be sensitive to cultural practices while evolving marketing programme so as to be at safer side. However, it will be difficult to have universal common norms that will acceptable to all, not in the near future.

### **Recommendations**

The study finds it interesting to recommends as follows:

That individual marketing officers should develop programme with particular attention to ethical issues however, the cultural sensitivity of the global village must be put into consideration since we now operates in a global village;

Similarly, it is now more than ever become much more compulsory to inbuilt values, ethos and cultural affinity into marketing programmes;

Since programmes that run counter acceptable to standard in one area can have defense if it is inbuilt with acceptable values from other background; and

The use of corporate sex workers is rightly frowned at since this do not have bases from any other society and the earlier such is discontinue from marketing practices the better.



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