

Degrading content marketing: legal and social implications on public health and the environment

Baqer Khudair Al-Hadrawi¹, Kais Khudhair Al-hadrawi^{1}, and Hanan Khaled Aldhalimi²*

¹Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University, Iraq

²Department of Biology, Faculty of Sciences, University of Kufa, Iraq

Abstract. Exploring the legal and social ramifications of 'degrading' content marketing regarding public health. 'Degrading' content marketing is defined as promotional communication that employs sensational, offensive, or unethical material designed to garner attention, often at the cost of its intended harmful effects. This paper will consider the increasingly reported practice of marketing communications, particularly concerning the digital revolution, and its influences on consumer behavior, social values, and perceptions of public health. Legally, this paces the study's call for more stringent control in bringing organizations to book over harmful content propagation and, secondly, to come out with clear guidelines to prevent its diffusion. Socially, the study points at the negative impact on health behaviors, especially among vulnerable groups, such as young people and adolescents, and that often the media perpetuate unhealthy lifestyles. It therefore calls for stakeholders to organize public awareness campaigns, responsible media practices, and agreements between government agencies with social media platforms & health organizations to reduce the adverse effects of degrading content marketing. Finally, it calls for more decency in marketing as a means to protect public health and social well-being.

1 Introduction

Degrading content marketing is the use of sensational, offensive, or degrading content to garner attention, create engagement, and drive consumer behavior through sharing. While quite powerful in capturing the public's eye, it is associated with significant ethical concerns regarding its effects on the values of society and public health perceptions. Degrading content marketing has gained ground with the onset of digital platforms because there, provocative campaigns tend to go viral, thus magnifying their reach and effects. The issue under consideration in this study emanates from the increasing worry concerning the ill effects of such marketing strategies on public health. Degrading content distorts not just consumer cognitions, but can also buoy unhealthy behavior, breed stigma as well as undermine public trust in general health campaigns. For these reasons, it is very essential to look deeper into the legal and social repercussions to protect the public interest and welfare of society. The

* Corresponding author: Kais.alhadrawi@atu.edu.iq

reason for choosing this topic is hinged on its immediacy, considering the contemporary digital era, where public opinion and conduct can be swayed by marketing tactics to unprecedented degrees.

This research tries to track the legal provisions over degrading content marketing and social impacts to come up with recommendations that can be applied to mitigate its effects. Its importance lies in the fact that, through it, the imminence of an ethically principled marketing campaign draws near; similarly, such knowledge will help in the ratification of laws that ensure the development of a healthy and socially responsible public communication space. Coming at the crossroads of law, marketing, and public health, it offers significant policy implications for policymakers, advocates, and marketers by adding new information to the scholarly debate in these areas.

2 The conceptual framework of degrading content marketing

Degrading content marketing is the application of provocative, offensive, or unethical content as a means to promote products, services, or even ideas. The strategy of marketing exploits sensational and controversial themes to attract notice in a manner that will drive engagement and elicit changes in consumer behavior. Unlike in traditional or ethical marketing, in degrading content, one usually crosses moral borders, focusing on shock value and immediacy of impact rather than long-term trust and credibility. The very nature of degrading content marketing is evident in its practices: over-manipulative messaging, very polarizing, or emotionally charged imagery, purposefully appealing to the sensational rather than substantive value. These make it the strategic move one would imply as an asset/resource in a digital age of viral trends and short spans of attention [1].

Examples of bottom-of-the-barrel content marketing can be observed in sectors that rely on using shock and outrage to pique consumer interest. Within the realm of fashion, this has, at times, compelled brands to launch campaigns with highly sexualized or controversial images to curry favor with the media [2]. Within the food industry, this forces companies to create commercials with humor that is often at the expense of particular stereotyped or marginalized groups to stand out, which has also hurt them through continued backlash. The same has happened in the health and wellness industry, wherein several campaigns use outright body shaming or unreal beauty standards to push products or services. If the practice might have resulted in some short-term wins in terms of visibility, it has had to carry a high price with it in most cases in terms of alienation of audience segments from the brand [3].

Their approaches to attaining business objectives set degrading marketing apart from ethical marketing. While ethical marketing proved honest, transparent, and respectful toward consumers and societal norms, seeking to build trust through long-term relationships based on shared values of the brand and its identified audience, degrading content marketing acquires this trust even through questionable means that often dispel ethical considerations in the pursuit of immediate impact through controversy or shock value. For instance, a fitness ethical campaign would focus on the promotion of health and self-care through uplifting messages; simultaneously, a body-shaming narrative would be a degrading campaign used to mobilize engagement. It means that competition for today's markets is given an evaluation significance, which is mainly one of ethical concerns for organizations with all apropos moral stresses [4], see Figure 1.

