

Chapter

10

Legal and Ethical Considerations in Digital Real Estate Marketing



First: Building the Legal and Ethical Framework of the Project

The marketing team began by defining a clear framework to which all personnel involved in the digital campaigns of the “Riyadh Residential Front” project would adhere. This framework was formulated in the form of internal guiding principles and was adopted as an official digital marketing policy. The framework included the following pillars:

The first principle: building trust as the foundation of all marketing activity. The team realized that customers seeking a residential unit in “Riyadh Residential Front” would not make a purchase decision unless they felt that the brand was honest and transparent. Accordingly, it was agreed that all marketing materials—whether images, texts, or videos—must be accurate and reflect the reality of the project without any exaggeration or distortion.

The second principle: full compliance with laws and regulations. A legal advisor specialized in digital marketing was appointed to review all campaigns prior to their launch. In addition, the marketing team was trained on the relevant laws, such as personal data protection laws, anti-spam electronic messaging regulations, and consumer protection laws related to real estate advertising.

The third principle: transparency at all points of contact. It was decided that the disclosure of any material information related to the project—such as the actual price, additional fees, delivery timelines, and the precise specifications of the units—would be mandatory in every advertisement, post, or marketing message.

The fourth principle: respect for user privacy and data. A strict policy was established for data collection, storage, and processing, to include clear mechanisms for obtaining consent, providing users with control options, and securing data against any breach.

The fifth principle: social responsibility and inclusiveness. It was emphasized that all marketing materials must be considerate of cultural and social diversity, free from any stereotypes or exclusionary language, and that the project’s digital platforms should be accessible to all users, including persons with disabilities.

Second: Handling Data Privacy and Protection in the Campaigns of “Riyadh Residential Front”

My dear students, as you learned in the lecture, the collection of users’ personal data has become an integral part of effective digital marketing. In the “Riyadh Residential Front” project, the marketing team needed to collect data on potential customers—such as name, phone number, email address, housing preferences, and approximate budget—in order to provide customized offers and follow up on inquiries. But how was this done in a legal and ethical manner?

First: obtaining explicit and prior consent: On the project’s website and mobile application, subscription forms were designed to include a checkbox (not pre-activated by default) through which the user acknowledges granting consent for the collection and use of their data for specified marketing purposes, with a direct link to the privacy policy. No marketing message—whether via email or text messages—was sent without first obtaining this consent.

Second: clarifying the purpose of data collection: A privacy policy was written in clear and simplified language, explaining to the user in detail: what data are collected, why they are collected (to customize real estate offers, improve the user experience, and communicate regarding inquiries), how they are protected, and how long they are retained. This policy was placed in a prominent location on the project’s website and application, and users were required to review it before granting consent.

Third: enabling the right of access, correction, and deletion: Users were provided with a personal control panel within the “Riyadh Residential Front” application, enabling them to view their stored data, modify them if necessary, or request their complete deletion. An “unsubscribe” link was also provided in every marketing email message, along with an option to disable push notifications from within the application.

Fourth: securing data against breaches: Advanced encryption systems were used to protect data during transmission and storage. Periodic security audits were also conducted on servers and databases, and an emergency response plan was established in the event of any breach, including notifying the competent authorities and affected users within 72 hours of discovering the breach.

Through these measures, the marketing team of the “Riyadh Residential Front” project ensured compliance with the requirements of international regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation, as well as local data protection laws, while at the same time strengthening users’ trust, making them more willing to share their data because they know it will be used responsibly.

Third: Compliance with Email and SMS Marketing Regulations

My dear students, as you have learned, sending marketing messages without prior consent constitutes a legal and ethical violation. In the “Riyadh Residential Front” project, a precise system was established for handling email and text messaging, as follows:

First: an explicit opt-in subscription mechanism: No email address or phone number was added to marketing distribution lists unless the user personally completed a consent form. For example, when a visitor to the website requested an informational brochure about the project, the form included a clear statement: “I agree to receive marketing messages and exclusive offers from Riyadh Residential Front via email and text messages.” If this box was not selected, no promotional messages were sent; communication was limited solely to sending the requested brochure.

