LITERATURE REVIEW ON ETHICAL ISSUES IN DIGITAL MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

In this era of digital marketing, communication and information technology have changed the scenario of the way marketers approach consumers. It is preferred because it is least in cost as compared to offline approach and is most effective. It is widely adopted by online virtual mega stores. But, there are many instances of fraudulent practices on the part of online stores. This is resulting in the negative attitude formation of consumers towards online shopping. Indian Consumer is already scared and is slowly gaining confidence. But, news and instances of cheating, fraud and misuse of bank account information are putting hurdles in progress of digital marketing at the infant stage itself. Not only this, many marketers are following unethical ways to approach the consumer .We all are aware, it is easy to wear the mask of any other online user by fiddling with the IP address and even spoof the email ids. Unethical or misusage of digital marketing for fraud against the common consumer has raised the guards and thus made the task of marketers difficult. Only awareness of consumers can help them distinction between the good and the bad. This paper is an attempt to bring conceptual clarity about functioning of mail servers;giving us the ability to judge the difference in genuine and fake emails; drawing the framework of ethics in digital marketing andfinally, to suggest technical safety measures to be adopted by consumers.

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Keywords
Digital Marketing , Spoofing , Ethics , Online Frauds.

1. INTRODUCTION
IT and the power of internet along-with electronics has given birth to digital marketing ensuring existence of the virtual markets. Digital Marketing has wide scope, it covers internet marketing, online advertising as well as various electronic devices. Thus, the digital marketing is not confined with internet marketing rather it also includes whole lot of channels/devices such as mobile/ smartphones, sms/mms, digital outdoor etc. Digital Marketing ensures approaching the consumers in timely, relevant and cost-effective manner. The digital marketing process is effectively used in both the pull and push marketing strategies. The message itself becomes effective once we are in the receptive mode.

Permission based marketing messages are powerful because based on its need or interest, the consumer itself chooses to receive the emails, text messages or web feeds and thus there are high chances of its effectiveness. On the other hand, if the consumer is not interested but the advertisement messages are still delivered they may not be that effective. This push strategies of delivering unwanted information, thus, is less effective. Both, pull and push advertising strategies are possible in digital marketing. Further, the ethical issue of digital marketing is that it can even fabricate the pull function out of the push. The receiver of the information may be bombarded with the information which actually he has not demand**ed but he might feel it's pulled by him.** This is possible due to advanced information technology and might be bringing results for marketers but raises many questions as to how far it is ethical..

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
E-mail advertising is used as a vehicle for the distribution of promotional messages, is fast becoming an important advertising tool.(Gartner, 2002).(Brown, 2002).(Brown, 2002). Research undertaken by practitioners indicates that consumers are interested in email marketing. (DoubleClick, 2002)[1]. Permission-based email is defined as email that has been requested by the consumer as part of an opt-in scheme. Thus, advertisers can gain greater effectiveness in the spending of their budgets as the message recipients have already indicated a level of interest in the messages. (Rowley, 2001).Further, appropriate email content plays a key role in advertising

effectiveness(Carmichael, 2000)[2]. In simple words, email **content must be "targeted"(Waring, 2002), "relevant and clear"(Yager, 2001) or "irresistible(Yager, 2001)**[3].

This form of email differs from unsolicited commercial email, also known as **"spam," which is an increasing problem** for consumers accessing their email. This is shattering the confidence of the marketers with consumer(Sara Radicati, 2010)[4]. Research suggests that response rates for spam email stand at only1 percent of the email sent out by advertisers, whereas the average click through rate for permission-based emails is between five and eight percent (Yoon, 2001)[5]. As reflected in literature above, one of the important segments of the digital marketing involves power of email marketing/advertising. As per the literature discussed above to work effectively the marketing emails must be (i) permission-based emails. (ii) Having contents of the message are specially designed for targeted consumer and are relevant and clear. & (iii) In addition to these two ingredients email marketing must be ethical so that it wins the trust of consumer and can be effective. Email is a super powerful tool in the hands of markets. It is increase its strength day by day. As per the study conducted by (Sara Radicati and Quoc Hoang, 2011)[6] the number of worldwide email accounts is expected to increase from an installed base of 3.1 billion in 2011 to nearly 4.1 billion by year-end 2015. But, the major concern is growth in the number of spam, unsolicited emails in the inbox of the consumer. As per the available information from the (Sara Radicati and Quoc Hoang, 2011), average number of daily spams received by a user in 2011 was 14 emails. It raises eyebrows. The consumer becomes skeptic towards the marketing emails if he is receiving plenty of such mails without his consent. In simple context the push marketing strategy simply means sending a message or mail to the prospective consumer without his/her consent; this may also include display online advertising on website or news blog. As **specified, email marketing's success is function of** trust in the email, their contents and its senders. Such push strategy of marketers involving spams makes consumer skeptic and raise the guard against such marketing mails. This is hampering the success of the online marketing. It involves two types of emails, one is spam and another is spoofed emails. Both of these email categories are out-come of IT. It has its positive role to play but due its unethical misuse it is becoming major threat.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
• **To explore the unethical means** used by online stores for

