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The triad of consumer protection and social and ethical responsibility in marketing activity - Roles and orientations

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Abstract
The consumer is a crucial element in any commercial or economic process. In light of the emergence of unethical practices in marketing and other sectors، researchers، academics and even governments in various countries have placed a renewed focus on consumer protection. Our research paper aims to elucidate the concept of social responsibility. The objective is to examine the roles of organisations and marketing ethics، and to protect the consumer from fraud، deception and unethical practices. We will also look at how to create a culture of marketing ethics and social responsibility to protect the consumer in the workplace.

Keywords:
Consumer;
Consumer protection;
Marketing ethics;
Responsibility and corporate social Responsibility.

JEL Classification Codes: D18; M14; M31 ; K42.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The The issue of ethics in business is one that has gained significant attention in recent times. Business ethics, in essence, seeks to delineate the principles that regulate the conduct of individuals and their actions. Ethical decisions are inherently rooted in the values espoused by the individual, which encompass a range of fundamental principles, including honesty, accountability, and commitment to fulfilling promises. These values serve as the foundation for achieving social responsibility, which represents a significant challenge for organisations in both developing and developed countries. By aligning their actions with these values, organisations can achieve excellence and a competitive advantage.

In recent years, there has been a sustained commitment to work ethically and achieve numerous social objectives. Primarily, this has entailed an improvement in the quality of goods and services provided to society, while simultaneously preserving the environment and ensuring the optimal utilisation of natural resources and energy sources. Additionally, there has been a focus on providing equal employment opportunities for members of society and meeting consumer needs. This collective endeavour is known as the social responsibility of organisations, which has led to the emergence of the consumer protection movement.

Given the pivotal role of consumer protection in contemporary society, organisations must adopt a comprehensive strategy that addresses the social, economic, ethical and philanthropic expectations of their stakeholders. In order to fulfil their social responsibilities, these stakeholders are defined as individuals or entities that have an interest or demand in some aspect of an organisation's products, processes, industries and outputs, and are beneficiaries of the social performance of the

operating organisations. These include parties such as owners, employees, customers, clients, suppliers, competitors, society, the environment, government, social pressure groups, minorities and special needs groups. Each of these parties has its own expectations regarding the actions that the organisation's management should take towards them in terms of social and ethical responsibility.

1- The Problem of the Study In light of the potential benefits of ethical values and social responsibility programmes in consumer protection, the present study seeks to investigate the role of social responsibility and marketing ethics in this regard.

2- Sub-questions: The primary question is comprised of several subordinate questions, as follows:

-The initial question to be addressed is that of the nature of corporate social responsibility and marketing ethics.

-What are the methods by which consumers may be protected?

-The objective is to ascertain how a culture of marketing ethics and consumer protection can be established in the workplace.

-What is the role of social responsibility in consumer protection?

3- The significance of the subject matter: It is evident that an understanding of the significance of marketing ethics and social responsibility is crucial for the protection of consumers and the assurance of responsible care and control. In addition, the identification of the principal, influential and efficacious elements in the equation of its output is contingent upon the nature of the interaction that occurs between the basic elements. This is particularly evident in the relationship between ethics and social responsibility in any organisational function, especially

marketing. It can be posited that the greater the interaction between marketing ethics and social responsibility, the more favourable the results will be for consumer protection.

4- The study's objectives are as follows: The objective of the study was to:

- The fundamental concepts of social responsibility, marketing ethics and consumer protection were elucidated.

The objective of this study is to examine the role of social responsibility in consumer protection.

The objective is to provide a straightforward explanation of the process of establishing a culture of marketing ethics and consumer protection in any given sector.

5- The methodology and tools employed in the study are as follows: A descriptive and analytical approach was employed to elucidate the theoretical tenets of the subject matter, collating and classifying pertinent data pertaining to consumer protection, social responsibility, and professional ethics in marketing activities. Furthermore, the interconnections between the variables were analysed, and the role of social and ethical responsibility was elucidated.

6- Content of the study: This study was divided into two sections, as follows:

-General introduction to the study variables: Consumer protection, social and ethical responsibility.

- The role of social responsibility and marketing ethics in consumer protection.

