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Indicators of ethical commitment in marketing through the elements of the marketing mix

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Abstract: This study, titled indicators of ethical commitment in marketing through the elements of the marketing mix, aims to bring out the most important indicators and ethical standards relied upon as criteria and foundations for determining the extent of the commitment of firms to marketing ethics, especially in what concerns the elements of the marketing mix, which is the basic pillar of any marketing activity and the effective mechanism for stimulating the movement of sales and raising profitability rates in firms. The various findings reached confirmed that the commitment of firms to ethical principles in the elements of the marketing mix will be reflected positively in the image of the firm and in its results in the future.

Keywords: marketing; marketing ethics; marketing mix

Introduction:

Marketing is one of the basic elements that drive activities of every kind, whether commercial, industrial, or service activities, and that assist in the achievement of success. This appears clearly through close acquaintance with customers and their social, psychological, and economic characteristics..., together with an understanding of their needs and desires and of the best possible ways of reaching them so that their satisfaction and loyalty are secured.

Discussion of ethics in the world of marketing in its modern sense came as a result of the ethical problems suffered by organizations, governments, and societies of differing cultures, religions, and languages, which followed from the neglect by some marketers of their ethical role toward customers and drove them to exploit those customers for their own interests at the expense of the interests of clients, something that was in turn reflected negatively in the reputation and the image of the firm and in its relationship with its customers. The concept of marketing ethics has also become one of the concepts to which firms give considerable care and attention, because of the benefit it brings to the firm and its contribution to the achievement of its objectives. The importance of this study lies in casting light on the indicators of commitment to marketing ethics in firms and on the effective impact obtained as a result of that commitment, and also in examining the most important foundations, standards, and frameworks that organize marketing work and place it within the ethical framework accepted by the various parties to the exchange process. From here the main problem of the study can be posed as follows: in what do the most important indicators and determinants that govern marketing work within the framework of commitment to marketing ethics appear?

Study objectives:

- To present a theoretical and practical background on the various marketing activities that can be practiced within an ethical framework and that would contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the firm, especially as these belong to the managerial concepts that still require deeper research and study;

- To point out and draw attention to an important approach of recent orientation that contributes to building the competitive brand image that various firms seek to reach, namely the approach of marketing ethics;

- To cast light on the most important indicators and principles that organize marketing work within the framework of marketing ethics and that relate principally to the elements of the marketing mix.

On the basis of the foregoing, the study is divided into:

Chapter one: the conceptual framework of ethical commitment in marketing

Chapter two: indicators of ethical commitment in marketing

Chapter three: motives and benefits of ethical commitment in marketing

Chapter one: the conceptual framework of ethical commitment in marketing

With the aim of casting light on the concept of the ethical orientation of marketing, this part of the research presents a set of basic concepts related to it, so that a comprehensive picture of the subject can be built.

Section one: marketing ethics, its origins and its concept

This element determines the most important circumstances that accompanied the appearance of marketing ethics, and it also attempts to define and delimit the concept, as follows:

Subsection one: the origins of marketing ethics

Kotler holds that discussion of marketing ethics came as a result of the criticism directed at marketing as a system that produces cultural pollution (Kotler and Armstrong, 2007). The term marketing ethics appeared in the 1960s, its appearance coinciding with the rise of the consumer protection movement, which for its part passed through a set of stages that played an important part in the adoption of the concept. The first stage began in 1900 under the influence of rising prices, especially in the pharmaceutical and meat industries, which pushed consumers to adopt other formulas for dealing with firms in a way that secured their access to the goods and services they were accustomed to. The second stage came after 1930, when the movement took on clearer features, particularly after the world crisis that exposed the weakness of consumers with regard to satisfying their needs and the limits of their purchasing power. The third stage came after 1960, with the appearance of the various social forces that aim to restrict the negative effects arising from the performance of firms toward consumers, to protect those consumers, and to limit the damage that may result (Talib, 2010). As a result, the first articles addressing marketing ethical questions appeared in 1960, and with the beginning of the 1980s a group of specialists began to construct and formulate different models that define and govern ethical marketing decisions. In the 1990s of the same century the writings of (Reidenbach) and (Robin) appeared, which put forward the theory of marketing ethics and its development and proposed measures and standards for ethics, and in the same period the writings of (Laczniak) and (Murphy) appeared, which were also devoted to the subject of marketing ethics (Abd al-Razzaq, 2014). The recurrent health crises that appeared during the 1990s and were reported forcefully by the media, such as the mad cow phenomenon in the period 1996/1997, as well as the environmental problems that resulted from the wreck of the ship (Erika) in 1999, also had a large part in the appearance of the term marketing ethics (Titush, 2016).

