Plagiarism and copyright infringement: are producers responsible for technologica...

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Technology is pushing forward at an incomprehensible rate. In just the past ten years, things like Facebook and Skype were coming out for the first time! The bulky iPods were a teen's best friend, and there was no such thing as a smart phone (2004: A Look Back at the Technology from 10 Years Ago). Whether one wants to admit it or not, the world is impacted daily with these advances. Along with consumers, these advances have also impacted marketers and raised ethical issues. If a company produces a product that is used for a crime, such as plagiarism or copy right infringement, is that company also in the wrong? The iPad, Kindle, and other technology-based items are raising a lot of questions, and demanding answers.

The first idea to explore is what an iPad, or product of the sort, really is. There are three types of products in marketing: tangible products, intangible products, and services. Although, when examined closer, there seems to be a blurred line for these products. In fact, it can be argued that this product represents all three. With changing products, ideals, technology, and demands, it is not a far stretch to say products now can be a part of multiple " types" of products.

Naturally any product like the Kindle or iPad is a tangible product. It is a physical product that can be perceived by the sense of touch (Armstrong, G., & Kotler, P. (2013)). Consumers can go out, and buy this product in a store. They can hold it in their hand, show it to a friend, drop it, and break it, etcetera. These products are on shelves, therefore they are tangible.

An intangible product can only be perceived indirectly, for example, and insurance policy. These are the hardest products to market because the

consumer cannot visually see or touch the purchased item. A marketer has to create a word picture for the customers in order to be successful (How to Market Tangible and Intangible Products and Services). This is what the iPad and Kindle do. There are many intangible assets engulfed into a single iPad. For one, design. This does not necessarily refer to the products style, but rather the ease of use and customer experience. In a way, the consumer is purchasing a software that to make browsing the internet or playing games easy and exciting (Untangling intangible assets – OECD Observer). Yet the customer cannot touch the software, just the iPad itself, which is useless without the proper programming. Towards that same effect, the last example, are the games, apps, and other tools downloaded to the item. There is not a way to hold the actual game or application from the machine. The consumer presses a button and it is there, but that really does not make it tangible. So the tangible product is full of intangible downloads. Interesting.

Lastly, each of the two devices I have mentioned thus far have a service implanted into them. For the iPad it is the Apple Store; for the Kindle, it is Amazon. Each of these two companies are the main hub to download anything the consumer may need: music, applications, books, movies, and tools. Therefore each of these products provide a service to the device user. Using the straight forward definition of products, it is easy to argue that these computer-like devices are a combination of the three types of products: tangible, intangible, and service. Each of these categories is too broad to place a label on these products.

The second question often raised by these products is: Is the manufacturer responsible for these devices use? That boils down to trying to figure out who is responsible if the item is used for poor-intended purposes. For example copyright. Since both products offer a service to connect to the internet, it is feasible to assume some may try to abuse this option and download copyrighted or pirated material. That mistake is 100% and fully on that on the consumer. Once again it is an ethical battle. Manufactures create their products, or at least they should, intending them to be used for enjoyment and entertainment while always being used in accordance to the law. It would be impossible for a company to monitor its products use by every consumer all the time. They do their part by creating a great product. The consumer does his or her part by making sure it is used for its intended purpose – which is never to infringe on copyright laws.

Technology is growing. Ethical and marketing questions will continue to grow as more of these products are produced. The key will be to use one's best judgement is utilizing the product. Consumers will need to trust the manufactures and vice versa in order to keep these operations moving smoothly.