2. A general introduction to the study variables: Consumer Protection, Social Responsibility and Ethics

Enter The term 'social responsibility' was initially defined as an acceptable moral and ethical commitment through which a

business organisation avoids any activity that has a negative impact on the interests of consumers or other groups in society. The concept subsequently evolved to encompass strategies, policies, procedures and actions that achieve the objectives of various groups, with the central goal of all business organisations being the happiness and well-being of society (Al-Ghalibi & Al-Amer, 2006, pp. 244-258). Subsequently, social responsibility in the field of marketing has become a comprehensive concept that encompasses all the commitments that an organisation makes in providing what the consumer desires and satisfying their needs and desires in a manner that is consistent with the common values between them. This ultimately contributes to achieving consumer protection and the welfare of society, as well as the continuation of the organisation's work and the profitable returns it achieves.

2.1 General considerations regarding consumer protection:

The United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection, issued by the United Nations Trade and Development Organisation (UNCTAD) in 1980 and expanded in 1999, are designed to provide guidance and recommendations to governments worldwide with regard to the development of policies and legislation aimed at ensuring the protection of consumer rights.It was highlighted that consumer rights encompass the right to a healthy environment, the right to access essential goods and services, the right to ensure safety and security, the right to choose between a range of diverse products and services at competitive prices, while ensuring satisfactory education and providing the necessary guarantees for Furthermore, the consumer is entitled to obtain all the information and facts that they require, particularly those pertaining to the product or service in question and its characteristics, as well as all

data necessary to ensure its validity. Additionally, the consumer is safeguarded from misleading, incorrect, and influential advertisements and statements. Furthermore, consumer rights encompass the right to representation, the right to be heard, the right to education, and the right to compensation for unsatisfactory goods and services (Abdullah & Hawi, 2014, p. 13).

Therefore, consumer protection is currently one of the most significant policy issues in countries that have incorporated it into their agendas. This is due to the correlation between consumer protection and the needs and objectives of societal development. Consequently, developed, developing, and even transitional countries have enacted legislation, implemented programs, and adopted economic policies with the primary objective of safeguarding consumers in their transactions, whether traditional or conducted through modern communication channels, particularly the Internet.

-What is consumer protection?

One of the primary motivations for the inception of the concept of consumer protection can be attributed to the existence of two disparate parties, characterised by disparities in information, economic strength and advertising, and the unequal treatment meted out by one of the parties, which possesses substantial economic and business power, as well as comprehensive information that affords it a more advantageous position than the other party, the consumer (Ministry of Economy and Trade, 2009, p. 7).

The term is defined in the language as one who consumes money or something, that is to say, one who spends money or something, or spends it.

The term 'consumer' is a relatively recent addition to the Algerian legislative lexicon. It was defined by the Algerian

legislator under the auspices of the new Law No. 09-03 on Consumer Protection and Suppression of Fraud (Law No. 09-03, 2009) in Article Article 03/1 of the aforementioned legislation defines a consumer as "any natural or legal person who acquires, for a fee or free of charge, a good or service intended for final use in order to satisfy his personal need or to satisfy the need of another person or animal in his care." From this definition, it can be concluded that the category of consumers comprises two distinct groups. The first group is represented by the final consumer, defined as an individual who purchases goods for their own use or consumption, or for the consumption of their family members. The second group is represented by the intermediate consumer, defined as an individual who purchases goods for the purpose of resale or distribution to another consumer. This category of consumer purchases goods on behalf of another individual, whether a sponsor, relative, or animal. These purchases are not made for their own benefit, but rather as an intermediary in the consumption process (Ben Boukhemis, 2000, p. 15).

Additionally, the Algerian legislator defined the consumer in accordance with the stipulations set forth in Law No. 04_02 on the rules applicable to commercial practices. This is evident from the second paragraph of Article 3 of the aforementioned law, which states the following: "The consumer is any natural or legal person who acquires goods offered for sale or benefits from services offered without any professional character." From an analysis of the definitions provided, it is evident that the Algerian legislator initially adopted an expanded concept of the consumer, incorporating the term 'intermediate use', within the definition of the consumer set forth in the ninth paragraph of the second article of Executive Decree 90_39 on quality control and suppression of fraud (Boudali, 2006, pp. 30-31).

It is evident that the legislator intended the economic interventionist, who purchases goods for remanufacturing or the purchase of tools to assist in their professional purposes, to be considered a consumer. However, the legislator subsequently reverted to the narrower concept as a fundamental principle, as evidenced by the definition set forth in Article 03/1 of the revised legislation. As previously mentioned, Article 09_03 on consumer protection and fraud suppression also makes it clear that the legislator did not impose a specific form for the emergence of consumer status. Rather, it arises simply by acquiring the product or service for consumer purposes (Ben Boukhamis Ali Bouliha, 2000, p. 16).