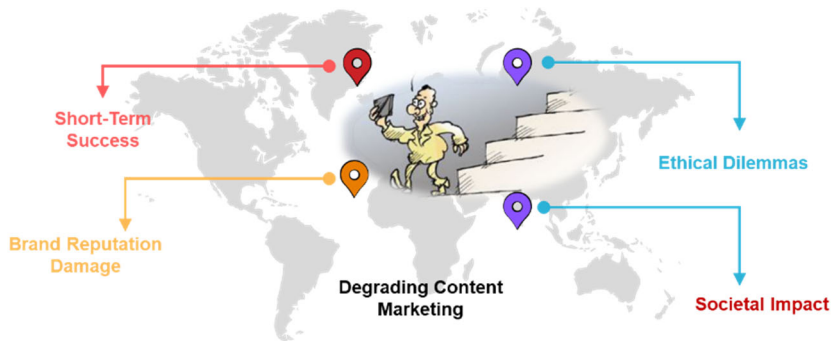


Fig. 1. Degrading Content Marketing.

The defining features of degrading content marketing are its conceptual manifestations and ethical ramifications. Stakeholders should seek to appreciate this approach by understanding its basic natures and relating it to how it affects the consumer and the greater society. Degrading content marketing may achieve immediate profit, but this type of strategy often risks the integrity of brand and social values. In contrast, Ethical Marketing will treat, consign, and sustain while saluting the customer and the general public.

3 The legal impact of degrading content marketing

Degrading content marketing involves the use of provocative, sensational, or unethical material to capture a great deal of interest and steer consumer behavior; in the process, it raises significant legal issues in many jurisdictions. The flamboyant form of marketing is taking root, especially on the digital platform, and allows harmful effects on consumers and society at large to endow new regulations while using existing laws and code reviews. Such flamboyant marketing may have legal implications in different respects such as intellectual property rights, consumer protection, defamation, and privacy laws. It is within this scope that the following would require a thorough assessment: applicable laws and code, the penalty to be imposed on culpable bodies, and the role of the regulatory authority in ensuring that flamboyant marketing is checked [5, 6].

Above all, the major preoccupation wrapping degrading content marketing is that it breaches media regulations and ethics standards. Most countries have such laws that govern what type of content can be channeled to the public, especially in advertisement [7]. These laws are designed to protect consumers from misleading, offensive, and harmful information. For example, the United States' Federal Communications Commission (FCC) strictly screens the decency of broadcast media's content in airing their advertisements. Again, the European Union's Audiovisual Media Services Directive advertises limits to companies on plenty of harmful content. This involves unhealthy behaviors and discrimination for degrading. Very often, material falling into this category usually falls into such regulatory requirements that compel to be taken off or edited in compliance with the law [8].

Legal liability awaits organizations at the endpoint of content marketing that engages in a derogatory manner, besides standard supervision. This might entail fines in monetary terms and even court cases[9]. Liability can emerge under consumer-protection legislation, for libel, or breach of advertising standards. Legal liability can arise under consumer-protection laws if an advertisement is misleading or untruthful [10].The Lanham Act is a U.S. statute that proscribes false advertisement against the goodwill of business and directly damages it. In extreme cases, this could mean issuing public apologies, taking off material that caused hurt, or compensating people for losses. These court cases are helpful in making sure brands are kept well in line and clean up their act [11].

Content advertising is viewed with serious disapproving skepticism. It is a critical, absolute responsibility of control for the protection and monitoring by legal standard settings of all distributed public interests in society against harm. For example, complaints about advertisements are upheld by the United Kingdom's Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), which may make a ruling requiring the advertisement to be removed or modified if it is found to breach the Advertising Code[12]. Sometimes, these regulatory bodies may impose fines or sanctions against companies that are found not to be in compliance with the set advertising rules. The digital space is especially important for regulatory agencies to control because spaces are limitless within the borders of a country. Organizations ensure that these practices are within online privacy and ethical standards from the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) to the Digital Advertising Alliance (DAA) concerning advertising practices, even when targeted toward children, a vulnerable population[13], see Figure 2.



Fig. 2. Legal and Regulatory Framework of Degrading Content Marketing.

The legality involved in degrading content marketing is no small matter. Almost every country has a rule book regarding its legal aspects and consequences. Securities over such issues make fights worth millions. This, from the regulators, has marked a well emphasized legalization and normalizing of work as per every law. Surely, advances in the digital world make more and more intricate legal intricacies with the focus of safeguarding consumers' rights as well as promoting honest-to-goodness action by marketers.

