A New Frontier of Ethics:

*Examining Government Regulations, Relationship Transfers, and Ethical Issues of Online Marketing*

by

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Introduction

In 1991, Tim Berners-Lee introduced the World Wide Web, interconnecting individuals all over the world (History). With this innovation, businesses quickly realized that they could use the internet as a form of marketing as computers became more available to potential customers. Because of this innovation, a new era of internet marketing emerged. Internet marketing, also known as online marketing, is marketing that uses the World Wide Web to increase sales. This form of business marketing is significantly different than traditional channels and it has given rise to new ethical dilemmas.

Ethics is important in marketing. Because a business’ primary communication with its customers is through its marketing techniques, it is essential to have strong ethical values that promote the company’s image. As good ethics are considered to be the “cornerstone of sustainable marketing,” decision makers normally advocate for ethical norms to guide the advertising decisions of their enterprises (Kotler 604). With the emergence of internet marketing, it is more difficult for businesses and consumers to determine what is considered ethical business practices. The purpose of this thesis is to determine how online marketing has shifted ethical viewpoints in society and to propose a code of internet marketing ethics.

The paper is organized into three sections. The first is a literature review that examines previous writings about marketing ethics. Second, analyzes interviews with business professionals involved with online marketing and compares this to the literature review. By doing so, the reader will understand the similarities and differences between the ethical viewpoints of scholarly articles and current business representatives. The paper concludes by using the information gathered from the literature review and interviews to create a code of online marketing ethics that act as a guide for businesses nationwide. The proposed online ethics code uses the American Marketing Association’s Code of Ethics as its foundation.
Limitations

This thesis is a small sample of articles and business opinions related to internet marketing ethics. It is not intended to be a full assessment. Instead, the goal of this research is to provide readers with an introduction to the field of internet marketing ethics, regulation, and relationship transfers that have surfaced since the creation of the World Wide Web. Because internet trends and technology are advancing rapidly, some of the articles and interviews may be considered somewhat outdated.

Literature Review

This literature review analyzes book chapters and articles on the development of ethics in relation to internet marketing. The first section examines how marketing ethics are currently taught in academia through popular textbooks. Next, the review analyzes how often internet marketing appears throughout previous research on various ethical issues, providing a background of how the exploration of this topic has been presented in business journals in the early twenty-first century. The majority of this analysis is centralized on ethical dilemmas that are induced by businesses using this communication channel through the viewpoints of both customers and firms. Finally, this review addresses the new medium of social commerce and government regulation. The conclusion includes a discussion of important implications of these articles as well as recommendations for future research and literature.

Ethics in Marketing Textbooks

By researching how ethics are presented in popular marketing textbooks, one can understand if internet marketing ethics are well represented in classes for future business leaders.

*Principles of Marketing* by Kotler and Armstrong is a popular textbook to teach the basics of marketing. The over 600 page textbook grants the last 28 pages to both sustainable marketing and ethics. The majority of the chapter is about sustainable marketing with only a small portion addressing ethics. Moreover, the ethical issues described only address marketing as a whole and is not specific to internet marketing. In this textbook, it is mentioned that the burden of developing a strong ethical code falls on a mixture of both free market legal systems and individual companies themselves.


In *Contemporary Marketing,* David Kurtz devotes a large chapter to the topic of marketing ethics. By addressing ethical dilemmas through multiple marketing stages, the textbook is a good resource for those beginning to study the of internet marketing. However, Kurtz does detail an ethical code for companies to follow when marketing online. Instead, he only addresses the ethical dilemmas such as privacy concerns. Both these textbooks show that online marketing is a topic that is barely addressed in modern textbooks.

