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“ORTHOMARKETING”
The Right Way to Do Marketing

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“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us...”

– A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a new marketing framework to avoid misleading online marketing/ mislead online consumption: “*Orthomarketing*”. To develop “*Orthomarketing*”, two main aspects will be analyzed. On the one hand, current problems on the internet that lead customers to make wrong consumption decisions will be extensively explained and accompanied by real life examples. On the other hand, in the second part of the paper, already existing marketing and consumer behavior theories will be taken into account as the basis for the development of “*Orthomarketing*”. These existing theories, Inbound Marketing and Consumer Education Theory, have some deficiencies. Hence, both strategies need to be reinforced with additional practices for the purpose of this paper. Finally, a definition for “*Orthomarketing*” will be suggested. Strengths and weaknesses of the new framework, as well as its viability and applicability will be studied. Overall, this paper aims to shed some light on how to develop new ways of how to do marketing, so to protect consumers and keep a strong and loyal customer base. “*Orthomarketing*” appears to be a viable solution counting with many future applications.

INTRODUCTION

Since the expansion of internet's massive use, the amount of information available for users has grown exponentially. This era is characterized by the digitalization of information, media and the way of doing business. Gathering information nowadays is a much easier task than before. For that reason, it is not surprising that most consumers base their purchasing decisions on information obtained from the web. Users commonly compare and choose, from all the available product and services' options on the internet, the ones that seem to better satisfy their needs and wants. They look up for information about product characteristics and carefully read product reviews. Internet has become one of the preferred shopping platforms and that is why companies have developed new marketing strategies to reach out to their public and even attract new customers. In fact, digital marketing and social media have a significant impact on the way consumers behave and companies do business (Todor, 2016).

Brands have adapted their business models to become digital. Therefore, digital marketing has turned into the most popular way to do marketing. For any kind of marketing to succeed, a close business-to-customer relationship has to be established. Internet has facilitated this process by making customer data more accessible. Nowadays business-to-customer relationship costs less effort for companies and knowing how to satisfy their customers is also easier than ever.

Unfortunately, internet has also facilitated the spread of deceptive information. Users are constantly exposed to manipulation of ill-willed, non-qualified or simply lousy actors during their purchase decision. Fake News, non-backed-up results on web search engines, false product reviews, clickbaits and biased forums have led the customer to lose control over the shopping process. Such malpractices do not only pose a danger to individual consumers and companies, but also to the whole consumption community. It might seem as if misleading consumers is something acceptable and correct, and that no one takes responsibility for this to happen. This paper assumes that there should be new marketing practices that could help to put an end to such behaviors.

Furthermore, deceptive behaviors and misinformation have debilitated the trust placed on brands. Manipulation damages the business-to-customer relationship, resulting in lack of customer loyalty. To the human eye it is very difficult to differentiate truthful information from malicious messages with the only purpose of attracting consumers. The online purchasing process has become for most web users a source of stress and frustration, and something difficult to manage correctly. Neither should be underestimated the negative effect of this issue on companies. Consumers' lack of trust on online companies could result in them gradually abandoning online purchases.

There exist a few marketing and consumer behavior theories that offer solutions to mitigate problems that misinformation poses to society in general. The two most important ones are: Consumer Education Theory, studied since the late seventies and Inbound Marketing, developed during the first decade of the 21st century. The principal objective of educating consumers is raising their awareness to demand excellence out of the offered products and services. Educated consumers will lead companies to offer accurate information on the characteristics of their products because, otherwise, they would shift to buying from other companies. Additionally, Inbound Marketing has concluded that online advertisements should be less and less intrusive. Both are good starting points. Nevertheless, Consumer Education Theory and Inbound Marketing need to be reinforced and furthered develop to a more complete framework.

“Orthomarketing” arises out of the deficiencies Inbound Marketing and Consumer Education present. It is a wide framework that parts from both theories as fundamental pillars. *“Orthomarketing”* is not only a theoretical framework, but also a practical one. It counts with the necessary tools for its correct implementation and verification. This new way to do marketing will provide companies with reliable and truthful marketing strategies. If *“Orthomarketing”* turns out to be in fact the right way to do marketing, brands that have not implemented it, will be at a disadvantage in the market.

In other terms, if *“Orthomarketing”* is successful, online businesses will rethink their digital marketing strategies. They will foster transparency, reliability, and

provide their customers with accurate and true information. Through “*Orthomarketing*” companies will change their marketing standards and will come up with a more verified and certified business, leading the way to consumer engagement and web purification.

HYPOTHESIS AND OBJECTIVES

Nowadays, everything is influenced by the opinion of crowds. Online comparatives, forums, search results, product reviews, etc. are a regular source of consumption advice. Unfortunately, they can often be biased and misrepresented. The constant exposure to manipulation not only affects consumers but also companies. Consumers tend to lose trust on companies not relying on accurate information.

Two existing theories will be studied and used as fundamental pillars for the development of this paper: Inbound Marketing and Consumer Education Theory. The deficiencies these theories have, will be identified and the need to develop a new theoretical framework will be raised. This framework will include specific tools to back up its correct implementation. This new way of marketing will be called “*Orthomarketing*” (the right way to do marketing).

