Detrimental Effects of Marketing Practices on Consumers’ Buying Behaviors
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Abstract
Marketing practices are important for organizations to promote their products and deliver solutions to the consumers. They are bound to make an effective contribution towards society while satisfying the needs of the consumers by delivering product and services. Yet if the marketing practices turn detrimental to the noble cause stated above, the situation worsens and Consumers are at losing end. This piece of writing is an effort by the author to point out such practices and encourage discussion as how to curb the impacts of such detrimental practices and maintain the balance among the stakeholders especially the consumers. In recent times, such marketing practices are being used on large scale and the element of materialism has added fuel to fire as the organizations in order to beat the competition; tend to go beyond the limit where ethical standards are sacrificed. The paper is based on extensive literature review and discusses in depth the historical perspective on the issue.

INTRODUCTION
Historically it is a practice to make the product known to the end users and consumers. At different times, different marketing modes and practices have been utilized to ensure the conveyance of the message to intended masses. However, in recent times, the degree of competition among the brands has increased rapidly leaving every organization to think and rethink its marketing strategies and every organization is trying level best to reach the customer first and that too with a better and convenient package. The scenario apparently seems very straightforward yet many questionable practices lay in depth and once if the probe is pondered, the results are shocking.

The organizations in spite of meeting their targets and intended goals have started overlooking the right of the consumers who are paying for the services and products (Andreasen and Manning, 1990). From deliberate manipulation of facts about a product to creation of a need that actually is not material, many malpractices are prevailing. Organizations now bother more about making profits rather than delivering the appropriate solutions, one example is of creating a need among the consumers and later addressing it with solutions (Barnett, 2001). Pharmaceutical companies are considered the worst in this scenario as to sell their products; they approach the medical practitioners and seek their help to make up customer’s mind by developing a situation that actually does not exist. However, our study is not limited to any particular product or industry, yet it is general in nature and the aspiration of author is to bring such practices to light, so that the level of customer’s awareness may be increased.

By highlighting these aspects, author intends to suggest a matter of concern to be addressed on priority basis and to add to the customer’s knowledge. The study is directed is an effort to help the consumers in spotting any mal practice as their interest are being sacrificed. A number of such mal marketing practices are very carefully discussed with proper logics and in the light of previous studies to validate the effort. The study does not challenge the notion of marketing rather questions its mal functions that are put to work very strategically and later leading to consumer rights violation. However, the hypothesis and model discussed is presented before the research groups to for evaluation and comments and if the model can be utilized for empirical testing at a later stage.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Ingram, Skinner and Taylor (2005) stated that if the committed consumers perceive the corporate actions of an organization as unethical, there are certain chances that the organization may lose its loyal consumers and ultimately the customer bucket shrinks. Alexander (2002) suggested that unethical marketing behavior influences customer’s behavior in marketplace, as the customer is sensitive enough to understand though to some extent that the right is being overrun. The customer perceives company’s behavior as unappealing; in the course of buying, he/she (customer) may deny the products (Bone, and Corey, 2000). The sense of one’s rights being violated impulse such behavior and in return the consequences are severe. Ingram et.al (2005) further adds that customer commitment is driven by psychological or emotional attachment to a brand or company. However, the judgment of the ethical behavior varies with individuals and for companies while initiating any marketing drive, it is necessary to understand how the stakeholders design the parameters of judgment (Carpenter, Rashi, and Nakamoto, 1994).

Jones (1991) states that any behavior that is illegal or morally unacceptable to larger community is referred to an unethical marketing behavior. Actions like a negative word of mouth, the frequency of complaints lodged and a few third party survey, are the factors that help the consumers determine their opinion about a brand and in specific a product (Carrigan, and Attalla, 2001). The seriousness of consequences exhibited by the marketing strategies and social consensus, affect the decision making process of the buyer (Carrigan, Marinova and Szmigin, 2005). Logically, the customer is consciously evaluating the company’s contribution towards society and the hidden interests of marketing initiatives. There are number of marketing practices that are considered contradictory to the marketing ethics, persuading the consumer with deceptive information and trying to maneuver the customer’s buying behavior (Chen, Ganesan, and Liu, 2009).

Rotfeld (2005) states that it is a patent unethical practice, when marketing people hide vital facts about a product from a customer rather deliver false information only to boost their sales; he further adds that, most of the marketing “experts” make a wrong use of customer’s desire to believe as mostly, consumers prefer sports over education and entertainment over science. The practice of using the public icons like actors, sportsmen and other inspirational elements work on the line to use the element of emotional attachment of the individuals with their role models (Creyer and Ross, 1997). In addition, marketers in advertising their products exploit the use of erotic sex appeals in ads for attracting customers (Ayub, et al., 2013). Bello, Etzel, and Pits (1983) defined sex appeal as the use of sexual attractiveness and appearance of nudity in ads.