Subsection two: the concept of marketing ethics

Marketing ethics is defined as "the set of principles and rules that determine correct behavior and wrong behavior in marketing activity" (Serikeine, 2007).

It is also defined as "the basic principles and values that govern the business and the activities involved in marketing products and services directed to clients" (Rajane, 2016).

(Vitell) defined it by stating that "marketing ethics is the investigation of the nature and the causes of moral judgments, criteria, and rules of conduct connected with marketing decisions and situations" (Dincer, 2014).

(Pride) and (Ferrell) defined it by stating that "marketing ethics is the principles and criteria that determine acceptable marketing behavior in a form that satisfies stakeholders" (Pride, 2012).

Kotler, for his part, holds that "marketing ethics is the broad guidelines that every individual in the organization must follow, and they must cover distributor relations, advertising standards, client service, product development, and general ethical principles" (Kotler and Armstrong, 2007).

From the foregoing it can be stated that marketing ethics is a set of rules, principles, and standards that guide and direct the behavior of those in charge of marketing activity, in the direction of behavior that is correct and acceptable to individuals and to society in general.

Section two: sources of ethical commitment

The most important sources and springs of the ethical behavior possessed by individuals or groups, and reflected in their conduct and their actions, are the following:

First: the religious source: religion is one of the most important sources of ethics for the human being, through what the texts of the revealed laws brought, which seek to correct the behavior and the conduct of individuals in life and to lay down frameworks and virtues for achieving uprightness in dealings among the members of society (Aghadir, 2015);

Second: the family: the family performs its ethical function by guiding its members and teaching them correct behavior and wrong behavior, urging them to practice good acts and to avoid everything that would harm others. The family also has its own instruments for fixing those principles in its members, through the various methods of reward and punishment (Mursi, 2008);

Third: conscience: the ethical conscience is a psychological readiness to perceive good and evil, or the fine and the ugly, in actions. It is the property of the mind by which normative, spontaneous, and direct judgments are issued on the ethical value of certain individual acts, and it is composed of the emotional experiences present in the understanding a person has of ethical responsibility for behavior within society (Ubayd, 2017);

Fourth: the social environment and values: this includes the set of values, customs, traditions, and conventions that have acquired the force of law in imposing standards on the behavior of individuals toward various questions, and that play an important part in commitment to ethical rules in society (al-Hush, 2016);

Fifth: laws and legislation: these consist of documented legal criteria, since they determine the behavior of individuals and firms and the ethical values that must be implemented (al-Wishi, 2013). Legislation, laws, and the regulations in force are among the ethical sources, as they specify for employees the basic duties that must be observed and applied (al-Buhi, 2018)

Sixth: codes of ethics: many firms have recently sought to issue codes of ethics (ethical charter) intended to clarify the priorities of the firm toward stakeholders and to determine rules and guidelines for directing and governing the behavior of the personnel of the firm (al-Subayhat, 2017).

Section three: principles of ethical commitment in marketing

The most important general principles of ethical commitments in marketing are the following (Attallah, 2019):

First: respect for privacy: that is, no infringement of the privacy of consumers, respect for their private lives, and protection of their information;

Second: honesty: that is, candor with customers, no misleading of them, and dealing with them with integrity;

Third: responsibility: serving the needs of customers in their multiple aspects;

Fourth: fairness (justice): that is, reconciling the needs of buyers with the concerns of the firm;

Fifth: respect: through communication with individuals, meeting their needs, and appreciating their contributions;

Sixth: transparency: through communication with the public, acceptance of criticism, and disclosure of the risks of certain products;

Seventh: corporate citizenship: that is, commitment to the legal and economic responsibilities toward stakeholders and the environment;

Eighth: not causing harm to customers: that is, avoiding the offer of products that may cause damage to consumers.