The main objective of this paper is to develop a more effective way of doing marketing that allows consumers regain control over their consumption decisions. “*Orthomarketing*” will be a helpful model to achieve that. In addition, the following specific objectives will be developed:

- Objective validation of internet responses through the correct implementation of “*Orthomarketing*”.
- Solutions to the problems posed by the lack of information and the amount of false information that the internet offers.
- Turn “*Orthomarketing*” into a seal of quality and truthfulness, and as an example of how to create a network of loyal consumers.

- As a part of “*Orthomarketing*”, develop an independent entity with a similar operation to credit rating agencies. This entity would assess and rate businesses’ marketing strategies.
- Raise consumer awareness about “*Orthomarketing*” good practices so to favor those companies abiding by them.
- Achieve a more screened web and eliminate malpractices to the benefit of consumers and companies.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in the development of this paper is based on literature review from secondary information sources. The information gathered has been mainly obtained from marketing and consumer behavior academic articles, studies, thesis and books. These sources of information were collected from the academic database ABI/INFORM.

The first chapter presents a set of problems that consumers suffer while searching the web. The information in this section has been obtained from different academic articles combined with real life examples of affected users. Chapter two develops existing marketing and consumer behavior theories that are helpful to mitigate the problems but that are not enough to solve them. For this part, academic articles as well as available thesis were consulted. The final chapter covers the main purpose of this paper. Based on the existing strategies and taking into account the problems consumers encounter on the internet consumption process, a new marketing framework is proposed, “*Orthomarketing*”. “*Orthomarketing*” is a new concept designed, presented and explained in this chapter. Thus, no existing sources of information have referred to this concept previously. Finally, a wrap of conclusions is drawn.

1. INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SOURCE OF MISINFORMATION

Internet is nowadays probably the principal information source for consumers. Web platforms allow customers to investigate and think about their consumption decisions. In addition, almost anyone can share information on the internet and social media, and as a result both have become the major platforms for online social interaction and information transmission (Shu et al., 2017). The problem arises from the fact that a lot of the shared information can be not fact-checked or directly unreliable and intended to mislead the consumption patterns of the web users. Due to the increasing popularity of social media, the internet has become the epicenter for spreading misleading information, fake news, non-backed-up results, fake product reviews, biased forums, and so on. Such content has the potential of causing the loss of consumer confidence on the internet's reliability, ill-grounded purchase decisions, poor resource allocation, markets' malfunctioning and, as a consequence, serious problems in society. The need to come up with solutions to these problems is necessary.

1.1. MISLED ONLINE CONSUMPTION BY FAKE NEWS

Cambridge Dictionary (2020) defines fake news as false stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views or as a joke. However, for this paper the definition in the academic article "*An overview of online fake news: Characterization, detection, and discussion*" is considered to be more accurate: Fake news are news used by malicious entities to manipulate people's options and decision activities like stock markets, health-care options, online shopping, education, and even presidential elections (Zhang & Ghorbani, 2020). Only fake news affecting online consumption will be taken into account. Those related to political decisions are not the subject of this paper and therefore will be disregarded.

On the one hand, highlighting the fact that fake news is commonly used to manipulate people's online consumption demonstrates that a need for a solution is required. On the other hand, solving this issue and detecting fake news is challenging.

There has been extensive research on establishing an effective framework for fake news detection (Zhang & Ghorbani, 2020). But, as a consequence of the dynamic nature of online information and the quick propagation of fake news, the efforts to develop solutions and to study the viral diffusion of misinformation are almost impossible.

Three main characteristics of fake news explain the difficulty on finding a suitable solution for the problem:

1. The amount of fake news on the internet is incalculable. In fact, there are webpages with the only purpose of deliberately creating and distributing false information for a financial gain. In addition, everyone can easily write fake news on the internet without any verification procedure (Ahmed et al., 2017).
2. Fake news can influence people's interests, decisions and opinions. Because of the way social media works today, a false belief can be shared countless of times until it is unstoppable. Take, for example, the hoaxes about the *Houseparty* app. During the Covid-19 crisis, rumors about the video call app being hacked caused the closing of an amazing number of user accounts. Although *Houseparty* creators denied the breach, the shared belief about the app not being safe, resulted in many users deinstalling and stopping to use the app.
3. The lack of scientific support on internet information and data fosters the spread of fake news. Despite the fact of many customers wanting to know what experts think of products, the amount of information makes it difficult to differentiate false news from reliable ones. William Craig wrote in a 2015 *Forbes'* article, that while science could be an ally to solve the problem, the language of science is often inadequate in efforts to appear to a broad customer base.

The identification of credible information and the detection of online fake news is a necessity for web users. Nevertheless, the existing frameworks to avoid this problem are not enough. Since fake news are intentionally written to mislead readers and consumers, the task to distinguish truthful information from anomalous messages is troublesome. The vulnerabilities of society to malicious actors are yet unknown.

1.2. CLICKBAITS ON THE WEB

Consumers are affected constantly by malicious practices of third parties. Companies and their online marketing activities have declined creditworthiness. Promoting the act of over-promising or misrepresenting the reality of a product should be penalized in some way. There are many examples of “miracle products” that promise consumers certain outcomes but end up failing to deliver them. For instance, consider products to lose weight fast. If a web user is looking up for ways to lose weight, such products are most likely going to appear as web results. Reality is, that scientists seem to agree that losing weight in a short period of time is almost impossible and that any of those products is probably going to fail to deliver the promised outcome.

