



The Impact of Applied Ethics on Social Media Marketing in India

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Abstract

Ethics is a systematic study of right and wrong behaviour. However, there are very few clear and compulsory mandates on the application of Ethics in the realm of business. But consumers are putting much more emphasis on ethical associations, and thus, it is essential that organizations and brands emphasize on Ethics in their marketing & communication strategies. Social media has become an all-important tool for marketing in the 21st century business world, and it is of paramount significance to ensure that the right ethical principles are applied to engage people in the right manner. This paper aims to give an overview on how Ethics can be applied in the realm of social media marketing, and gain consumer engagement in an appropriate manner, without any manipulation or under false pretenses. The paper is formatted as a white paper and will provide an informative and descriptive analysis on the topic.

Keywords: Applied Ethics, Social Media, Marketing, white paper.

1. Introduction

Applied Ethics is a branch of Ethics, which gives practical solutions to policies and principles related to personal lives, different professions, organizations and governments. Due to cost- effectiveness and wider reach amongst consumers, Social Media has become a powerful marketing tool for organizations. Using the right viewpoint, respecting privacy and engaging in a correct manner are ethical aspects of Social Media marketing. However, the importance of Ethics in Social Media marketing is still not clearly established in India. There is no standardisation in the implementation of Ethics, and thus its importance is not clearly etched out.

In the contemporary global economy, several companies are engaged in cut-throat competition with one another. Applied Ethics can be seen as a competitive advantage for a particular brand. However, the awareness regarding Ethics is still low amongst the Indian population. There are unfortunately, no proper mandates on the application of Ethics. The ASCI has a separate section on advertising ethics but there is not strict regulation on the marketing campaigns in India. Several social media advertisement campaigns have resorted to deceptive techniques, in order to attract more consumers. The aim of this study is to find out whether Applied Ethics has a strong impact on Social Media advertising in India, with special focus in the Indian context.

Social networks have become integral parts of marketing strategy, because of the cost- effectiveness and easy permissibility. Signing up and creating a social media page is free for almost all social networking platforms, and any paid promotions are also meagre, in comparison with newspaper advertisements and TV advertisements. Being cost-can help brands retain a higher share of profitability. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter help in creating strong brand awareness and more inbound traffic. Higher interactions with consumers directly helps create a positive image for brands in the minds of people, and eventually, this leads to more conversions. Social media marketing helps brands rank higher on search engine pages as well, which in turn, leads to more awareness and credibility. Consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty go hand-in-hand, and as people get to interact more with brands directly through social media pages, they are more likely to grow a sense of loyalty towards a particular brand. This can lead to more conversions, and consistent profitability for the brand. The best aspect about social media marketing is that it is cost-friendly, and yet,

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has a higher reach than other traditional media. Most people have accounts on social media sites, and any brand can reach its target audience much more easily via these sites. Besides, social media marketing is customizable and flexible. A social media page can be professional, or funky, depending on the brand image. If a brand wants to create a professional image in the minds of consumers, it will use sites like LinkedIn or Twitter. A brand with a fun or funky image will use Instagram or Pinterest. Brands can easily customize or design pages easily, through social media.

While social media has its own set of advantages, it is also essential to have an ethical code of conduct for marketing.

2. Brief Literature Survey:

According to Tsao and Mau(2019), consumer-generated online product reviews (OPRs) have become a crucial source of information for consumers but are incentivized to create positive images in the minds of people. Even Whistleblowing and anonymous comments on blogs can spread misinformation over Social Media quickly (Teixeira da Silva & Dobránszki, 2019). Sharma(2016) states that while Social Media is a powerful tool, the data collection has to follow legal and ethical regulations at all levels. This research claims that a public legal framework for creating a Social Media archive can be useful for data collection, but ethically it is wrong.

While considerable work has been done in this field, the focus on Indian organizations and consumers has been considerably less. There are gaps in understanding ethical contexts in Indian Social Media advertising. This study will focus on Indian consumers only and try to gauge how Applied Ethics is perceived and used in Social Media marketing.

3. Methodology

Correlational quantitative research will be used for this project. This research will be conducted to establish a relationship between the two entities, “Social Media Marketing” and “Applied Ethics”. This research will show how one entity impacts the other and the implications of the relationship.

Data will be collected from 300-500 participants through questionnaires and surveys. Stratified random sampling is used in this case and data from 29 state capitals as well as 9 union territory capitals will be collected. Random selection from this population will be used to ensure greater precision and greater number of sample points. The risk of omitting a particular group(e.g.: a particular state) is also removed. The sample population will comprise of people from all over India, in order to see how Social Media and CSR are related, and how people perceive the relationship between the two.

The data collection will be done through semantic scale-based question, YES/NO questions, rating-scale questions, consumer surveys and multiple choice questions(MCQs). The questions will focus on analysing whether the sample population observed the implementation of Applied Ethics, and the subsequent consequences.

4. Plan for data analysis

The null hypothesis H_0 : There is no significant effect of the lack of Applied Ethics in relation to effectiveness of Social Media Marketing

The alternate hypothesis H_A : There is a significant effect of the lack of Applied Ethics in relation to effectiveness of Social Media Marketing

Using SPSS, the Pearson Correlation between the two entities will be calculated. Further, a regression model will be used to find out the exact relationship between Social Media Marketing and Ethics.

4. Study Implications

Based on the results of the data analysis, marketing theories like SWOT and PESTLE will be used to check the effectiveness and implications of Applied Ethics on Social Media marketing.

Strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Consumer confidence is strengthened if ethical virtues are present in a marketing campaign b) Ethics can be a competitive advantage over other companies c) Protection of stakeholders' interests 	Weaknesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Deceptive and false advertisements in the name of Ethics can mislead consumers b) Profitability can be impacted
Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Building a niche USP for the brand b) Ethics can set a new trend in advertising c) More people can be attracted towards an ethical campaign 	Threats: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Other companies can copy the advertisement strategies b) Media mis-influences can detrimentally impact the image of a company

PESTLE Analysis:

Political: International laws need to be considered because different standards of Ethics exist for different countries	Economic: Ethical campaigns need to be redesigned and thus, can incur higher costs than traditional Social Media campaigns	Social: Implementation of Ethics through Social Media Campaigns can be educative and leave positive impact on the minds of people
Technological: Social Media campaigns can be easy to reach a large number of people simultaneously, through the internet or mobile network	Legal: Ethical standards take care of stakeholders' needs and advertisements need to comply with legal regulations of the respective countries	Environmental: Ethical considerations also comply with environmental aspects and any company will adhere to the best sustainable practices, even in their campaigns

Practical Implications:

- a) Social Media campaigns will use psychographic and demographic data with proper permissions from the consumers, to reduce the chances of privacy breach.
- b) Authentic communication of information will be guaranteed if a marketing campaign is ethical
- c) Marketing campaigns will comply with protocols and regulations
- d) Consumer welfare will be more important for such companies
- e) Social Media advertisements can make Indian consumers more aware about Ethics, in general

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