

2 Advanced perspectives for ethical and socially responsible marketing decisions

Introduction

After spending some time introducing students to the foundations of marketing ethics the second chapter in the book focuses on BPs5-7; introduces students to five ethical theories (schools of thought); explores and discusses the stakeholder concept; and, considers a moral reasoning framework for marketing managers in tackling ethical marketing issues. We find this chapter works well in a stand-alone class, after students have received a concise introduction in Chapter One. Relating each of the different theories and issues which arise to examples which are both real and which students themselves can relate to works very well in class. There is the potential (depending on the level of the class) to delve deeply into each of the theories or to simply introduce them for consideration. At the outset, it is important to highlight that the students are only being introduced to key ethical theories, and they could in-fact do a whole module on the theories (or even one theory!) alone. Breaking the class up, by providing various exercises is a great way to introduce the theories to the students and to also get them to remember them. A standard lecture delivery would not work well, as chances are, students will not remember the theories, which they will need to engage with the cases!

BP5 - Essential Frameworks for Enlightened Marketing: five theories

At this point instructors can introduce students to five different theoretical approaches to ethics, which can then be applied to ethical marketing issues. Again, it is important to emphasize that these are ethical theories, some of which date back many years, and that we are only skimming the surface of them. Interested readers can of course follow up on some the theories in more detail if they so wish! At the start of the class it is a good time to remind students that any analysis of marketing ethics must begin with a primary focus on people! We are introducing students to the following five theories and are doing so because:

- ▶ If principled marketing managers with moral imagination are essential to an ethical organization, then what principles might they regularly integrate into their moral reasoning?
- ▶ Different approaches discussed here help address ethical issues concerning the 'rightness' or 'fairness' of various marketing tactics in the workplace.

It is useful throughout the class to keep referring to these two points, and the issue of people, as gentle reminders of the key issues of importance. The start of the chapter introduces students to some examples of ethical questions which various stakeholders might ask. A good idea at the beginning of class is to ask students to identify other stakeholders and provide some other examples of ethical questions. This might only take 5-10 mins, but is good to get the students thinking about the key issues.

Next students can be introduced to some moral maxims for marketing, and again discuss these maxims and gather opinions about them.

Next students can be introduced to the following five theories:

Consequence based ethical theories

Duty based ethical theories

Contract based ethical theories

Virtue based ethics

Religious approaches to ethics

For each theory we find it useful to briefly introduce the theory, discuss its history and also identify its weaknesses. At all times, use examples, to aid the discussion. At the end of the introduction to the theories instructors can take some time to ask students which theory (if any) they like the best, and why. There is normally widespread disagreement amongst students and this makes for interesting debates!

BP6 – Embracing the Stakeholder Concept

BP6 introduces students to the stakeholder concept and explores primary, indirect and secondary stakeholders. BP6 is one which can be used for all of the cases of this textbook, and students should familiarize themselves with it. It is also something which will be utilized in other management and marketing modules, and is a concept which is fundamentally important to all aspects of business life. An example of a stakeholder analysis for SouthWest airlines is used in the book, and after using this example, students could then be asked to conduct a stakeholder analysis for a company of their choice, either in class or for homework.

BP7 – Moral Reasoning for Marketing Managers: the seven steps

As with BP6, BP7 is a framework which can be applied to all cases in the textbook, and as such, students should spend considerable time familiarizing themselves with the framework. The textbook emphasizes that - Marketing organizations striving for exemplary ethical conduct ought to delineate an ethical analysis protocol and train their managers to follow it. This framework introduces students to an ethical analysis protocol. After introducing students to the seven steps instructors can then move on to Chapter 3 and the L'Oréal case study as an example of using the seven steps in practice. As there has been so much discussion in this class it may be best to leave the L'Oréal case for a future class, or if time is limited, ask students to assess the case in their own time, and then use the powerpoint slides for the case as a check-list against their own endeavours.

Conclusions

To conclude the discussion of the theories and frameworks from this chapter students are asked to reflect on the Ethical lessons they have learned from the basic perspective set and to re-emphasize the key issues identified in the text book:

- **Moral reflection** is important so that the BPs are considered as an integrative whole.
- The challenge for concerned marketing managers is to work through the network of possible connections among the BPs in the context of the peculiarities and industry-specific issues confronting their own operating environments

It is also important to re-emphasize at this juncture that each of the seven BPs are inter-connected, and while in class we may consider them separately, it is always important to recognize the inter-relationships that exist.

Discussion Points for the Class

- 1. Split into teams and conduct a stakeholder analysis of an organization of your choice.**

This exercise is a useful one to engage with after introducing students to BP6 and going through the SouthWest airlines example with them. We have also found it useful to ask students to conduct an assessment of the same organization – this normally distinguishes the good from the weak students, and can embarrass some of the weaker students into doing better next time around! Sometimes there is also disagreement and confusion over the difference between secondary and indirect stakeholders and this is a good time to address these.

- 2. Take five stakeholder groups from your analysis in Q1 and make a list of potential ethical questions each group might ask themselves and/or their employer.**

This exercise allows students to begin to embark on the **moral reflection** they have been introduced to earlier. It asks them to begin to think about these stakeholders and their everyday activities and consider what ethical issues might arise. Again, this exercise can be made more sophisticated depending on the level of students being taught. For first year UGs for instance it might be enough to get them to draw up some ethical questions; whereas for MBA students one might begin to discuss how different stakeholders might respond to the same ethical question.

- 3. Take the “protocol for formalizing the ethical evaluation process in marketing organizations framework” and apply it to a current ethical ‘scandal’.**

Conducting this exercise in groups at the end of class is normally a fun way to end the session, and one where students will learn from for the remainder of the module. Choosing a current scandal is also a great way to show students how many businesses have yet to get that ethics is important! The fact that, when writing this manual, we are confident that current ethical scandals will exist is an unfortunate reality! This exercise in itself could take up over an hour of students’ time, and it may well be something that they begin in class, but finish as a team before the next class. The exercise is also a great way to get students to search for reliable sources of information!

Homework questions for students

- 1. Write a 1000 word summary of each of the five theories discussed in Chapter 2. Make sure to utilize academic books and journal articles to aid your summary.**

This exercise asks students to take the theories, and to reflect on them further. It also asks them to engage in reading, and this reading will take them outside of the normal business, and marketing literature. Instructors may wish to take a look at what information sources are available in their libraries before giving out the exercise, or they can simply tell students ‘go explore the library’! Engaging in this exercise will really help the students understand the theories, and will be hugely beneficial for analyzing the cases later. Many of the discussion exercises above also will typically work in teams this is a good individual exercise for the students.

2. Choose an ethical theory of your choice and consider how this theory could be applied to a recent ethical 'scandal'.

This is another good, individual exercise for the students, and as with homework question 1 above, will prove invaluable for later on. It also mixes theory with practice and this is what will be expected of students when they engage with the cases later.