



UNIVERSITAT
POLITÈCNICA
DE VALÈNCIA

ADE

Facultad de Administración
y Dirección de Empresas /UPV

UNIVERSITAT POLITÈCNICA DE VALÈNCIA

Faculty of Business Administration and Management

ETHICAL GUIDE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING:
brand humanization, data privacy, and brand trust

Master's Thesis

Master's Degree in Social Media and Corporate Communication

AUTHOR: Morales Sharp, Talía

Tutor: Guijarro Tarradellas, Ester

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2022/2023

AGRADECIMIENTOS

Primero, agradecer enormemente a Ester Guijarro, mi maravillosa tutora, por su apoyo, consejos, y esfuerzo durante un año de trabajo. Ha sido un proceso largo, pero al fin lo hemos conseguido.

También agradecer a Adriana, Kirstie, y Alex por su apoyo incondicional y, sobre todo, por animarme a seguir.

Por último, agradecer a la facultad y a Amparo Baviera por confiar en mí y brindarme la oportunidad de hacer el máster.

—

Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 ABSTRACT.....	1
1.2 PURPOSE, MOTIVATION & RELEVANCY	2
1.3 OBJECTIVES	6
1.4 METHODOLOGY & RESEARCH GAPS	7
1.4.1 Methodology	7
1.4.2 Research gaps.....	10
CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: NEW PARADIGMS.....	12
2.1 DEFINING SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING	12
2.2 EVOLUTION: FROM SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS TO MONETISED PLATFORMS	14
2.3 BUSINESSES & CONSUMERS: BUILDING TRUST WITH NEW DIGITAL GENERATIONS..	17
2.3.1 The humanisation of brands: the fight for authenticity.....	20
2.3.1.1 Brand activism & woke-washing.	23
2.3.1.2 Influencer marketing ethics.	25
2.4 CONCLUSIONS & REFLECTIONS	27
CHAPTER 3: THE DATA PRIVACY DILEMMA	31
3.1 ONLINE PRIVACY: WHAT AND WHY	31
3.2 THE DATA PRIVACY BATTLE: PLATFORMS VS. BUSINESSES VS. CONSUMERS	34
3.2.1 Platforms	34
3.2.2 Users.....	37
3.2.3 Businesses	40
3.3 CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS	42
CHAPTER 4: A SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ETHICAL GUIDE PROPOSAL ..	46
4.1 ETHICAL GUIDELINES	49
4.1.1 Disclosure.....	62
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS & REFLECTIONS	63
5.1 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS	64
5.2 EVALUATION OF CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH GAPS	70
5.3 LIMITATIONS & METHODOLOGY REFLECTION	71
5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINAL REFLECTIONS	72

REFERENCES	75
APPENDIX: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS	87

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Initial thesis conceptual map	Page 9
Figure 2: Brand humanisation: effective and ineffective practices	Page 34
Figure 3 Data privacy: Consumer behaviour and marketing effectiveness	Page 50
Figure 4: Ethical guidelines for social media marketing	Page 54
Figure 5: Data literacy framework proposition	Page 55
Figure 6: Marketing transparency framework	Page 58
Figure 7: Prior Campaign Consideration Example	Page 60
Figure 8: Ethical brand humanisation process	Page 63
Figure 9: Growth and evolution through literacy and research	Page 65

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Abstract

In this post-pandemic era, social media marketers encounter increasingly complex ethical dilemmas stemming from evolving consumer behaviour and changes in social media platforms. This study offers a comprehensive examination of the ethical challenges in social media marketing by considering the viewpoints of consumers, businesses, and platforms. The objective is to present a pragmatic ethical framework that enables marketers to navigate social media with a focus on brand trust, while considering marketing impact, social responsibility, and business success.

This work is divided into two sections: the theoretical framework and the practical guide. The theoretical section aims to justify the ethical guidelines proposed by providing evidence, analysing the subject matters, identifying key ethical issues, and elaborating comprehensive conclusions. The two ethical issues explored in this work correspond to brand humanisation and data privacy. The primary research method employed qualitative and quantitative data by conducting an extensive literature review, supported by market research reports, surveys, journal articles, and scientific studies.

