

Numeric Referencing In Practice: An Exercise

Some ethical issues, although they may be Internet-related, occur in both the online and offline world [1]. For example, aggressive or dishonest advertising on the Internet, fraud in e-commerce transactions and child pornography on the Internet. Van den Hoeven, cited by Langford in [2 p133], proposes that the Internet does not add to the ethical problems as such, as these same moral issues are typically involved in traditional media as well, their moral core being 'deception' and 'child abuse'. As he says:

“When Con.com does not deliver the goods, the moral issue is ‘wrongful appropriation’, ‘deception’ or ‘negligence’ not ‘Internet fraud’ in any special sense...The Internet is not necessary for this moral problem to arise.”

The deontological principle of 'fair exchange' should underpin the ethics of business transactions, whether online or offline. One of the principal differences between online communications in comparison with other channels is the increased opportunity for interaction with the customer [3-5]. In the UK, Durlacher's [6] survey of 1093 small- to medium-size enterprises (SME's) showed that 76% had Internet access enabling e-mail communication with their customers and 70.8% of these had a website. For larger companies, the survey targeted 500 companies with turnover exceeding £75 million, and showed that the level of Internet connectivity was 99%. The Internet is potentially a bi-directional, one-to-one communication (between company and customer), rather than the traditional uni-directional, one-to-many communication (from company to customers) of mass marketing. Such communication is the basis for relationship or loyalty marketing as it allows personalisation of promotional messages, with an 80% response rate compared to 2% via traditional media [4].

Consumers though, are concerned about the security of transactions on the Internet - they worry that hackers will intercept their credit card numbers for unauthorised use. Yet Jones [7] reports that 'less than 3% of website fraud is to do with credit cards being hacked into. It's a very minimal risk.' Many websites offer the possibility for regular customers to create their own accounts. In order to protect these details, he suggests that a password should be created to authorise access and the website should inform customers of the security measures in place.

References

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