

Why Ethics Should Matter in Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)

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It is regrettable that despite widespread acceptance of relational models, much focus on building and maintaining relationships, high visibility of marketing activities, and global integration of markets and marketing, comprehensive theorizing on marketing ethics has been conspicuously lacking in the literature. There are only five normative frameworks in marketing ethics research: Laczniak, 1983; Williams & Murphy, 1990; Reidenbach & Robin, 1990; Smith, 1995; and Dunfee, Smith, & Ross, 1999. Interestingly, while the publication of articles on marketing ethics increased consistently from 1981 to 2005, the rate of increase from 2001 to 2005 was the lowest (Nill & Schibrowsky, 2007). Normative articles that provided “advice on how to behave ethically almost completely vanished” (Nill & Schibrowsky, p. 263). It is acknowledged that even among industry practitioners, ethics is rarely a concern, much less talked about (Drumwright & Murphy, 2004). Even the definition of marketing by the American Marketing Association (AMA) ignores the moral responsibility of marketers (Mick, 2007). Thus, it comes as no surprise that numerous ethical issues have continued to plague marketing over time.

Although the definition and scope of marketing continue to widen due to strategies such as marketing public relations (MPR), relationship marketing (RM), and integrated marketing communications (IMC), research concerning ethics has ceased to be part of mainstream

marketing discourse. The number of marketing ethics pieces in traditional marketing journals, as noted above, has “remained relatively flat” (Nill & Schibrowsky, p. 271). Anecdotal evidence suggests that “marketing ethics manuscripts are more likely to be rejected by the top tier journals” (p. 271). It may be because marketing ethics research does not deliver managerial relevance (Nill & Schibrowsky). This may be the reason scholars opt to pursue mainstream rather than ethical research.

Marketing scholars may pay little attention to ethical research, but a field that relies heavily on customer-centric philosophy, relationship-building approach, and commitment to a social dimension can move forward only if it does research on ethical problems. Since societal problems such as sexual promiscuity, pollution, business scams and fraud, credit card debt, excessive smoking, alcohol abuse, diabetes, and heart disease have often been traced to marketing activities, managers and marketers need to understand that a good image and profit are directly proportional to good ethics – or vice versa.

Marketers and corporations may ask themselves whether their failure to consider ethics in the business process is impractical and unwise. Before marketers can make this practical leap of faith, however, there is a need for them to envision the role of marketing, the responsibilities and consequences that come with that function, and the impact of their activities on people.

This paper aims to present the significance of ethics from an IMC perspective by focusing on two characteristics of marketing that have become problematic: (1) its broadening definition and (2) the lack of ethics in its slogan. The study hopes to generate questions about these two conditions and encourage inquiry into the IMC framework hopefully directing IMC efforts to address these challenges.

Broadened Marketing: Definition, Concept and Issues

In *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith proposed that the sole end of marketing is consumption. This is advanced through traditional

marketing functions such as research, design, pricing, promotion, and retailing (Mick). The American Marketing Association (AMA) subsequently defined traditional marketing as “the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services by producers to consumers” (Laczniak & Michie, 1979, p. 218).

Towards the last quarter of the twentieth century, as the business of selling became more complex, the definition and scope of marketing broadened through the following ideas:

Increased creativity through branding. The breadth and depth of marketing has been expanded by a more sophisticated delivery of message. It now focuses on creative promotions by transforming products into “brands” – i.e., selling by embedding a product in an ideology, culture, attitude, or lifestyle. From managing products, marketing now manages “brands”. A key theme in contemporary marketing involves approaching consumers in an expanded range of everyday spaces which emphasizes branding. The phenomenon of product parity illustrates how far the concept of branding introduces differences among products, which are virtually all the same (Moor, 2003).