The practical section is composed of the ethical guide proposal, based on the findings of the first section. This guide proposal, as reflected in Chapter 4, is the main contribution of this work and focuses on five main points, which have been identified based on the prior research work: (i). ‘Data literacy: a privacy-first framework for marketing actions’ focuses on creating a framework that encourages literacy and growth as a key tool to practice ethical marketing and improve consumer relations; (ii). ‘Transparency: a tool for brand trust’ aims to provide marketers with key actions to promote transparency and ethical considerations in marketing communications; (iii). ‘Social responsibility: personalisation & targeting’ is based on ethical principles that regulate advertising personalisation and high-risk privacy violations and negative repercussions from the perspective of social responsibility; (iv). ‘Brand identity: humanisation and social responsibility’ formulates a framework to appropriately evaluate and analyse brand humanisation strategies to avoid unethical practices and negative marketing impact; (v). ‘Evolution and growth: research, adapting, and holistic decision-

making' proposes a guideline for marketers to follow to keep evolving and making ethical and effective marketing decisions.

Findings reveal that ethical marketing is crucial to build and maintain brand trust and presents an array of benefits for the business and consumers. Transparency, honesty, and integrity are some of the identified factors that affect brand trust. In addition, brand trust is impacted negatively when consumers feel discomfort at marketing practices or communications on social media. Findings reveal that ethical marketing practices and social responsibility not only decrease negative effects but strengthen consumer-business relations for increased business success. Another key finding is that marketers are uneducated and unaware of ethical implications and are experiencing a lack of support from platform and government regulations in terms of ethical conduct and frameworks.

The implications of this research highlight the importance of ethical marketing practices since they impact consumers and businesses alike. This work contributes to the existing literature and ethical guides by providing marketers with practical and achievable guidelines that are evidenced on relevant and current consumer behaviours, regulations, and ethical concerns. This study urges marketers to implement literacy, awareness, and research as key practices of their marketing activities and elaborate ethical strategies that consider marketing impact and stakeholder interests. It also emphasises the need for accessible, practical, relevant, and ethical guidelines for marketers self-regulating in the face of lacking platform and governmental regulations.

1.2 Purpose, motivation & relevancy

The **purpose** of this work is to justify the significance of ethical marketing, particularly when operating on social media platforms, and provide marketing professionals with a practical ethical guide that responds to current and relevant ethical concerns.

The **motivation** for this work stems from two perspectives: the first, as a social media user, and the second, as a marketing professional. For the former, I noticed a pattern of recurring conversations with other social media users, whom all seemed apprehensive

and upset by how invasive and incessant social media marketing had become. Above all, these users showed clear discomfort at the level of accuracy and personalisation of social media marketing: they were sensing they were being heavily monitored online and offline, and social media had begun marketing very specific items they had perhaps mentioned in a real-life conversation or responded to biological needs, such as menstruation. I had also felt this discomfort in my own experience, and began noticing alarming patterns in my behaviour, such as ignoring cookie notices, accepting privacy policies I had not read, and, perhaps the most concerning, I had simply normalised being monitored and did not care because I had accepted my privacy did not exist on the Internet realm.

On the other hand, as a marketer, this experience became of utmost importance to my work: I did not want to become a marketer that was inflicting this level of discomfort and fear on social media users and society at large. This idea made me wonder if marketing professionals were truly aware of their impact on people and what could be done to practice marketing more ethically in order to improve user experience and not detriment it. In addition, the experiences mentioned above made me believe these marketing practices were not effective at all if they were causing such negative reactions. Therefore, the idea for this work was to investigate how marketing can be executed ethically and effectively on social media platforms, with the aim that all stakeholders can enjoy a positive, fruitful, valuable experience.

An additional item that sparked the motivation to create this work was the ‘Social Dilemma’ documentary published by Netflix in 2020 (Orlowski, 2020). The documentary focused on various professionals who had previously worked creating the most popular social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. The overall sentiment was of regret and that they were oblivious to the dangers they could pose to society. However, the only solution these former employees, founders, and acclaimed academics and pioneers, such as Shoshana Zuboff and Jaron Lanier, —whom will also be quoted throughout this work— seemed to agree on, was to stop using social media altogether. Unfortunately, I was heavily disappointed by this conclusion since it seemed a ‘cheap fix’ to the prevalent and real concerns and issues presented, and solely placed the responsibility on the user rather than working to improve the digital experience for all stakeholders and parties involved. Therefore, another of the motivations of this work was

to find clear and achievable steps that could provide a solution to, in this case, marketers working on social media platforms, as well as taking responsibility for our part in the digital ecosystem.