Articles, photographs, etc. on the internet that are intended to attract attention and encourage people to click on links to particular websites are known as clickbait (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). Furthermore, for the purpose of this paper, behind clickbait a malicious intention to attract consumers to those links must exist. BuzzFeed Editor-in-Chief Ben Smith explains that, the key distinction lies in deception. Real clickbait exists when a product unsuccessfully delivers what was initially assured.

Clickbait is one of the easiest ways to lose consumers over time (Escher & Ha, 2016). The internet is filled with over-promising headlines leading to under-delivering products or services, and that annoys users. Supporting transparency in order for customers to regain confidence in the information they receive is

proposed as a solution for eliminating clickbait and the rapid spread of rumors online.

1.3. NON-BACKED-UP RESULTS IN WEB SEARCH ENGINES

When looking for information about products and services on the internet, the possibility of that information not being reliable arises. Misinformed and non-educated customers might run into products that do not work or that even can be harmful in some way.

Around 2017, the use of charcoal face masks for blackheads' removal was widely spread on social media. As a consequence, many users started searching for them on search engines. These face masks were made with charcoal powder and glue and sold by unregulated beauty companies. Consumers who were promised with a blackhead-less and soft and smooth skin, often experienced negative effects. There were numerous reviews on *YouTube* of people using such charcoal face masks and having real trouble peeling them off, some even ripping an eyebrow. This example shows perfectly that misinforming consumers might be even dangerous for consumers. There is the need to establish a marketing framework that could validate the information on the web and protect customers.

According to Statista.com the four most used search engines from 2010 to 2020 are *Google, Bing, Yahoo! and Baidu*. They account for more than 96 per cent of all global search referrals to shopping sites. Before making the buying decision, consumers will most likely look up the products on the internet. The lack of backed-up information about the features and characteristics of products, results in web users deciding on what to purchase based on misleading information. Furthermore, algorithms used in web advertising that are based on previous searches, induce to keep on reproducing such malpractices.

For brands and companies, it is very important to be listed highly within search results. Customers click mostly on the first five results listed by a search engine

(Stewart, 2003). Rising to Google's front page is essential for promoting products and services. Explained in a simpler way, web search engines suggest a set of results based on a set of search criteria. Firstly, browsers process all web pages to detect all of their contained information. Web pages count with what is denominated as tags. These are keywords that help search engines to analyze the information. Through tags the information is extracted from the web and exposed to the user. Depending on the algorithm each browser uses, the relevance of the information is determined. The relevance criterion prioritizes one website over another. Web pages must manage tags in order for them to appear at the top of search results. This process does not assure that the information given to the user is truthful and reliable.

Besides the relevance criteria, most web search tools integrate sponsored results with results from their internal database (Nicholson et al., 2006). Companies can pay to appear on the front page of search engines. Paying to be advertised at the top of the result list can confuse consumers. Users may associate high relevance with reliability and therefore will be prompted to acquire whatever is on the first results of the list. Thus, the urgency to implement tools to verify the information is highly important.

1.4. BIASED FORUMS AND PRODUCT REVIEWS

Rumor diffusion has been always difficult to fight. Since the massive use of internet, brand anecdotes have been circulating with more profusion. Characterized for being mostly anonymous and having the appearance of community solidarity, brand anecdotes have gain popularity on web forums and product reviews. Malicious actors benefit from creating such rumors to obtain some kind of advantage and exploit the fact that there are few prestigious sources on the internet.

Growing evidence shows that consumers are influenced by internet-based opinion forums before making purchase decisions (Dellarocas, 2006). As a result, information on Community Question and Answer websites and product reviews

provide customers with a feeling of trust. Customers can post answers to questions about products and criticize and debate freely on forums. These websites have become a major source of advice for a large number of customers and have gain popularity by providing a sense of interaction between the masses. Hence, firms whose products are being discussed in internet forums are tempted to manipulate customer perceptions by posting automatic responses and recommendations praising the product. Lay users may not be able to recognize them. Therefore, consumers should be warned of any potential commercial campaigns hidden behind these answers (Chen et al., 2015).

Online reviews are easily accessible and used by brands to avoid losing credibility, reputation and to viciously acquire promotion. In fact, there is much controversy around Amazon's review opinions. Customers argue that there are countless of fake reviews on various products. To ameliorate this concern, Amazon introduced its 'Amazon Verified Purchase' banner on the opinions posted. This verification label assures that the person writing the review purchased the product on Amazon without having received any deep discount. Bad news is that, even with this verification procedure, false reviews keep appearing on the website. Truth is that there are online reviewing companies actively recruiting people to post positive reviews (Anderson, 2020). Furthermore, these same reviewing companies are often hired to discredit or write negative reviews about the competitor's products.

To sum up, consumers are constantly exposed to fake reviews and false opinion on forums which have the effect of switching their buying decision. Companies are also affected by payed negative reviews. Therefore, developing new marketing strategies which would give companies the recognition they seek could alleviate the problem of fake reviews.

2. DIGITAL MARKETING AND CONSUMER EDUCATION

Human nature tends to be guided by imitation. The problem is that shared beliefs are not always scientifically backed up. As seen in the previous chapter,

misinformation induces consumers to make wrong consumption decisions. Nevertheless, due to the wide reach internet has, this negative outcome is even more noticeable. Educating and empowering customers would diminish the dangers that false information poses for society. An educated consumer is going to be more demanding with respect of what is offered and will help to change the system as whole. The objective is to educate web users to find their inner power and challenge the status quo.

