



ROLE OF CUSTOMER IN DIGITAL MARKETING DURING COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Online marketing became a major channel for selling products and services all over the world during the first two decades, particularly during the covid-19. Because of its unavoidable future, digital marketing is gaining popularity, and it has become a very important mode of shopping in this pandemic. However, as anticipated challenges and ethical issues arose, this method of doing business resulted in numerous conflicts between client, vendor, and vendor. Genuine product information, prompt and accurate product delivery, no sharing or misuse of customer card number, personal information, or purchase history, and accurate and fast draw attention to e-ethical commerce's responsibility and about the customer and also behave ethically when purchasing products online. The primary goal of this article is to investigate the ethical role of customers in digital marketing in the twenty-first century. To confirm the facts or the ways in which the client is acting unethically, as well as to offer solutions to the problem. The study's findings are solely based on responses from a self-structured questionnaire distributed to 300 people in the Nilgiris district. An exploratory and descriptive research design was used due to their small size and narrow research domain, and data were calculated using descriptive statistics to validate the results.

Key words: Digital marketing, ethical responsibility, electronic commerce, descriptive research.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 has had an impact on the business in a variety of ways. Some businesses will fail, while others will struggle, and only a few will begin to win. Despite the fact that a recession is

looming, a specific set of companies in healthcare, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, online media and entertainment, e-learning, digital payment, food processing, and other testimonials are increasing demand and may create new job opportunities for a few. One of the greatest inventions of the twentieth century, the Internet, is used in many aspects of our daily lives as well as modern business. According to statistics, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of online retailers that offer certain benefits such as more information, increased service, and increased customer control due to the global spirit of the internet. The top 20 internet-using countries will have 3 billion people worldwide by 2020. There were 624 million internet users in India as of January 20, and the number of internet users in India increased by 47 million between 2019 and 2020, with internet penetration reaching 45 percent in 2020. The slow Internet connection, the tangibility of the product, the electronic payment method, and the lack of trust are just a few of the drawbacks of online marketing (Karthick *et al.*, 2020 a & b). Regardless of these issues, people's online shopping spending has increased, and consumers' interest in online retailing has begun to grow. Further, studies discussed on Consumer Behaviour (Usharani & Gopinath, 2020 a), Customer Perception (Usharani & Gopinath, 2020 b; Kavitha & Gopinath, 2020), Brand preferences (Unnamalai & Gopinath, 2020) and Relationship of Self-Actualization (Gopinath,2020).

Many nursing practises now consider online marketing to be the new frontier of market communication, with Facebook blocking Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn at the top of the list of possible applications for the various mediums (Gopinath & Kalpana, 2011). These trends indicate that electronic retailing has emerged as a viable alternative to traditional shopping channels. The ability to convert to new things quickly and easily is the most important feature of the online market. The online market is a particularly volatile environment, and the popularity of online shopping is growing by the day (Gopinath, 2011). One of the primary factors preventing consumer loyalty and preventing online shopping is the consumer's perception of risk. As a result, developing and transferring trust to customers is a critical step in converting e-commerce visitors into loyal customers.