*Previous Research on Marketing Ethics*

This study undertook a comprehensive review of literature involving marketing ethics from 1960 to 2008. Schlegelmilch and Oberseder reviewed business articles that covered eighteen issues relevant to marketing such as “Corporate ethical decision making” and “Ethical issues related to marketing research.” Over this period of almost fifty years, the researchers evaluated 538 articles in marketing ethics published in 58 different journals. The goal of this study was to understand which ethical issues were considered significant to authors during a certain decade, discover how these articles were consistent or enhanced throughout the time period, and determine ethical concerns that have developed in the new decades. Research related to ethical issues and internet marketing began in the early 2000s (See Appendix A). This is not surprising as the internet is a fairly new communication medium for businesses and as the popularity for online commerce rises, so will the research on marketing ethics. According to a chart developed in the study, ethics articles discussing internet marketing are already outperforming many other ethical issues that have been written decades before such as law, religion, and price (See Appendix B). This article states how the technological advancements of the internet seem to be outpacing regulation efforts. The study urges that as the internet continues to grow, it is essential to develop marketing ethics to establish values and norms to ethical behavior to guide future electronic commerce.

Ethical Issues of Internet Marketing: The Customer’s Viewpoint

Now that readers have a comprehensive understanding of how ethical issues related to the internet have been discussed in relation to other marketing ethics, it is important to recognize what these ethics entail. The following addresses specific ethical issues that consumers have with the rise of internet marketing.

This article acknowledges the rapid growth of electronic commerce and describes the ethical issues that have developed as businesses market their products to customers by means of the internet. Stead and Gilbert focus on three issues uniquely related to ecommerce and internet marketing: privacy, security, and competition with intermediaries.

Stead and Gilbert suggest that the issues of privacy is the main concern of Americans as internet technology continues to develop. To define privacy throughout an ecommerce lens, the study quotes Miller and Weckert: privacy is considered “a desirable condition…with respect to possession of information by the other persons about him/herself on the observation/perceiving of him/herself by other persons” (Miller 256). The researchers evaluate this by examining a business’ right to gather personal information from web browsers with the intent to later distribute it. As many vendors defend this action as a means for better customer service, many customers do not agree and fear that this information will be sold or stolen. Stead and Gilbert argue that most individuals believe that they have a moral right to browse the internet unmonitored.

The second ethical issue discussed in the article is security. Closely related to privacy, individuals began fretting about their security after receiving advertisements for specific products directly related to websites previously visited. While companies tend to retain information on a specific person to “profile” or “data-mine” their consumers in hopes to better understand their buying habits, this can also lead to an increased number of identity theft from online thieves. In addition, multiple consumers purchase goods online through the use of their
credit card. This is another security threat that has led to identity theft as the card information can be stolen.

Stead and Gilbert also consider the future competition with intermediaries. As ecommerce continues to grow, manufacturers will begin to sell directly to their customers in effort to reduce their costs. However, this may cause direct competition with businesses’ intermediaries and the role of wholesalers and retailers will decline as a result. An ethical dilemma is present when one considers the numerous jobs of loyal intermediaries. Unfortunately, computers will be taking jobs from individuals who need to support their families.


In this article, philosophy professor David Palmer examines the underlying source of ethical concerns related to online marketing. Instead of focusing on the traditional thought of how ethics affect business, Palmer questions the new relationships and social environment of how firms relate to customers through online marketing. Palmer discusses how consumers are upset about the deceptive techniques that companies use to advertise their products online through spam, pop-ups, and data gathering. Although these can become tiresome for customers to sift through, Palmer argues that there is a different, philosophical reason that individuals stress ethical regulation for internet marketing. Instead of being the source of the problem, spam and pop-ups are merely emblematic of the larger technological transformation that is changing the relationships of businesses and consumers. The true issue of internet ethics is the consumer fearing the loss of autonomy in the form of a person’s ability to interact with others. Palmer argues that as internet marketing grows in the future, consumers need assurance that they will
retain control over the accessibility that others have to them. In this way, businesses need to be as transparent as possible about how they use their customers’ information so individuals can fully consent to these interactions. Palmer concludes by emphasizing the importance of addressing the ethical effects of this transformation before it is complete.