Additionally, educated consumers want quality content without interruptions. They want to have control on their purchase decision and not having the brands deciding for them. Out of that necessity, Inbound Marketing was developed. Through Inbound Marketing, companies can offer value to their customers through digital platforms, in a non-intrusive way.

2.1. CONSUMER EDUCATION

The key of consumer education lies in providing the public with the information needed so they can make well-informed purchase decisions. Overall, it helps customers to become active participants in the buying process. Firms should provide customers with the skills and abilities to utilize critical information (Simon et al., 2017). Conversely, many businesses fear educating their customers because it may result in losing them to the competition. But in fact, it has been demonstrated that educating consumers leads to increased loyalty (Simon et al., 2017).

2.1.1. Informing and Educating Customers

Informing and educating customers cannot be based on short term financial gains. Anyway, it can surely be relevant for marketing strategies. McNeal (1978) was one of the first marketing academics to address the relevance of consumer education to marketing strategy. He argued that consumer education helps to obtain and keep satisfied customers; it contributes to a favorable attitude among

consumers towards a product or company; and it helps reduce confrontations with consumers advocates. Consequently, consumer education is a win-win situation. It protects consumers against malpractices and helps brands with their marketing strategy. Overall, customer education improves the customer's experience with a product, increasing in turn the customer engagement with the brand (Andriotis, 2018).

Consumer information can be defined as presenting the consumer the information and facts, whereas consumer education focuses in providing the skills to utilize such information (Burton, 2002). Both terms are equally important. Feeding customers valuable information and knowledge will increase trustworthiness. Likewise, companies providing transparent information will gain advantage over those who does not. Consumer education forces companies to be honest about what they are offering, price their product fairly and pay close attention to the needs and wants of their customers (Brookins, 2019)

2.1.2. Consumer Knowledge and Empowerment

Information and education are not enough for customers to challenge the status quo. They need to be able to have the ability to influence companies in an advantageous way. Consumers need to be empowered through knowledge. For this study, consumer empowerment is viewed as the extent to which customers can enforce excellence out of businesses.

An empowered consumer will use the information and take advantage of the competitive market by being knowledgeable, confident, assertive and self-reliant (McGregor, 2005). Empowered consumers can advocate for themselves and make the right decisions during the purchase phase. In addition, knowledgeable customers will be able to distinguish truthful information from false one. Consumer empowerment is totally self-sustaining, once learned it cannot be unlearned (McGregor, 2005). Over time empowered consumers will have the authority to demand what was initially promised and they will be an asset to develop new marketing strategies that could fight ill-willed actors.

2.2. FROM OUTBOUND TO INBOUND MARKETING STRATEGIES

In the origins of marketing and advertisement, Inbound Marketing did not exist. Many businesses relied on the traditional marketing tool known as Outbound Marketing. Outbound Marketing involves interrupting someone to get their attention while incurring a tangible, direct cost to acquiring the client (Hawlk, 2018). Take as an example, advertisements on *YouTube*. Advertising spots that interfere the reproduction of the video the user is watching are outbound. Moreover, Outbound Marketing is also a strategy in which a business advertises its products and services by presenting information to consumers even if they are not looking for those products or services (Goodwin, 2013).

Consumers are tired of being interrupted with traditional advertisements that are not of any value nor interesting for them. Traditional or Outbound Marketing is not specifically targeted to any particular customer. It is mainly used to provoke a reaction. Even though it is not aimed at anyone in particular, it demands the consumer's full attention.

The idea of Inbound Marketing is to create customer experience where the choice relies on the customer and it is not a necessity created by the brand. This methodology is based on publishing, through digital platforms, valuable content for customers. Inbound Marketing means marketing activities that bring visitors in, earning the attention of consumers, making the business easy to be found, and also drawing customers to the website by generating stimulating content (Halligan, 2009). Inbound techniques help to attract customers through consumer education in order for them to look for the brands and not vice versa. For this methodology to work, customers need to express their interest on the products voluntarily. It is a non-invasive and non-intrusive marketing strategy. A close relationship between the brand and the consumers has to be established as for Inbound Marketing to succeed.

For the purpose of this paper, business-to-customer relationship has to be based on trust. The information given to customers has not only to be high quality, but

also reliable and non-intrusive. It is believed that by offering verified and relevant content to customers, brands can develop customer loyalty at a whole new level.

3. “ORTHOMARKETING”: THE RIGHT WAY TO DO MARKETING

In the first chapter of the paper, *Internet and Social Media as a Source of Misinformation*, the main problems posed by false information were raised. A solution to heal consumption shortcomings on the internet is necessary. Out of that necessity arises the idea of “*Orthomarketing*”. Backed-up by Inbound Marketing and Consumer Education theories, “*Orthomarketing*” is a new way to do reliable and truthful marketing. In addition, two approaches on how to foster the implementation of “*Orthomarketing*” and how to control it are proposed. On the one hand, developing an “*Orthomarketing*” Quality Seal is proposed. On the other hand, an independent rating agency has been developed. Both approaches share some similarities but, in the end, they do not function in the same way. Thus, they can be totally complimentary. Overall, “*Orthomarketing*” should be the best way to do marketing and therefore should be developed as part of both business and society’s change.

