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Marketing Research

Lec – 37

Ethics in Marketing Research

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Welcome everyone to the session of Marketing Research and Analysis. In the last session we discussed about a very perennial issue, a very important issue in the world of marketing and mostly everywhere. Today more and more fraudulent practices are happening in companies, in large organizations, small organizations even on individual level some people are following unethical practices in doing studies and doing researches.

And obviously when your research itself the process is fraudulent then no wonder that your output also would be highly poor. In fact I don't want to cite any country details but it has been seen that many of the studies, that scientific studies been conducted in the Asian zone are highly being questioned.

There are doubts over the researchers methods of doing, of conducting the research and even questioning the output, the final outcome because some many a times what happens is researchers follow practices which I have also seen in my life, that they follow practices which are not highly ethical.

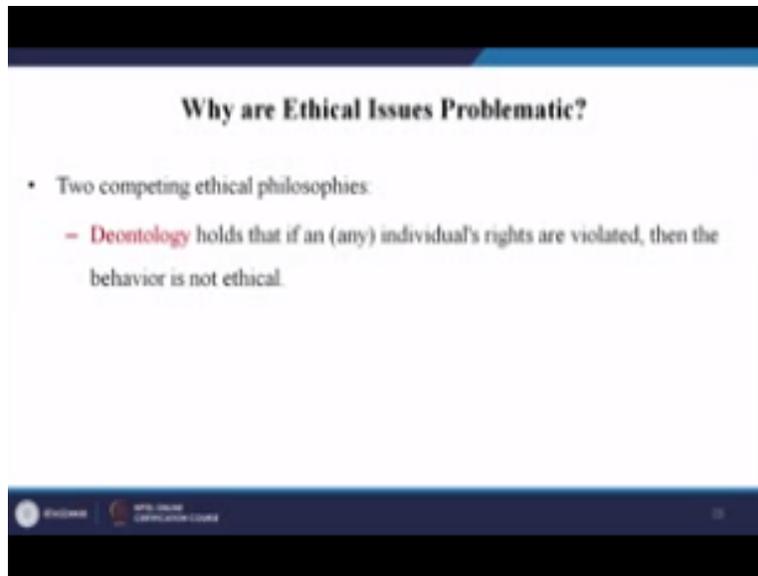
So what they have done is that they have not maybe, sometimes they have not adequate data but they have somehow managed it and then they have come out with a confusion because if you use any data, a software data as a database and you give it some data, so the software data will be obviously giving you some results. But the question is, are these results desirable? Are this justified? Well no. I would not say they are justified, and first of all the process of doing the research has been wrong.

I don't know why people do it because sometimes they do it out of pressure of publishing, the pressure of finishing a PhD or something. But that is highly-highly-highly-highly undesirable. So ethics in marketing research is a very-very-very important part of the subject because you see today what has happened with poor, because lack of ethics and such kind of things the participation of from respondents, from you know the people has started declining seriously.

You will find if you go to a research, conduct a study, you will find that people are less interested in filling out questionnaires. Why? The reason is very simple because they feel this is just a waste of time. They feel that there is no research in it. In fact, the person who has come with a research thing/frame in mind, he himself is not very serious. He is just wasting my time. So that is why respondents are also not showing interest and because of this, the cost of research has increased and the efficacy half research has declined.

So, I am not saying country wise, I am not naming, but one needs to be careful. Even I have seen large number of plagiarism cases coming up in the research world. Very popular scientists, very known names have also fallen prey to the work, through the case of plagiarism and all these things. So well, as a researcher I would only say kindly keep away from such things, do one research, good research, that is more than enough, instead of doing large number of quantity-wise, large number of researches where it makes no sense. So why are ethical issues problematic?

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Two competing ethical philosophies. Deontology holds that if any individual, if an individual's rights are violated then the behavior is not ethical. Suppose you are violating the right of a person, suppose somebody does not want it to be done and you are still publicizing it or you are opening it up to the world, then this behavior is not ethical. On the other hand, there is another theory.

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Why are Ethical Issues Problematic?

