



Ethics and responsibility in relationship marketing

The business school and the next generation of managers

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Abstract

Purpose – The role of ethical issues is growing in business and in society, but surprisingly, that role is sparsely examined in the relationship-marketing context. The purpose of this paper is to develop a framework describing the fundamentals of ethical relationship marketing and analyses the content of six selected textbooks on the subject.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper sheds light on ethics in a significant marketing sub-discipline, i.e. relationship marketing.

Findings – The findings confirm previous findings from analyses of teaching material in marketing, indicating that ethical issues are superficially treated. None of the books has separate sections devoted to ethical issues. Key words selected to represent ethical issues are sparsely used.

Research limitations/implications – There is considerable room for improvement if business schools are to prepare their students for the challenges in the future business world. Through the analysis of the textbook, and the recommendations, this study contributes to such improvement in one marketing discipline which is considered to represent a paradigm shift in marketing because it is fundamentally different from transaction-based marketing.

Practical implications – The paper presents suggestions for how to encourage faculty and students to develop awareness about ethical relationship marketing, and recommends courses to improve learning about the subject.

Originality/value – The framework of the fundamentals of ethical relationship marketing, a textbook analysis, and implications for business school faculty.

Keywords Marketing, Ethics, Curricula, Professional education, Relationship marketing

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Over the years, the teaching and learning of ethics in business schools have been examined from many different perspectives. The contents and developments of course curricula have been scrutinised for pedagogical issues (e.g. McDonald, 2005; Harris, 2008; Bosco *et al.*, 2010). Findings indicate that business schools do a great deal to teach students about moral considerations and ethical dilemmas that they may encounter in their future careers.

Even though business schools have introduced coverage of ethics, many course textbooks still seem to deal superficially with the topic. Baetz and Sharp (2004) reported findings from a survey of 25 business ethics textbooks and 36 case studies in business school core subjects. Of the seven reviewed books on marketing, three acknowledged the existence of ethical theories. A wide variation in conceptual approaches ranged from considering marketing ethics as principles that define acceptable conduct relating to individual and group evaluations to viewing the law as the minimum ethical standard. Of the eight teaching notes in marketing, only one referred to ethical theories, even though the marketing cases involved excellent



examples of ethical dilemmas and issues. Baetz and Sharp (2004) concluded that material in all six core subjects provided minimal reference to ethical theories. Along with many other marketing curriculum researchers (e.g. Clarke *et al.*, 2006; Stringfellow *et al.*, 2006; Harris, 2008; Spiller and Scovotti, 2008; Bosco *et al.*, 2010), they subsequently called for more studies to determine the specific coverage of ethical theories.

The lack of relationship-marketing textbooks and material dealing methodically with ethics issues may be partly the result of marginal research coverage. With the exception of a handful of studies (Gundlach and Murphy, 1993; Takala and Uusitalo, 1996; Kavali *et al.*, 1999; Murphy *et al.* 2007), few papers pay explicit attention to ethics issues in relationship marketing (Little and Marandi, 2003; Nill and Schibowsky, 2007). It is surprising that ethical issues have not been explored in the relationship-marketing context, which represents a paradigm shift in marketing (Grönroos, 1994), fundamentally different from transaction-based, functional marketing. From the many characterisations of relationship marketing (Harker, 1999), this study defines it from a company-wide perspective (e.g. Grönroos, 1994).

Ethical issues lie at the core of relationship marketing, as the building of long-term human relationships cannot be sustained without a genuine concern for ethics (Murphy *et al.*, 2007). At the same time, as many recent ethical scandals show, ethical problems in marketing practice remain, and a genuine need to consider the ethical issues involved in business and marketing explicitly appears obvious. Although relationship marketing highlights fostering long-term relationships, it does not automatically follow that ethical considerations are incorporated into relationship marketing theory and practice. Ethical considerations must be explicit and they must be discussed. Against this background, the aim of this study is to explore how relationship-marketing textbooks explicitly deal with ethical issues. First, previous studies are used to develop a set of elements that constitute the fundamentals of ethical relationship marketing. These fundamentals then constitute the basis of the study's analysis of the content of five core relationship-marketing textbooks and one managerial-oriented relationship-marketing book.