2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

From its inception, the concept has been subjected to criticism on the grounds that it is incompatible with the logic of commerce and the market. The concept of extended corporate social responsibility has been met with opposition from numerous academics and practitioners, most notably from Theodore Levitt and Milton Friedman (Riano & Natalia, 2020, p. 8). Conversely, CSR has never been exclusively altruistic, although some proponents of the concept would prefer it to be so. Organisations adopt CSR practices because they perceive them to be beneficial to both themselves and society (Carroll, 2015, p. 95).

The concept originated in debates about the role of business (economic activity) in society and the negative consequences of business practices, including child labour, poor working conditions, unpaid overtime, and environmental degradation (Riano & Natalia, 2020, p. 1). The decision-making process surrounding CSR is not isolated; rather, it is informed by a comprehensive understanding of the potential benefits and costs

involved. As Geoffrey and Laureen (2010, p. 452) observe, "CSR decisions are not made in a vacuum."

The overarching objective of social responsibility is to foster enhanced and elevated standards of sustainable living, while upholding the profitability or integrity of the organisation, both within and beyond its operational boundaries. The pivotal point is the manner in which profits are generated, rather than the mere pursuit of profits at any expense (Hopkins, 2014, pp. 1–2).

- Concept and definition of CSR

The concept of CSR can be conceptualised in three different ways: Adopting a long-term perspective, philanthropy may be delegated to third parties on behalf of stakeholders, or alternatively initiated by organisations from within. The latter two understandings are predicated on the notion of individual social responsibility (Benabou & Tirole, 2010, p. 15). The most prevalent definitions currently in use are those set forth by the European Union and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 26000, which exhibit notable similarities (Hopkins, 2014, p. 1-2). The European Commission defines corporate social responsibility (CSR) as "an organisation's responsibility for its impact on society and therefore the organisation should lead that impact."

The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a key area of interest within the business community. It can be defined as an organisation's responsibility for its impact on society, and therefore the organisation should lead that impact. In order to become The European Commission defines corporate social responsibility (CSR) as 'an organisation's responsibility for its impact on society and therefore the organisation should lead that impact; organisations can become socially responsible by applying the law and integrating social, environmental, ethical,

consumer and human rights concerns into their business strategies and operations' (European Commission, n.d.). In summary, Hopkins Michael defines CSR as follows: The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is concerned with the responsible treatment of key stakeholders (Hopkins, 2014, p. 7).

The term is currently employed extensively to delineate the non-commercial relationships between organisations, other social actors and society at large. It is frequently utilised in reference to for-profit organisations (e.g. businesses and foundations), but can also be applied to non-profit organisations such as government departments, municipal organisations, NGOs and social enterprises (Riano & Natalia, 2020, p. 2).

- Principles of Corporate Social Responsibility

The fundamental principles of corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be distilled into three core tenets: sustainability, accountability, and transparency. The concept of sustainability implies that society should not utilise a given resource in excess of its replenishment capacity. This can be defined in terms of the carrying capacity of the ecosystem. Accountability can be defined as the recognition by an organisation that its actions have an impact on the external environment, and thus that it bears responsibility for the consequences of those actions. Transparency entails that the external impact of an organisation's actions can be verified through the organisation's reports, and that the relevant facts are not obscured in said reports (Crowther & Aras, 2008, pp. 14-15).

The key characteristics of CSR can be distilled into six core elements. The first of these is that CSR is a voluntary undertaking. It is frequently asserted by experts in the field that CSR typically encompasses voluntary activities that extend beyond the requirements of legislation.

- The introduction or management of externalities: The term 'externalities' is used to describe the positive and negative consequences of economic activity that are experienced by third parties.

- A multi-stakeholder orientation: Such stakeholders include, for example, consumers, employees, suppliers, local communities and, of course, shareholders.

- The alignment of social and economic responsibilities: It is possible for social responsibility and profitability to coexist.

- Practices and Values: The principle pertains to a specific set of business practices and strategies, as well as a set of values that reinforce these practices.

- Beyond philanthropy: This concept concerns the manner in which a company's comprehensive operations, including its fundamental business activities, affect society (Crane & Spence, 2013, pp. 9-11).

- Areas of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

There are a number of different areas within the field of CSR, with the following areas being of particular importance: These include employee health and well-being, environmental safety, ethical responsibilities, legal responsibilities, philanthropic responsibilities, and economic responsibilities (S. Asemah, A. Okpanachi & O.N. Edegoh, 2013, pp. 46–47). The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can be defined as the sum of the four elements, which Carroll stated in the form of an equation:

CSR can be defined as the sum of four interrelated components: economic responsibility, legal responsibility, ethical responsibility and philanthropic responsibility.