effective digital marketing;

•**To explore the** problems faced by consumer in this unethical

process;

•**To suggest safeguards to the consumer out** of

inferences drawn from study

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The study is primarily focused on the online consumers. For the purpose of study, primary data was collected from the respondents as per convenience sampling. These respondents had experience of online shopping on one or more of the virtual stores namely Snapdeal and ebay.in and other online buy-sell websites. The respondents reported to have account as consumer for six months or more on such sites. Keeping in mind, the image and brand positioning issues of the portals, the findings are reflected without mentioning the name of the portal or virtual mall, though the suggestion can be incorporated by all consumers and virtual stores in general. The following are the empirical findings of the study.

5. EMPERICAL ANALYSIS
The respondents reported that shopping experience at virtual malls was wonderful. They found it better as compared to offline shopping in various ways. But, they also have reported some of the ethical issues involved in some of experiences.

5.1 UNETHICAL MEANS ADOPTED FOR EFFECTIVE DIGITAL MARKETING
i) 72 percent respondents agreed to the statement that online stores follow unethical means to approach the consumers.

ii) 91.2 percent of the respondents agree that they receive junk mails from various marketers insisting them to click on the link of the marketers.

iii) 63.9 percent of the respondents confirmed that they receive the spoofed mail from marketers to trap them to buy. Further, it results in losing the trust on the genuine marketers also.

iv) 45 percent of the respondents have confirmed that the marketers follow IP based advertising and they are flashed frequently with the advertising banners while surfing, reminding them to click and buy.

5.2 IMPACT RESULTING FRON UNETHICAL MEANS FACED BY CONSUMERS
The virtual stores backed with Trust Pay guarantees satisfaction to the consumer in online shopping by providing money back guarantee without asking any question and also money back guaranteed with trust pay if issue is not resolved within 30 days. Different Virtual Stores follow different type of guarantee for the

money and shopping. But, still the consumer has a feel that the virtual stores **sometimes cheat or don't listen to the genuine**

complaints of the consumer. The findings in open ended questions related to such issues are grouped as follows:

i) One of the virtual stores is reported to sometimes deliver the alternative product to the consumer in case the one ordered is not present. As mentioned by our respondent in different cases the color or even the configuration/contents were different than ordered.

Most of the respondents report that it is very hard to get

back the money and the complaint or helplines are not free thus involved long cost and wait to report the complaint.

6. DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the study, the following measures are suggested as safeguard to protect the online consumers in future deals.

i) The consumer must communicate with the supplier to confirm if the product shown on the website will be similar in color, size and shape to the one to be delivered.

ii) It is advisable to communicate in writing through emails so that it can be kept as reference in case of any dispute.

iii) While surfing the inbox the consumer should not go to the **bank's website which is reflected in the email as it may be a spoofed email from hacker's group.**

iv) In case of paying online the consumer should check minutely the URL of the bank address.

v) The consumer should use virtual key board while entering the **user id and password on the bank's website after checking its** address.

vi) The important suggestion is that the consumer should not actually shop for online on any pc other than his own personal computer or his own laptop.

7. CONCLUSION

Finally, the digital marketing is a wonderful way of achieving the heights but the marketers should take due care to satisfy the genu-ine complaints of the consumers. Though, there may be the cases in which the consumer make undue advantage of the facility like money back guarantee, putting extra cost of delivery on the virtual stores. But, still the consumer is the king of the market and rules. The consumer should also take care of the suggested measures and have trust in the online shopping. The offline shopping also involve many types of frauds and misleading information, similar may be the case of online shopping which the consumer should handle with care. It is a gold mine to be explored cautiously by the consumer.

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