As companies attempt to create and develop long-term relationships with their counterparts and keep satisfied customers, it is good business to strive for ethical behaviour and high moral values simultaneously. Not only customers, but also societies, are becoming more demanding, knowledgeable, and alert, raising ethical dilemmas for companies. Therefore, existing and future managers studying marketing need to familiarise themselves with ethical issues to succeed in a tougher ethical climate. Textbooks are still fundamental in business schools and are typically used as the foundation for learning; thus, largely, they determine curricula topics. Although relationship marketing is a significant contemporary discipline in marketing, taught in most business schools, marketing textbooks contain only a few reviews of ethical issues, and to our knowledge, none deals specifically with relationship marketing. Baetz and Sharp (2004) discuss general marketing textbooks; our study focuses on relationship-marketing textbooks. To work in an "ethics era", future business leaders need to be more versed in handling ethical considerations (Carrigan *et al.*, 2005).

The remainder of the paper has three major divisions. The first presents the diagnostic tool used in the textbook analysis. The second describes the methodology and findings of the content analysis. Finally, the third discusses the contributions, limitations, and implications of the study, together with suggestions for further research.

Fundamentals of ethical relationship marketing

The review and synthesis of relationship marketing and ethics literature resulted in eight elements of ethical relationship marketing. These elements are complementary and represent core ethical issues developed for a relationship-marketing setting. They are of equal importance and capture the essence and distinguishing features of ethics in this context. Based on the findings of previous studies, we call these elements fundamentals of ethical relationship marketing, as summarised in Figure 1.

Previous research suggests that marketing decision making and behaviour benefit from integrating ethics into business. Abela and Murphy (2008) presented examples of the problems that compartmentalisation creates for companies. Integration seems especially beneficial in complex settings, such as customer- and relationship-oriented businesses. A second fundamental element of ethical relationship marketing is that a customer relationship setting puts more emphasis on human beings than does transaction-based marketing (Laczniak and Murphy, 2006; Little and Marandi, 2003; Takala and Uusitalo, 2006; Murphy *et al.*, 2007). Core virtues, such as trust, commitment, diligence, and loyalty (Laczniak and Murphy, 2006; Little and Marandi, 2003; Takala and Uusitalo, 2006; Murphy *et al.*, 2007) have been grouped into a third element. A characteristic of relationship marketing that contrasts with transaction- and product-based marketing is its emphasis on contacts – interactions between the company’s contact personnel and customers. A fourth element, therefore, comprises interaction-related aspects of ethical relationships, such as dialogue, transparency, and co-understanding (Takala and Uusitalo, 1996; Laczniak and Murphy, 2006; Little and Marandi, 2003; Murphy *et al.*, 2007). The fifth element relates to giving and keeping promises (Takala and Uusitalo, 1996; Grönroos, 1997; Little and Marandi, 2003). In relationship marketing, the notion of promises, creating expectations, is as essential as being truthful. The next element relates to operating in line with, or above, legal requirements (Kavali *et al.*, 1999; Laczniak and Murphy, 2006). The provision of ethical guidance to management in the context of ethical relationship marketing is distinguished as a separate element (Kavali *et al.*, 1999; Laczniak and Murphy, 2006). At best, this means that companies

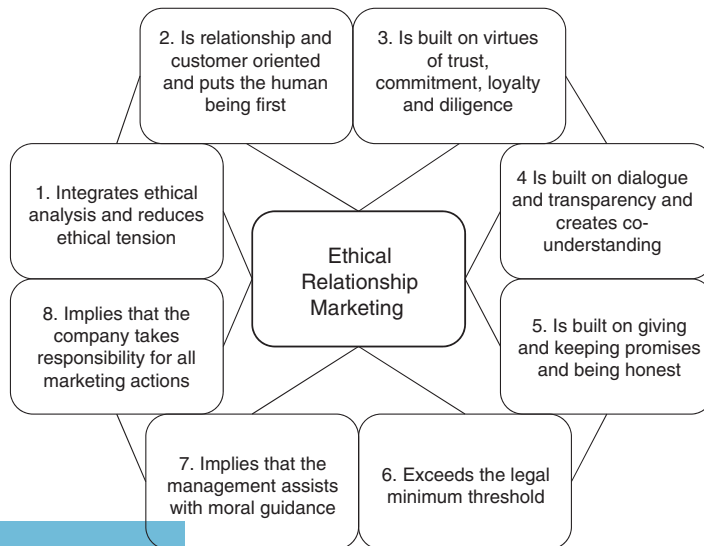


Figure 1.
Fundamentals of ethical
relationship marketing

internalise ethical codes of conduct that support relationship marketing at both policy and operational levels. The final element identified (Kavali *et al.*, 1999; Laczniak and Murphy, 2006; Takala and Uusitalo, 2006; Abela and Murphy, 2008) concerns responsibility for marketing activities. Marketing activities are broad in relationship marketing, and companies should assume responsibility for all such activities.