**Ethics of Internet Marketing: The Business’ Viewpoint**

Because online marketing is a relationship between consumers and firms, it is valuable to consider both opinions of the parties involved. Consumers and businesses have similar perceptions of ethical issues facing the internet (Bush 242). However, when it comes to the topic of regulation, there is not a clear consensus on how internet business practices should be monitored.


This study was interested in the business community’s opinions of the ethics of internet marketing at the societal, industry, and organizational levels. To determine the opinions of businesses, the researchers collected a national sample of 292 marketing executives and asked them to give their thoughts of internet regulation, potential ethical issues of internet marketing, and the role of internet ethics in their organization. In regards to internet regulation, the study determined that a small majority of marketing executives believe that the lack of online regulation leads to ethical abuse, however, when asked if the internet should be regulated to guarantee ethical marketing, executives were evenly divided. On an industry level, researchers asked their participants to list ethical issues of concern when using the internet as a marketing channel. Not surprisingly, the main concern of businesses was the security of transactions and
illegal activity, closely followed by privacy and honesty. Although these concerns are similar to the concerns of consumers, only two percent of companies provided a notice on their websites regarding a privacy policy at the time of the study (Bush 243). When asked if internet ethics are similar to other ethical issues found in other marketing channels in their organization, a majority of executives said it was “basically the same.” Again, this is somewhat contradictory because other marketing channels are strictly regulated and only half of the sample believes in strong regulation of internet marketing. The researchers provide a possible explanation for this and attribute these results to the probability that the respondents of the survey prefer self-regulation. Overall, the survey shows that although businesses understand that a code of ethics is necessary when marketing online, executives as a whole are unsure how to proceed with the regulation.

**Online Customer Reviews**

Internet marketing channels have advanced rapidly. With the rise of social media sites, customers now review businesses, products, and individuals to provide others with information to influence their decision-making process. It has been proven that modern consumers are significantly affected by social media due to the trustworthiness of their peers. Because of this, individuals find online reviews helpful when making purchasing decisions (Hajli 400). However, this confidence in another individual’s review leads to an ethical question of the integrity of these reviews. The following addresses the ethical issues of online review credibility.


John Henshell outlines the ethical problem of user reviews that are influenced by manufacturers themselves. In his article, he evaluates the trustworthiness of user reviews. Henshell suggests that because social commerce is extremely helpful to undecided customers
when making purchasing decisions, companies will incentivize consumers to post positive reviews in order to influence others. In fact, marketers have realized that by providing a small refund for biased reviews, companies receive a positive return on investment in the long-run with more purchases. Although many consider this act ethically questionable, it is not illegal to solicit these reviews according to Federal Trade Commission (FTC) laws. Individuals are, however, required to disclose the relationships. But, this rarely happens. Another form of social commerce is affiliate marketing, or the practice of marketing goods that are sold by a third party. In this way, any individual with a website, even a blog site, can become affiliate marketers for a company, usually promoting products and receiving a small commission to do so. Although affiliate marketing can be done in an ethical way when disclosing the relationship, many individuals participating in the action may be influenced solely by the commission, not the product itself. Henshell warns reviewers to be weary of hidden motives of social commerce.

**Government Regulation**

It is useful to understand the steps that the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has taken to monitor businesses’ practices when using this channel.


This article focuses on the government regulation of internet marketing. Concentrating specifically on the unfairness doctrine, Beltramini explains how a firm is in discordance with FTC regulations when injury is sustained by the consumer due to marketing communication. As ecommerce begins to become more popular, the FTC has recently became more involved in internet marketing. In regards to privacy, it requires websites to maintain “consumer privacy education pages” to inform customers of their rights to privacy when browsing a certain website.
A quick search finds these notices posted on websites such as Amazon.com and Facebook. However, the article discloses that the FTC considers it the customer’s duty to understand the privacy policies and “exercise choice in the information they share.” Ultimately, the unfairness doctrine is nothing more than a blanket regulatory consideration and the FTC primarily depends on internal policies to meet these standards. Instead, in hopes to promote commerce, the government mainly put its trust in non-profit organizations to help with customer protection.