Second: clear identification of the sender: In every email or text message, the project name “Riyadh Residential Front” was prominently stated, along with a clear mailing address and a customer support phone number. No misleading addresses or fictitious names were used.

Third: providing an easy opt-out option: A direct “Unsubscribe” link was included at the bottom of every email, leading to a page that confirmed the cancellation immediately without requiring login or complex procedures. In short text messages, the phrase “Reply STOP to unsubscribe” was included.

Unsubscription requests were honored immediately, and no further messages were sent to users who had opted out.

Fourth: avoiding message overload: An internal policy was established limiting communications to a maximum of two emails per month for regular subscribers and one text message per week for urgent offers, with a commitment not to send messages late at night or on official holidays except in cases of extreme necessity.

Fifth: providing valuable and relevant content: No marketing message was sent unless it was verified to deliver useful information to the recipient, such as exclusive offers, updates on construction phases, advice on real estate financing, or invitations to informational events. Generic, non-personalized messages were deliberately avoided.

Through these practices, the “Riyadh Residential Front” project not only achieved legal compliance, but also maintained low unsubscribe rates and high levels of message open rates and engagement.

Fourth: Protection of Intellectual Property and Copyright

My dear students, in digital real estate marketing, visual content relies heavily on images, videos, and designs. In the “Riyadh Residential Front” project, the issue of intellectual property was handled with the utmost precision:

First: using entirely original content: Professional photographers were commissioned to capture exclusive images of the project from multiple angles, in-house introductory videos were produced, and original marketing texts were written to describe the project’s features in a distinctive language. No image, video clip, or text was used from the internet without obtaining explicit permission from its owner.

Second: documenting licenses and permissions: For any content obtained from external entities—such as location maps from the surveying authority or background music clips for videos—copies of the licensing agreements were retained, and it was ensured that they covered the required commercial use.

Third: citing sources when quoting: In some marketing materials, such as educational posts about trends in the real estate market, quotations were taken from official reports, with the source clearly cited at the end of the post, while ensuring that the information was neither distorted nor used outside its original context.

Fourth: protecting the project’s proprietary rights: The trademark “Riyadh Residential Front” and its associated logo were registered with the competent authorities. A copyright notice was also placed on all digital marketing materials, and the internet was monitored regularly to detect any unauthorized use of the project’s content, with legal action taken against violators.

Through this approach, the marketing team avoided the legal risks associated with infringing the rights of others, while at the same time protecting the project’s intellectual assets from unlawful exploitation.

Fifth: Combating Misleading Advertising and False Claims

My dear students, as we have discussed, misleading advertisements are among the most dangerous practices, as they undermine trust and expose the brand to legal accountability. In the “Riyadh Residential Front” project, strict controls were established to ensure that all advertisements were truthful and accurate:

First: accuracy of images and videos: It was agreed that all images displayed in advertisements must be real images of the project as it actually exists, not of similar sites or unimplemented designs. With regard to virtual tours, it was clearly stated that they represent a “standard architectural design” rather than the final unit if the project was still under construction. A clear disclaimer was included: “Images and virtual tours are for illustrative purposes only; final units may differ in some details.”

Second: accuracy of textual information: No claim regarding unit areas, number of rooms, finishing specifications, or proximity of the project to services (schools, hospitals, metro stations) was mentioned unless it had been verified by a technical and engineering team. For example, if it was stated that “the project is 5 minutes from the metro station,” the distance was actually measured at different times of the day to ensure the accuracy of the statement. In cases of uncertainty, formulations such as “approximately” or “estimated” were used.

Third: transparency in pricing and fees: Residential unit prices were displayed clearly in advertisements, with disclosure of any potential additional fees such as maintenance fees, real estate registration fees, or taxes. Misleading use of phrases such as “prices starting from” was avoided unless the conditions under which such prices applied were clearly explained.