It is also a point to note that in the past, subliminal messaging has also been used to manipulate consumers’ paradigm of choice. Subliminal messaging is a technique introduced in 1950s to advertise products in movies. Rogers (2003), refers to a claim made by a failing research firm that he used subliminal messaging in a movie to boost the sales of popcorons and drinks. Actually, the marketing agents try to take undue advantage of a customer’s psychic and instead develop a need for him/her that literally is not desired. However, for many products the customer is so obsessed to believe anything that comes their way (Rotfeld, 2005). For example, a number of weight loss products are a source of attraction for overweight individuals and they are not bothered to evaluate the product or question its safety, whereas the marketers deliberately skip the possible consequences that are associated with the use of that product.

To further validate, Smith and Cooper (1997) state that any product that carries unsafe characteristics or ingredients towards its intended use is a harmful product. As the concept of “harm chain” introduced by Polonsky, Carlson and Fry (2003) which was actually developed to evaluate the characteristics of a product and evaluate as if it includes any harmful ingredients. The companies that catch more eyes among the public as a positive force will have to face more public scrutiny (Stoll, 2002).

Furthermore companies now days tend to spend more on spreading word about their contribution towards society rather than actually, what they spend. Stoll (2002) adds that Phillip Morris once spent three times more money on advertising their social work they actually did. Here, companies tend to put curtains on the damage they dealt to the consumers in lieu of questionable marketing practices while taking undue advantage of customer’s psychic (Sun, Chen and Wang, 2012). Moreover, such
Philanthropic deeds are brought into light as a reaction to negative public opinion due to past misdeeds (Rogers, 2003). Academically, the issue of scrutinizing the issue of marketing practices is under consideration of research groups and particular focus is on the ethics gap developed in response to allegedly deceptive marketing practices (Quelch, 1993). Holley (1987) argues that repetitive ads are considered as bully that doesn’t give the customer enough time and space to think and decide rather generate a pulse. The mass marketing activities make way for advertisers to define a scenario of a good life and then manipulate our desires and exploiting the insecurities without giving any chance to think critically and evaluate the choice and define their own parameters of a good life (Mason, 2000).

HYPOTHESES
Following hypothesis as extracted out of the model suggested:
H1: The Unethical Marketing practices are directed towards manipulation of consumer choice/
H2: Manipulated consumer choice results in Influenced Buying behavior of the consumers

DISCUSSION
As mentioned in the literature review, the practices that are critically and unreasonably manipulating the consumers buying behavior are much in to act. Now days people are obsessed with a lot of desires and in order to fulfill one they turn back towards the important factor that is scrutiny and the marketing agents unfortunately are taking full advantage if this. However, consumers are perceived as innocent souls and with little knowledge about the product they most of the times fail to distinguish between the usefulness of the product they intend for. The said model depicts a sense of curiosity to evaluate the notion as if the marketing agents use manipulation techniques to influence consumer’s buying behavior.
The organizations at will and quite daringly overlook the ethical standards and put behind the obligations to deliver to the society rather than taking the undue advantage and increasing their profit ratio by sacrificing the free will of the consumer. In their stance they appear to be well justified as their interests are being well served, yet the consumers are at losing end in all this process. Practices like, hiding or faking the information, creating undue needs and later addressing them, subliminal messaging and spreading words about philanthropic activities to cover all the misdeeds, are putting the consumers at a very uncomfortable place with not much but little of the chance to opine.

With the historic perspectives, such practices have been occurring in the past but in recent times the intensity has increased to a greater degree and such practices, which used to be occasional are now carried out regularly. The marketing initiatives are designed in a way to serve the stated cause and organizations appear to be obsessed with the fact to increase their profit ratio while sacrificing the consumers’ rights at any cost.

CONCLUSION
Conclusively, the practices discussed are detrimental and the marketing ethics are being violated at every step leaving consumers astray. Organizations appear to be controlling the consumers buying behavior by any means and the most absolute means of all is through manipulation. Not much space is left with the consumer to think and decide rather they are unduly directed to opt any option due to false and unrealistic situations created by the organizations. Author encouraged research groups to give the fact a thought and think on the lines discussed in this piece of work. The situation if not dealt properly will continue to worsen and no sooner than later the adversity will increase landing the consumer blocks in sheer trouble.
REFERENCES