Method

To analyse and compare how two relationship-marketing textbooks deal with ethical issues, we performed content analysis using the fundamentals of ethical relationship marketing. Our content analysis, defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Krippendorff, 1980; Duriau *et al.*, 2007), combined qualitative and quantitative analyses. The qualitative approach consisted of interpreting how the books presented the elements in the fundamentals. In the quantitative approach, we employed a widely used analysis method of classifying words into content categories and counting the number of times a theme appears in the text (Roberts, 2000). Word frequency is an indicator of the importance of a concept, or its centrality, from a cognitive-scheme perspective (Duriau *et al.*, 2007).

We conducted an online global search for relationship marketing courses and textbooks to select the books. Appendix shows the outcome of the search, in which we used the key word relationship marketing, plus course descriptions, course syllabi, and textbooks. The selected books were Baron *et al.* (2010), Buttle (2008), Gummesson (2002, 2008), and Peppers and Rogers (2011), complemented with Roberts-Phelps (2001) as comparison material representative of many managerial-oriented books also used in courses. The five course books were the most commonly used globally, with four or more course hits. Gummesson's two books were both in use and were similar in content, but they tentatively allowed for the identification of potential development. Sales numbers were not available to verify book spread, which instead can be supported with the fact that all but one of the textbooks were second or third editions. The books were also available electronically, which facilitated the analysis. Great variety was evident in the books used, as many other books were used, but they were used considerably less frequently. However, the intent was not to analyse all relationship-marketing books, but to select and analyse the most frequently used. Content analysis does not prescribe a correct or minimum number of books to analyse. Adding books with three course hits would have resulted in five more books, but all appeared to be rather similar in content; their addition would not have produced noticeably different results concerning ethical content. Many business schools do not reveal their individual courses or textbooks online; these are listed at the end of the table to show the width of the search.

In the research process, we employed Weber's protocol, the most widely used tool for step-wise analysis (Duriau *et al.*, 2007).

Definition of the recording units (e.g. words, sentences, arguments)

The first task was to define and preset the coding units (a priori coding). This study used key words from the elements in the fundamentals of ethical relationship marketing and the paragraphs in which the words appeared (context coding).

Definition of the coding categories

Next, the coding categories were developed and operationalised. The first three columns in Table I show the results.

Table I.
Counts and relevant hits
for each of the codes
representing the ethical
elements in the books

Ethical relationship marketing element	Coding category	Operationalisation	Most frequently used RM course books						Managerial RM book					
			Baron <i>et al.</i> (2010, p. 214)	Buttle (2008, p. 523)	Gummeson (2002, p. 350)	Gummeson (2008, p. 393)	Peppers and Rogers (2011, p. 530)	Roberts-Phelps (2001, p. 230)	Counts	Relevant				
1.1 Ethics	1.1 Ethics	Ethics, ethical, unethical	8	3	10	8	19	17	32	29	10	9	1	1
	1.2 Morals	Moral(s), morality, immorality)	0	0	0	0	3	3	5	4	0	0	0	0
1 Integrates ethical analysis and reduces ethical tension	1.1 Ethics integration	Ethical integration, integration of ethics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1.2 Ethical tension	Ethical tension(s)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2 Is relationship and customer oriented and puts the human being first	2.1 Relationship orientation	Relationship orientation, relationship oriented/ orientated, relationship- based, based on relationships	1	1	0	0	2	2	1	1	9	9	2	2
	2.2 Customer orientation	Customer orientation, customer oriented/ orientated, customer-based, customer-focused, customer centricity/-centric	10	6	34	23	12	9	40	32	167	142	33	18
3 Is built on the virtues trust, commitment, loyalty, and diligence	3.1 Virtues	Virtue(s)	0	0	2	2	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	0
	3.2 Trust	Trust(ing)	44	37	67	48	46	36	59	45	389	329	7	7
	3.3 Commitment	Commitment, committed	41	32	128	89	15	8	31	24	73	52	12	12
	3.4 Loyalty	Loyalty, loyal	171	129	179	75	61	36	86	70	309	127	73	42
	3.5 Diligence	Diligence, diligent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0

(continued)