Fourth: avoiding unrealistic expectations: No promises of specific investment returns or future price appreciation rates were made unless they were supported by documented market studies, with clear disclosure that such figures were non-binding estimates. Expressions such as “guaranteed profit investment” or “the best investment in Riyadh” were avoided, as they constitute absolute claims that are difficult to substantiate.

Fifth: documentation of promotional offers: Any promotional offer, such as “10% discount for early bookings” or “a free gift upon purchase,” had its duration clearly specified, with the terms and conditions precisely explained in the advertisement text or via a direct link to a conditions page. Fake countdown timers or phrases such as “for a limited time” without a genuine end date were not used.

Through these controls, the marketing team ensured that the messages of the “Riyadh Residential Front” project were capable of building genuine trust, while avoiding any customer complaints or legal violations from consumer protection authorities.

Sixth: Transparency in Influencer Marketing

My dear students, within the framework of the promotional campaign for the “Riyadh Residential Front” project, a number of influencers in the fields of real estate and lifestyle in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were contracted to promote the project. This type of marketing was handled with the utmost transparency:

First: clear disclosure of paid promotion: A clause was included in influencer contracts obligating them to use clear disclosures, in Arabic, such as “#Advertisement,” “#Sponsored_by_Riyadh_Front,” or “#Paid_Collaboration,” at the beginning of every promotional post or video. It was also emphasized that the disclosure must be clearly visible to the audience without the need to click on “more.”

Second: prohibition of untrue claims: Influencers were provided with accurate and documented information about the project, and it was agreed in writing that they were not permitted to make any statements or promises not included in the official materials. For example, influencers were not allowed to say “this is the best project in Riyadh,” as this is an absolute claim, nor to promise specific investment returns.

Third: content monitoring and compliance: A dedicated team was assigned to monitor influencers’ posts and ensure their compliance with disclosure requirements and information accuracy. In the event of any violation, the influencer was contacted to rectify the situation immediately; in cases of repeated violations, the contract was terminated.

Fourth: avoiding exploitation of followers: Care was taken to ensure that influencers did not use psychological pressure tactics such as “you will never find this price again” unless the offer was genuinely time-bound. They were also instructed to provide valuable content that objectively explains the project’s features, rather than merely delivering superficial advertising.

In this manner, the project benefited from the influencers’ reach to a wide audience while maintaining integrity and transparency that strengthen trust rather than undermine it.

Seventh: Cookie Policy and User Tracking

My dear students, as you have learned, websites use cookies to collect data on user behavior in order to improve the experience and personalize advertisements. On the website of the “Riyadh Residential Front” project, this issue was handled as follows:

First: a clear consent banner: When a user enters the website for the first time, a pop-up banner appears (without blocking the main content) explaining that the website uses cookies to improve performance and deliver personalized content, and requesting the user’s consent. Cookies were divided into two categories: essential cookies (necessary for the operation of the website and cannot be disabled) and optional cookies (for marketing and analytics). Users could either accept all cookies or customize their preferences.

Second: a detailed explanation of the cookie policy: A standalone page entitled “Cookie Policy” was created in clear language, explaining in detail: what cookies are, the types used on the website, the purpose of each type, the duration of their retention, and how users can control or delete them through their browser settings.

Third: respecting user choices: If the user rejected marketing and analytics cookies, they were not activated under any circumstances. If the user consented and later changed their mind, their decision was respected immediately.

Fourth: transparency in sharing data with third parties: It was disclosed that some cookies may belong to third parties such as advertising platforms and analytics tools, and links were provided to the privacy policies of those third parties.

This transparent approach made users feel in control of their data and increased their willingness to consent to tracking, thereby enabling the marketing team to obtain valuable data to improve campaigns without exceeding ethical or legal boundaries.