3.1. CONCEPT DEFINITION AND DEVELOPMENT

Previous to going deeper into the “*Orthomarketing*” theory development, the concept needs to be defined. There is not such a concept in the dictionary yet, neither is there evidence that it has been used in previous studies or papers.

Ortho- is a prefix that stems from the Greek word *Orthos*, which means “straight”, “upward”, “right” or “correct” (Random House Unabridged Dictionary of American English, 2020). Accordingly, “*Orthomarketing*” should mean “*the right marketing*”. This definition has been further expanded for the purpose of this paper to “*Orthomarketing*” meaning “*the correct way to do marketing*”.

“*Orthomarketing*” is a theoretical model or marketing strategy about how to do marketing in alliance with correctness. Its objective is to eliminate malpractices in digital marketing strategies.

3.1.1. Theoretical Framework

“*Orthomarketing*” is a process of expanding and reinforcing digital marketing knowledge. It is a tool to bring closer companies and public. It facilitates consumer satisfaction on the web by providing truthful, backed up and verified information. When implemented, users will be able to take decisions based on objective criteria and real facts. They will have guarantee that the advertised product or service provides the outcomes initially promised.

“*Orthomarketing*” is characterized by combining digital marketing strategies and consumer education theories. It is designed towards using educated, informed and empowered consumers to be involved in the online shopping experience and turn them into a loyal customer base. “*Orthomarketing*” may cover all kinds of communication techniques and strategies based on reliability and can be carried out in any existing medium, such as internet, social networks or mobile apps.

“*Orthomarketing*” can be applied to platforms or new technologies such as internet, social media or web applications. It includes content management, public relations, reputation monitoring, product marketing and customer service. “*Orthomarketing*” will enable companies to keep on following closely their customers necessities as it is with digital marketing. The difference lies in that in “*Orthomarketing*” the implementation of information campaigns and sales strategies is based on authenticity. Therefore, “*Orthomarketing*” goes beyond the possibilities digital marketing offers. This, without losing the analytical capacity and the ability to reach the target market that digital marketing offers.

This new way to do marketing uses consumer education to gain competitive advantage. Hence, it is important that business-to-customer relationship is based

on trust. Consumers need assurance that products successfully deliver the promised outcome and consequently are reliable. The secret lies in educating consumers. Well-informed consumers will help “*Orthomarketing*” mitigating negative effects created by online manipulation.

It should not be forgotten that for consumers, the content offered through “*Orthomarketing*” has to be attractive and valuable as well. To that end, interaction with users has to be promoted. The key element is that the content offered is not intrusive. Consumers do not like to be interrupted during the purchasing process and therefore, “*Orthomarketing*” is based on one of the Inbound Marketing’s principles. “*Orthomarketing*” helps consumers look for content they consider relevant and more appropriate, and not the other way around.

For the benefit of companies and consumers “*Orthomarketing*” may present a dramatic change in digital marketing. Through “*Orthomarketing*” customers will make decisions on their own terms, relying on properly supported information networks that form opinion. Truth be said, marketing roles will change drastically. Empowered consumers will decide voluntarily that brands using “*Orthomarketing*” are much more reliable than those that do not. Verified content will be used as fuel for the promotion, as well as purchase of products and services online.

The principles and characteristics that differentiate “*Orthomarketing*” from other digital marketing strategies are:

1. **Veracity:** Derives out of the necessity of users wanting truthful, real and trustworthy information. Product information must meet those characteristics.
2. **Value:** The product or service must fulfill the promised results. The quality and the product/ service’s attributes must do justice to what was initially promised.
3. **Transparency:** The marketing of products and services must be completely transparent and cannot hide any kind of information to customers. Adverse effects a product or service may have must be reported to clients.
4. **Reality:** Any marketing campaign on social media or the web must be explicitly notified. Consumers should know whether opinions or reviews are

paid for, whether there is product placement, whether search results are sponsored, etc.

5. **Verification:** “*Orthomarketing*” does not accept judgment calls. All information consumers receive must be objectively validated. Verification could be carried out by experts, scientists and so on. Furthermore, for the purpose of this paper, validation would be carried out by private entities with the sole purpose of evaluating and controlling “*Orthomarketing*” strategies.
6. **Loyalty:** “*Orthomarketing*” strategies will always be loyal to consumers. In no case may consumers be manipulated or misled to speed customer engagement. Putting customer’s interests first, results in an increased loyalty to those companies that follow “*Orthomarketing*” principles.
7. **Alternatives:** Advertisements consumers receive on the internet depend mostly on their previous searches. Internet’s content gradually adapts to each user’s tastes and interests. “*Orthomarketing*” proposes that instead of suggesting only results based on consumers’ previous consumption patterns, healthier or more sustainable alternatives could be suggested. The aim is to favor those services or products that have certain social value and that safeguard social interests, such as healthcare, environmentally friendly or sustainable products.
8. **Purification:** By developing “*Orthomarketing*”, companies’ marketing strategies and the web in general could be purified. Online marketing malpractices would be eliminated, consumers would be protected, and companies would gain more recognition. Purification induces a win-win situation between companies and consumers.