In order to be considered a good corporate citizen, a company must pursue not only the financial interests of its

shareholders, but also the interests of all other stakeholders, including consumers, employees, managers, the environment in which it operates, the media, and society at large. Being a socially responsible company entails more than merely making charitable donations; it requires actively participating in educational programmes, committing to environmental protection, and acting in accordance with the principles of transparency and accountability.

2.3 Marketing ethics and its principles

Marketing work ethics set the standards for how individuals should behave in their marketing activities. These standards also apply to other work, including the professional conduct, ethical behaviour and responsibility that professionals should demonstrate in their marketing roles and in other work contexts. This responsibility extends to the individual's work, their community and their self-esteem (Irshaid, 2021).

In another definition, it is described as 'a set of values and systems that achieve the high positive standards required in the performance of job and specialised work, in the methods of dealing within the work environment and with beneficiaries, and in preserving human health and environmental safety'.

Others define it as a set of abstract rules and principles to which the employee is subjected in carrying out work tasks and evaluated in terms of their behaviour, with the outcome being a positive or negative judgement.

The term "professional ethics" is derived from the Greek words "Deon," meaning "duty," and "logos," meaning "science" or "explanation." Together, they refer to the obligations imposed on employees and state agents in general associated with the exercise of public office. They encompass the exercise of tasks in

accordance with laws, commitment, integrity, dedication to the practice of the job, not combining more than one job, and commitment to good behaviors (Shahidi, 2023, p. 7).

Work ethics is concerned with how to behave appropriately during the exercise of various professional activities. It expresses the need for the employee to perform their tasks at all times in accordance with the law of the state. Therefore, work ethics, profession or job means a set of rules, principles and assets that the worker must adhere to. The essence is to do the work without negligence.

2.4 The significance of work ethics and its objectives

Ethics is a critical factor in the development and stability of any society. It plays a key role in the advancement of civilizations and the prevention of collapse. The growth and prosperity of nations depend on the collective moral advancement of their members. (Brenda, E. Joyner & Dinah, Paynee, 2002).

To achieve this, it is essential to:

- Remove authoritarian tendencies from the management style.
- Strengthening the credibility of human resource development.
- Enhancing organisational performance and success through adherence to values and ethics.
- Manage the professional and personal conduct of those responsible for representing the state's interests.

The objectives of work ethics are manifested in the following points (Shahidi Massoud, 2023, p. 7):

- Understanding job behaviour and its importance in monitoring compliance with labour laws.
- Understanding the ethical standards of the profession and

the importance of adhering to them.

- Identifying methods of self-development and how to manage pressure at work.
- Organising regular training sessions.
- Knowing the correct employee behaviour and how to understand the behaviour of others, and distinguish between ethical and unethical behaviour.

The essence of marketing ethics

One of the most effective ways to attract customers and gain their trust in a brand or company's products is to demonstrate credibility and commitment to marketing ethics. While questionable marketing campaigns may yield immediate profits, they often prove costly in the long run. It is of the utmost importance to consider the potential loss of brand reputation and customers. Conversely, companies that prioritise ethical marketing practices are more likely to see increased customer satisfaction, enhanced brand trust and credibility, and ultimately, success at all levels. (Blog, 2020)

Marketing ethics, also known as ethical marketing, represents one of the most important rules to be followed when choosing marketing strategies for business activities. It is an important long-term factor that contributes to building trust between the employer and the customer. Adherence to this rule helps to improve the business presence in the market and convince potential customers of products and services. Furthermore, ethical marketing can lead to increased sales of a product or service. It is generally based on following the principles of ethical marketing and adhering to the accepted standards of acceptable marketing behaviour. Ethical marketing is an integral part of the definition of marketing proposed by the Marketing Association.

1. Transparency is key.

2. It is essential to maintain consumer privacy and data protection.
3. We are committed to sustainability.
4. We address consumer concerns promptly and effectively.
5. It is essential to minimise risks.

The primary objective of marketing ethics is to benefit and protect consumers by minimising risk and seeking to have a positive impact on consumers.

3. The role of social responsibility and marketing ethics in consumer protection

In the context of marketing, social responsibility refers to an organisation's commitment to optimising its positive impact on society while minimising any negative consequences. The concept of social responsibility encompasses the overall impact of marketing decisions on society. There is a wealth of evidence that demonstrates how failing to meet societal expectations for responsible marketing can erode customer trust and result in violations of government regulations. Irresponsible actions that cause customer, employee and competitor dissatisfaction may not only jeopardise the financial position but also have legal consequences (Soleimani, Sadiq, 2020).