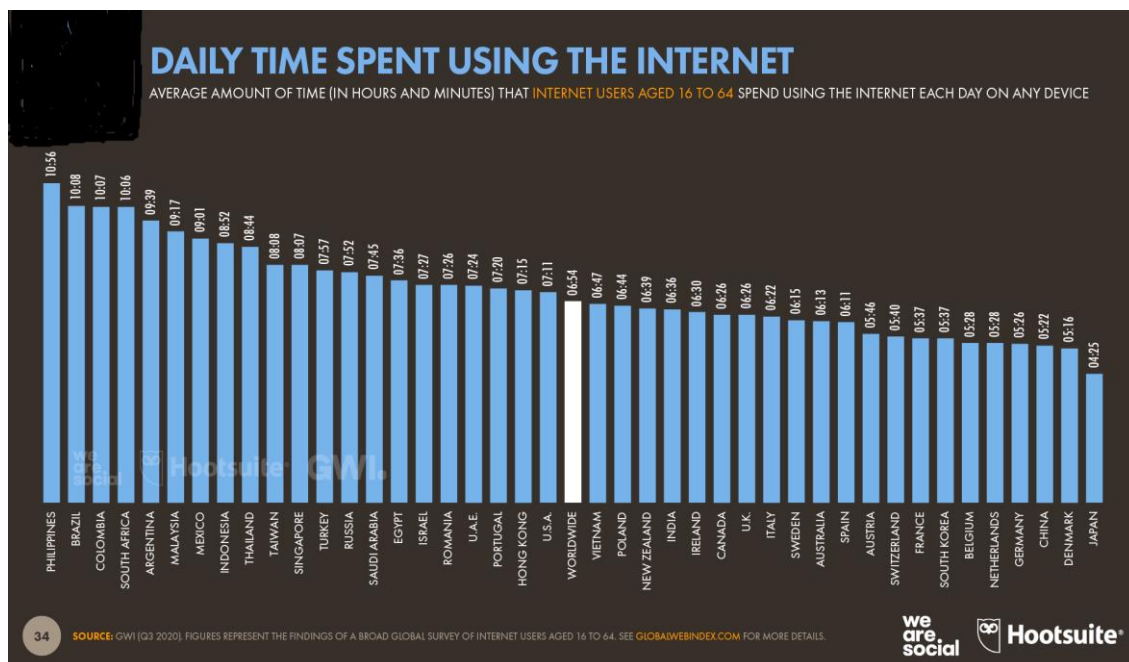


Figure 1

Source: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-global-overview-report>

Now that the market is more focused on ethical issues that can harm the online mode, it is the merchant's ethical responsibility to provide relevant information about the product they are using, such as the expiry date, date of manufacture, and product quality. Customer information, such as credit card numbers, online banking information, addresses, and phone numbers, must be kept private. This implies that the trader must adhere to ethical practises, but what exactly is ethics? The study of ethics aims to find an answer to the question, "What is good?" It delineates what is desirable and what is not. what's good and what's not. The term "ethics" refers to the ethical judgement that guides marketing decisions and attitudes. E-commerce ethics is defined as retailers' responsibility, which includes their trustworthy, fair, and honest behaviour toward their customers and protecting their customers' interests (Gopinath & Irismargaret, 2019).

As a result, it is now obvious that marketers' ethical responsibilities will always influence customer preferences and online marketers' success. The primary goal of this research goes beyond these areas and focuses on customer ethics when it comes to online marketing. If the merchant provides the customer with prompt and adequate service, it is also the customer's responsibility to act ethically (Gopinath & Kalpana, 2019). This study also looks into the various ways in which the client responds unethically and makes recommendations for both.

2. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

- Evaluate the ethical role of customers in digital marketing.
- Analyze the ethical role of customers in relation to digital marketing based on demographic variables.
- Explore the unethical path of customers to digital marketing.

2.1. Limitation of the Study

- Feedback provided by respondents have been considered authentic, no further verification is performed.
- Time is a limiting factor in carrying out in-depth research work

2.2. Hypothesis of the Study

- There is a significant relationship between the customer's ethical role and digital marketing.
- Based on demographic variables, there are degrees of difference in customers' ethical roles in relation to digital marketing.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study employs an exploratory and descriptive survey design to attempt to explain the various ethical roles of customers in relation to digital marketing. The research is based on original data collection. Data was gathered using a standardized questionnaire that was produced and distributed personally. Books, the Internet, and journals were used to gather secondary data.

4. DISCUSSION AND OUTCOME

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in table No.1 from the total number of 300 respondents from the Nilgiris district, 56 percent are male and 44 percent are female. Table also depicted that 26 percent respondents are below graduation; 33 percent are graduate and 41 percent are post graduate. Majority of the respondents are students. As concern

to family income of respondents, table shows that 56 percent respondents' families earning less than 2 lacs and 28 percent respondents families earning in between 3 to 5 lacs.

H₁: There is a significant relation between ethical role of customer and digital marketing.