Another aspect I consider to be related to ethical marketing, social responsibility, and brand trust is the phenomenon of brand humanisation. This concept has been gaining in popularity as social media platforms and communications in such develop - social media has become a platform for communities to empower, educate, and fight for change regarding social issues, and consumers now expect brands to do the same. Across social platforms, brands engaging in various forms of humanisation, such as brand activism, personification of communications, or influencer collaborations have taken over the digital landscape. However, every week there seems to be a different brand being boycotted for ‘woke-washing’ or ‘green-washing’ their marketing campaigns or being ‘cancelled’ for affiliating themselves with a controversial influencer. The main common critique is that these campaigns seem performative and with the sole purpose of making profit. Considering social media users are constantly being encouraged to engage in consumerism through personalised ads, it is no wonder consumers feel discomfort and anger when brand-consumer communications also become blatantly capitalist, inauthentic, and insensitive.

The motive to further explore this topic and relate it to creating an ethical marketing guide came when researching studies on the subject: various studies revealed that brands who implement humanisation strategies successfully enjoy many positive benefits, such as increased engagement, reputation, customer loyalty, and purchase intention. These findings made me question why many marketers were being unsuccessful in humanising their brand and what actions or practices could they implement to be successful and remain ethical (i.e., not do so for their own benefit, but for the common good).

The **relevancy** of this work can be supported by the countless studies, articles, and market surveys that pronounce the importance of data privacy and social responsibility for today’s consumers, as reflected in the bibliography of this work. Data privacy, although not a novel concern, continues to be a growing issue for all stakeholders as new technologies arise and consumers become more aware of data mining processes.

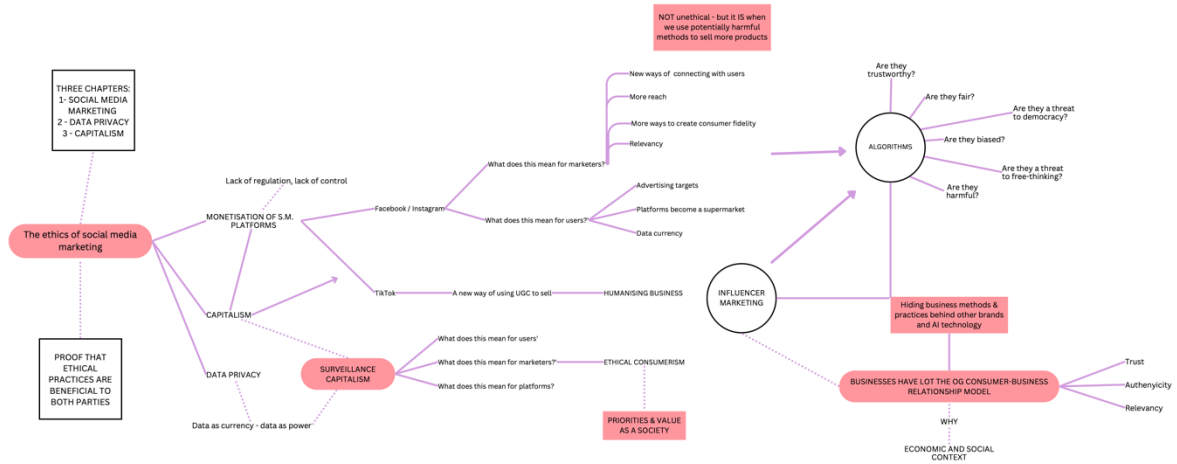
In addition, governments are also stressing the importance of data and privacy protection, not only for individuals or businesses, but for society at large. The European Parliament, for example, as well as enforcing a data regulation and protection law, the General Data Protection Regulation (European Union, 2016), pronounced ‘surveillance, personalisation, disinformation, moderation, and microtargeting’ as key risks for democracy (Members' Research Service, 2021). Various market studies have also identified consumers’ rising concerns about data privacy to impact brand trust and harm business and marketing effectiveness, some pronouncing brand trust as ‘the new brand equity’ (Edelman, 2021).