- Two competing ethical philosophies:
 - **Deontology** holds that if an (any) individual's rights are violated, then the behavior is not ethical.
 - **Teleology** says to judge a given behavior in terms of its benefits and costs to society: if there are individual costs but group benefits, then there are net gains (versus net losses) and the behavior is judged to be ethical.

The Teleology, it says, to judge a given behavior in terms of its benefit and costs to society. If there are individual costs or group benefits then there are net gains because and the behavior is said to be ethical. So as a researcher one needs to follow one of those principles. Either you have to see from the individual's point of view or you have to see from the societal point of view.

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Why are Ethical Issues Problematic?

Marketing Research Situation or Practice	Deontologist says...	Teleologist says...
Mystery shopper		
Frugging		
Disguised survey		

So this is a small thing before you as you can see. For example mystery shopper. As per deontologists, what would it be, you can think. So unethical because if you are doing a mystery shopping, hiding yourself and trying to find out what people are doing and observing them, that is unethical, so because you have violated the individual's rights.

But suppose you are doing it from a societal perspective, you know that you are doing it for the benefit of the society at large then there is no problem. Similarly, frugging is as I said when you are raising funds in the name of research. So wrong, you should not be doing it.

Deontologist says, you should not be doing. The Teleologist says, okay if it helps people, the needy, if you are raising funds and using it for the needy, then so be it, good. Third thing, disguised survey. Disguised surveys are those where the entire purpose is disguised and they are not revealed, so the respondent is actually not aware of what he is feeling up, so and why he is participating. So in such a condition, the deontologist says unethical, but the teleologist, what does it say, it says okay, it's okay if it gets to the truth.

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Why are Ethical Issues Problematic?

Marketing Research Situation or Practice	Deontologist says...	Teleologist says...
Mystery shopper	Unethical	No problem
Frugging	Wrong!	Okay if it helps folks
Disguised survey	Unethical	Okay if it gets to the truth

So there are two types of theories or this two philosophies of research. One is from the individual point of view, the deontologist and the other is from a societal point of view. But both of them can be correct if you are not criss-crossing or super imposing the truth. So as a researcher one needs to be very careful, when he is doing, is he honest himself to the subject and himself or not, to the research world.

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Ethical Issues

- Sugging
- Frugging
- Misrepresentation and omission of pertinent research data
- Treating clients, suppliers & the public unfairly

So these are some of the ethical issues, sugging, frugging, misrepresentation and omission of pertinent research data. Now this is a big problem. Many a times researchers misrepresent the data. Suppose there is some missing data, for example, they fill it up by some number or they feel that this person should be given this number and they fill it up with that number.

No, this is a wrong, or deleting something which is there just because you felt it would not give me a good result or a desirable result, you delete it or you omit it, then that is also not desirable. Treating clients, suppliers and the public unfairly, now this is a big problem. Many a times it has been seen that the researchers do not treat the respondents in a proper manner.

Sometimes the respondents might not be of your level, in the sense in the societal level, structurally, they might be poor village folks or they might be somebody of low strata. So in such a condition treating them unfairly is extremely bad, extremely unwise because you would never get support from such a client base.

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Ethical Issues with Respondents

- Respondent cooperation has been going down
- Marketing researchers should:
 - Eliminate or keep deception to a minimum

The respondent co-operation has been going down; marketing researchers should eliminate or keep deception to a minimum. Do not keep any disguised thing, do not keep unless it is extremely wanted or important otherwise you should remove any kind of disguise because let him know what is the purpose, who is the sponsor of the study, who is doing it, why is he doing it, if he does not know, then maybe his opinions would be different.

If promised guarantee, anonymity or confidentiality. If you have promised to maintain the confidentiality, please, please do it, otherwise already the research has been generating bad name and it would still go on.

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Ethical Issues with Respondents

- Respondent cooperation has been going down
- Marketing researchers should:
 - Eliminate or keep deception to a minimum
 - If promised, guarantee anonymity or confidentiality
 - Fight invasions of privacy such as telemarketing and SPAM

Fight invasions of privacy such as telemarketing and spam. Now online marketing, in online marketing spam, sending spam means large number of bulk mails and all have become a fashion to send to large number of people to show a large database. So these things are not very good to do. You should avoid.

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Ethical conflict

It occurs when an individual perceives that his or her duties and responsibilities toward one group are inconsistent with his or her duties and responsibilities toward some other group (including one's self.)

