

Societal Impacts of Marketing Teaching Notes

What Are the Relevant Facts?

1. There is a demand for a product which the Puna Native Americans are able to fill.
2. With his background in anthropology, Len is aware of how changing a culture can harm a society.
3. The deal with the Punas is in Len's hands; he is the only person from Artifacts who has contact with the Punas.
4. If the Punas are willing to meet Bob Littman's demands, it will be a lucrative contract for the tribe.
5. Even if making the new types of baskets does not harm Puna society, we can assume that changing traditional gender roles, which would be necessary to meet the deadline, will disrupt their society.

What Are the Ethical Issues?

1. Should the Punas be allowed to decide whether to agree to the contract offered by Bob Littman, even though they would probably not be aware of the potential damage to their society?
2. Should the Punas be considered a vulnerable group (similar to other poorly educated people and children) and be protected from making a potentially harmful decision?

Who Are the Primary Stakeholders?

- Len Quill
- Artifacts, Inc.
- Bob Littman
- Customers of Bob
- Littman's galleries
- The Punas

What Are the Possible Alternatives?

1. Len could present Bob's offer enthusiastically.
2. Len could present Bob's offer but include a cautionary note about similar cases where harm was done to societal structure.
3. Len could pretend to have made the offer to the Punas and tell Mary Mathers that the Punas refused the offer.

What Are the Ethics of the Alternatives?

Alternative 1: We will assume that Len presents the offer with such enthusiasm that the Punas accept the agreement to make baskets per Bob Littman's specifications.

• Utilitarian Perspective:

1. Len Quill, Artifacts, and Bob Littman gain because they now have a new, marketable product. Bob Littman's customers benefit because they are able to buy a product which meets their needs. The Punas gain economically, but they may be harmed socially. Len will be negatively affected because he feels partially responsible for the Punas' fate.
2. Is this the greatest good for the greatest number? It is a close call. One could argue that because harm to Puna society is not definitely an outcome, it should be given less weight. If this argument holds, the greatest good for the greatest number prevails.

• Deontological Perspective:

1. *Categorical Imperative.* What if all people in developing countries agreed to change their art styles to meet the demands of outsiders? The system would not break down, unless such cultural mayhem followed that the people lost their ability to supply any artifacts.
2. *Rights.* No rights are violated, in the sense that the Punas are deciding their own fate. One could argue that the Punas have a right to full disclosure, i.e., to know the potential problems which might arise when their society undergoes rapid change due to changing art forms and changing gender roles.
3. *Justice.* Everyone is treated equally; the whole Puna tribe is being asked to develop a new [artistic style]. According to this analysis, having Punas develop a new art form based on their traditional one appears to be ethical. This is partly because we really cannot be sure that developing a new art form will do great damage to their society. The one area where an ethical principle is definitely violated is the lack of full disclosure of the potential negative outcome of accepting the contract.

Alternative 2: Len could make the offer but inform the Punas of the potential dangers of accepting the offer.

- Utilitarian Perspective:
 1. Since we do not know if Len would convince the Punas to refuse the offer, our utilitarian analysis is limited. If the Punas accept, the analysis would be the same as in the above alternative.
 2. If they reject the offer, Artifacts, Inc, Bob Littman, and Bob's customers will be negatively affected. The Punas will be negatively affected by the loss of income but will be positively affected by feeling that they have protected their society. Since the Punas are the largest group and they would have a net benefit (having decided themselves that the cost of the lost income is less than the benefits of a stable society), one can conclude that the greatest good for the greatest number has been obtained.
- Deontological Perspective:
 1. *Categorical Imperative.* What would happen if all decisions were made with as full knowledge as possible? The system would not break down.
 2. *Rights.* The Punas' rights to full disclosure have been met.
 3. *Justice.* Everyone is treated equally.
 4. Alternative 2 is ethical, based on all of the above analyses.

Alternative 3: Len would not make the offer, and then pretend the Punas have rejected it.

- Utilitarian Perspective:
 1. Artifacts, Inc., Bob Littman, and his customers will be negatively affected because they will not have the new product. The Punas will be negatively affected because they will lose the contract, but they may be positively affected if in fact the contract would have hurt their society. Len will be negatively affected

because he has failed to get the agreement from the Punas but positively affected because he feels he has saved a society from possible harm.

2. Because we do not know if in fact Puna society has been saved from harm, this outcome should be given less weight. The greatest good for the greatest number has not been obtained.
- Deontological Perspective:
 1. *Categorical Imperative.* Len would be lying by claiming the Punas rejected the offer. Lying violates the categorical imperative principle.
 2. *Rights.* The Punas have lost the right to determine their own destiny. Therefore, their rights are violated.
 3. *Justice.* Len is lying to everyone (Artifacts, Bob Littman, and the Punas, by not informing them of the offer) equally. Justice is not violated. But because everyone is treated poorly, it is not applicable in this case.
 4. The analysis shows that, although his intentions may be good, Len would be acting unethically if he did not inform the Punas of the offer.

What Are the Practical Constraints?

1. Len will not be held in such high esteem by his boss, Mary, if he does not make the deal. But his job is not in jeopardy.

What Actions Should Be Taken?

1. Len should inform the Punas of the offer but fully disclose the possible negative outcome of agreeing to the deal. The Punas have a right to decide whether to agree to the offer, but they should do so with as much useful information as possible.