Ethical relationship marketing element	Coding category	Operationalisation	Most frequently used RM course books						Managerial RM book			
			Baron <i>et al.</i> (2010, p. 214)	Buttle (2008, p. 523)	Gummeson (2002, p. 350)	Gummeson (2008, p. 393)	Peppers and Rogers (2011, p. 530)	Roberts-Phelps (2001, p. 230)	Counts	Relevant	Counts	Relevant
4 Is built on dialogue, transparency, and creates co-understanding	4.1 Dialogue 4.2 Transparency 4.3 Co-understanding	Dialogue Transparency, transparent Common/mutual understanding, agreement, collaboration	6 0 11	3 0 7	17 5 62	14 3 44	25 9 71	17 6 59	96 36 36	73 21 19	4 0 11	2 0 7
5 Is built on giving and keeping promises and being honest	5.1 Promise-drive 5.2 Truthfulness	Promise(s) Truth, truthful, truthfulness, honest, honesty	1 3	0 1	7 2	6 2	33 18	27 2	18 50	11 17	10 16	9 3
6 Exceeds the legal minimum threshold	6.1 Exceeding the legal minimum threshold	Law, legal, compliance	4	1	77	34	99	34	52	13	2	0
7 Implies that the management assists with moral guidance	7.1 Moral guidance	Guidance, moral guidance, ethical guidance, role model(s), leadership, leader(s)	5	0	60	0	66	9	122	10	7	0
8 Implies that the company takes responsibility for all marketing actions	8.1 Responsibility	Responsibility, responsible	13	0	33	16	60	45	54	10	7	5
		Hits total	318	220	302	436	227	404	1,424	842	190	108

Table I.

Test of the coding on a sample of the text

Consistent with most content analyses, this study contained frequency counts of selected words.

Awareness of the accuracy and reliability of the sample coding, and revision of the coding rules

752 As delimitation, and to avoid interpreting and speculating, the books were analysed on how they explicitly dealt with ethical issues. During the analysis, as we gained more understanding, we extended the list of concepts/words in the operationalisation, shown in its final version in Table I. The books were re-analysed as the list extended.

Reiteration until sufficient reliability is achieved: coding of all the text

The books were carefully read several times and analysed with great sensitivity to any ethics-related concepts and content to ensure that all ethics-related issues in the books were captured. The books were available in hard copy form, and as Ebrary Database PDF documents; the latter facilitated computer-assisted analysis, which increased accuracy. The search function in Adobe was used for each word. The located words, accompanied by the paragraphs, were extracted and compiled in a separate document, which formed data chunks in the raw data material.

Assessment of the achieved reliability or accuracy

The accuracy of the coding was checked by identifying irrelevant hits.

Findings from the content analysis

The columns of Table I summarise the counts, with relevant hits for each of the codes representing the ethical elements in each of the books. Some of the hits, assessed as irrelevant, constitute the difference between the count and the relevant numbers. For example, the excerpt “When – after careful scrutiny – you find that the terrain differs from your map, *trust* the terrain and your own judgment!” (italics added) (Gummesson, 2002, p. 5) was coded under “trust” but was assessed as irrelevant from an ethics perspective.

Summary of the findings:

- (1) The book with the most hits was Peppers and Rogers (2011), followed by Gummesson (2008), Buttle (2008), Gummesson (2002), Baron *et al.* (2010), and Roberts-Phelps (2002).
- (2) Baron *et al.*'s (2010) book had the lowest total amount of hits, with no hits on nearly half of the selected concepts.
- (3) The course books were rather similar in terms of hits per ethical relationship marketing element and corresponding coding category. The hits in the managerial-oriented book followed the same pattern, having fewer hits compared to nearly all course books.
- (4) Most hits (> 100) addressed relationship-marketing core concepts, such as trust, loyalty, commitment, customer orientation, co-understanding, and dialogue. The hits in the managerial-oriented book followed the same pattern.
- (5) The hits in many coding categories involving concepts with direct references to ethical issues were close to none, or considerably fewer (<100). These sparsely hit categories included morals, ethics integration, ethical tension,

virtues, diligence, transparency, promise-driven concepts, truthfulness, exceeding the legal minimum threshold, moral guidance, and responsibility. The hits in the managerial-oriented book followed the same pattern.

- (6) Peppers and Rogers' (2011) book had the highest number of hits but did not score high on concepts directly referring to ethics, with the exception of transparency.
- (7) The later edition of Gummesson's book (2008) scored comparatively highest, and higher than his previous edition, on many concepts with direct references to ethical issues, such as ethics, morals, promise-driven concepts, exceeding the minimum legal threshold, moral guidance, and responsibility.
- (8) Nearly all elements of the fundamentals framework produced hits. This indicated that the framework was indeed useful in capturing ethical relationship-marketing concepts, especially so from a broad perspective. Even though the selected books did not illustrate the integration element, seeing ethics as integrated rather than compartmentalised was in line with the relationship marketing idea.

