



Ethical issues in digital marketing

Digital marketing, also known as internet marketing, is how businesses promote a product/service on various online platforms. These platforms are divided into two types: social media and mobile applications. Social media platforms include the collaborative databases (Wikis), social networks, blogs and forums. The mobile applications are the programs developed to be used on the smartphone as mobile marketing tools.

Ethical Concepts in Marketing

Digital marketing is developing and implementing marketing strategies using artificial intelligence-supported applications. Today, the digital consumer needs help to understand whether a company behaves ethically in the internet environment where there is no physical interaction. Academicians are doing further research on this subject. Many studies investigating the ethical behavior of online sellers and consumers' ethical perceptions of online marketing and sales reveal different findings.

It is no longer a secret that companies collect and analyze information about consumers and competitors through various digital tools. On the other hand, there are suspicions that the consumer's personal information is breached. Studies examining the ethical concerns of online consumers reveal that consumers are most concerned about information privacy, web security, fraud, retailer reliability, and quality when purchasing online.

Product Related Issues

The digital consumer is fortunate to research the best virtual product or service to meet their needs. Websites and other digital platforms are environments that live 24/7, promote the product and brand to online consumers, and where freely browse and purchase products, unlike physical stores. While traditional marketing channels provide the opportunity to touch the product, compare and try its features, the opportunity to try the products offered in virtual marketplaces is limited, and purchasing decisions are based mainly on the information available on the website.

Visual product presentations that do not reflect reality, are exaggerated, and inflated will negatively affect the purchasing decision-making process of the consumer or increase post-purchase dissatisfaction. The online store customer develops e-loyalty when the presentations of the products he/she examines on the web page are remarkable and the text information is legible. There is no difference between the product he/she sees and the product he/she buys.

Price Related Issues

Businesses gain an edge over their competitors by implementing planned dynamic pricing strategies that increase profitability. Dynamic pricing is an e-commerce pricing strategy that provides flexible prices to consumers by monitoring the real-time demand and competition situation in the market with the software, taking into account product costs, targeted profit shares, and competitor prices. Furthermore, consumers, who see that the prices of the products and services they examine are constantly changing, experience a loss of confidence. Today, industries and businesses, such as airlines, tourism, car rental, and e-commerce platforms, benefit from dynamic pricing to adjust product/service prices according to market trends, customer behavior, and competitor environment.

Place Related Issues

Since the success of online marketing is directly proportional to the success of the logistics process, the positive increase in the logistics performance of the enterprise also greatly affects the marketing performance and customer satisfaction. Digital consumers are more demanding and time-sensitive on delivery time than traditional commerce. Therefore, meeting delivery deadlines is crucial to customer satisfaction and can improve or damage companies' reputations.

Customer reviews on distribution are an essential determinant of marketing success. The online customer cares very much about the fast delivery of his order and prefers these brands. For this reason, it will be possible to overcome the problems by informing the buyer about the reasons for the stock error, late delivery, and information update errors that may occur in the logistics process

Promotion Related Issues

Companies collect customer data to improve their products and management strategies. A successful digital marketing strategy means successful use of data, but data security is the most fundamental problem of the internet today. The method of obtaining the data is essential, whether it is obtained by business efforts or by unethical means. The responsibility here must depend on the consumer's consent, not on the request of the data collector. The consumer, who gives consent for the use of data, will play an active role in creating more exciting and meaningful content for him. The mutual and long-term results of the benefit created in this way will be satisfactory for both sides.

Sending e-mails promoting products to current and potential customers is one of the most common marketing tactics today. The subject that leads this practice to ethical questioning is sending e-mails without permission. Sending spam mail to people unrelated to the product is an inappropriate method.

Ethical decision-making in digital marketing should be applied at all stages. This state of honesty should be reflected in the marketing mix elements, including everything from raw material information used in the product to the logistics process and advertising content, from sincerity in social media to approaches to competitors.

Reference:

Ozlem Karaman (2023), Ethics of Digital Marketing, In İnci ERDOĞAN TARAKÇI & Ramazan ASLAN (eds), The essentials of today's Marketing. EFE academy publishing, pp170-185