4 The social impact of degrading content marketing on public health

The degrading content marketing, an aspect which lies in the exploitation of sensationalism, controversial subject matter, or unethical means toward attracting an audience, has its implications on public health. Where its immediate aim lies in the capture of attention to drive consumer behavior, the social implications are far more reaching than the immediate commercial gains. One of the most prominent consequences is that people's health behavior becomes affected as a result of being exposed to unhealthy lifestyles and dangerous practices. This makes an overemphasis role of degrading content marketing in creating public views regarding health and wellness, given that effects cut across from the physical condition to the psychological and then to the social well-being [14].

The implications of Degrading Content marketing on individual health behaviors are as follows: Unhealthy behaviors are portrayed as healthy and acceptable. For instance,

advertisements that portray unhealthy behaviors and give “funny” or humorous messages could give room for their behaviors to be thought of as harmless or funny[15]. It tends to normalize such behavior, especially in the impressionable population, who are easily practiced to copy in imitating the portrayed media norm around them. Moreover, degrading content marketing contributes to enhanced rates of obesity and cardiac diseases in cases where marketing campaigns underline no dangers to unhealthy acts like the consumption of sugary treats and high-calorie snacks. Deprecating content marketing presents this act in such a way that the quitting of an unhealthy lifestyle becomes almost a mission impossible especially in relation to food, exercise, and drugs [16].

Another huge actor is the media, through degraded content marketing, in condoning unhealthy lifestyles. Advertisements and media campaigns point fingers at negative body image stereotypes, unrealistic beauty standards, and unreal physical appearance ideals. Not only do these portrayals propagate the unhealthy behaviors, but they too create the culture where self-worth should actually be based on physical appearance in most instances [17]. This is downright very damaging when propagating unhealthy weight control behaviors such as severe dieting, disordered eating, and the abuse of cosmetic products since all these have very far physic and psychological complications Having been exposed over and over again in the media as well as on advertisements, such material confirms that practice as part of lifestyles, deemed normative, thus giving up unhealthy choices [18].

The psychological and social effects resulting from the Degrading Content Marketing are more visible among the vulnerable group, especially teenagers and youth. Developmentally, it is during this period of life progress that individuals are more vulnerable to external influences, of which media is a part. Research has shown that exposure to Degrading Content Marketing channels, particularly emphasizing idealized body images, tends to cause dissatisfaction, leading to various forms of ill-health conditions, including depression and anxiety[19]. For example, a teenager continuously exposed to unrealistic images of beauty in advertisements may feel unattractive and, thus, be more inclined to resort to unhealthy practices, such as extreme dieting, smoking, or taking drugs that enhance performance. This therefore creates more pressure to live up to whatever is defined as attractive within these contexts of social media, aggravating a set of problems related to mental health and making social comparison salient [20].

The social consequences of degrading content marketing stretch further than mental health to almost every human relationship [21]. As these unhealthy standards that campaigns create become internalized by individuals, they may start to judge other people by how they look or by lifestyle choices, perpetuating social stigma and discrimination. Therefore, in this sense, those not conforming to the idealized degrading marketing beauty and success images could be ostracized, victimized, or stereotyped further undermining social cohesion [22], see Figure 3.



Fig. 3. The Social Impact of Degrading Content Marketing on Public Health.

The social impact of lowering content marketing on public health is major and many-layered — from influencing individual health behaviors and promoting unhealthy lifestyles to contributing to mental health problems and social discrimination. As the digital age continues to augment the circulation of such content, it becomes all the more pertinent to appreciate the injurious repercussions of these marketing strategies. An area that can be learned from the model is to understand that for the social impact of degrading content marketing, what is required is constant effort in making marketing healthier and more responsible while being well-intended for an individual and societal well-being.

5 Challenges in reducing degrading content marketing

Degrading content marketing is defined by the application of sensational, offensive, or illegal methods for driving consumer actions, which has today materialized as one of the most striking pitfalls of the digital era. Though several initiatives have been launched to put out the degrading content marketing, several challenges impede the decreasing rate of its presence[23]. These technical, legal, and societal needs are essentially required so that all the negative effects of degrading content marketing can be reduced. The biggest problems at this level are identified by how rapidly such information circulates over social media, the loopholes within the existing legal frameworks, and how culture influences the level of publicity and the perception within the public [24].