Findings for the ethical relationship marketing framework elements

Core concepts ethics and morals. Considering that the analysis involved entire books, none of the books used the terms "ethical", "unethical", or "ethics" to any greater extent. There were few hits on these concepts, although the word "ethics" was found in all books; most hits occurred in the later edition of Gummesson's (2008) book. The same pattern, but with considerably fewer hits, recurred for "morals".

Example quotations:

Finally, we should note that there may be some serious ethical issues associated with social networks, especially related to the potentially addictive behaviours that are resulting (Baron *et al.*, 2010, p. 176).

Organizations should stress ethical behavior in all stakeholder transactions and interactions. Highly ethical conduct should be a requirement of and should be monitored by the organization's governance body (Gummesson, 2008, p. 145).

Failing to take a properly balanced approach not only penalizes good management practices but also undermines corporate ethics by encouraging managers to 'steal' from the future to fund the present (Peppers and Rogers, 2011, p. 309).

- (1) Integrates ethical analysis and reduces ethical tension. No hits occurred on this element in any of the course books or the managerially oriented book. Thus, none of them was in line with the recommendations of Abela and Murphy (2008) to avoid tensions in marketing practice.
- (2) Is relationship and customer oriented and puts the human being first. There were many hits on customer orientation. On the other hand, another core relationship-marketing concept, relationship orientation, surprisingly, was rarely used in any of the books, including the managerial-oriented book.

Example quotations:

Strategic CRM is a core customer-centric business strategy that aims at winning and keeping profitable customers (Buttle, 2008, p. 4).

For a customer relationship strategy to work, a company must establish a focus on the customer, a commitment to genuinely understanding the customer, and a culture in which

every employee believes that the customer comes first. In short, the company needs to have a customer strategy, one focused on ensuring that everything the company does is oriented toward building solid customer relationships (Peppers and Rogers, 2011, p. 57).

- (3) Is built on the virtues of trust, commitment, loyalty, and diligence. Trust, loyalty, and commitment resulted in a great number of hits in all books. Virtues and diligence, referring more directly to ethical aspects, were not found. The pattern was similar in the managerial-oriented book.

Example quotations:

CRM cannot succeed without the ongoing commitment of people to the CRM vision, strategy and objectives, and their willingness to use the CRM toolkit (Buttle, 2008, p. 345).

Relationship marketing (RM) is usually defined as an approach to develop long-term loyal customers and thus increasing profitability (Gummeson, 2008, p. 5).

You can have ethics without trust but you can't have trust without ethics. Trust, which encompasses ethics, is the bigger idea (Peppers and Rogers, 2011, pp. 80-81).

- (4) Is built on dialogue, transparency, and creates co-understanding. The pattern in all books was the same; dialogue, transparency, and co-understanding were all found, with dialogue being the most frequent. Transparency was not found in the managerial-oriented book, but the two other concepts were.

Example quotations:

In RM, interaction and dialogue in two-way relationships are emphasized, while in mass-marketing relationships these aspects are primarily one way. Consumers have an active relationship to suppliers but the degree of co-creation varies (Gummeson, 2008, p. 99).

The first is self-regulation by companies and associations. For example, a number of companies publish their privacy policies and make a commercial virtue out of their transparency (Buttle, 2008, p. 117).

Spin is out, transparency is in, and the fact that this higher ethical standard is being applied today by more and more consumers in a wider and wider variety of marketing and selling situations owes much to the social media revolution and to the kind of word-of-mouth recommendations and experience sharing that goes on among consumers now, electronically (Peppers and Rogers, 2011, p. 236).

- (5) Is built on giving and keeping promises and being honest. Truthfulness, and more so promises, was found in all the books, including the managerially oriented book.

Example quotations:

Most promises are made without written contracts, they are moral and ethical promises to perform a service, deliver goods or collaborate in a development project (Gummeson, 2008, p. 309).

Trust is expectation that the word of another can be relied upon and implies honesty in negotiations (Baron *et al.*, 2010, p. 32).

One party may trust the other party's: -benevolence: a belief that one party acts in the interests of the other -honesty: a belief that the other party's word is reliable or credible

competence: -a belief that the other party has the necessary expertise to perform as required (Buttle 2008, p. 29).

- (6) Exceeds the legal minimum threshold. All course books, but not the managerial book, mentioned ethics vs legal issues.

Example quotations:

It is imperative to separate what is right from strictly legal considerations and technicalities, and what is right from a long term and ethical relationship perspective[...] (Gummesson, 2008, p. 109).