Summary and Implications

In summary, internet marketing has caused the relationships and interactions between consumers and businesses to change drastically. As this transformation continues, so will the public’s attitude towards ethical norms towards online business practices. The articles and textbooks summarized above agree that privacy and security are the two most important ethical concerns of online marketing, but the researchers do little to provide recommendations about what regulatory actions need to be put in place to ensure these values will be protected. At the present time, there are too few articles on online ethics. Yet, the topic seems to be developing at a swift pace due to the rapid popularity growth of ecommerce. Together, the articles emphasize the need for future research of online marketing ethics as internet technology advances. As the FTC seems to have little regulation in place to monitor online marketing ethics, it is necessary to promote self-regulation among the market.

Online marketing needs more focus in education. Analysis of two popular marketing textbooks shows that although authors are devoting entire chapters to marketing ethics and sustainability, there is little information present that is related to a specific code of online ethics.
Future Research

As internet technology continues to advance, the studies analyzed in this literature review acknowledge the need for more research of the ethics of online marketing. As social marketing continues to grow in popularity, the credibility of consumer reviews is an interesting topic to examine from an ethical standpoint. It would be beneficial, for example, to conduct a study of one’s ability to determine an honest, impartial review in contrast to those that contain bias as a result of a manufacturer’s reward. In other words, such a study could be used to better understand the effect of unethical and biased reviews on consumers.

Another interesting topic is the use of mobile devices in connection with internet marketing ethics. As consumers buy “on the go,” it will be intriguing to determine how the ethics of online marketing varies from a person’s computer to mobile device. As the use of the internet continues to advance, there will be multiple opportunities for individuals to advance the research of establish ethical norms that will needed to be established for internet marketing.

Interviews

To better understand the impact of ethics in online marketing, it is important to not only examine literature, but also review real world experiences of those who contribute to online marketing during their daily work. This paper includes interviews from two professionals with different viewpoints: a director of customer service for a consumer goods company that prides themselves on “Love Thy Customer,” and a current employee at the Federal Trade Commission. By observing the opinions that these professionals have about the ethics of online marketing, readers can understand how first hand experiences of those in the workplace compare and contrast to the current literature.
Brett Johnson

Brett Johnson is the Director of Customer Experience at Radio Systems Corporation, a manufacturing company focused on pet goods headquartered in Knoxville, Tennessee. As Radio Systems Corporation’s sales have steadily been growing through online platforms, it is important to the company to have strong online marketing channels to support growing business. Johnson described why customers view online marketing different than traditional marketing as well as illustrated his thoughts on a code of ethics that business should follow for marketing on the internet.

Johnson believes that customers’ apprehensions regarding internet ethics stems from the complexity of the internet itself. The lack of understanding and visibility that the average consumer has into how the internet works at a technical level makes one particularly susceptible. Johnson believes that this is different than traditional marketing due to the fact that it is a multi-directional communication environment as consumers themselves are becoming spokespeople for products. Because of this, people are often disclosing their information without even knowing it. This is consistent with Palmer’s thoughts of individuals’ loss of autonomy when interacting with others (Palmer 2005).

From a business’ perspective, the nature of online marketing allows more opportunities and tactics for companies to employ, therefore creating more ethical grey areas. Johnson claims that a company can simply use a customer’s email to gather data such as one’s income, age, marital status, address, and much more. With this data, the company can use analytics to tailor specific marketing ads to its consumers. Johnson questions whether such action is ethical if the customer does not provide the information willingly.
Johnson believes that as the technology of the internet advances, more and more aspects of people’s lives will become digital and be available online, potentially exposing increasing amounts of their data and behaviors to marketers. With the complexity of online marketing increasing, so does the potential for abuse. Because of this, Johnson feels that there should be a specific code of ethics for online marketing activities. For example, at Radio Systems, he admits that it is easy to get excited about the new marketing technology, and marketers may rush to utilize it without considering the potential negative consequences for the consumer. A set code of ethics could ensure that the people making decisions on marketing practices actually understand the customer’s viewpoint.