Now ethical conflict, now what does it say? It occurs when an individual perceives that his or her duties and responsibilities towards one group are inconsistent with his or her duties and responsibilities towards some other group including one's self. Now let us understand it. So what you see, it occurs when an individual perceives that his or her duties towards one group are inconsistent with his or her duties towards some other group, so this is an ethical conflict. So you are doing something for one group and you are doing something for other group.

So if you are doing it then, the ethical output would also be biased and this is the conflict which is arising. So as a researcher one needs to avoid such kind of, one has to be as standardized as possible. You have to create a unanimity so that there is no discrimination.

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Ethical conflict (cont...)

- Serve as role models by conducting their own activities impeccably
- Encourage ethical behaviours by promptly reprimanding unethical conduct
- Draft and promote both corporate and industry codes of conduct.



Now this is, let us see. Serve as role models. So ethical conflict, what should you do? Serve as role models by conducting their own activities impeccably. So the researcher should serve as a role model, so by conducting the activities without any mistake or any feel. Encourage ethical behaviors by promptly reprimanding unethical conduct.

Suppose, this is very important, the world of research needs to get up, should develop and come to a conclusion that no animal is, or no deception, or no biased research outcomes should be encouraged. Many a times I have seen people publicizing, publishing papers in good journals with wrong methods.

I am using the word wrong methods because they do not understand, they do not know, they do not have the data, they have never visited the field but they have done it. So if you find something similar you should raise your voice because they should be reprimanded by the further unethical conduct. Draft and promote both corporate and industry codes of conduct. Now this is also becoming important.

Now code of conduct are day by day becoming or improving so that researchers do not violate such code of conducts and this does not keep others into a trouble or this does not create trouble for the other respondents. As I said many a times respondents find it very difficult to adjust to the researcher's motives and for this their participation has been declining steadily. So this should be discouraged and rather a proper means has to be created.

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Code of Ethical Conduct

There are various ethical codes of conduct that regulate researchers' behaviour. These codes discuss many issues that potentially might arise in the research, as well as other issues associated with professional practice.

There are various ethical codes of conduct that regulate the researcher's behavior. These codes discuss many issues that potentially might arise in the research, as well as other issues associated with professional practice. Now if you look at the code of conduct required by the marketing associations, there is a well documented, you know, well documented one in which they have explained what should be done and what should not be done.

What is ethical, what is unethical, because many a times, I will tell you very interesting, one of my prof, he used to say that plagiarism which is generally taken to be a very highly negative thing, obviously it is negative, that means you do not cite somebody and use his material. So you do not give value to the person who actually has conducted the research. But many a times it so happens that the researcher is unaware that he is conducting plagiarism. Now this is not to be very happy for all those researchers who claiming that they are innocent but still this is like a support for them. Many a times it happens that the researcher is unaware, he does not know that he has become part of the practice of plagiarism because he does not know what is plagiarism and what is not plagiarism.

That is why many, then it is better to go for some kind of research, workshops or somewhere where they explain you, what does actually plagiarism mean and how you can avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is a very simple thing, if you can understand while copying something, if you are writing and not naming the person is a case of plagiarism. Suppose you write the same thing in

your own words and you explain it and you use it, and you cite them then there is nothing wrong in that. That is good enough.

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Different types of codes

- American Marketing Association's (AMA, 2009) – research-related issues and specifically states that members must 'do not harm'
- European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research's (ESOMR, 2009) – researchers' broad responsibilities.
- The American Psychological Association (APA, 2009) – a diverse range of research issues, many of which also relate to business research.

So different types of codes have been developed to avoid this ethical code of conducts to people should not be doing it, and you know, to have a strict adherence. The American Marketing Association in 2009, it has research-related issues and specifically states that the members must 'do not harm'. So the AMA, the American Marketing Association, has come up with some research-related documents.

Similarly, the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMR) also has termed some researchers broad responsibilities. If you can just go to the search the site in the Google net and all, you can find good amount of information on these things. The American Psychological Association (APA) in 2009, a diverse range of research issues, it talks about a diverse range of research issues, many of which also relate to business research. So here are some of the, what is wrong, what is right.