The social aspect of business organisations has become a focus of interest within the context of various marketing activities. This is because marketing acts as the link between consumers and organisations. As marketing concepts have developed and integrated marketing thinking has emerged, which encompasses social marketing, political marketing, non-profit marketing and marketing of ideas on issues of public interest, social responsibility and related business ethics have become central

topics in this type of marketing.

3.1 The role of social responsibility and ethics in marketing activity:

An ethical issue is a specific issue, situation or opportunity that requires an individual or organisation to select from a range of actions that are evaluated as right or wrong, ethical or unethical. Any activity that causes marketing managers or customers in the target market to feel at any point in time that they have been deceived or cheated is an ethical issue, regardless of the legality of the activity.

Conscious marketers are faced with ethical challenges; the optimal course of action is often unclear. Given that not all managers adhere to ethical standards, organisations must develop comprehensive marketing ethics policies. These policies should provide guidance for all employees on matters related to distribution, promotion, customer service, pricing, product development, and other marketing activities.

3.2 The ethics, importance and reasons for adopting CSR

The positive outcomes achieved by participating in CSR focus on long-term goals in economic, social and environmental terms.

Two main reasons are usually cited for organisations adopting CSR; the first is that it leads to a competitive advantage for the company in the market, the second is consumers, pressure from shareholders, governments or regulators, pressure from the media and so on.

In fact, there are many benefits that CSR practices can bring, including Better financial performance in the long term, greater market share, competitive advantage, better reputation, improved business climate, increased productivity, employee motivation

and loyalty, and retention of highly qualified employees (Nimani, Zeqiraj & Spahija, 2022, p. 314, 319).

The benefits of CSR also include the following: Reducing operating costs, attracting new customers, discouraging government regulation, improving relations with the investment community and improving access to capital, promoting innovation, and stronger relationships within communities by involving various stakeholders (S. Asemah, A. Okpanachi & O.N. Edegoh, 2013, p. 45).

Some researchers also point out that CSR affects a company's monetary holdings through three channels. CSR-related activities can build the social (or moral) capital of organisations; customer and/or investor loyalty to CSR firms can make them less sensitive to aggregate market shocks (i.e. reduce systemic risk); and CSR activities play a role in corporate governance by increasing or decreasing agency issues associated with the firm's cash holdings (Cheung, 2016, p. 28-29).

On the other hand, there are CSR-related costs to the organisation, which can be measured by identifying CSR-related activities, as well as activities that the organisation was unable to undertake due to engaging in CSR activities (i.e. opportunity costs). CSR-related activities can increase cash outlays and reduce cash inflows. Costs associated with cash contributions include raw cash flows less tax deductions. The environmental costs associated with CSR activities can be estimated by comparing the cost of 'green' methods with those of 'traditional' methods (Geoffrey & Laureen, 2010, p. 448).

2- Marketing Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility

CSR is about following the ethical principles and standards that define acceptable marketing behaviour, as defined by a group of stakeholders. Marketing ethics represents a set of standards and

principles that define the boundaries of what is considered good, acceptable or unacceptable in marketing practices (Al-Rubaie, 2010, pp. 6-7).

Indeed, these practices cover a number of areas, including distribution relationships, advertising and promotion, pricing, product management and new product development, customer and service relationships, market research, professional relationships among marketing personnel, responsibilities to society, and general ethical standards. The following framework sets out the American Marketing Association's Code of Ethics. It is evident that there is an increasing trend towards the issuance of codes of ethics across various sectors. This underscores the significance of such codes in advancing the profession and reinforcing public trust in it.

In accordance with the American Marketing Association (AMA) Code of Ethics, AMA members are dedicated to upholding the highest standards of professional conduct and adhere to the following code of ethics:

- Marketer Responsibilities:

Marketers must accept responsibility for the results of their activities and ensure that their decisions, recommendations and actions serve to identify, serve and satisfy the entire audience. This encompasses customers, organisations and communities.

The following principles should guide the professional behaviour of marketers:

1. The fundamental principle of professional ethics is as follows: There must be no intention to cause harm.

2. All applicable laws and regulations must be complied with.

3. It is important to apply the appropriate level of scrutiny to their education, training and experience.

4. We encourage all employees to support, practise and promote this code of ethics.

- Integrity and justice: Marketers will support and uphold the integrity, honour and dignity of the marketing profession by:

1. We are committed to serving our customers, clients, employees, suppliers, distributors and the public with honesty and integrity.

2. We are dedicated to avoiding any conflicts of interest and will promptly notify all parties in the event that such a conflict arises.

