

# Ethical Challenges in Digital Marketing

Vijayakumar.M<sup>1</sup>, Abdul Rahman.F<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor, Department of Management Studies, K.S.Rangasamy College of Technology, Namakkal, India

<sup>2</sup>Student, Department of Management Studies, K.S.Rangasamy College of Technology, Namakkal, India

**Abstract-** In this era of digital marketing, communication and information technology have changed the way marketers engage with consumers. Because it is less expensive and more cost-effective than an offline method, it is preferred. Online megastores have embraced it extensively. Nonetheless, there are several instances of online shops using dishonest business practices.

This is leading to a negative attitude among customers towards online shopping. Indian customers are starting to feel more assured, although they are still cautious. Though digital marketing is still in its infancy, reports and occurrences of dishonesty, fraud, and misuse of bank account information are posing challenges to its progress. Furthermore, many marketers reach out to customers using unscrupulous means.

**Keywords:** Digital marketing, spoofing, snail mail, e-mail, ethics, and online frauds

## INTRODUCTION

Technology, the internet's strength, and the combination of electronics and technology made possible digital marketing, which ensures the existence of virtual markets. Digital marketing encompasses a wide range of electronic channels and technology, online advertising, and internet marketing. Consequently, a broad spectrum of platforms and tools are included in digital marketing, such as SMS/MMS, mobile devices, digital outdoor advertising, and smartphones. It is not exclusive to internet marketing.

Permission-based marketing communications have a high chance of success because the client voluntarily decides to receive emails, SMS, or internet feeds based on need or interest. Commercial messages may not have the intended impact, though, if the customer doesn't show interest in them. As a result, the push approach of spreading unwanted information is less effective. Both push and pull advertising strategies are practical in digital marketing.

Because digital marketing can even turn a push function into a pull one, it also presents ethical questions. He might feel that he is pulling the strings when a torrent of information that he hasn't truly asked for is hurled at him. This is possible because to modern information technology, and although it might be lucrative for marketers, there are a lot of ethical questions raised by it.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Email marketing is a means for distributing promotional messages and is quickly growing in importance as a tool for advertising. (Gartner, 2002). In Brown (2002). In Brown (2002). Email marketing appears to be appealing to consumers, according to practitioner research. DoubleClick (2002).

Email that has been requested by the customer as part of an opt-in programme is known as permission-based email. Because the message recipients have previously shown some interest in the communications, advertisers may spend their funds more effectively. (2001, Rowley). Additionally, the efficiency of advertising is significantly influenced by the content of emails (Carmichael, 2000). To put it simply, email content needs to be "targeted," "relevant and clear," or "irresistible" (Waring, 2002; Yeager, 2001).

The strength of email marketing and advertising is one of the key components of digital marketing, as evidenced by the literature mentioned above. According to the studies reviewed above, marketing emails need to be (i) permission-based in order to be effective. (ii) Having message contents that are pertinent, understandable, and especially created for the intended audience. Email marketing needs to be ethical in addition to these two components in order to gain consumers' trust and be successful.

Marketers have a very strong weapon at their disposal: email. It is becoming more powerful every day. According to a 2011 estimate by Sara Radicati and

Quoc Hoang, there would be approximately 4.1 billion email accounts globally by the end of 2015, up from an installed base of 3.1 billion in 2011. However, the main cause for concern is the rise in spam and unsolicited emails arriving in customers' inboxes. Based on the data provided by Sara Radicati and Quoc Hoang (2011), an average user in 2011 received 14 emails per day on average containing spam. It draws acclaim. If a consumer is receiving a lot of these emails without giving his permission, he will start to doubt the marketing communications.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- looking at the unethical strategies used by online shops for effective digital marketing;
- analysing the problems that customers face during this immoral procedure;
- recommending consumer protections in light of the study's findings

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main emphasis of the study is online shoppers. Convenience sampling was used to collect primary data from the respondents for the study. At least one online purchase on virtual marketplaces such as Snapdeal, eBay.in, and other buy-sell websites was mentioned by these respondents.

Considering the image and brand positioning challenges of the portals, the results are presented without disclosing the name of the portal or virtual mall, even though the suggestion can be accepted by all customers and virtual enterprises in general. The following is a list of the study's empirical findings.

#### USE OF UNETHICAL TACTICS TO ACHIEVE SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL MARKETING

- 72% of respondents felt that online shops employ dishonest business practices to draw in customers.
- Ninety-one percent of those surveyed said they regularly get unsolicited emails from various advertisers asking them to click on a link.
- 63.9 percent of participants reported receiving bogus emails purporting to be marketers attempting to con them into buying something. It

also makes people lose faith in the legitimate advertisers.

- Forty-five percent of the respondents confirmed that marketers employ IP-based advertising and continuously display banners during users' browsing sessions to entice them to click and complete a transaction.

#### CONSUMER IMPACT/PROBLEMS RESULTING FROM UNETHICAL MEANS

Virtual companies supported by Trust Pay make sure that their customers are happy with their online purchases by providing a money-back guarantee without asking questions and an extra money-back promise with Trust Pay if the issue is not resolved in 30 days. Different online retailers honour different payment methods and purchase assurances. Customers still believe, nonetheless, that online merchants sometimes deceive them or disregard their legitimate complaints. Responses to open-ended questions concerning these kinds of difficulties fall into one of the following categories:

#### DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

- The consumer must contact the provider to find out if the product's colour, size, and shape will match the one that is delivered in comparison to what is shown online.
- It is advisable to record email correspondence so that it can be consulted in case of dispute.
- Because it might be a spoof email from a hacker organisation, the customer should avoid visiting the bank's website, which appears in the email, while perusing their inbox.
- When making an online payment, the customer should carefully review the bank's website.
- After verifying the address, the customer should utilise a virtual keyboard to input their user name and password on the bank's website.
- The crucial recommendation is that the customer should only shop online using his or her own laptop or personal computer.

#### CONCLUSION

In summary, digital marketing is a great way to achieve new heights, but marketers need to be careful

when handling valid customer complaints. On the other hand, there might be situations where a customer unfairly takes advantage of a feature, like a money-back guarantee or an extra delivery charge on an online retailer. In these cases, the customer is still in charge of the market and is still its king. Also, the customer needs to heed the advice and have faith in internet retailers. In the same way that online shopping can involve a variety of fraudulent activity and misinformation, consumers should be cautious when making purchases online. Finally, consumers should be cautious when delving into this gold mine.

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