Customer focus/centricity. Marketers now live and breathe customers and prospects – surrounding, tracking, and interacting with them in their everyday spaces. The focus on people and the formation of relations are obvious, particularly in the 2004 definition of marketing by the AMA: “Marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering values to customers, and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders” (Gundlach 2007, p. 243). Marketing has thus expanded its target audience by going beyond the traditional notion of consumer to a myriad of social actors now described as “stakeholders,” defined by the AMA as “one of a group of publics with which a company must be concerned . . . [which include] consumers, employees, stockholders, suppliers, and others who have some relationship with the organization” (AMA website). The definition of marketing has thus been extended to include the

establishment of relationships, versus the “old” transactional, mere exchange paradigm.

Ubiquitous marketing. The broadened concept of marketing is found at both ends of the marketing process – the sender and the receiver of marketing communication messages. From the sender’s perspective, marketing is asserted in “every nook and cranny of the organization” (Levitt, 1975, p. 10), and assumes that everyone is a marketer because “virtually everyone engages in some social transactions” (Laczniak & Michie, p. 220). From the receiver’s perspective, audiences and consumers are bombarded by various commercial messages from everywhere and in various forms. In this situation, marketing is breaking its fundamental rule of market segmentation, i.e. never to target “everybody.” Broadened marketing does just this – it targets the world. Its scope has become so extensive that it occurs almost everywhere and is “all pervasive, part of everyone’s job description, from the receptionists to the board of directors,” because “marketing is everything and everything is marketing” (McKenna, 1991, p. 69). Thus, advocates of broadened marketing propose that it is not merely a function of an organization but a philosophy.

Thus has the scope of marketing been widened. Thomas Harris’ description of marketing public relations (MPR) even further extended the scope of marketing to PR, referring to the publicity intended to encourage product purchase (1991). Relationship marketing (RM) sought to go long-term by moving from traditional product and organization management to customer management. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), social marketing or cause-related Marketing (CRM) sought to build marketing as a “social worker” and a “philanthropist,” but often obscuring the unethical practices related to a corporation’s business activities. IMC, on the other hand, adopts both PR and RM concepts and further magnifies their scope by identifying almost all activities known to man as essential and natural domains of marketing. IMC is about the management of all marketing communication activities – sources, messages, channels, and receivers/contacts – to achieve maximum communication impact. With IMC, the definition and scope

of marketing have become so broad that distinctions between marketing and any other mutual exchange between persons become meaningless, in the same way as Laczniak and Michie postulated about marketing decades before the onset of IMC.

The problems generated

When marketing is defined “so broadly as to barely differentiate it from a multiplicity of human behaviors” (Laczniak & Michie, p. 221), its scope becomes too large to organize. Such coverage “paints the field as a giant discipline which encompasses substantial portions of other areas of study” (Laczniak & Michie, p. 221). Any concept should be evaluated on the criteria of its primary function, and since the definition of marketing has become so broad, it can no longer be identified with any specific discipline or function (Kunket, 1970). Evaluating it is close to impossible, or, at best, overly challenging.

The marketing field has also become known for its deceptive strategies. Broadened marketing, in particular, adopts sophisticated means of engineering marketing campaigns, resulting in “a proliferation of products and services in many categories, with very few or no real differences among them” (Kliatchko, 2002, p. 3). An example of this power is seen in the success of the bottled water industry, where something as commonplace as water has been turned into a commodity through branding. Advertising executives do make jokes about being able to sell ice cubes to Eskimos, “Getting people to pay for things that they already have in abundance . . . for which they have no manifest need, has become commonplace” (Wilk, 2006, p. 305). Therefore, rather than focusing on developing real rather than “reel” (or created) differences, marketing has become premised on a falsehood.

In the Philippines, this influence on culture is immanent, where the economy allots a disproportionate amount of money on advertising.

An example is the pharmaceutical industry. The amount of money that the industry spends on advertising alone helps make the system vulnerable to unethical choices, misconduct, and negative cultural effects.