Chapter two: indicators of ethical commitment in marketing

Many of those concerned with marketing affairs hold that marketing practices and activities must take place under an ethical umbrella that would contribute to gaining greater trust on the part of customers, produce a positive brand image of the firm, and contribute to achieving the objectives the firm seeks to reach. These practices are realized through a set of indicators that point to the commitment of the firm to them.

Section one: indicators of ethical commitment linked to the elements of the marketing mix

This part of the research addresses the most important ethical commitments in marketing, with greater focus on those connected with the elements of the marketing mix, which touch the consumer directly, the consumer being the pivot of any marketing activity.

Subsection one: ethical commitments linked to product policy

The product is one of the elements of the marketing mix with the greatest influence on the purchasing decision of the consumer and on the formation of the brand image, given its connection with achieving satisfaction and contentment and with providing standards of quality for consumers. Among the ethical practices that guarantee a better perception among consumers of the products offered to the market are the following: (Qalun, 2013):

First: guaranteeing conformity: by guaranteeing that the product satisfies the need and the desire of individuals and consumers at certain levels of quality, guaranteeing the availability of safety and security standards during the manufacturing process and in the use of the raw materials and primary substances used in the composition of the product, and taking care that they are free of substances that may cause harm to the consumer;

Second: diversification and simplification in the product line: because of certain competitive conditions, some firms resort to decisions to diversify their products. From the ethical standpoint, diversification must not be merely apparent, but must guarantee the provision of real additional advantages in the new products. Decisions to simplify the product line must not take account of the interest of the firm alone, but must also take account of the interest of the consumer, in a way that does not reduce the scope of choice in the market;

Third: ethical practices in the two operations of packaging and labeling: the firm can render a great social service to its society and show through it a deep ethical commitment, by taking account of certain aspects related to the fields of packaging and labeling, among which the following are mentioned (al-Ghalibi, 2019):

a) That the packaging and labeling operation guarantee the requirements of safety and security for the composition of the product and for the health of the consumer (tight closure, use of substances that are not harmful to the health of the consumer, attention to the interaction of the content of the product with external factors..);

b) Clarification of the way of dealing with containers and wrappings after use, especially if these materials are of the type that reacts quickly with the elements and components of the environment (water, soil, air, plants..);

That the information label meet the conditions for supplying the consumer with the true information needed;

c) That the packaging and labeling operation take account, in its aesthetic aspect, of public taste and of the values and conventions prevailing in society;

d) That the product be accompanied by a guidance leaflet containing necessary information of concern to the consumer (components of the product, manner of use, operating problems and ways of treating them...);

It is also assumed, from the ethical standpoint, that the packaging and labeling operation achieve the following:

e) Care in the use of recyclable raw materials that do not cause environmental problems (pollution and fires..), reduction in the use of plastic, and reliance on paper and its derivatives..;

f) Avoidance of imitation in the use of the trademark and its presentation in a clear form that does not lead to error and misleading practice for the consumer;

g) Avoidance of manipulation of the production date and the expiry date of the product, and care in writing them in clear script and without confusion;

h) That the container or the wrapping take account of ease of use and of reducing the probability of danger to the consumer.

Subsection two: ethical commitments linked to pricing policy

The price is one of the most important factors influencing the purchasing decision of the consumer, as it is an element of choice and of comparison among the alternatives in the market. For that reason, and in view of the importance of this element for the consumer, account must be taken of a set of criteria and standards of an ethical dimension that would raise the rates of repetition of the purchase operation by customers in the future, among which the following are mentioned:

First: the care of the firm to rationalize costs in order to avoid raising prices, provided that this is not at the expense of the quality of the product;

Second: commitment to the rules of fair competition in setting and governing the prices of the products offered to the market (Abu Bakr, 2010);