One of the major technical challenges of degrading content marketing is that it spreads rapidly through social media. The viral distribution of content finds a fertile breeding ground in social media networks, whose algorithm nature propagates most rich content in response to its ability to cause a howling, outraged, or funny response. This means that degrading controversial or attention-seeking content has an increased likelihood of going viral. Specifically, the platforms of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok are extremely vulnerable to this as users easily click sharing without thinking deeply into the morality of the situation [25]. The viral nature of social media may make even the harmful or degrading content circulate after it has been eliminated, making control difficult. These platforms run as global enterprises so that any uniformity in supervision and control will have to take into account differences in jurisdictions where the levels of cultural and legal standards can be quite different [26].

In addition to their dominance, legal challenges come into play when attempting to control the advertising of degrading content. Particularly, the major challenge lies in the vacuum that exists as far as legislations on marketing through digital means are concerned. Although the traditional advertising laws have persisted over the years, having been there for more than a period of a few decades, they mainly focused on advertising in print media or television or radio. English(SaudiArabia) The upshot is that it is not tailored its frequent adaptation to fast-changing digital innovation [27]. The fast uptake of internet platforms combined with the global nature of the internet has indeed resulted in lacunae since the majority of laws don't provide for the specific dimensions embedded within digital marketing. Legal systems do have problems keeping up with technological advancements that include the use of algorithms and data-driven advertising to help degrade content spread as part of a more comprehensive framework. In some countries, definitions of harmful or degrading content are not available, which makes the application of regulations a near impossible task. In addition, sanctions are more often weak and under-resourced, thus also making it difficult to hold organizations accountable for any breaches in relation to degrading content marketing [28].

Equally important as an economic challenge is a social challenge to the phenomenon of downgrading content marketing, particularly in cultural sensitivity and public education. Many countries have not well understood the likelihood of harm caused by such degrading

content—neither individual harm nor the far more extensive harm to larger social values [29]. Cultural values impact the perception and response people offer toward media content. People have different opinions on marketing content due to diverse cultural values. In some places, there is the normalization of offensive or sensational marketing tactics. This is particularly so for those communities with sparse access to education on media literacy or with an indoctrinated belief in the traditional concept of advertising and media consumption [30]. Public awareness of the psychological and social implications of degrading content marketing is at a minimum. That means there cannot be widespread public support for regulation or reform. In addition, many consumers do not see or feel the long-term effects even further perpetuate the dissemination and influence of the material shared [31], see Figure 4.

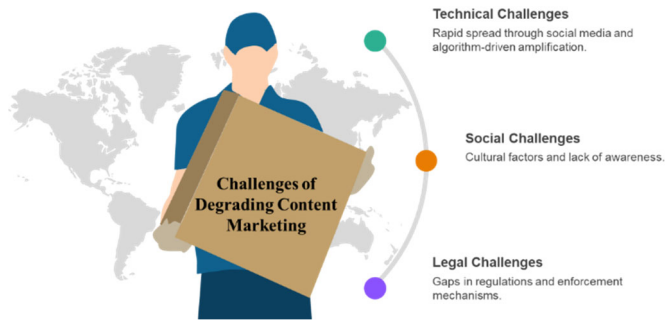


Fig. 4. Challenges of Degrading Content Marketing.

The challenges of reducing degrading content marketing are many-sided in technical, legal, and social dimensions. The quick diffusion of such content over social media gaps in the scope of legal measures, and cultural and educational deficiencies contribute to sustaining this problem. That, therefore, has to involve an increased multi-faceted approach in stronger legal frameworks better means of enforcement and public understanding and knowledge about effects on citizens of degrading content. By those means only through implementation, it is hoped that society would even lessen the prevalence of marketing as such, and come up with more responsible, ethically conscientious uses in an age gone digital.

6 The role of health and community organizations in addressing degrading content marketing

Health and community organizations are at the forefront of controlling the rot in content marketing, which poses danger to the public health and social well-being of a community. Given that digital platforms are going to be more central in the future concerning the general public's impression, attention essentially falls to such groups as regards mitigating the negative effects emanating from sensational and unethical content. Works such as campaigns and engagement with media, and public-private partnership, by these groups are needed for a healthier and more responsive digital environment [15].

The most affirmative approach to combating degrading content marketing that health organizations can take, however, is through health awareness campaigns. Degrading content may have an adverse effect on health-related behavior. Therefore, health organizations can empower persons by providing clear and accessible information about the risks related to unhealthy behaviors advertised by certain marketing strategies. It is also a way to publicize healthier alternatives, contests against hurtful stereotypes, and responsible media use. When

properly developed, such campaigns on health awareness go a long way in reducing the impact of degrading content as well as making people health-conscious.