Eighth: Ethical Targeting and Segmentation

My dear students, in the campaigns of “Riyadh Residential Front,” user data—collected with their consent—were used to segment audiences and target them with customized messages. However, this was carried out in a purely ethical manner:

First: avoiding the targeting of vulnerable groups: Instructions were issued not to target individuals who had expressed interest in high-risk loans or those seeking urgent housing solutions due to coercive circumstances (such as family disputes or forced eviction). The focus was placed solely on segments seeking residential or investment improvement on a voluntary basis.

Second: not using sensitive data: No data related to religion, ethnicity, political affiliation, or health status were collected or used. Targeting was limited to variables related to real estate behavior: geographic location (at the city level rather than precise neighborhood), estimated household size, budget, and property-type preferences.

Third: avoiding unfair discrimination: Campaigns were designed to reach all eligible audience segments without offering better deals to one group at the expense of another for non-objective reasons. For example, the same discounts were offered to young families and investors alike, and project advertisements were not directed exclusively to men rather than women, or to a specific age group to the exclusion of others.

Fourth: transparency in targeting criteria: A section was included in the privacy policy explaining the criteria used in ad personalization, so that users would not feel that the process was opaque or manipulative.

Fifth: enabling user control: Users were provided with the option to modify their marketing preferences from within the application, select the types of offers they wished to receive (residential, investment, after-sales services), and disable location-based targeting if they so desired.

Through these principles, the marketing team ensured that targeting functioned as a tool for serving the customer and delivering value, rather than as a means of annoyance, exploitation, or discrimination.

Ninth: Dealing with Ratings and Testimonials – Avoiding Fake Practices

My dear students, you have learned that fake ratings constitute a serious violation of both ethics and the law. In the “Riyadh Residential Front” project, a strict policy regarding ratings was established:

First: encouraging genuine ratings from actual customers: After the delivery of the first 50 residential units, an invitation was sent via email to real purchasers to evaluate their experience with the purchasing process, as well as their interaction with the sales team and after-sales service. Ratings were requested objectively, without offering financial incentives in exchange for a positive review. (Symbolic incentives, such as a shopping voucher from the project’s store, were offered in return for any rating—whether positive or negative—to ensure neutrality.)

Second: not deleting negative ratings: All ratings were displayed on the website and within the application, including negative ones, without interference. Negative ratings were responded to professionally, with apologies when necessary and proposed solutions. This practice significantly increased the brand’s credibility.

Third: refraining from purchasing fake ratings or exchanging them with other developers: All offers received from companies specializing in “reputation enhancement” through the publication of fake positive reviews were rejected. The marketing team was also instructed not to write any ratings themselves under pseudonyms.

Fourth: disclosure of any paid testimonials: In the rare cases where a real customer was contracted to provide a video or written testimonial in exchange for compensation, clear disclosure was made in the testimonial indicating that the customer had received compensation for sharing their experience.

Fifth: reporting fake ratings from others: If it was discovered that a competing entity was promoting fake ratings against the project, such practices were reported to the competent authorities rather than being countered in kind.

These practices established “Riyadh Residential Front” as a brand with a trustworthy reputation, as new customers rely on genuine ratings with confidence, which contributed to a sustainable increase in sales.

Tenth: Accessibility and Inclusivity in Digital Content

My dear students, as we discussed, accessibility is not merely an ethical commitment but has become a legal requirement in many countries. The marketing team of the “Riyadh Residential Front” project ensured that all digital platforms were accessible to the widest possible segment of the audience:

First: designing a website and application compatible with screen readers: Programming code was implemented to enable screen readers (used by visually impaired users) to read the content correctly, with a logical structure for headings and paragraphs, and descriptive alternative text for all images.

Second: providing textual captions for videos: Written subtitles were added to all marketing videos, whether introductory project videos or virtual tours, to serve users with hearing impairments or those who prefer viewing content without sound.

Third: appropriate color contrast and flexible font size: High-contrast color schemes were selected to facilitate readability for users with visual impairments, and the website was designed to allow font enlargement of up to 200% without disrupting the layout.