In 1997, for instance, food manufacturers in the US spent \$7 billion on advertising, compared with \$333.3 million spent by the USDA on nutrition (Gallo, 1999). A similar disparity can be observed in the advertising activities of infant formula milk companies in the Philippines which spend over \$100M a year on advertising breast milk substitutes, an amount more than half the country's Department of Health annual budget (Monbiot, 2007). Since 1986, the infant formula industry, (mostly owned and controlled by large multinationals), has been committing breaches in the marketing code drawn up by the World Health Organization (Monbiot). The marketing code discourages practices such as dispensing gifts to both health workers and mothers, running promotional classes and meetings and advertising their wares on television, magazines and papers. In 2007, the Philippines' Department of Health prohibited all advertising and promotion of infant formula for children up to two years old and rendered illegal the practices of giving gifts and samples, assisting health workers, and conducting classes for mothers. The new rules were in consonance with the WHO code, although they were later revoked.

In 2000, Fortune Tobacco spent \$17.9 million on advertising, which was 300 times the size of the budget of the Philippine Department of Health for public information and education (Blanke, 2003). Smoking has become endemic to Philippine society and culture, with almost one fifth of young Filipinos starting to smoke before the age of 10 (Alechnowicz & Chapman, 2004). The question may be asked whether marketing campaigns directed at the young are to blame (Mason, 1984), given the fact that the country has a highly commercial environment. According to a status report by the Asia ETS Project, a big multinational tobacco company once recruited Philippine pulmonologists to promote the insignificance of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) in the development of respiratory disease (Billings & Rupp, 1989). Together with its international counterparts, the Philippine tobacco industry worked "to publicly repudiate the links between smoking and disease" (Alechnowicz & Chapman, p. 72). When "local cigarettes in the Philippines were found to contain 8% more nicotine

and 76% more tar” (Alechnowicz & Chapman, p. 72) the Philippine Tobacco Board, in conjunction with the Department of Trade, stated that Philippine grown tobacco “is possibly the only safe, non-cancer producing tobacco because of the very low tar and nicotine content” (Alechnowicz & Chapman, p. 73).

Drug companies “spend more than twice as much on marketing as they do on research and development” (American Academy of Pediatrics [AAP], 2006, p. 2565), with the top 10 drug companies making a total profit that is more than the other 490 companies in the Fortune 500 combined. Abramson (2004) chronicled a crisis in American medicine, which he dubbed as a transformation of medical science from a public good to a commodity with profit as its primary concern. He identified two negative features: 1) That doctors were often found to have financial ties with pharmaceutical industries; and 2) that pharmaceutical industries seem to have found a way to influence academic research in medicine. He suspected that much of the scientific evidence which doctors relied on were either commercially spun, or published in the most respected medical journals as “infomercials” to promote products.

It can be deduced that “the billions of pesos of ads-spending in the past decades might be partly responsible for the strong consumptive culture of Filipinos” (Arcilla, 2007, p. B2-1). While this assumption might be speculative, it is convincing when statistics show that the Philippines’ domestic savings rates and private domestic investments are among the lowest in Asia (Arcilla). In a country that has the longest commercial load per hour of TV programming worldwide, and has among the highest amounts of print and outdoor ads, the tendency to blame it on marketing is not easily dismissed.

Marketers could note that broadened marketing may lead not just to certain social complications but also to potential embarrassments for marketing professionals (Laczniak & Michie), especially since the field and function does not particularly deem ethical considerations significant. This lack of concern for ethics, coupled with a broadened scope, will not only fall prey to constant scrutiny, but also strengthen the likelihood of unethical marketing. In 1999, for instance,

DoubleClick, an Internet advertising company, planned to purchase Abacus Direct, a direct marketing company which housed the largest catalog database in the United States. The “purchase would have allowed DoubleClick to marry information about consumers’ online habits (clickstream data) with Abacus’ information, thereby creating personally identifiable online profiles and allowing DoubleClick customers to better target online ads to consumers” (Haller, 2002, p. 34). An advocacy group filed a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in the US, and the resulting investigation was well covered in the press. Perhaps, to prevent further embarrassment, DoubleClick backed away from its plans.