Health media have a great deal to do with the kind of attitudes that the public will hold, as well as with reinforcing positive messages. In so doing, these outlets will have enlightened and responsible information that is corrective to the wrong influences that may have aroused degrading content marketing. Handling content that will be in line with healthy behaviors, well-being, and positive social values in stories, advertisements, and messages will help health media create a supportive environment for public health goals[32]. Health media will also be able to cover a debate on ethics regarding the use of some strategies for marketing and will enable insight into a better understanding of adverse effects on mental health and psychological trauma. Finally, working with policymakers and professionals in the field, the health media campaign has the role of monitoring by reclaiming some of the badly used tactics during marketing; it demands an enhancement of more responsible standards in advertising [33].

The degrading content marketing problems need to be addressed through effective coordination between governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). While governmental agencies come up with regulations and policies that will limit the spread of unethical content, NGOs can complement advocacy work, public education, and grassroots mobilization. Working together, the two organizations guarantee better coordination and wider reach in any public health initiative, such as those used in. It is also the nongovernmental organizations that, through community-based membership, take the bull by the horns, sensitize locals on the dangers of degrading content, and garner energies towards policy change. At the same time, governments have also offered legal backing on fighting against the violation of ethics in marketing. Holding the perpetrators legally culpable is one way of curbing the spread of harmful content [34], see Figure 5.



Fig. 5. Strategies to Combat Degrading Content Marketing.

It is the health and community organizations that are to respond to the challenges of deplorable content marketing. Public awareness campaigns and the positive health media plus the efforts of collaboration from governmental and nongovernmental sectors can surely reduce the negative impacts resulting from such practices of marketing. That can bear the development of a more responsible setting, predominantly healthy in public health with well-being-social.

7 Enhanced solutions and recommendations with supporting studies

7.1 Stricter Legal Policies

The role of a legal framework for regulating practices in digital marketing was strongly confirmed in a study by [35]. It noted that in countries with regulations specifically defined, cases of circulation of harmful content were found to be significantly low. Good policies do not only discourage bad practices but also ensure good accountability towards the same[36]. further contend that laws enacted under consumer protection against deceptive marketing could reduce negative societal and psychological impacts by reducing the exposure of the public to disrespectful content.

7.2 Strengthening Government-Social Media Partnerships

Explains that social media platforms are central in the process of content moderation though he strongly calls for partnerships between government and platforms to aid in the detection and removal of harmful content [37]. This would therefore facilitate a quicker response toward harmful content and ensure a digital ecosystem is safe. According to a report from [38], this can be further justified since the recommendation was to develop AI-based tools in collaboration with the public and private sector. These would augment moderation capacity— blocking degrading content from public view.

7.3 Enhancing Public Awareness through Education and Media

Provide compelling evidence that after media literacy programs, there are significant improvements in the ability to critically evaluate digital content [39]. These programs empower the populace to resist unscrupulous marketing strategies. Besides, [40] underscores the transformation education carries for making informed choices. Public campaigns and efforts in media literacy can help reduce the sustained effects over time of marketing practices that are abusive.

7.4 Multi-Faceted Approach

The OECD, 2020 underlines the need for a comprehensive strategy that brings together legal, technological, and educational approaches to tackle unethical marketing. A comprehensive framework such as this protects the health of the public and offers an incentive to the development of long-term societal resilience [41]. Argue and state that it is important to combine all ways of policy enforcement, technological advancement, and public education to meet the granular challenges that the Content Marketing Practice posed [42].

8 Conclusion

This study has brought out the very salient challenges of degrading content marketing, especially to the public health and societal being. It has sliced the several dimensions of such marketing in its unethical nature and its brought influence on consumer behavior and far more extended impacts on mental and physical health. The results called for more stringent legal impositions, greater social cognizance, and more sturdy governmental pressures on sharing sites to quell the expansion of the degrading content dilemma. It also underlined the quite central role that campaigns on health awareness and responsible media practice and education

initiatives can play. By increasing public awareness of the risks that come with such marketing tactics, we can give people the power to make healthier, more educated decisions. Also, the value of media literacy and ethical marketing is more than ever proven as a way to decrease the impact of sensational and damaging content.

In order to reduce the negative impacts of deteriorating content marketing on public health, the following strategies will be implemented. First, there must be comprehensive legal control over all digital marketing practices. Legislation should emphasize consumer protection and focus on avoiding the circulation of hurtful and unethical content. In the second place, that would also require greater cooperation of governmental bodies with social networks in creating mechanisms of pre-censorship of degrading content precursors to prevent them from reaching wide circulation. Finally, extensive public education and awareness campaigns regarding the risks associated with unethical marketing and the advancement of media literacy will help but promote responsibility and a healthier approach to life in general. Steps from this could prove wholesome in ensuring harm from degrading content marketing is reduced and always advisable in a balanced, healthy life.

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