

Marketing related



Internet marketing practices: The ethic of using “ cookies” The employment of “ cookies” as a data collection technique had triggered much debate.

Cookies are embedded software programs that records individual user data, in order to customize settings for that particular user. Nevertheless, some marketers have employed cookies for much more than catering to individual preferences. For example, marketers are known to utilize user preferences data so as to draw consumer preference patterns, which in turn are integrated in advertising and marketing strategies to gain maximum commercial success. The rest of this essay will analyze the ethic of such a practice.

Be it professionals or lay people, all are subject to unwanted intrusions as a result of this phenomena. Even if the user follows stringent security measures and installs software to set parental controls, perform regular disk clean-up and remove temporary internet files on a regular basis, cookies can still record and disclose confidential personal/business information to marketers. For some business enterprises, such “ leakage” of strategic information could deprive them of competitive edge. If professionally managed business corporations are at risk, then the individual user (who in most cases is not a computer expert) is even more vulnerable. Sadly though, the cookie aided internet marketing practice has now become a multi-million dollar industry. Needless to say, exploiting gullible internet users in order to increase profits does not meet even the basic ethical standards.

In spite of all the justifications that the marketers provide in favor of this practice, spying on unsuspecting customers of a competitor in order to target advertisements at them is not at all ethical. These unethical marketers are not the only ones spying on internet users. A few online

companies discreetly distribute viruses such as Trojan horses into the computer hardware, which then sends back the gathered personal information data to the home source. Also, the majority of the cookies that internet users download into their personal computers are innocuous if not actually helpful in making browsing easier. The ease of use can be discerned when the user reopens an already exited website. But this fact is taken advantage of by unethical marketers to maximize their profits at the cost of individual privacy.

When it comes to sly marketing practices such as the employment of cookies, the whole enterprise is ethically wrong. To defraud, deceive, abuse, exploit, damage or take from innocent consumers is what this practice amounts to. Corporations must realize that they have an ethical responsibility to value the basic rights of consumers, including their liberty and security, to help those in urgent need of support, to look for the greater common good and not simply its own bottom-lines, and to strive to make the world more just and humane.

In the final analysis, individual internet users are susceptible and vulnerable to marketing malpractices. They are also powerless to question the unethical behavior of these business corporations. A widespread change in the approach to e-commerce is imperative at this juncture. And these changes have to come from the online business enterprises themselves. On part of the user/consumer, security procedures need to be adhered to in its entirety, in addition to creating greater awareness of the problem within the consumer pool. But none of the endeavors from the consumer will bear fruit if the business community will remain inert rather than addressing this

digital epidemic. It won't be an exaggeration to say that tackling unethical marketing practices is every corporation's social responsibility.