3.1.2. “*Orthomarketing*” as Quality Seal

A possible approach to turn “*Orthomarketing*” into a worldwide recognized strategy is introducing an “*Orthomarketing*” Quality Seal. This seal is intended to certify that companies’ products and their marketing comply with “*Orthomarketing*”. In this way, the implementation of “*Orthomarketing*” could be made more attractive to companies.

Quality labels or seals value companies from different points of view. In general, they are hallmarks that guarantee that a product or service meets a series of quality criteria. A quality seal must always be endorsed by an official authority that verifies good product or service development. The world's largest international standards' developer is the *International Standards Organization (ISO)*. Compliance with ISO International Standards provides a quality seal that ensures confidence in companies' products and services.

The use of "Orthomarketing" strategies could become a new ISO international standard and thus become a quality seal. A certification system would be developed using a verification process that would assure firms' compliance with the "Orthomarketing" principles.

To obtain the *"Orthomarketing" Quality Seal*, companies need to follow these requirements:

1. Demonstrate their ability to provide real and truthful product information and meeting the needs and requirements of clients without manipulation.
2. Improve customer satisfaction by eliminating malpractices and misleading information.
3. Check that the products or services successfully deliver the promised outcomes and results.

For the purpose of this paper, not each product or service would be studied independently. It is the company to be considered as a whole. For this reason, it would be the brand who obtains the *"Orthomarketing" Quality Seal* and not the products. Even so, it is considered that, in the case of obtaining the quality seal, all products should meet the *"Orthomarketing"* standards. In the event of non-compliance, the seal could be withdrawn by the pertinent authority. There is a slight difficulty for retailers when trying to obtain the quality seal. In essence retailers should sell only products and services that have complied with *"Orthomarketing"*. But in their case, it will also be considered the process involved in promoting and marketing their products and services. The fact that one of the retailer's manufacturers have obtained a quality seal does not imply in this retailer receiving it as well.

The following is an example of how companies could obtain an “Orthomarketing” Quality Seal:

Company X offers different moisturizers for dry skin considered to have followed “Orthomarketing” strategies for their promotion. For that reason, Company X decides to apply to an “Orthomarketing” Quality Seal.

To obtain the seal, Company X needs to verify that the necessary “Orthomarketing” characteristics are being met. The company informs clients about all its moisturizers’ characteristics. It provides real product reviews of user experiences. Furthermore, consumers are fully informed about possible adverse effects. The creams are clearly not recommended for oily skin. The company’s customer network is mostly satisfied with the product. Most agree that the information received is reliable and enough, and that the promised results are successfully delivered.

Therefore, after everything being analyzed, Company X is considered to be suitable for obtaining the “Orthomarketing” Quality Seal. The seal can appear exposed on the company’s website and on packaging of its products.

The development of the “Orthomarketing” Quality Seal would incentivize companies to create more well-founded, supported and valuable content for customers. In addition, it would help boost the consumer’s overall perception of product quality and enhance the company’s brand image.

3.1.3. “Orthomarketing” Rating Agency

“Orthomarketing” needs recognition to be implemented worldwide. For that purpose, the “Orthomarketing” Quality Seal can be furthered reinforced. This second approach is the creation of a rating agency that functions similarly to credit rating agencies. This agency will evaluate, verify and grade marketing strategies followed by companies.

Explained in a simple way, the main objective of credit rating agencies is to evaluate and quantify the credit risk associated with debt emission on capital markets. Through this valuation, such agencies release a rating in order to give an opinion on the issued instrument. Each agency has an independent rating system but each one of them operates in similar ways.

Consequently, the operation methodology of the rating agency entrusted to rate “*Orthomarketing*” strategies would be similar. It would be a private entity counting with an independent evaluation structure with the sole purpose of rating the veracity and truthfulness through which companies promote their products. The agency would carry out an in depth and detailed study on how companies market their products or services. Subsequently, the agency would publish the obtained grade. For the purpose of this paper, a rating system ranging from (A+) to (C-) is proposed. (A+) would imply product promotion carried out through total “*Orthomarketing*” strategies. And (C-) meaning the opposite.

The rating process would be led as follows:

1. The agency studies the product or service promotion based on the “*Orthomarketing*” principles. It will be necessary to check if the products’ information that the consumer receives is truthful and totally transparent.
2. Marketing of the product or service is rated. It will be verified that the advertising and information about its characteristics is truthful and non-misleading. In addition, it will be verified that the information has not been intrusively given to the consumer and that all advertising campaigns have been explicitly alerted and not intended to manipulate the consumer in any way.
3. Rating publication. Companies obtain the grade published by the rating agency.
4. Certification. The grade obtained will appear in the form of a label on product’s packaging, web pages that market and sell the products and in all advertising related to product promotion.

Something even more ambitious is that, in the long term, manufacturers and retailers involved in product production and promotion could also be rated. This

is the main difference with the “*Orthomarketing*” Quality Seal. To apply this rating system on these actors, both the number of products and services they offer, as well as their respective rating, should be taken into account. That is, if a manufacturer produces only products rated as (A+), the manufacturer itself would also get an (A+) rating. Likewise, if all manufacturers that sell their products through a retailer are rated as (A+), the retailer would get the same rating grade. For these parties, the obtained rating could appear on their websites and advertising used to market their products or services.