3. We are committed to establishing fair fee schedules that include payment or receipt of customary and/or legal marketing exchanges.

The rights and duties of the parties involved in the marketing exchange process are as follows:

1. The products and services on offer are safe and suitable for their intended use.

2. All communications about the products on offer must be truthful and non-deceptive.

3. All parties involved in the transaction intend to fulfil their financial and other obligations in good faith.

4. The company has established internal processes for the fair settlement and/or resolution of complaints related to the purchase.

The above concepts include the following responsibilities of the marketer (Al-Rubaie, 2010, pp. 6-7):

- Full disclosure of all material risks associated with the use of the product or service.

- Identifying appropriate compensation for any component of the product that may affect the product's value or the buyer's purchasing decision.

It is important to be able to distinguish between the characteristics of the additional features and the additional cost.

In regard to pricing, we advise against the use of predatory pricing tactics.

- No commitment to set prices.

- The full price must be disclosed at the point of sale.

* Promotion:

- Ensure all advertising is accurate and truthful.

It is company policy to reject any sales tactics that are high-pressure or otherwise misleading.

It is advisable to avoid sales promotions that employ unscrupulous tactics or manipulative techniques.

* Distribution:

It is vital that the resale option is not unduly influenced with the aim of facilitating trade and product circulation. Moreover, the marketing channel must not be used in a coercive manner.

- It is also important to ensure that the product is available at all times and that customers are not exploited in any way.

* In marketing research:

- All customers and suppliers must be treated fairly.

-It is not permitted to sell or profit from the results of research.

-It is essential to safeguard the integrity of the research by ensuring that the research history is not com

- Organisational relationships:

It is essential for marketers to be aware of how their actions affect the behaviour of others in the context of organisational relationships. It is imperative that they refrain from demanding, encouraging or coercing unethical behaviour in their interactions with others, including employees, suppliers and customers.

1. In the context of organisational relationships involving

information, it is essential to maintain reliability and anonymity.

2. Ensure that all contractual and mutual agreement obligations and responsibilities are fulfilled in an appropriate manner.

3. It is not permitted to take work from others, either in whole or in part, where such work represents a direct private benefit without compensation or consent of the person who did the work or its owner.

4. Avoid any actions that could gain an advantage in certain situations at the expense of others. In the event that any member of the Association is found to be in violation of any measure set forth in this Code of Ethics, their membership shall be subject to temporary suspension or, in the most severe cases, permanent termination. Marketers must accept responsibility for the consequences of their activities and ensure that their decisions, recommendations and activities serve and satisfy all relevant audiences. This encompasses customers, organisations and society as a whole.promised or deleted.

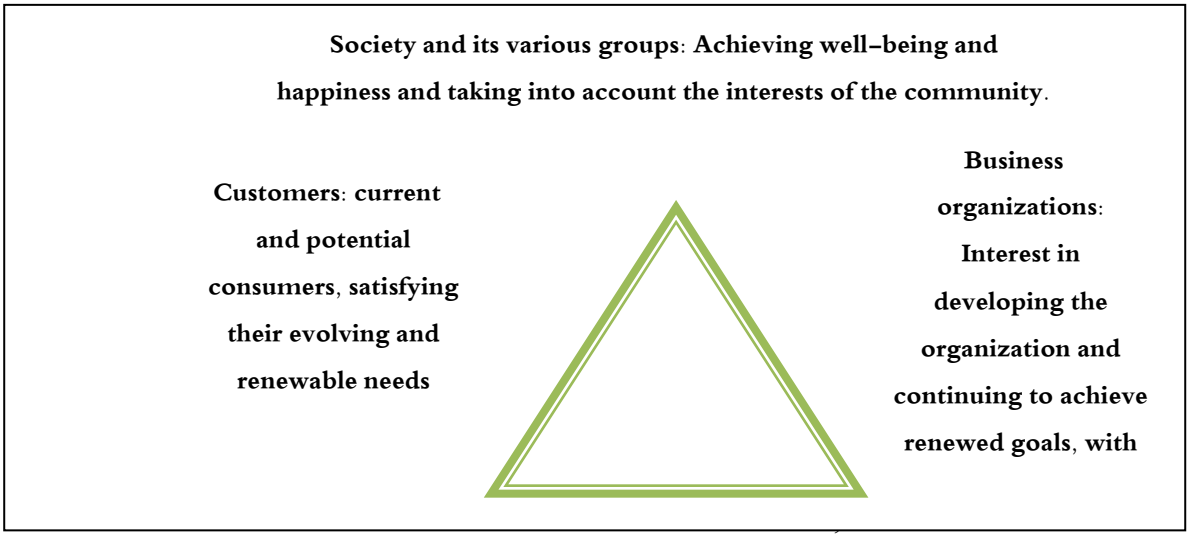
3.3 Social responsibility and consumer protection