Moreover, as each organization moves to globalize its operations, its leaders will need to be aware of and comply with the many legal requirements of the nations in which it serves customers, and they will need to respect the individual cultures of these countries (Peppers and Rogers, 2011, p. 254).

- (7) Implies that the management assists with moral guidance. Two course books mentioned that management could assist with moral guidance.

Example quotations:

A favorite quote of mine is “We are defined by what we tolerate.” Leaders who forget this truism do so at the risk of their organization. Like the ever-observant child, the organization always knows when behavior is being allowed that is inconsistent with its purported values (Peppers and Rogers, 2011, p. 446).

An organization’s leaders should stress responsibilities to the public, ethical behavior, and the need to practice good citizenship (Gummesson, 2008, p. 144).

Managing social responsibility requires the use of appropriate measures and leadership responsibility for those measures (Gummesson, 2008, p. 145).

- (8) Implies that the company takes responsibility for all marketing actions. All books, including the managerial book, mentioned responsibility.

Example quotations:

A focal organization must take responsibility for managing its network so that it creates and delivers sustainable value to customers (Buttle, 2008, p. 298).

The responsibility for customer management may spring from the marketing department, or sales management, or product development, or even, occasionally, from the information-technology department, where the customer data are housed (Peppers and Rogers, 2011, p. 415).

Managing social responsibility requires the use of appropriate measures and leadership responsibility for those measures (Gummesson, 2008, p. 145).

Discussion of the findings

This study contributes to the understanding of how relationship-marketing textbooks deal with ethics issues. The results indicate that they address these issues to a surprisingly limited extent. Some ethical issues selected from the range of fundamentals received some coverage in the books, but those directly referring to ethics, in particular, were few. Thus, overall, the attention that ethics received in the books was scant.

The fundamentals framework, explicitly grounded in the relationship-marketing setting, captures a broad range of aspects. It contains specific features such as customer and relationship orientation, making and keeping promises, interaction and dialogue, co-understanding, loyalty and commitment, and a people focus. This content distinguishes it from other marketing ethics models and from the framework of Kavali *et al.* (1999), which is encompassing, but not specifically anchored in relationship marketing. Takala and Uusitalo's (2006) key issues are firmly related to customers but more narrow in scope, since they highlight keeping promises and truth-telling, equal treatment of customers, commitment, and communication. Murphy *et al.*'s model (2007) is not as broad as our fundamentals framework; rather, it has a clear relationship focus and uses core ethics and relationship marketing concepts to position virtues in relationship stages, adding facilitation of virtues and transparency of communication. The construction of our framework is similar to that of Laczniak and Murphy's (2006) broad model with seven essential basic perspectives for evaluating and improving marketing ethics. Their model focuses on managerial aspects, and similarly recognises, for example, prioritising people, behavioural standards in excess of the law, stakeholder orientation, and having a set of core ethical principles. Both models capture comprehensive core ethical principles identified through literature reviews and both are capable of use in empirical studies.

A conclusion of this study is that the link between ethics and relationship marketing needs to be explicit, especially if the aim is to make ethical relationship marketing successful. The lack of coverage strongly suggests that the relative inattention to ethical issues in business schools can be tied to textbook content. Both in practical company activities and behaviour, and in teaching and teaching material, far too little attention is given to ethics. To remedy this study's fundamentals of ethical relationship marketing can be useful. It is not a matter of introducing a new relationship marketing perspective, but of pointing at the roots and elements of ethical relationship marketing. Recognising ethical fundamentals should permeate the whole company; when it does, it can benefit the implementation of relationship marketing by, for example, changing views about responsibility, customers, and engaging in dialogue with others. Furthermore, recognising ethical issues in relationship marketing can improve or restore a marketing reputation damaged by ethical blunders. Customers do value companies that display high levels of ethics and responsibility.

Rather than merely adding content to current textbooks, and in order to offer an integrated view on ethics, fundamental revisions of relationship marketing books appear necessary. Other authors have made similar suggestions to incorporate sustainability issues into marketing textbooks (e.g Demoss and Nicholson, 2005; Bridges and Wilhelm, 2008).