Failure to exhibit social responsibility on the part of business corporations could diminish the power of marketing (Laczniak and Murphy, 2006). If marketing continues to attract public debate due to unfair and erroneous practices, the backlash will come in the form of more restrictions through state sanctioned laws and additional regulations; and thus, embarrassments for marketing. The following are a few examples:

Marketing to children. Several abuses of children’s privacy on the Internet prompted state and federal ‘do not call lists’ for the telemarketing industry and the restriction of online marketing research involving children through the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act [COPPA] (Laczniak and Murphy). In the 1970s, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) held hearings, reviewed existing research, and came to the conclusion that it was “unfair and deceptive to advertise to children younger than 6 years” (AAP, p. 2563).

Privacy issues. In 1996, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) required health plans, healthcare clearinghouses, and certain healthcare providers to include certain privacy protections (Haller). Similar measures were adopted in 1999, following attempts to purchase drivers’ photographs from state departments of motor vehicles (DMVs). The American Congress enacted amendments to the Driver’s Privacy Protection Act (DPPA) to restrict the entities to whom driver’s license information may be disclosed (Haller).

Companies may find themselves the subject of FTC action or a lawsuit if their privacy policies do not accurately reflect their practices or if they violate their own stated policies. An attempt by Toysmart.com to sell personally identifiable information about its customers after filing bankruptcy in 2000, ended in a settlement after the FTC ordered Toysmart and its parent company, Walt Disney, to destroy the customer list and to pay the creditors \$50,000 to end the controversy (Haller). In 2002, there were as many as eighty privacy laws before the U.S. Congress; and the focus was the anger of the public (Pemberton & Michael, 2002) about the misuse of personal information.

Regulations on alcohol advertising. In Australia, the Ministerial Council on Drugs reviewed the alcohol advertising standards and rulings of industry voluntary systems in 2004 due to long standing dissatisfaction with the industry's regulations (Center for Social and Health Outcomes Research and Evaluation [SHORE], 2006). This prompted the industry to implement changes within a six-month deadline. In New Zealand, a public petition arising from dissatisfaction with industry self-regulation brought about time restrictions on television alcohol ads (SHORE).

Other negative consequences of scandal and controversy in marketing may have a more permanent effect. Consumer skepticism is perhaps the longest lasting of the negative effects. In some cases, for instance, it has affected consumer decisions about which companies they are willing to do business with (Haller).

Because marketing has become a hodge-podge of everything, a wider audience is likely to criticize it, especially if marketing fails to be an expert in any of the roles it attempts to play. This is particularly true of the involvement of marketing in campaigns with a social dimension. If the profit motive clashes with its claim towards social responsibility, credibility issues would certainly compromise the purpose of the cause and would antagonize audiences. The commercialization of causes and nonprofits can have tremendous effects due to the "contradiction of nonprofits' moral adherence to social goals while increasingly engaging in profit seeking" (Guo, 2006, p. 124).

Broadened Marketing and Catholic Social Teaching (CST)

The drive towards safeguarding profit is what primarily compelled marketing to seek alternative ways of doing things. The broadening of its scope was a Darwinian struggle for survival – a reaction to the growing demands for a more powerful marketplace, which the 4Ps – product, price, place, and promotions – could no longer handle. The response of marketing was to expand both its space and its scope (Moor).

The evolution of marketing from the 4Ps to a synergy of creativity and branding, customer focus/centricity, and ubiquitous marketing which may have unconsciously excluded ethics was the result of attempts to strengthen the commitment to the bottom line. The situation went beyond the teleological bounds of ethics. Without ethical guidance, the broadening of marketing itself may be contrary to at least five key principles of the most pragmatic moral framework in the world – Catholic Social Teachings (CST) (Klein & Laczniak, 2009).

First is the principle of human dignity, meaning that all persons have an inherent worth. The “excessive focus on profit maximization can be harmful to authentic personal development” (Klein & Laczniak, p. 234). Since the primary focus of marketing is profit, the broadening of the function could lead to an even more profit-oriented culture that obscures the essence of personal development. The prevalent consumerist/ materialistic culture of today is perhaps the best tangible example of the consequences of a broadened marketing paradigm.