The term 'social responsibility' was initially defined as an ethical and behavioural commitment on the part of a business organisation whereby any activity that could negatively affect the interests of consumers or other segments of society is avoided. The concept then evolved to encompass strategies, policies, procedures and actions that achieve the goals of various groups in order to promote the happiness and well-being of society, which is a central goal for all business organisations (Al-Ghalibi, Al-Amer, 2006, pp. 244-258). Subsequently, the concept of social responsibility in marketing expanded to encompass organisational commitments to provide products and services that align with

consumer desires and needs, and to adhere to the shared values between the consumer and the organisation. This ultimately protects consumers and advances societal well-being, while supporting the organisation's continued operations and profitability (Al-Ghalibi, Al-Amer, 2006, p. 245).

Figure 1 below demonstrates the convergence and interaction between business organisations, society, and customers under the umbrella of CSR.

Fig.1. The interrelationship between society, business organisations and customers



Source: Mohsen Al-Amer, 2006, p. 245.

It can be stated that the advancement of the concept of social responsibility and consumer protection is contingent upon the collective efforts of a group of agencies or entities that have a vested interest in monitoring and evaluating the activities of organisations and the quality of consumer protection. Consequently, the work of each agency is closely interlinked with that of the others. All of these activities are carried out in the interest of the consumer, in accordance with the principles of

social responsibility, with the aim of protecting them from unethical practices committed by some businesses. This is demonstrated in the following illustration. Consequently, the legal and judicial bodies are responsible for monitoring companies in case of any violations committed by them. Furthermore, consumer protection associations, the media, individuals, and supervisory and regulatory bodies play a role in monitoring institutions, highlighting their actions, and identifying instances of malpractice that are detrimental to consumers. This is done with the objective of preventing such behaviour from occurring in the first place. In instances where organisations do not respond to these warnings, the relevant authorities may seek recourse through the judicial system. Concurrently, all consumer protection agencies are engaged in initiatives to enhance consumer decision-making and educate consumers on sound financial practices (Al-Ghalibi, Amer, 2006, p. 246).

3.4 How to create a culture of marketing ethics and consumer protection in an organization:

This guide outlines the steps an organisation can take to establish a culture of marketing ethics and consumer protection.

In today's fast-paced business environment, establishing a robust ethical framework is not just a legal requirement; it is a strategic foundation that can enhance brand reputation and consumer trust. The integration of marketing ethics and consumer protection fosters a mutually beneficial relationship that benefits both the organisation and its customers. This synergy is particularly evident in the proactive adoption of consumer protection laws, which provide a framework for ethical marketing practices (FasterCapital, 2024).

- Transparency in advertising: A fundamental tenet of ethical

marketing is a dedication to honesty in advertising. This requires the avoidance of misleading claims and the provision of information that is clear, accurate and truthful. For instance, organisations must always disclose the full cost of a product, including any additional fees or costs, to avoid accusations of hidden costs.

- Data privacy and security: In view of the increasing significance of digital marketing, the protection of consumer data has become a crucial objective. The implementation of robust data security measures and transparent privacy policies not only ensures compliance with consumer protection legislation, but also communicates to customers that their personal information is valuable and protected.

- Implement fair pricing strategies. Ethical pricing is the practice of setting prices that are fair to both the organisation and the consumer. This includes refraining from price gouging, particularly during periods of high demand or crisis, and providing consumers with clear and accurate information regarding price changes..

The safety and quality of the product are of paramount importance. The adherence to safety standards and the assurance of product quality serve as pivotal indicators of an organisation's ethical stance. The prompt and public recall of defective products constitutes an effective demonstration of an organisation's commitment to the welfare of consumers.

- Ethical sales practices: It is incumbent upon sales teams to receive training in ethical sales tactics and to refrain from employing high-pressure sales tactics.

- Responsive customer service: It is imperative that any business possesses a customer service department that is both responsive and empathetic, in order to effectively address

customer concerns and feedback. This necessitates the implementation of transparent procedures for the resolution of customer grievances, coupled with a commitment to ensuring that customers feel heard and valued.

- Community engagement and social responsibility: Organisations that proactively engage with their communities and assume their social responsibilities demonstrate a commitment that extends beyond mere profit-making. Such initiatives may include supporting local charities or adopting sustainable business practices (FasterCapital, 2024).