Table 1

Characteristics		Percentage
Gender	Male	56
	Female	44
Age	Below 20	34
	21-25	58
	26-30	5.3
	31-35	1.3
	36-40	0.6
	ABOVE 40	0.6
Occupation	Businessmen	2
	Service	6.6
	Student	88
	Other	3.4
Qualification	Below UG	26
	UG	33
	PG and above	41
Family Income	Below 2 lacs	56
	2-5 lacs	28
	6-10 lacs	7.4
	More than 10 lacs	8.6

Outcome: At 5% significance, the critical (tabulated) value of chi square values for the degree of freedom is 41.113 (as χ^2 calculated $>$ χ^2 tabulated), because the calculated chi-square value is greater than the tabulated chi-square value (table2). The null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. There is a significant relationship between ethical behaviour and e-commerce. These financings are in line with (Gopinath, 2019 a; 2019 b).

Table 2 Chi-square of Selected Respondents

Dimension	Calculated Chi Square Value	Degree of Freedom	Table Value	Null Hypothesis (at 5%)	Result
significant relation between ethical role of customer and online marketing	746.9	23	41.113	Rejected	Significant

A percentage frequency distribution was used to determine the level of ethical role of customers in online marketing. Table 3 shows that more than half of the respondents have purchased products online, particularly food items that are not included in this category; otherwise, this figure could reach 90%. When ordering products online, 63 percent of respondents admit to never returning used ones, while 29 percent rarely do so. Almost 36% of respondents replaces some parts of a product with damaged parts and file a claim for a new product from the vendor, while 41% never engage in such unethical practices. Frequent product cancellation for any reason also falls under unethical practices 45 percent of respondents rarely

do this, and 36 percent regularly or occasionally cancel the product. If it is the marketer's responsibility to provide prompt and adequate service to the customer, the customer must also demonstrate a sense of responsiveness on their part. 5 percent of respondents are usually and 25 percent of the times not available for delivery person at scheduled time, while 39 percent are rarely unavailable for the same.

Table 3

Characteristics		Percentage
Buy Product from Online Marketing	Usually	32
	Sometimes	56
	Rarely	11
	Not at All	1
Use Product for Few Days and Returned Back	Usually	3
	Sometimes	5
	Rarely	29
	Not At All	63
Will You replace Some part of Product with Damaged with Damaged One and Claim for New	Usually	19
	Sometimes	17
	Rarely	23
	Not at All	41
Frequently Cancelled Orders	Usually	5
	Sometimes	31
	Rarely	45
	Not at All	19
Unavailable for Delivery Person	Usually	5
	Sometimes	25
	Rarely	39
	Not at all	31

When asked about the unavailability of delivery personnel due to a lack of cash, 75% of respondents stated that they never engage in such practices. Table 4 shows that 86 percent of respondents are not intentionally posting negative feedback in order to gain benefits. The majority of respondents did not freely provide their incorrect information details for the sake of amusement. Customers may order products from multiple companies and receive them from any of them; however, 77 percent of respondents indicate that they are not involved in such activities at all. 3 percent usually, 17 percent occasionally, 19 percent rarely, and 61 percent never order multiple items from multiple companies and selecting the best one and returned back other items. The same was analyzed by Gopinath. (2019 c).

Table 4

Characteristics		Percentage
Unavailability of Deliver Person Due to Non-Availability of Cash	Usually	4
	Sometimes	3
	Rarely	17
	Not at All	76
Deliberately Posting Negative Feedback	Usually	1
	Sometimes	8
	Rarely	4
	Not at All	87
Deliberately Not Provide Your Proper Information Details	Usually	1
	Sometimes	3
	Rarely	5

	Not at All	91
Ordering Product from More Than One Company and Rejecting Others	Usually	0
	Sometimes	9
	Rarely	13
	Not at All	78
Ordering Multiple Items and Selecting Usually the Best One	Usually	3
	Sometimes	17
	Rarely	19
	Not at All	61

H₂: there is difference in the ethical role of customer towards digital marketing based on demographic variables