*Cassidy Bolt*

Cassidy Bolt is a graduate of Duke University and a current employee at the Federal Trade Commission in Washington, D.C. Her employment at the FTC allow readers to understand the thoughts from a regulator. Bolt addresses the need for certain government regulation with online marketing while maintaining innovative competition.

Bolt believes that online marketing differs from traditional marketing because of how it has allowed companies to target their customers. Because of its ability to target individual consumers, it is a marketing strategy that can be both beneficial and manipulative. Her main concern for customers is the invasion of their privacy and fears that companies may be taking advantage of uninformed individuals.

The Federal Trade Commission’s website states that it is the mission of the organization “To prevent business practices that are anticompetitive or deceptive or unfair to consumers” (About). Bolton believes that it is the duty of the FTC to protect consumers’ identity rights through regulation. In doing so, the organization has created the FTC Act which prohibits unfair
and deceptive advertising in any medium. Although Bolton believes that some level of regulation is necessary for online marketing, she also mentions that the burden should fall more heavily on the companies themselves. She thinks that the businesses themselves have an incentive to align their marketing measures with consumer values. In order to protect their brand and reputation, businesses should adopt policies that are transparent and increase consumer confidence.

Bolton emphasizes that it is the duty of the FTC to regulate without hindering competition and oppressing legitimate business activity. Because of this, it can be difficult for the organization to place regulations on certain techniques. With this in mind, she mentions that the FTC is weary of regulation because inhibiting innovative marketing techniques could be consequential to the free market environment in the same way that minimizing consumer protection could be. Therefore, it is also the customer’s responsibility to understand the privacy measures and possible manipulation of data to an extent. This aligns with Beltramini’s argument that the customer has a duty of care when they go online.

**Code of Ethics for Online Marketing**

Currently, there is no established code of ethics for online marketing. As a result, the burden to create such a guideline has fallen on each business to formulate customer-friendly policies to direct its marketing endeavors. However, it can be seen from the literature review that not all companies believe that online marketing should be regulated in the same way. This creates instability and uncertainty for customers who are subject to online marketing. Because internet marketing has created relationship transfers between businesses and customers, it is important to create a clear code of ethics to provide customers satisfaction and guide companies to promote virtuous marketing practices.
The American Marketing Association (AMA) promotes marketing excellence. Its goal is to help marketers and researchers connect with consumers through the association’s resources. The association’s “Ethical Norms and Values” statement promotes the highest standard of ethical norms (See Appendix C). The values consist of honesty, responsibility, fairness, respect, transparency, and citizenship (Statement). Through these standards, the American Marketing Association urges companies to keep these values in mind when faced with ethical dilemmas. Although this is a useful start when forming a standardized code of ethics, these values are not specific to any marketing channels, but rather to the act of marketing as a whole. It is critical that a specific code of ethics is created for online marketing that builds on these general values. This paper next defines the values in an online marketing context to create a broad code of ethics that can be used by business when utilizing twenty-first century technology.

Honesty

The AMA statement of ethics defines honesty as the duty of companies to “be forthright in dealings with customers” by being truthful and honorable (Statement). This value addresses the issue of trust that customers have with online marketing schemes. By being honest about how consumers’ information will be used, companies can earn their trust. This can be done by clearly stating the commitments that a company promises their consumers and following through with the obligation. Internet marketing is accomplished through online platforms, therefore removing much of the personal aspect from the interaction. Because of this, many customers believe that it lacks the honesty aspect that can be found from traditional marketing platforms. By following honest marketing practices, companies can gain this trust that many customers have difficulty granting.
The New Frontier of Ethics, Wallace, 17

**Transparency**

The second value that should be considered as a part of the code of ethics for internet marketing is transparency and openness in marketing operations. This is a crucial element of online marketing because it will provide customers with clear communication of how their information is being used. As stated by Stead and Gilbert, privacy is considered the main concern for customers who are exposed to online marketing (Stead 2001). This issue can be solved if companies clearly state what information is being taken from them as well as how it is being used. By having a clear web page explaining these facts, customers can fully understand the extent of how their information is being used.