Practical implications

Table II summarises different measures intended for marketing departments with no/limited current coverage of ethics in their current relationship marketing classes. The suggestions divide into three categories; each aims to encourage marketing teachers, students, or course designers. The suggestions draw on ideas and elements in previous similar studies. One, fundament for ethical relationship marketing teaching and learning, refers to encouraging sensitivity to ethical issues among all and stems from, for example, Harris' (2008) paper that emphasises the importance of personal reflection in ethical education. A complementary element concerns developing actual

Marketing faculty encouragement

Increase sensitivity to/awareness of ethical issues among marketing faculty, in general, and relationship marketing teachers, in particular

By, e.g., spreading information and contacts related to ethics issues and including them explicitly in discussion about future plans

Encourage marketing faculty, in general, and relationship marketing teachers, in particular, to pursue ethics as a research stream

By, e.g., creating incentives (project funding, rewards, etc.) and recognising both new research and teaching initiatives

Develop pedagogical competence of teachers

By, e.g., attending pedagogical training and reading material on new pedagogic tools and methods

Student encouragement

Sensitise students to ethical issues through student supervision/guidance

By, e.g., facilitating and encouraging them to select assignments/term; paper/thesis topics related to ethics in relationship marketing

By, e.g., encouraging critical thinking and reflection and teaching argumentation

By, e.g., supporting students' development of business and life values

Offer special support/knowledge/cases/empirical access, etc., for students who study ethics in relationship marketing

By, e.g., compiling material, web links, company names, etc., relevant to the topic and initiating awards, for example, "best annual thesis in ethics in relationship marketing"

Course development

Integrate ethical practices into current relationship marketing courses with ethical issues

By, e.g., replacing some current elements/assignments/guest speakers

Seek and employ external specialists, academic or other types, and company representatives who are knowledgeable in ethics issues, and compile a database with their data

By, e.g., attending events and using networks

Seek/develop suitable relationship marketing course material

By, e.g., adopting a critical view when choosing and using relationship marketing course textbooks and other material

By, e.g., developing/benchmarking innovative inspiring teaching material/methods in relationship marketing courses, e.g. videos, guest speakers, cases

By, e.g., reading reports/articles on developing and using ethics material and methods

By, e.g., checking teaching material and ideas also related to sustainability

Consider a cross-disciplinary setup of a course or parts thereof

By, e.g., co-designing and co-teaching it with teachers from other subjects, e.g. management, logistics, accounting, human resource management, international business, business law, and/or economics

Table II.
Implications for
strengthening teaching
in relationship marketing

course material suitable for ethical learning. A great many studies have addressed this topic, such as Baetz and Sharp (2004). The integration of ethics into courses, or the alternative of having separate ethics courses (e.g. McDonald, 2005; Bridges and Wilhelm, 2008; Spiller and Scovotti, 2008), constitutes a third fundamental element in ethics teaching, and it is, therefore, included in the implication list. A fourth and different element relates to teacher expertise and competence in ethical issues (Clarke *et al.*, 2006; Bosco *et al.*, 2010); today this competence greatly varies, and therefore, we highlight it here. Compared to earlier implication sets, our list is long and it covers a much broader array of measures than others studies have done individually.

Limitations and further research

Like most research, this study has limitations. The most obvious limitation is the small number, and the choice, of books, which means that caution must be exercised in generalising the results to all relationship-marketing textbooks. The online

information and sampling method resulted in a useable and relatively representative sample, which for this first analysis of ethics in relationship-marketing textbooks was sufficient. The textbooks selected were suitable for providing the tentative conclusions in this exploratory study. Examining other types of teaching material in relationship marketing courses would be extremely useful for furthering knowledge about the teaching of ethics at business schools, or one might take a time perspective and analyse how this aspect of teaching has evolved over time. Another topic might entail analysing different ways of teaching students in and outside the classroom. For example, one might develop and test innovative pedagogical methods borrowed from other disciplines or ways of working with real-life company cases or together with companies.