Social responsibility from the perspective of marketing communications, through brand activism and humanisation strategies, is another factor that affects brand trust and that has sparked abundant discussion among marketers and consumers over the past few years. Today’s consumers, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, expect brands to be positive contributors to society, speak on social issues, and use their power for good (Sprout Social, 2018; Edelman, 2022; Mason, 2021). The main issue, and why it is relevant for marketers today, is that marketers are executing ineffective and distasteful campaigns with the aim of fulfilling these expectations and making a profit of brand humanisation strategies. Many brands have been boycotted and have caused controversy along the years for their insensitive, tone-deaf, or performative affiliation to social issues or influencers; yet well-executed humanisation strategies have been found to provide an array of benefits, such as increased brand loyalty and reputation. With this wave of new consumer values, interests, and behaviours, marketers need tools to understand their audience and execute effective marketing strategies that benefit all stakeholders, and thus must be studied from an ethical and practical perspective.

The following figure, Figure 1, responds to the initial concept map created in the early stages of this work, by narrowing down key issues observed and the relationship between them. As the work progresses, this work focused on brand humanisation on data privacy since it involved the communication and technical aspects of the marketing role on social media.

Figure 1

Initial thesis conceptual map



Source: own elaboration, 2023.

1.3 Objectives

The main objective of this work is to propose an ethical guide for social media marketing professionals that responds to current contexts and concerns. This objective involves providing marketers with practical and relevant guidelines that respond to the dilemmas studied in this work, based on academic research and empirical evidence. The guidelines aim to cover key issues in marketing for professionals who work regularly with social media platforms and wish to develop and integrate a more ethical and responsible practice. The following sub-objectives have been formulated with the aim to conceptualise and bring further dimension and accuracy to the main objective of this work:

- To provide a comprehensive and holistic evaluation of the current issues in marketing from the perspective of consumers, marketers, and social media platforms: this point aims to encompass different perspectives from key stakeholders in order to find solutions that benefit consumers and marketers alike.

By using this approach, the ethical proposal will be integrative and consider the interests of all parties rather than do so solely from the marketer's perspective.

- To assess the impact of brand trust on consumer comfort and its relation to brand humanisation and data privacy: this involves evaluating consumers' behaviours and concerns regarding brand humanisation and data privacy and how it affects brand trust. The objective aims to contemplate brand trust as an integral asset for today's marketers operating on social media, and how unethical or ethical marketing can modify it.
- To evaluate the significance of ethical marketing practices for consumers and businesses: this point involves showcasing data, evidence, and cases that supports the practicing of ethical marketing from a social responsibility and business perspective. The aim is to answer why marketers should care about working consciously and ethically for the benefit of society and business and avoid acting in self-interest in a capitalist economy.
- To identify consumer behavioural patterns and draw possible solutions to the dilemmas posed in this work: this point aims to gather the evidence, analyse the findings, and draw conclusions based on empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks. These solutions or considerations will serve as groundwork for the main contribution of this work, which is the ethical marketing guide, and to assess and propose future research recommendations.

1.4 Methodology & research gaps

1.4.1 Methodology

The primary methodology utilised in this work has been an extensive review of existing literature and research as well as secondary sources. Due to the theoretical background of this work, a comprehensive study has been carried out to extract, analyse, and apply relevant and current information from academic and scientific literature,

journals, and studies. These sources have been the foundation of the main body of this work and the basis of the ethical marketing proposal guide in Chapter 4.

The secondary sources employed, such as surveys, market research reports, or articles, were all by reputable and established organisations and institutions. The aim was to use high-quality sources to ensure the most accurate and reliable data and information to base this study on. In addition, the publishing date was considered when choosing sources to avoid outdated or irrelevant content, aiming for a publishing date between 2016 and 2023. In the case of surveys and market reports, this was the preferred method to acquire the most up-to-date data while also ensuring the number of respondents was as large as possible since this work does not focus on a specific demographic but considers consumers and marketers from all industries. Both qualitative and quantitative data was sourced from the various literature and secondary sources selected: a comprehensive study that involved collecting, analysing, and connecting similar or opposing ideas and data to draw conclusions and identify trends, ideas, and concepts that would aid in the conception of this work.