By incorporating these principles into their operations, organisations not only comply with consumer protection laws, but also foster a culture of integrity that resonates with consumers and differentiates the brand in a competitive marketplace. The cumulative effect of these efforts is a strong ethical identity that not only complies with legal standards, but also generates consumer loyalty and advocacy..

4. CONCLUSION

In this study, we addressed the concept of consumer protection, which encompasses the measures required to safeguard individuals seeking to procure goods or services to meet their personal or familial needs. Our findings revealed the necessity for legislators to consider a range of fundamental aspects to ensure the protection of consumers and, consequently, the broader society.

In the modern business environment, the consumer has become the primary focus of organisations. There is a collective endeavour to satisfy consumer desires and meet their expectations by adopting a socially responsible approach, which rationalises consumption and reduces indiscriminate consumption.

Furthermore, it functions as a conduit between the consumer and the organisation, with a particular emphasis on ethical and social considerations. It is the responsibility of organisations to prioritise the protection of the customer, even if it results in the loss of a profitable sale, rather than pursuing profits at the expense of customer satisfaction.

We discussed illustrative concepts about business ethics in general and marketing ethics in particular. We also examined the importance of social and ethical responsibility in the marketing field and the extent to which it contributes to and enhances consumer protection in organisations' dealings with consumers.

The following conclusions were reached:

Consumer protection is a fundamental right, enshrined in legislation at the national and international levels. It is a crucial element in the development of societies and the preservation of safety.

In Algeria, the legislative authority has provided support for the protection of the public (society) through the establishment of consumer protection measures.

Marketing ethics can be defined as the ethical principles that guide the behaviour of marketers in their interactions with consumers, stakeholders, and society at large. Marketing ethics are a reflection of the values and standards of the marketing profession, as well as the expectations of the public. This is not merely a matter of reputation and credibility.

The overarching objective of social responsibility is to foster enhanced and elevated standards of sustainable living, while concurrently ensuring the continued profitability or integrity of the organisation, both internally and externally. The pivotal point is the manner in which profits are generated, rather than the mere pursuit of profits regardless of the circumstances.

In the context of contemporary market competition, the strategic importance of social responsibility for business organisations is significant. This is due to the fact that it has the potential to enhance an organisation's competitive position through its impact on performance, customer satisfaction and loyalty, as well as the satisfaction of other stakeholders. This assertion is corroborated by the findings of a number of research studies conducted in recent years.

An ethical issue can be defined as a specific issue, situation, or opportunity that requires an individual or organisation to choose from a set of actions whose merits can be evaluated as right or wrong, moral or unethical. Any action that causes marketing managers or customers in a target market to feel deceived or cheated at any point in time is an ethical issue, irrespective of the legality of the action in question.

Those engaged in conscious marketing are frequently confronted with ethical challenges, and the optimal course of action is often unclear. In light of the fact that not all managers adhere to ethical standards, it is of the utmost importance that companies develop comprehensive marketing ethics policies. Such policies should function as a comprehensive framework for all employees, encompassing a range of key areas including distribution, promotion, customer service, pricing, product development and other marketing activities.

The concept of social responsibility in business requires that marketers adhere to the principles and standards of marketing ethics, which define the acceptable behaviour of marketers as defined by various stakeholders.

An organisation that is socially responsible and ethical will accord these rights the attention they deserve, as the foundation for committed and ethical marketing activity. Conversely, these

rights have been incorporated into a multitude of legal statutes enacted by disparate governmental entities, each with its own jurisdiction. It is clear that organisations are competing to fulfil their social role and demonstrate ethical commitment by developing their marketing capabilities and operational procedures in order to provide consumer-satisfying services and goods.

The promotion of social responsibility in marketing represents a fundamental aspect of ethical marketing practice. This involves the integration of values and initiatives that benefit society and the environment into marketing strategies. From various standpoints, the advancement of social responsibility in marketing initiatives can be regarded as a strategy for cultivating trust, reinforcing brand reputation, and contributing to the collective benefit of society.

In light of the findings presented in this study, we put forth a series of recommendations.

It is recommended that individual employees and officials be encouraged to adopt business ethics, along with instilling social values within organisations, in order to facilitate the adoption of social responsibility.

- The initiation of social and ethical practices, coupled with a sense of responsibility while ensuring compliance with the relevant legislation and regulations.

It is essential to define a clear vision of the social and ethical role of the organisation's initiative, with a view to protecting the consumer and society as a whole.

It is recommended that the organisation should intensify its ethical practices and social responsibility in marketing and other activities in order to protect the consumer.

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