The following example describes how the “*Orthomarketing*” Rating Agency will perform its duties in a more practical way:

*Assume that **Company X** manufactures a type of **Shampoo A**. Consumers are promised that using Shampoo A will help to remove dandruff from the scalp. Information provided by Company X is not endorsed by the dermatology association and in fact many users have experienced the contrary effect. The amount of dandruff has increased. Nevertheless, when searching through the internet for such shampoos, Shampoo A keeps appearing listed among the first search results. The “*Orthomarketing*” Rating Agency conducts a study on the product itself as well as in its marketing. The agency decides that the product does not meet any of the requirements to be considered “*Orthomarketing*” and therefore qualifies it as **C-**.*

*On the other hand, Company X also manufactures a different type of **Shampoo B**. This shampoo is rated as **A+**, totally “*Orthomarketing*”. To rate Company X as producer and manufacturer, the two scores will be taken into account to grant an intermediate or average grade. In this example Company X receives a rating **B**.*

*In addition, Company X markets and sells its products through a **Retailer**. This Retailer also markets and sells products from another **Company Y**. Company Y follows totally “*Orthomarketing*” strategies and therefore is rated as **A+**. Taking into account the rating of both companies, the Retailer will obtain an **A-** rating.*

This type of rating would serve as an indicator for consumers to make well-informed consumption decisions. It would provide an external and independent

vision on product commercialization and would warn about the inherent risks that may arise in the event of choosing poorly valued companies. Finally, this rating system would provide “*Orthomarketing*” with the necessary prestige and recognition to become popular among more and more brands. The “*Orthomarketing*” Rating Agency would reproduce a virtuous cycle: If advertisers and businesses realize that a good rating favors them, they would seek more “*Orthomarketing*” features. “*Orthomarketing*” would be given visibility and more companies would want to implement this new way of doing marketing.

3.2. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

As “*Orthomarketing*” is one more marketing methodology, analyzing its strengths and weaknesses is interesting and necessary for its future viability. The correct strengths and weaknesses identification will help the subsequent analysis of “*Orthomarketing*” feasibility and applicability.

On one hand, four main strengths are identified. As mentioned before, “*Orthomarketing*” provides customers with truthful and supported information for their consumption decisions. Consumers will become experts and will require brands to follow “*Orthomarketing*” strategies. Furthermore, the theories on which “*Orthomarketing*” is based: Inbound Marketing and Consumer Education Theory, have been implemented for quite some time and have been proved to be successful. “*Orthomarketing*” will still be considered part of digital marketing. For this reason, companies will be able to continue enjoying all online marketing offers and in turn strengthen ties with customers. Finally, joint work carried out by consumers, the “*Orthomarketing*” Rating Agency, the “*Orthomarketing*” Quality Seal and possible future public regulations, will make companies consider this strategy as advantageous.

On the other hand, three weaknesses are considered. Becoming influential on a large scale is a slow process and “*Orthomarketing*” may not achieve the desired reputation and recognition at the end. Likewise, the process of following successful “*Orthomarketing*” strategies is slow due to the difficulties in achieving

total clearance of bad practices on the internet. This is challenging and costly. Finally, “*Orthomarketing*” can create a tendency to erroneously differentiate between what is right and what is wrong. For this reason, it is necessary to highlight that “*Orthomarketing*” cannot be based on making judgement calls but on backed-up and verified content that is offered to the consumer. This means that “*Orthomarketing*” does not stand for individual beliefs. The information given to customers has to be totally objective and cannot be biased towards individual inclinations of any kind.

3.3. VIABILITY AND APPLICABILITY

To obtain a more practical view on “*Orthomarketing*” viability and applicability, this marketing strategy should be further studied and more in depth developed. For the purposes of this paper, which is to theoretically demonstrate that “*Orthomarketing*” works, it is considered to be viable and with numerous application possibilities.

Digital marketing would be the main field for its implementation, but future application to other marketing branches could be studied. Above all, “*Orthomarketing*” is designed to be used on the internet, social media, mobile applications, etc. Nonetheless, future applications for television, radio or printed advertising are not ruled out. Therefore, it is appropriate and feasible to be used on any means of communication.

Although as already stated, the process of recognizing “*Orthomarketing*” as the true right and correct way to do marketing can be slow, it is believed that both the “*Orthomarketing*” Rating Agency and the “*Orthomarketing*” Quality Seal, could shorten the credibility and recognition time. For this reason, it is considered that the future application of the “*Orthomarketing*” framework is possible.

Once the necessary prestige is acquired and “*Orthomarketing*” becomes popular among companies, introducing public regulation is proposed. This paper focuses on the development of private entities (“*Orthomarketing*” Rating Agency and

“Orthomarketing” Quality Seal) to promote and control the implementation of *“Orthomarketing”* strategies. However, the possibility of elevating such regulations to turn them into compulsory norms set by public organisms is another possibility of future application.

At first, *“Orthomarketing”* has more opportunities of succeeding in the niche of small and medium-sized companies. Large companies normally have strong brand identities that are often related to the company’s reliability. However, small and medium-sized companies often lack such brand identities and therefore, they would greatly benefit from implementing *“Orthomarketing”*. *“Orthomarketing”* would provide small and medium-sized companies with the prestige and recognition they need. Additionally, developing brand identity is often a very expensive process. *“Orthomarketing”* would be a good and a much less expensive solution to substitute costly brand recognition. Anyhow, the growth possibilities and the *“Orthomarketing”* implementation by multinationals and large companies are not ruled out.