**Responsibility**

Traditionally, businesses have a responsibility to act in the best interest of their customers, and this does not change over an online platform. A main aspect of responsible practices for online marketers is to have special commitments to vulnerable markets. This can include children, those in poverty, the elderly, and those who do not fully understand how online marketing works. As both businesses and consumers are concerned about the security of their transactions, it is necessary for companies to have proper measures to guarantee the protection of customer’s data financial information (Bush 2000 & Stead 2001). It needs to be the responsibility of businesses to protect valuable information from potential online thieves.

**Respect**

Respect is one of the most important values a company can have. Based upon the “Golden Rule,” companies who exhibit respect are those who treat everyone as they wish to be treated. To do so in online marketing, companies need to listen to and understand the needs of
their customers and adequately change and improve satisfaction. To be more specific, companies that participate in online marketing gain a large amount of data from their consumers. With this data, companies can share their customers’ information, often for a price. It is ethical for a company to respect their customer’s information by gaining consent to do so.

Fairness

The next value is fairness. The AMA defines this as “to balance justly the needs of the buyer with the interests of the seller,” (Statement). For online marketing, it is necessary for companies to refrain from using promotions that may be misleading and deceptive in their advertisements. Businesses can achieve this by striving for marketing operations that are beneficial to the consumer and do not exploit their vulnerabilities. Instead, decision makers need to value consumers’ priorities to the same extent of their own. In doing so, companies will gain customer loyalty.

Citizenship

The final value that needs to be in a set code of marketing ethics is citizenship. This is to ensure that companies will adhere to legal, economic, and societal responsibilities when conducting marketing operations. Companies that excel at this not only follow government regulations, but are also beneficial contributors to society as a whole through marketing.

Conclusion

Online marketing is utilized by companies to gather detailed information about consumers in hopes for well-targeted ads that are presented through an online medium. As technology progresses, so do the opportunities for businesses to utilize advanced marketing techniques. Online marketing is transforming the customer-business relationships. One of the
main consequences of this paradigm shift is the difficulties of establishing ethical business practices.

Although consumers have gained multiple benefits from internet marketing, the online medium has evoked many concerns. Due to the amount of data that can be gathered and shared, individuals fear for the privacy of their information, security of their transactions, and autonomy of their interactions (Stead 2001; Palmer 2005). Limited government regulations have placed the burden of ethics on businesses themselves. While businesses address that online marketing raises new apprehensions unlike that of traditional marketing practices, they are unsure of how to regulate their efforts. Because of this, it is important for both consumers and businesses to determine a code of online marketing ethics that act as a guide for businesses nationwide.

By using the ethical norms established by the American Marketing Association of honesty, transparency, responsibility, respect, fairness, and citizenship as a foundation for current marketing practices, this paper has outlined how each value specifically addresses issues of online marketing. By following this code of online marketing ethics, businesses can ensure to gain the trust and support of their consumers without damaging the competitive advantages that are gained from these marketing advancements.
Works Cited


[https://archive.ama.org/archive/AboutAMA/Pages/Statement%20of%20Ethics.aspx](https://archive.ama.org/archive/AboutAMA/Pages/Statement%20of%20Ethics.aspx)
Appendix A:

[Image: Half a Century of Marketing Ethics graph]
Appendix B:

Figure 2. Impact/importance of ethics-related topics in marketing from 1960 to 2008: 1 law, 2 literature review, 3 religion, 4 price, 5 green marketing, 6 Internet, 7 place, 8 product, 9 vulnerable consumers, 10 sales, 11 marketing research, 12 international, 13 education, 14 promotion, 15 consumers, 16 social marketing, 17 norms and codes, 18 decision making.
Appendix C:

AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION
STATEMENT OF ETHICS

Preamble
The American Marketing Association commits itself to promoting the highest standard of professional ethical norms and values for its members. Norms are established standards of conduct that are expected and maintained by society and/or professional organizations. Values represent the collective conception of what people find desirable, important and morally proper. Values serve as the criteria for evaluating the actions of others. Marketing practitioners must recognize that they not only serve their enterprises but also act as stewards of society in creating, facilitating and executing the efficient and effective transactions that are part of the greater economy. In this role, marketers should embrace the highest ethical norms of practicing professionals and the ethical values implied by their responsibility toward stakeholders (e.g., customers, employees, investors, channel members, regulators and the host community).