Third: that reductions in prices be decided on a realistic basis and not as a result of a decline in the effectiveness or the quality of the product (al-Masghuni, 2002);

Fourth: avoiding charging the consumer with the costs of manufacturing errors and of technical and administrative errors;

Fifth: the importance of taking account of certain social groups, such as persons with special needs, when pricing some products of the firm (al-Ghalibi, 2019);

Among the ethical commitments in relation to pricing that firms ought to observe, the following are mentioned:

Sixth: adopting the principle of justice in the distribution of prices among consumers, since from the ethical standpoint practices of discrimination in pricing the same products for different customers must be avoided, whether on a geographical basis or on a financial basis, especially in markets of low purchasing power;

Seventh: respect for the principles of transparency and honesty and reliance on correct methods in setting prices (real costs, the general level of prices..), and avoidance of practices of fallacy and misleading practice that influence the behavior of the consumer;

Eighth: showing a spirit of responsibility and corporate citizenship in crises and exceptional circumstances, so that these circumstances are not exploited as opportunities to raise the prices of products;

Ninth: avoiding exaggeration in raising profit margins, the result of which is reflected directly in the level of prices, especially if the firm controls a large part of the market and possesses large competitive capacities.

Subsection three: ethical commitments linked to distribution policy

Distribution is one of the marketing activities practiced by firms in order to deliver the product to the consumer at the appropriate time and place. Accordingly, the ethically committed firm must fulfill its promises by providing the product in the quantity and the quality required and agreed upon, and in the place and the time agreed upon as well, so that the benefit required by the consumer is achieved (al-Zu'bi, 2010),

So that the benefits of the distribution function are realized, the firm must observe a set of ethical standards, among which the following are mentioned (Uqasi, 2015):

First: working to shorten the length of distribution channels and relying on those that are necessary, with the aim of lowering costs;

Second: working to achieve justice in distribution and guaranteeing comprehensive coverage of most parts of the market without discrimination among regions;

Third: choosing the distribution channels that guarantee the safety of the product and avoid any damage the product may cause to the environment or to the consumer, especially if the goods are of the type that contains dangerous substances that may interact with other factors and lead to harm to the health or the life of the consumer;

Fourth: commitment to providing the product in the appropriate place and time, refraining from the withholding of stock that leads to raising prices, relying on intermediaries who possess integrity and commitment and who do not practice monopolistic hoarding, in addition to choosing suitable means of transport and providing places of storage that guarantee the safety of the product and its protection from spoilage.

Subsection four: ethical commitments linked to promotion policy

The ethical standards of promotion are connected with the ethical aspect of the marketer or the seller, and these practices also appear through elements of the promotional mix of the firm. Promotion includes all the activities that lead to facilitating good communication with the consumer and increasing the volume of sales, and to persuading the consumer of the importance of the service or the good and of the degree to which it satisfies the desires and needs of the consumer rather than other competing services or goods (al-Damur, 2008),

The most important ethical standards particular to the elements of the promotional mix are the following:

First: ethical commitments in advertising

Advertising is defined as "the impersonal means of presenting goods, services, and ideas by a known party and for a paid fee" (Attallah, A study of the influence of promotional mix elements on consumer purchasing behavior, 2018). The advertiser works at the outset to determine the objective of the advertising communication to be achieved, after carrying out a set of marketing analyses that determine the image through which the firm wishes to position itself (Bermadet, 1996).

The advertising message in general aims to attract the target market by means of the information the firm presents about its products through advertising, with a view to influencing the behavior of individuals in a particular direction that serves its objectives. Therefore, since advertising is one of the most important elements capable of influencing the purchasing decision of the consumer directly, the ethical responsibility of the advertising process grows and becomes greater, especially as that process contributes to forming a particular image among consumers of the credibility of the firm and of its integrity in what it offers to the market.