Second is the principle of the common good, which, in the economic field, implies that business should be a human institution in service to humanity. Broadened marketing utilizes the goods of the earth by means of production which is consequent of human consumption. A critical feature of broadened marketing is its almost inevitable function of utilizing both developers and users of such goods as agents merely for the acquisition of economic ends.

Third is the principle of subsidiarity, which was the argument that Pope Pius XI used against assigning to a higher association what subordinate groups can do. Clearly, activities of a broadened marketing concept go beyond traditional buyer and seller roles to those of parent, teacher, counselor, spiritual director, doctor, or legislator.

Quite often, many marketing strategies and activities are multifaceted, carrying with them numerous roles for marketing all at the same time. Marketing alcohol brand images and lifestyles to young people, for instance, provide identities and values, albeit commercialized. This function traditionally belongs to parents, teachers, counselors, and spiritual directors. This cannot be seen more clearly than in the way advertisers have slowly but steadily infiltrated school systems. From school buses, gymnasiums, book covers, bathroom stalls, educational television – commercial messages are sent out everywhere. In the U.S., “more than 200 school districts nationwide have signed exclusive contracts with soft drink companies” (AAP, p. 2565). Advertising and marketing messages now follow children to school, often in subtle and sneaky forms disguised as sponsored educational materials, contests, and reading incentive programs (Karpatkin & Holmes, 1995). Even fast food conglomerates are using toy tie-ins with major children’s motion pictures to market their goods (AAP). A popular strategy is KAGOY (Kids Are Getting Older Younger) (Palmer, 2007), with the idea that it is in the best interests of marketing – from a profit perspective of course – to get children to grow up faster since their needs and wants are directly proportional to growing up.

Another example is the growing role of marketing as doctor-teacher. The pharmaceutical industry, for instance, employs medical representatives who are trained to educate doctors on the benefits of new drugs. While this is not unethical in itself, it is a system that enables a for-profit industry to act as a mentor to doctors and virtually plays the role of doctor to consumers and patients. Moreover, the industry employs various marketing strategies, such as sponsoring medical conferences, giving gifts to doctors and medical students, and crafting advertising messages that sometimes ‘medicalize’ certain conditions (i.e. shyness as social anxiety disorder, tired feet as restless feet syndrome,

anti-depressants for children who may just be feeling bad because they did not make the baseball team), that are otherwise normal conditions.

Although these examples do not refer to “lower” or “subordinate” groups, it is the aspect of “delegation of tasks” that becomes objectionable in the phenomenon of a broadened marketing paradigm. This is similar to Plato’s idea of injustice in the Republic – where there is disregard for the roles appointed to each citizen on the basis of one’s education. Plato was of the opinion that this disregard would result in chaos, disharmony, disunity, and, ultimately, the inevitable destruction of the state.

Fourth is the principle of preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, which a broadened marketing concept could potentially undermine. Teleological concepts of the negative consequences of a broadened marketing paradigm have shown just how potentially dangerous marketing can be when given much power and scope, such as when audiences are not equipped to evaluate marketing communication messages. Consumers, particularly children, adolescents, and the less literate, could be exploited by false marketing communication messages.

Finally, there is the principle of solidarity, which recognizes that all people and social groups are united in a brotherhood that seeks common growth and fulfillment. The 1997 statement of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (USA) specifically states that the economic life in this brotherhood should be shaped by moral principles. The nature of broadened marketing, based on its evolution, development, and bias towards a strategic versus an ethics-driven approach, is inimical to a brotherhood that seeks common growth and fulfillment. Much of the evidence in the literature and in practice have shown that economic ends and profit goals are the overwhelming winners in the broadened marketing phenomenon.

But what is more alarming is when ethics is utilized as an argument for broadening the domain of marketing. Social marketing is the most obvious example of this practice. It may be that marketing is used by

a corporation to promote public awareness on issues, perform public service, allot money for foundations and other similar undertakings. The corporation may perform considerable public service but systematically pollute the environment, misappropriate money from its employees' pension fund, or pursue discriminatory labor practices (Campbell, 2006). Some scholars think that concepts like CSR and good citizenship were invented as "a way of putting a positive gloss on a minimal threshold of good deeds" (Neron & Norman, 2008, p. 17). Social marketers can now turn crises to branded, competitive advantage, and in some cases even utilize them to cover up serious malpractices.