General Norms
1. Marketers must do no harm. This means doing work for which they are appropriately trained or experienced so that they can actively add value to their organizations and customers. It also means adhering to all applicable laws and regulations and embodying high ethical standards in the choices they make.
2. Marketers must foster trust in the marketing system. This means that products are appropriate for their intended and promoted uses. It requires that marketing communications about goods and services are not intentionally deceptive or misleading. It suggests building relationships that provide for the equitable adjustment and/or redress of customer grievances. It implies striving for good faith and fair dealing so as to contribute toward the efficacy of the exchange process.
3. Marketers must embrace, communicate and practice the fundamental ethical values that will improve consumer confidence in the integrity of the marketing exchange system. These basic values are intentionally aspirational and include honesty, responsibility, fairness, respect, openness and citizenship.

Ethical Values
Honesty—to be truthful and forthright in our dealings with customers and stakeholders.
• We will tell the truth in all situations and at all times.
• We will offer products of value that do what we claim in our communications.
• We will stand behind our products if they fail to deliver their claimed benefits.
• We will honor our explicit and implicit commitments and promises.
Responsibility—to accept the consequences of our marketing decisions and strategies.
• We will make strenuous efforts to serve the needs of our customers.
• We will avoid using coercion with all stakeholders.
• We will acknowledge the social obligations to stakeholders that come with increased marketing and economic power.
• We will recognize our special commitments to economically vulnerable segments of the market such as children, the elderly and
(Continued) 

others who may be substantially disadvantaged.

Fairness—to try to balance justly the needs of the buyer with the interests of the seller.

- We will represent our products in a clear way in selling, advertising and other forms of communication; this includes the avoidance of false, misleading and deceptive promotion.
- We will reject manipulations and sales tactics that harm customer trust.
- We will not engage in price fixing, predatory pricing, price gouging or “bait-and-switch” tactics.
- We will not knowingly participate in material conflicts of interest.

Respect—to acknowledge the basic human dignity of all stakeholders.

- We will value individual differences even as we avoid stereotyping customers or depicting demographic groups (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation) in a negative or dehumanizing way in our promotions.
- We will listen to the needs of our customers and make all reasonable efforts to monitor and improve their satisfaction on an ongoing basis.
- We will make a special effort to understand suppliers, intermediaries and distributors from other cultures.
- We will appropriately acknowledge the contributions of others, such as consultants, employees and coworkers, to our marketing endeavors.

Openness—to create transparency in our marketing operations.

constituencies.

- We will accept constructive criticism from our customers and other stakeholders.
- We will explain significant product or service risks, component substitutions or other foreseeable eventualities that could affect customers or their perception of the purchase decision.
- We will fully disclose list prices and terms of financing as well as available price deals and adjustments.

Citizenship—to fulfill the economic, legal, philanthropic and societal responsibilities that serve stakeholders in a strategic manner.

- We will strive to protect the natural environment in the execution of marketing campaigns.
- We will give back to the community through volunteerism and charitable donations.
- We will work to contribute to the overall betterment of marketing and its reputation.
- We will encourage supply chain members to ensure that trade is fair for all participants, including producers in developing countries.

Implementation

Finally, we recognize that every industry sector and marketing subspecialty (e.g., marketing research, e-commerce, direct selling, direct marketing, advertising) has its own specific ethical issues that require policies and commentary. An array of such codes can be accessed through links on the AMA Web site. We encourage all such groups to develop and/or refine their industry and discipline-specific codes of ethics to supplement these general norms and values.