Outcome: To see if any of the differences in gender, age, academic level, occupation, and family income are statistically significant, compare the p-value at the significance level to the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis asserts that all of the population means are equal. A significance level of 0.01 is usually sufficient. A significance level of 0.01 indicates a 1% chance of concluding that a difference exists. Table 4 depicts the differences in customer ethics toward digital marketing based on gender, age, academic level, occupation, and family income. Concerning the ethical role of customers towards online marketing based on gender, the table value (5.19) is less than the calculated value (40.6), so the null hypothesis is rejected, implying that all of the population means are not equal, and that the ethical role of males may differ from that of females when they shop online. As the null hypothesis is accepted, the age means of the four groups are similar. To assess the ethical role of customers based on academic level, it was discovered that undergraduate and postgraduate students have different ethical roles in digital marketing based on their academic level. At the 1% significance level, the calculated value of F is 0.64, which is less than the table value of 3.49. The null hypothesis of no difference in sample mean is accepted in this analysis. As a result, it is concluded that there is no significant difference in ethical role towards digital marketing due to occupation among these four groups (Gopinath, 2019 d).

Unethical customer approaches towards Digital Marketing

- Use the product for a few days and then return it within the return period.
- Replace some of the product's parts with the damaged ones and file a claim for a new one.
- Your order was frequently cancelled for a variety of reasons.
- The delivery person was unable to arrive at the scheduled time.
- Unavailable for delivery person due to lacs of cash at the time of delivery.
- Purposefully posting negative feedback or commendation and attempting to gain benefits for the same.
- Purposefully failing to provide your proper information details only for fun.
- Ordering your product from multiple companies and rejecting others while receiving any of the ones.
- Ordering multiple items, selecting the best one, and returning the others.

Table 5

Dimensions	D.F	F-Calculation	F-Table	Null Hypothesis	Result
Ethical Role of Customer Towards Online Marketing Based on Gender	9	40.6	5.19	Rejected	All Population Means of Two Groups Are Not Equal
Ethical Role of Customer Towards Online Marketing Based on Age	15	1.71	3.49	Accepted	All Population Means of Four Groups Are Equal
Ethical Role of Customer Towards Online Marketing Based on Academic Level	11	34.07	4.06	Rejected	All Population Means of Three Groups Are Not Equal
Ethical Role of Customer Towards Online Marketing Based On Occupation	15	64.2.02	3.49	Accepted	All Population Means of Four Groups Are Equal
Ethical Role of Customer Towards Online Marketing Based On Family Income	15	2.02	3.49	Accepted	All Population Means of Four Groups Are Equal

5. CONCLUSION

Marketing ethics is becoming increasingly important with the advancement of technology, globalisation of markets, globalisation of production, and the rise of emerging markets. According to the study, the increasing literacy about the internet among people is the primary reason for the growing importance of digital marketing. They have discovered that the internet is a truly beneficial medium through which they can serve their various purposes, primarily social networking, digital shopping, and media sharing, and the efficacy of the internet has increased their productivity to be online.

As per the current study's findings, there is a significant relationship between the ethical role of the customer and online marketing, which means that customers always adopt ethical behaviour when shopping online. The majority of respondents stated that they had never engaged in unethical practices such as frequently cancelling orders for better options, providing incorrect information, not accepting cash on delivery, purposefully posting negative comments, and so on. While analyzing the role of the customer towards online marketing based on demographic variables, the current study attempts that male and female received the ethical role difficulty the academic level of the respondent influences the ethical role of regardless of age and occupation where there is no significant difference exists among the group towards online marketing (Gopinath, 2019 e). The study also found that the population of family income groups is equal and that there is no significant difference because family income influences individual behaviour and roles in digital marketing.

The current problem should be minimized by avoiding the aforementioned unethical practices in digital marketing, and this will only come from the individual customer inside no one can behind to behave ethically but all the companies may prepare a code of contact to customers so that the specific problem does not emerge. Online marketers should implement a

try strategy in order for customers to first try and be satisfied with their requirements before purchasing those products. Cash on delivery timing should be agreed upon by the customer and marketer, and penalties should be imposed for non-compliance. Companies are providing free cancellation services to promote their products, but if customers cancel quickly, the company should impose a certain penalty, which should be mandatory for all companies so that this does not affect their individual sales. Electronic goods should only be installed by the concerned company so that the customer does not change any part of it, and this practice may also ensure proper product settlement.

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