In identifying issues in marketing ethics, scholars should distinguish (real) social responsibility from expanded "responsibilities" that pervade every aspect of human life. The former cautions marketing to think about the ramifications of what it does, while the latter gives it legitimacy with its broadened function as the rationale. Putting them together gives broadened marketing a false legitimacy, which becomes problematic without the guidance of ethics.

Ethical Issues in IMC

As previously noted, broadened marketing began as an answer to growing ethical concerns and the need to strengthen marketing to serve the bottom line, that is, to make profit. Unfortunately such theoretical perspectives were rooted in logical empiricism. Accepting ethics as a core issue has always been elusive, and the tendency to consider only the bottom line has been prevalent.

In relationship marketing (RM), the establishment of relationships was central to a buyer's choice. Marketing public relations (MPR), on the other hand, supported marketing activities. The resulting brand proliferation led to message clutter and decreasing brand loyalty. Public distrust grew, with consumer and pressure groups turning critical, so that the main thrust for MPR was to earn the trust of both consumers

and stakeholders. Greater accountability was demanded and public relations became a “crucial element in the marketing communications mix as the strategic marketing communications weapon” (Hines, 1997, p. 11).

Social marketing was originally defined as “the design, implementation and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution and marketing” (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971, p. 5). Social marketing acknowledged public dissatisfaction with businesses that resulted in adverse legislation, stringent regulation, and actions from pressure groups. Social marketing turned a survivalist reaction into branding activities and crisis “insurance” to gain competitive advantage.

Similar to RM and MPR, integrated marketing communications (IMC) began as a reaction to the perceived shortcomings of the traditional marketing model. Customer issues in RM and MPR were the same as those faced by IMC. Credibility issues due to product parity among savvy consumers made it difficult for marketing and advertising to reach audiences and targets. Other issues like accountability and globalization exacerbated difficulties. Like all previous derivatives of broadened marketing, IMC failed to identify ethics as the core issue, and instead focused on giving marketing a fighting chance in a world that technology had crafted and had made the consumer elusive. Technology made the consumer more aware of issues and more discriminating. Ironically, the same technology made marketing ubiquitous and effective as a profit and sales center. As with many previous marketing concepts, IMC continues to espouse ethics as its slogan, even without the investment of time and money in ethics research.

But the potential dangers must be dissected and examined; and some of the more relevant ones are as follows:

A broadened scope lacking in ethics. Among the marketing concepts popular from the latter part of the twentieth century to the present, IMC has one of the largest scopes. In an attempt to ensure that brand

contacts are relevant, IMC has sought to “manage” all marketing communication activities – sources, messages, channels, and receivers/contacts – to achieve maximum communication impact. Many proponents of IMC consider this as normal and necessary because “all marketing is communication and almost all communication can be marketing” (Schultz, Tannenbaum, & Lauterborn, 1996, p. 45).

By identifying, integrating, and centralizing a multitude of everyday human activities as its natural domain, IMC casts itself as potentially omnipresent and omnipotent. With this claim, the scope that IMC aims for could make it an institution far more pervasive, influential, and powerful than centuries-old, traditional institutions such as family, church, and school.

What makes it problematic is that studies on ethics in IMC are almost non-existent. There are almost no normative guidelines. In a survey of topics covered by journal articles on IMC, Kliatchko (2008) found that ethics as a topic was so rarely covered that it did not even merit a category. How can a field properly address trust issues such as credibility and accountability if it does not devote time, interest, and resources to studying ethical implications? Any field that seeks to assume a colossal task involving persuasion and culture and dealing with various audiences cannot succeed when knowledge of ethics is virtually nil. Recently, however, an article by Kliatchko (2009) attempted to present a personalist view of the consumer for IMC. Hopefully, more articles of the same nature will follow and pave the way for a more serious look into IMC’s ethical dimensions—and finally succeed, where all other marketing strategies and paradigm have thus far, failed.