Among the most important ethical standards connected with the advertising process are the following (Khantar, 2019):

a) Reliance on honesty and transparency and distance from deception, lying, and misleading practice when advertising products, and avoidance of inflating the size of the benefits the products achieve;

b) That the advertised products satisfy in reality particular needs and desires of consumers, together with the importance of their possessing a degree of quality by which the credibility of the advertisement is achieved;

c) The necessity that the advertising material presented take account of public taste and of the social and religious conventions and traditions prevailing in society;

d) That the advertising material not contain practices that may cause risks to children and consumers;

e) That the advertisement not contain any references that may injure the reputation of competing firms;

f) When advertising products that have been proven harmful to the health of the consumer, such as alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, and others, it is necessary from the ethical standpoint to inform and guide the consumer about the risks that result from consuming such substances;

In addition to that, there are other ethical standards particular to advertising, and they are (Qalun, A study of the influence of promotional mix elements on consumer purchasing behavior, 2009):

- Supplying the members of society with the valuable models that influence the values and cultures of individuals, so that the role of advertising as a social guide is embodied;

- Embodying the educational role of advertising by informing the consumer of the way of using products and maintaining them;

- That the advertisement devoted to certain products for which demand increases in particular periods, such as energy, contain recommendations and advice concerning the ways and the mechanisms of rationalizing the consumption of such materials;

- Avoiding the presentation in advertising of practices that may harm society in ways that can be imitated (Anbar, 2011).

Second: ethical commitments in personal selling

Personal selling is marked by being a direct communication activity that requires simplicity, give and take in conversation, and the building of relations of friendship with customers, together with distance from tension, dispute, and clashes as far as possible (Dras, 2000). Therefore, and in view of the direct contact of the personal selling process with the buyer, there appears the need for commitment to a set of ethical standards related to it, which can be stated as follows (Shalabi, 2002):

a) Diligence in searching for the real needs of consumers, in order to be able to provide the products capable of satisfying them;

b) Becoming acquainted with the complaints, opinions, and criticisms directed at the products and conveying them to management, with commitment to honesty and trustworthiness;

c) Self control in critical circumstances, such as not exploiting a decline in the supply of a particular product and avoiding the spread of rumors about the possibility of a decline in its supply in the near future;

In addition to that, a set of procedures and methods can be presented that those charged with the personal selling process must observe and that place this process among the ethical practices in marketing, and they are:

d) That those carrying out the personal selling process be committed to presenting all the information about the products offered, without falsification, misleading practice, or exaggeration;

e) Avoiding the methods of pressure and coercion practiced by some salespeople on customers in order to push them into carrying out the exchange operation without a desire on their part to do so (repeated messages, calls, meetings...);

f) The commitment of those carrying out the personal selling process to ethical criteria when presenting products, which is assumed to take place without infringement of general social values and of the conventions prevailing in those regions;

g) The necessity of conformity between what is presented by salespeople as a sample of the product offered for sale and what is actually delivered after the completion of the purchase operation.

Third: ethical commitments in sales promotion

The promotion process consists in the various marketing activities used in particular during a specified period of time, with the aim of encouraging and stimulating demand among consumers and intermediaries so that an immediate response is obtained and additional benefits are realized (competitions, promotional gifts, free samples, price discounts..) (al-Hush M., 2014). Firms usually resort to the use of such mechanisms especially when the volume of sales declines or the levels of stock rise, or as a result of the desire of the firm to replace old products with other new products, which calls, from the ethical standpoint, for the sales promotion process to be marked by the following (Qalun, Ethical aspects in marketing practices, 2013):

a) That the competitions the firm announces from time to time in order to stimulate demand be honest and not deceptive;

b) That the reductions in the level of prices of some products not be fictitious or unrealistic;

c) That the costs of gifts and competitions not be charged to the prices of products by indirect means;

d) Honesty and commitment in providing the announced free quantities that accompany the volume of the original product.

Fourth: ethical commitments in public relations

The Public Relations Society of America defines public relations as "an activity, an industry, a union, a profession, a government, or any other establishment concerned with building sound and productive relations between it and a category of the public, such as clients, employees, shareholders, or the public in general" (al-Isawi, 2018). The British

Institute defined it as "those planned and designed efforts intended to establish continuous understanding between the organization and its publics" (Barkan, 2015).