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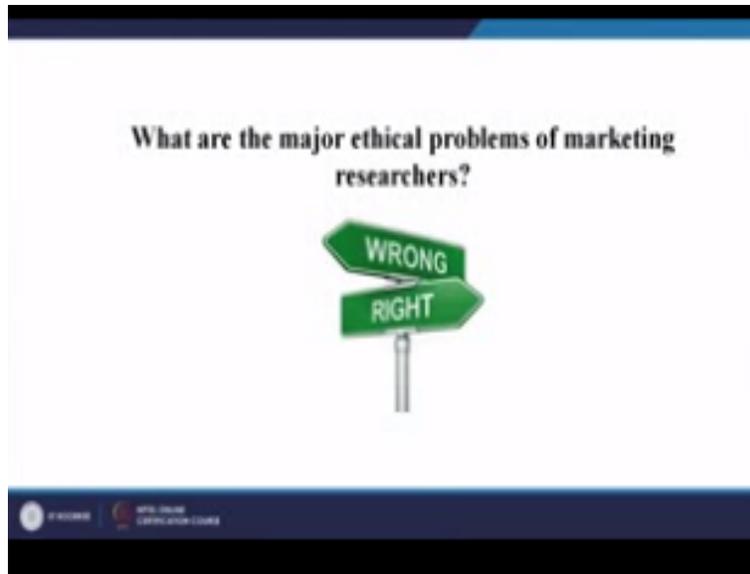


So we have said from the very beginning that research, the ethical part is to understand what is right and what is wrong. So if you are breaking the confidentiality, if you are hurting the emotions, psychologically, socially, it could be anything then it is unethical. And even using some kind of a, for example, now it as I am finding an interesting process that whenever you track something.

When you track a product or something, automatically you find that next day you are giving suggestions on the may be on the Facebook or some other or something. Now the question is, somebody is tracking you and finding out what are your interests and all, the question is how ethical is that? Is it a part of the ethical management practice?

Well I would still say no because if you are adopting a practice without the knowledge of the person, the participant, then how can it be judged ethical? But if you look at it, most of the management companies, most of the, you know corporates, they are following this practice that on the social media you are being rightly, you are being followed inch by inch and they track you to what are your interest areas, what are you doing and how, what motivates you so that they can tomorrow maybe place a product before you and maybe you can purchase it, who knows?

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So what are the major ethical problems of marketing researchers? Some ethical problems.

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Ethical problems

- **Research integrity** – deliberate production of dishonest or less-than-completely-honest research
- **Treating outside clients fairly** – conflict between company interests and outside client interests
- **Confidentiality** – researcher must balance what is fair to a competitor with what is best for one's own company.

Right and wrong, first, research integrity. Deliberate production of dishonest or less-than-completely-honest research. Now this is the problem which I have been always dictating, always discussing in many of my workshops. Research integrity is undoubtedly the most important thing because nobody can question a researcher.

It is very difficult to question because a researcher is assumed to be honest. But suppose the researcher does not, which many of people who are listening to me could be so have done this somewhere in their life which is not be done. Production of dishonest, there is a particular database and you have used it, you have collected it from as a Google and you are using it for a study which is not related.

But only the numbers are there, now that is not done, this is not research integrity. Treating outside clients fairly, that means conflict between company interests and outside client interests. So when you are trying to do a research you should avoid such kind of conflicts. Suppose you are doing it for a company, and the outside clients or maybe the respondents, you should not be treating in a way that only the company's interests are kept.

So as a researcher one needs to understand that you have to be fair enough. Third, and the most important confidentiality, which I have been repeating again and again and again. Researcher must balance what is fair to a competitor with what is best for one's own company. So in the name of confidentiality you have collected the data, and tomorrow for some reason you are selling the data to somebody.

Now this database selling has become a big business and many companies they are collecting data in a disguised format and then maybe they are selling it to somebody else who is interested at a hefty amount of money. Now this is why research outcomes have become poor. Researchers, the respondents have become less interested in your researches today.

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Ethical problems (cont...)