Fourth: ease of navigation using the keyboard: It was ensured that all sections of the website and application could be navigated using the keyboard alone (without a mouse), which benefits users with motor impairments.

Fifth: avoiding exclusionary language: All marketing texts were reviewed by a specialist in inclusive communication to ensure they were free from any language that discriminates on the basis of gender, age, disability, or cultural background. Diverse images representing individuals of different ages and genders were also used in advertising materials.

Through these measures, the “Riyadh Residential Front” project not only complied with legal standards but also expanded its audience base to include groups that are often excluded from real estate marketing campaigns, thereby reflecting a strong and positive brand image.

Eleventh: Responding to Data Breaches and Reporting Them

My dear students, although the “Riyadh Residential Front” project did not experience any major security breaches during the period of its marketing campaigns, the cybersecurity team prepared a comprehensive response plan as a precaution against any potential incident. This plan included the following:

First: a specialized response team: A team was formed comprising representatives from marketing, information technology, legal affairs, and communications, tasked with handling any security incident.

Second: detection and containment procedures: Intrusion detection systems were installed to alert the team immediately upon the occurrence of any unusual activity on servers or databases. Protocols were also established to isolate affected systems in order to prevent the spread of the breach.

Third: prompt notification of authorities and the public: In the event of a breach affecting users’ personal data, plans were in place to notify the competent data protection authority within 72 hours, and to inform affected users via email and text messages, with a clear explanation of the nature of the compromised data and the steps they should take to protect themselves.

Fourth: transparent communication without panic: Pre-prepared message templates were developed to ensure that notifications would be clear and honest, while avoiding defensive or minimizing language, and offering a sincere apology for any inconvenience or harm.

Fifth: analysis and lessons learned: After containment of the breach, an internal investigation would be conducted to identify the root cause, implement the necessary security improvements, and inform users of the updates that had been made.

Although this plan was not actually activated, its existence provided users with additional confidence that their data were in safe hands, and increased their willingness to engage with the project digitally.

Twelfth: Applying Future Trends with Ethical Commitment

My dear students, as we reviewed at the end of the lecture, there are future trends in digital marketing such as marketing automation, personalization, conversational marketing, voice search, social commerce, extended reality, and consumer privacy. The “Riyadh Residential Front” team began adopting some of these trends while maintaining an ethical framework:

First: marketing automation and ethical personalization: A marketing automation system was used to send personalized email messages based on user behavior (such as users who visited the three-bedroom apartment page more than once). However, clear boundaries were set: no use of sensitive data, providing users with the option to opt out of personalization, and avoiding excessive or intrusive messaging.

Second: chatbots (conversational marketing): A chatbot was activated on the project’s website and application to answer frequently asked questions (delivery schedules, payment methods, unit sizes). The bot was trained not to collect unnecessary personal data, and when it was unable to provide an answer, it transferred the user to a human representative. Users were also informed at the beginning of the conversation that they were interacting with a chatbot.

Third: social commerce: A small store was created within the project’s account on one of the social media platforms to sell digital brochures about the project and allow booking of viewing appointments for a refundable nominal fee. All terms and conditions were clearly disclosed, and the payment process was secured.

Fourth: augmented reality for immersive experiences: An application was developed that allows users to point their phone camera at any room in their current home and see how the furniture of a “Riyadh Residential Front” apartment model would appear in that space. A disclaimer was included stating that the image is approximate and not 100% accurate.

Fifth: voice search and voice commerce: The website content was optimized to align with natural voice search queries, such as “How far is Riyadh Front from King Khalid Airport?” rather than “Riyadh Front distance to the airport.” Plans were also made for a future voice-assisted booking experience, with an emphasis on obtaining recorded voice consent before completing any purchase.

Sixth: privacy as a future priority: Across all these trends, user privacy was placed at the forefront: minimizing data collection to what is strictly necessary, encrypting everything, providing users with broad control options, and ensuring full transparency regarding the use of artificial intelligence in recommendations.



Thank You