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Egan, J. (2008), <i>Relationship Marketing: Exploring Relational Strategies in Marketing</i> , 3rd ed., Pearson Education Ltd, Harlow		Monash University, AUS, Hull University Business School, UK
Foss, B. and Stone, M. (2001), <i>Successful Customer Relation Marketing: New Thinking, New Strategies, New Tools, for Getting Closer to Your Customers</i> , Bookcraft, Bath		London Metropolitan Business School, UK, University of Canterbury, NZ
Harwood T., Garry, T. and Broderick, A. (2008), <i>Relationship Marketing: Perspectives, Dimensions and Contexts</i> , McGraw Hill, London		Aarhus School of Business, FIN, University of Canterbury, NZ
Little, E. and Marandi, E. (2003), <i>Relationship Marketing Management</i> , Thomson, London		London Metropolitan Business School, UK, University of Canterbury, UK
Rust, R.T., Zeithaml, V.A. and Lemon, K.N. (2000), <i>Driving Customer Equity: How Customer Lifetime Value is Reshaping Corporate Strategy</i> , The Free Press, New York, NY		Aalto School of Economics, FIN, University of Liverpool, UK
Aaker, D. (2010), <i>Building Strong Brands</i> , Simon & Schuster, London		Mid Sweden University, SWE
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Donaldson, B. and O'Toole, T. (2002), <i>Strategic Market Relationships: From Strategy to Implementation</i> , John Wiley & Sons Ltd, Chichester		London Metropolitan Business School, UK
Egan, J. and Harker, M. (Eds) (2005), <i>Relationship Marketing, Volume 3: Paradigm or Perspective – The Future of Relationship Marketing</i> , Sage, London		Hull University Business School, UK
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Ford, D., Gaddie, L.-E., Hakansson, H. and Snehota, I. (Eds) (2011), <i>Managing Business Relationships</i> , 3rd ed., Wiley, Chichester		Monash University, AUS
Greenberg, P. (2010), <i>CRM at the Speed of Light. Social CRM Strategies, Tools, and Techniques for Engaging Your Customers</i> , 4th ed., McGraw-Hill		University of Jyväskylä, FIN
Grönroos, C. (2000), <i>Service Management and Marketing: A Customer Relationship Management Approach</i> , Wiley, Chichester		Monash University, AUS
Henning-Thurau, T., Hansen, U. (2000), <i>Relationship Marketing – Gaining Competitive Advantage through Customer Satisfaction and Customer Retention</i> , Springer-Verlag, Berlin		University of Liverpool, UK
Kotler, P. and Keller, K.L. (2012), <i>A Framework for Marketing Management</i> , 5th ed., Pearson Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ		KTH Royal Institute of Technology, SWE

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RM books used in four or more courses	University/business school	RM course name
Kumar, V. (2008), <i>Managing Customers for Profit: Strategies to Increase Profits and Build Loyalty</i> , Wharton School Publishing		Aalto School of Economics, FIN
Kumar, V. and Reinartz, W.J. (2006) <i>Customer Relationship Management: A Database Approach</i> , John Wiley & Sons Inc, New York, NY		Aarhus School of Business, DK
Möller, K. and Wilson D.T. (Eds) (1995), <i>Business Marketing: An Interaction and Network Perspective</i> , Kluwer, Boston, MA		University of Oulu, FIN
Mullin, R. (2002), <i>Direct Marketing: A Step by Step Guide to Effective Planning and Targeting</i> , Kogan Page Limited, London		Hull University Business School, UK
Murphy, J., Burton, J., Gleaves, R. and Kitshoff, J. (2006), <i>Converting Customer Value: From Retention to Profit</i> , Barnes & Noble		Manchester Business School, UK
Nash, E.L. (2000), <i>Direct Marketing: Strategy, Planning and Execution</i> , 4th ed., McGraw Hill, London		Hull University Business School, UK
Palmatier, R. (2008), <i>Relationship Marketing</i> , Marketing Science Institute		Monash University, AUS
Sheth, J. and Parvatiyar, A. (Eds) (2000), <i>Handbook of Relationship Marketing</i> , Sage, London		University of Jyväskylä, FIN
Tapp, A. (2000), <i>Principles of Direct and Database Marketing</i> , 2nd ed., Pearson, Harlow		London Metropolitan Business School, UK
<i>List of universities with no relationship marketing course or course literature found online:</i>		
Africa: University of South Africa		
Australia: University of Queensland, University of Sydney, Griffith University		
Denmark: Copenhagen Business School, University of Southern Denmark		
Finland: University of Eastern Finland, University of Lapland, University of Vaasa, Åbo Akademi University		
France: HEC Paris		
Germany: European Business School		
Netherlands: Tilburg University, Maastricht University		
New Zealand: Auckland University Business School, University of Otago, Canterbury Christ Church University		
Norway: BI Oslo, Norwegian School of Economics, University of Stavanger		
Scotland: University of Edinburgh		
Sweden: Linköping University, Stockholm university, Umeå University, Uppsala University, Örebro University, Stockholm School of Business		
Switzerland: USI Università della Svizzera italiana		
UK: Strathclyde Business School, Warwick Business School, Kingston Business School, Lancaster University Management School, University of Birmingham, University of Sheffield, Bradford University School of Management, Leeds University Business School, Durham University Business School, Aston Business School		
USA: Stanford Graduate School of Business, University of Pennsylvania Wharton, J. Mack Robinson College of Business, Georgia State University, Colorado State University, College of Business, Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame		

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