- **Social issues and marketing mix** – balancing the interests of society with the interest of the company in the context of either product decisions or advertising decisions.
- **Personal decisions** – how to balance responsibilities
- **Treating respondents fairly** – protecting the personal informations and anonymity of the respondent. Balance the interests of the respondent against the interests of the company.

Some other problems, social issues and marketing mix, balancing the interests of society with the interest of the company in the context of either product design or advertising decisions. I have said many a times in several advertisements it has been seen that they try to, you know, belittle each other, the competitors, through some kind of a research backing or something. Now this is not proper. This is not to be, this should be avoided. So social issues and the marketing mix. So balancing the interests also, many a times also you must have seen nowadays it is a important discussion going on.

Cost related marketing. Now if you buy a particular detergent or something, some portion of the money goes to a charity. Now till it is going for a charity, that side of the part is okay, but suppose it is being done for just utilizing the sympathy on the soft side of human being and trying to use it as a self pitch then it is dangerous.

Personal decision is how to balance responsibilities. Treating respondents fairly, now that is very important. Protecting the personal information and anonymity of the respondent, balance the interests of the respondent against the interests of the company. If you can do it, then only you can justify the, you know, the ethical part of it, if there is such.

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Ethical problems (cont...)

- **Informed Consent** – ensure that potential participants fully understand what they are being asked to do and that they are informed of any potentially negative consequences of such participation.



Informed consent, ensure that potential participants fully understand what they are being asked to do and that they are informed. So if somebody has taken a promise not to be honest, nothing can be done. They can only be caught and then that can be not so good, but as a researcher one needs to be honest and they should be honest enough to even tell their clients or the respondents. Why they are conducting this research. If there are any potentially negative consequences that should be also explained to them. Then it is their wish to participate or not to participate.

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Ethical problems (cont...)

Consent Forms

Audio/videotaping or conducting a focus group, use not only information sheet but also have the respondent sign a consent form as well. There is more emphasis on what respondents are agreeing to do and that they understand any potential negative consequences.

Consent forms, for example you have seen people taping, for example, you are speaking to somebody you are taping, they also use audio tapes, video tapes to record without informing the

respondent. That should be avoided. Audio/ videotaping or conducting a focus group use not only information sheet but also have the respondent sign a consent form as well.

There is more emphasis on what respondents are agreeing to do and that they understand any potential negative. Suppose somebody is not interested, he doesn't want to show his identity. So it should be avoided. So these are some of the problems that is happening.

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Ethical problems (cont...)

Technology Issues

Collecting data online from a blog or chat site that discusses aspects of a given company or brand. This can be viewed as a private communication.

Technology issues, collecting data online from a blog or chat site, which is I think being done nowadays mostly, that discusses aspects of a given company or brand. This is a private communication. You should not be using as it as a research and if you are using, you cannot cite it. So if you cannot cite it, that means there is something illegal in that.

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- Who is doing the research
- Where you are from
- Why you are doing the research
- Who the supervisor is
- How were they selected to participate
- What do participants need to do and how long it will take
- Is there any potential for them to be harmed (or will they be disadvantaged if they do not participate)
- Whether their confidentiality and anonymity will be protected
- What happens to the data and any report
- How they will be informed of the results

So these are some of the questions one needs to answer. Who is doing the research? The researcher, the respondents should always be doing. Where are you from? Why you are doing the research? Who is the supervisor? How are they selected to participate? Why they, why not somebody else? Why did you select them as a participant? What do participants need to do and how long will it take? Is there any potential for them to be harmed? Is there any potential harm for the respondents if they participate in this research? Whether their confidentiality and anonymity will be protected?

What happens to the data and any report after you do it? And how they will be informed of the results? So all these things together when you do, the researcher should clearly, clearly explain it to the research. If they do it again maybe there is a chance that respondents interest in research activities will increase otherwise research is going to take a backseat. The respondents are less and less interested nowadays but unless they are given some benefit otherwise they are not interested to be a part of the process.

So I think these are some of the important things that one needs to understand. With this I will finish this session of ethics and research. So we have understood what is ethics, why ethics and

how ethics has taken a backseat in many of the cases and what should researchers do to improve the confidence of respondents, and keep the confidentiality, high and even work for the benefit and interest of the company and all. Thank you very much for this session. We will meet in the next session. Thank you very much.

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