The public relations department is one of the most important departments of firms at the present time, as it contributes to strengthening positive and strongly interactive communication between firms and their publics or targeted customers, through making the firm and its products and their advantages known, and through care in presenting a positive image of the firm and refuting negative rumors about it. Work in public relations is marked by the necessity of a measure of basic and ethical principles, the most important of which are (Khantar, 2019):

a) Care in presenting information and facts about the firm and its nature without falsification or misleading practice;

b) Focus on the social role of the firm and effective concern for the interest of the public;

c) Achieving positive and effective communication with the public, free of all forms of misleading practice and false propaganda;

The ethical commitment of the relations activity also appears through influencing the attitudes and the behavior of the public and pushing them in the correct direction, and through persuading the public to accept the forms of rational behavior that achieve the general interest of society, such as the call to protect the environment, rationalize consumption, encourage the consumption of green products, carry out tree planting campaigns, contribute to limiting the spread of narcotics, sponsor and encourage scientific and cultural events and useful television and radio programs, and support various charitable activities (Qalun, Ethical aspects in marketing practices, 2013). Those in charge of public relations must also pledge not to engage in tasks that lead to the corruption of the integrity of mass communication and of the laws, and the trust of the public must be protected by not exploiting that trust for other purposes (al-Adawi, 2011), together with concern for the ethics of society and attention to the social values, customs, and traditions prevailing in it. In the case of a conflict between certain duties and personal interests, the practitioner of public relations must perform the work in all circumstances with neutrality and objectivity, and must not be influenced by any considerations that may appear to conflict with this requirement (al-Isawi, 2018).

Section two: indicators of ethical commitment linked to marketing research

Marketing research works to determine marketing problems and available opportunities, to collect and analyze information in an organized manner, and to present practical suggestions and recommendations for improving the performance of the marketing activities of the firm (Barahimi, 2018).

Like other activities, marketing research has a set of standards particular to it that give the process a responsible ethical dimension contributing effectively and efficiently to serving the objectives of the firm. Among these standards the following are mentioned (Thabit, 2009):

First: the commitment of the person conducting marketing research to precision and high quality in performing all the activities and the works particular to marketing research;

Second: commitment to objectivity and clarity in presenting the results of the research to clients, and avoidance of complicated, misleading, and unrealistic methods;

Third: commitment to confidentiality with regard to the data the client provides during the marketing research;

Fourth: when study centers wish to conduct marketing research, they must not embark on the process except when the equipment and the capacities necessary for it are available, and they must inform clients of the level of their capacities without deception or misleading practice.

Chapter three: motives and benefits of ethical commitments in marketing

Many questions have been raised about the nature of the marketing orientation and the extent of its capacity to confront the environmental deterioration taking place and the problems connected with the scarcity of resources, rising rates of population growth, and the spread of poverty, and about whether firms are able to achieve their interests within the framework of what society achieves, and whether marketing can reconcile the fulfillment of the desires and interests of customers on the one hand with the achievement of social welfare in the long run on the other (Talib, 2010).

Section one: motives of ethical commitments in marketing

The questions that were among the basic drivers pushing firms to pay greater attention to their activities, to review their practices, and to consider the extent of their conformity with ethical behavior have already been addressed. There is, however, a set of other motives and causes behind the growing interest in the subject of ethical commitments in marketing, among which the following are mentioned (Hasuna, 2010):

First: the spread of certain counter marketing practices that do not agree with the objectives and orientations of the firm, such as bribery and others;

Second: many of the decisions of the managers of firms, at their various administrative levels, pay no attention to work ethics, especially when the effects of those decisions extend outside the firm to include society;

Third: certain marketing behaviors cannot be governed through legal legislation, and hence the need to set ethical criteria that determine the pattern of these behaviors;

Fourth: the growing pressures on firms as a result of the accelerating changes in their business environment, the increasing intensity of competition among them, and the spread of ethical scandals that have caused severe losses to firms;

Fifth: the spread of deception in commercial advertising programs for marketing products, which leads to the formation of bad and negative impressions of the image of the firm among the various parties;

Sixth: the trend toward globalization and the free market, which has allowed companies to move their products across borders and to pursue their interests at the expense of their social and ethical responsibilities toward the environments in which they operate;