The magnitude of its customer focus. IMC focuses strongly on looking for, communicating with, and studying customers. Because marketing focuses on the consumer, all aspects of life have significance pertinent to a brand – hence the use of the term “brand contact points.” Examining various contact points can determine through which points consumers are disposed to receive messages, and at which times they act on those messages. “Managing” the consumers is not only inevitable

but also essential. Although marketers claim that the customer is king, in practice, the customer has become another product to develop.

Manipulation and behavioral change involving persons are potentially dangerous even with ethics, but the implications are far more serious when ethics is not the principal concern. IMC specialists move consumers from mere awareness to action by employing multiple brand contact points to persuade. When they manage all sources of information and move the consumer to buy, all the while devoting little attention to ethics, the potential for abuse is greater than under the traditional 4Ps.

Why Ethics Matter in IMC

Even though advocates of IMC claim that a consumer-is-king environment pervades the communications landscape, failure to seriously look into ethics negates the effects of a consumer-is-king world. It is also negated by an increase in mergers and acquisitions of marketing communication agencies. Corporations wield considerable economic power in today's world of integrated markets and economies (Grein & Gould, 2007). As marketing increasingly adopts a one-on-one relational approach to business, the argument for a more powerful synergy between mass marketing and interpersonal mass marketing cannot be easily dismissed. This further strengthens the case for the necessity of ethics, most especially for IMC.

Ethics is the single most important aspect in running a business, especially the kind incorporating the broadened perspective of integrated marketing communications. It is a kind of significance that is due not just to morality and social responsibility but to the dictum that the practice of good ethics is good business. Not only does brand image improve when a firm behaves ethically and engages in effective dialogue but a better brand image also leads to higher sales and profits (Grein & Gould). Striking a balance between company profit, consumer desires, and the societal marketing concept through customer orientation is desirable (Kotler, 1972). Thus, if

marketers want to know the ultimate answer to all their marketing and management woes, it is nothing more than the practice of ethics, premised on universal moral principles.

When IMC scholars and practitioners decide to pay more attention to ethics, what should this brand of ethics focus on?

Three components are proposed for analyzing ethical marketing practice that IMC can use as a springboard – intent, implementation, and the consequences of unethical practice (Laczniak and Murphy), all of which consider the values infringed upon by the function. Like Peter Senge's (1994) Fifth Discipline (his name for systems thinking), values integrate all areas of marketing ethics. Other fields of study, particularly philosophy, can accelerate the growth of marketing ethics although attempts can be fraught with difficulties (Nill and Schibrowsky). Anecdotal evidence suggests that marketing and management journals reject articles based on philosophical thinking, citing for reason antipathy towards reading philosophy. But it must be understood that the humanities, philosophy, and religion are pertinent to understanding and promoting ethical practice (Wicks & Derry, 1996). If people followed the suggestions and advice of moral philosophers, integrating “deontological and teleological theories could provide a framework for a positive theory of ethics” (Hunt & Vitell, 2006, p. 143). Since moral reflection is a result of the cognitive processing of the “good life,” strong moral and ethical training specifically for marketers is essential (Kekes, 1989).

Although accepting the philosophical, moral, and ethical implications of a broadened marketing concept in IMC is a gargantuan task, it should be done. This means seriously investing in the following: (1) the development of normative perspectives and guidelines for IMC practice; (2) an authentic cross-functional training program for marketers not just as number crunchers and psychologists but as persons schooled in the arts and humanities who are well prepared for a role traditionally held by family, church, and education; and (3) the development of a universal marketing program for future marketers that will incorporate a strong ethical and moral orientation.

Consumption is necessary for life; thus, there is nothing wrong

with finding efficient ways to reach consumers. This should be done, however, outside the premise that everything is marketing and marketing is everything. If IMC must persist in its quest to support a broadened marketing concept, then the aforementioned guidelines are crucial because they carry with them a moral obligation.

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