Furthermore, through the utilization of *“Orthomarketing”*, companies would abandon online malpractices such as automatic responses to customer opinions on products. Companies would have already gained reputation and acknowledgment through the grade given by the *“Orthomarketing”* Rating Agency or through the Quality Seal. Therefore, they would not have the need to manipulate the web to fight for credibility and reputation.

Once companies have been rated or count with the quality seal, another possible field of application raises. The idea would be to develop an online search engines’ filter, so that when collecting information and during the buying process, the results were listed from more *“Orthomarketing”* to less *“Orthomarketing”*. That is, companies that comply with the *“Orthomarketing”* principles would appear among the first search results. This future direction of application would be very useful for informed and educated consumers, and it would provide an advantageous position for those companies following *“Orthomarketing”*.

One of "*Orthomarketing*" principles is to favor and offer healthier or more sustainable alternatives to consumers. This requires that both, online search engines and the advertising offered to consumers, promote these types of product or services. Something similar is already happening in, for example, Nutella's advertisements which remind the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. The idea would be to take this further. Regardless of whether the Nutella ad proposes healthier actions, the ad obviously does not propose healthier equivalent products. An advertisement offering alternative products is impossible, but the development of the algorithm mentioned in the previous paragraph could be used to also prioritize goods of social interest over others in web search engines. In addition, just as the collection of personal data offered by the web is used to provide advertising to consumers based on their tastes, it could also be used to advertise similar but more sustainable or healthy alternatives.

Finally, for all the aforementioned, the future development and maturation process of "*Orthomarketing*" are considered to be viable. The possible real-life applications are numerous and "*Orthomarketing*" could end up being the solution to many problems and maybe even the solution that many consumers and companies crave. "*Orthomarketing*" could be beneficial to society at large. By implementing its principles, companies would gain more consumers. This results in a better functioning of the market as a whole.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays, truthful information is increasingly scarce. It could even be said that real information has turned into a luxury good in comparison to false information, which is disseminated free of charge. Numerous algorithms facilitate that information consumers receive is aimed to manipulate their consumption decisions. Consumers often do not recognize that many of their decisions are mediated through false information. Without even realizing it, society's judgements and shared beliefs become increasingly vulnerable to manipulation.

Members of society have the responsibility to put an end to anything that threatens the social coexistence. For this reason, it is imperative that correct and practical solutions are presented to end bad behaviors. Ending deceptive practices that interfere with the online consumption process is necessary. After an extensive analysis of problems arising during the internet consumption process, it can be concluded that by implementing “*Orthomarketing*” these could be gradually solved and eliminated.

Ending fake news on the internet is a complex task. Previous studies focused on eliminating fake news by identifying them on the internet. “*Orthomarketing*” proposes, as a conclusion, a new way to approach and solve the problem. The need to spread false news would be considerably reduced thanks to the prestige that “*Orthomarketing*” would grant to companies. Consumers would rather approach companies that comply with standards of “*Orthomarketing*”. Consequently, companies would prefer to put truthful information before false one.

In this paper the importance of forums and product reviews for the credibility and prestige of brands has been already mentioned. Due to this, in recent years manipulation through forums and product reviews has increased. In conclusion, “*Orthomarketing*” offers a very simple solution to this problem. Thanks to the “*Orthomarketing*” Rating Agency and the “*Orthomarketing*” Quality Seal, brands would not be in need of acquiring recognition through other channels. Both entities would provide companies with the necessary prestige to establish a loyal customer base.

Besides, the implementation of filters in online search engines in order to prioritize backed-up results should not be ruled out. The development of such an algorithm that would allow this filter to work, would have to be furthered studied. For the purposes of this paper, that solution is possible and viable. The “*Orthomarketing*” filter would purify web search engine results and would offer verified, truthful and relevant content for customers.

In addition, one of the *“Orthomarketing”* principles is that the promised results products offer are fulfilled. This principle can also be applied when marketing the product. As mentioned in the first chapter, internet is filled with over-promising headlines leading to under-delivering products or services. *“Orthomarketing”* products and services would always deliver the promised results. Therefore, if *“Orthomarketing”* was applied on a large scale, links with the sole objective of deceivingly attracting consumers would disappear from the web.

Through the implementation of *“Orthomarketing”* consumers would be considerably less exposed to bad internet practices. As they would be educated consumers that would have been provided with all the necessary information, it can be concluded that they would make the best consumption decisions. *“Orthomarketing”* would contribute to creating a loyal customer base, satisfied with the products and services offered as well as with companies providing transparent information.

Finally, and for all the aforementioned, it can be concluded that *“Orthomarketing”* may be viable and that it has numerous application possibilities. Furthermore, either through private regulation or public regulation, an exhaustive control could be carried out on the implementation of *“Orthomarketing”*.

“Orthomarketing” is proposed as the solution for all the problems mentioned along this paper. By complementing *“Orthomarketing”* framework with other studies focused on solving the same problems and by developing the theory further, *“Orthomarketing”* could turn up to be the remedy for online manipulation many academics have been looking for. *“Orthomarketing”* would improve the business-to-customer relationship, it would protect users from malicious actors, and it would maybe result in an improvement for society in general. Being exposed to information manipulation would no longer be a problem. *“Orthomarketing”* would demand the recovery of consumers’ trust in companies and their right to obtain real and truthful information.

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