Seventh: unethical conduct can be costly for the firm from the economic standpoint, such as losses from compensation in lawsuits;

Section two: benefits of ethical commitments in marketing

The importance of commitment to ethical practices in marketing becomes clear through the sum of the benefits the firm obtains as a result of adopting this concept, the most important of which can be stated as follows (Abd al-Razzaq, 2014):

First: the commitment of marketing specialists to ethics spares them the violation of governmental laws and legislation;

Second: commitment to ethical behavior builds a good image of the firm, protects it from distortion, and spares it any effect on the trust and the loyalty of the consumer;

Third: the study carried out by the (Walker Research) center indicated that when price and quality are equal, from 2 to 3 of consumers \[trans.: two out of every three\] will move to firms that are ethically and socially responsible;

Fourth: one study indicated that firms that follow ethical and social principles in the practice of their business achieve financial results superior to those of firms that do not possess such principles;

Fifth: when the firm acts ethically, the positive attitudes of customers toward the products of that firm develop further (Bougouila, 2013);

Sixth: a study conducted by the (Corporate Giving) organization in 2011 indicates that 76% of consumers prefer dealing with firms that apply social responsibility programs over dealing with firms that hold a well known trademark. The same study also indicated that employees in firms that apply social and ethical responsibility programs have a loyalty to their firms reaching 87% more than employees in other firms, and that 83% of new employees wish to work for those firms (al-Hamuri, 2015);

Seventh: according to a report on social responsibility carried out by the American insurance firm (Aflac) on the basis of a questionnaire conducted with a sample of consumers, it became clear that 92% of consumers agree to buy the products of firms that deal ethically, and that 82% of them believe that a trademark marked by ethics surpasses its counterparts that lack commitment to ethical principles (al-Na'as, 2019);

Eighth: the reputation of the firm is extremely sensitive, and consequently any unethical conduct would directly affect the relationship of the firm with its customers and its sales in the future (Feral, 2019).

Conclusion:

Among the objectives that firms seek to achieve within the framework of the marketing function, especially under conditions of intense competition, is the search for the manner in which the relationship with customers is established and consolidated. It has become clear that the factors assisting the firm in achieving success and guaranteeing the continuity of dealings by consumers with it are now determined to a large extent by the measure of ethical commitments the firm practices, commitments able to persuade the consumer and to restore the lost balance of the exchange equation.

From what has been presented, a set of findings related to the research can be drawn, the most important of which are:

- The most important indicators of ethical commitment related to the product consist in guaranteeing the conformity of the product with quality and with the standards of safety and security, diversification and simplification in the product line, and positive practices connected with the two operations of packaging and labeling;

- The most important indicators of ethical commitment related to pricing consist in the necessity of taking account of certain fragile groups of consumers when setting pricing policies, adopting the principle of justice in the distribution of prices among consumers, and deciding price reductions on a realistic basis and not for promotional or competitive reasons alone;

- When implementing the programs connected with the distribution process, firms must take care to reduce the length of distribution channels as far as possible, in order to avoid the rise in costs that affects the level of prices, to adopt the principle of justice in distributing products through comprehensive coverage that reaches most parts of the market without distinguishing one region from another, and to provide places of storage that guarantee the safety of the product and its protection from spoilage;

- The most important indicators of ethical commitment related to promotion consist in placing promotional programs within an acceptable ethical framework, through insistence on adopting the principle of honesty and trustworthiness, avoidance of deception, lying, and misleading practice in advertising programs, presentation of the realistic image of the product, and refraining from claiming that the product gives advantages or benefits that cannot be realized in reality.

- Commitment to the indicators of marketing ethics is of great importance, which becomes clear through the totality of benefits realized for firms as a result of adopting the concept, such as the formation of a good image of them among consumers and their protection from distortion, in addition to the further development of the positive attitudes of consumers toward the products and services of these firms and the gaining of the trust and the loyalty of consumers. Many studies have also confirmed that firms adopting ethical practices in their marketing activities are shown to achieve financial and competitive results far superior to the results achieved by other firms.

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