

TECHNOLOGY-BASED MARKETING STRATEGIES THROUGH THE CONSUMER LENS: HOW INTERRELATED ARE PERCEPTIONS OF ETHICALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS?

Roger Brooksbank, University of Waikato, New Zealand

Sam Fullerton, Eastern Michigan University, USA

Steven Miller, University of Waikato, New Zealand

ABSTRACT

Today, digital technologies are being routinely incorporated within most companies' marketing strategies, and ongoing advancements mean that marketers are increasingly spoilt for choice as to which ones to employ. Yet little research has sought to investigate the use of these technologies from a consumer perspective. To address this deficiency, a sample of 967 adult residents of the United States provided their perspectives in relation to 18 technology-based initiatives along two separate constructs: their ethicality according to society's moral norms, and their effectiveness as a mainstream marketing tool. This study focusses on examining the interrelationships between these two constructs.

Findings indicate a wide spectrum of opinion as to what constitutes both an ethical as well as an effective initiative. In general, the two constructs are positively correlated in that the more an initiative is perceived to be ethical the more it is seen to be effective. However, these perceptions are not equal in measure on each scale. Whereas toward the top end of each scale, those initiatives perceived to be highly ethical are also seen to be highly effective, toward the bottom end of each scale those that are perceived to be highly unethical are almost invariably still viewed to be somewhat effective. Principal Components Analysis suggests the potential existence of three sub-dimensions of the ethicality-effectiveness correlation dyad, provisionally labelled here according to similarities in the characteristics of member initiatives: "Message Dissemination", "Consumer Benefits" and "Company Stealth".

Overall, findings indicate that marketers would be well advised to complete their due diligence so as to determine which technology-based marketing strategy under consideration is likely to be viewed most favorably by consumers in relation to both constructs, prior to a decision to operationalize it.

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