In terms of ethical implications, no external studies were conducted or was there collection of first-party data. The literary and secondary sources have all been adequately accessed and acquired and have been referenced in the required format in the bibliography section at the end of this work.

The literature and secondary sources reviewed were chosen to gain comprehensive insight into the current ethical concerns originating from social media marketing practices. The main subject pillars have been brand trust, data privacy, brand humanisation, and social media marketing from an ethical standpoint. As mentioned prior, secondary sources have been selected according to accuracy, but also to the date published in order to analyse and construct arguments based on recent data (ranged from 2015-2023). On the other hand, literature or other sources that cater to a more theoretical background have been exempted from this rule since theory can be relevant and applied for a longer period. The chosen research concepts were synthesised as such:

- Empirical evidence on brand humanisation response

This section presents studies, journal articles, and market reports that explore the relation between brand humanisation and brand trust on social media. Many studies presented opposing evidence, such as brand humanisation proving to be a contributor to increased brand trust, and some the opposite. However, the concepts of authenticity, transparency, and honesty were a clear pattern among sources relating them directly to brand trust. In addition, studies and market reports were analysed that presented significant results on consumers' behaviours, reactions, and expectations to certain types of brand humanisation such as activism of anthropomorphic communication.

- Theoretical perspectives on privacy and evidence on consumer behaviours

The main body of work to support the data privacy theory has been that of Shoshana Zuboff, who coined the term 'surveillance capitalism'. Although many sources (some prior the release of said work) contemplate a similar theory, they might not always use this term as such. Analysing and processing different source material for a similar theory, as critiques to it, allowed for a deeper understanding of the complex issue that is data, capitalism, and privacy. In addition, earlier works from theorists that contemplated privacy in relation to society were significant in demonstrating the underlying issues of data protection. This section also explored multiple journal articles and market reports in order to find patterns on consumers' behaviour, critical concerns for marketers, ethical considerations, and the relation to brand trust.

- Theoretical perspectives on marketing and business ethics

As this work references various theoretical aspects, such as the concept of privacy, the economics of capitalism, and even democracy, it became a challenge to not diverge too deep into philosophical analysis but find practical and relevant solutions for the issues studied. For this reason, the literature review of this section focuses on ethics applied to marketing and social media in general. Business ethics were also researched to gain broader insight into the subject of social and corporate responsibility, although the focus was on marketers. The ethical implications of social media itself were also studied in literature such as 'The Age of Surveillance Capitalism' (Zuboff, 2018), journal articles and studies, and from

documentary interviews with key industry players in order to provide a holistic focus on the matter.

1.4.2 Research gaps

While reviewing many of the sources used for this work, particularly scientific and business journal articles, a clear pattern became apparent: many authors declared frustration at the lack of up-to-date research on many issues and perspectives related to social media and technology ethics and the real-life impact of such. Although it is understandable that research often requires years of effort, by the time the study or work is published, most data and arguments become redundant due changes in the overall context of the study. Data privacy, in particular, is a subject that is in constant evolution that can be affected by various factors: regulations from governmental, social media platforms, operating systems, and businesses themselves all impact the concept of data privacy in the digital world, as do consumers' behaviours, concerns, and knowledge of the matter.

In addition, new technological integrations also challenge the concept of privacy and its implications or impact on consumers. Depending on the subject at hand, it can be decades before the true impact can be measured. For example, the long-lasting effects of the monetisation of social media and how it encourages over-consumption and consumerism have perhaps not been revealed yet, since the 'e-commercialisation' of social media platforms is recent. Research on this topic, as many others mentioned in this work, would have been relevant and significant for the purpose of this work; however, not enough evidence has been gathered to accurately portray the phenomenon.

Lastly, few literary sources within the 2016-2023 publishing frame were found that studied the ethics of social media marketing specifically. In addition, many focused solely on the data collection aspect – as argued in this work, while data privacy is a prominent issue, it does not encompass the ethical implications of social media marketing. Moreover, most ethical guidelines reviewed from literary sources focused on marketing in general; hence the need to rely on scientific and business journals and studies. Another significant gap is the lack of a comprehensive and accessible work that serves as a

reference for marketers looking to integrate practical and relevant actions into their work. When searching ‘ethical guide for social media marketing’ or similar on Google, most of the resources are from blogs, which may give valuable advice but are not necessarily based on scientific or academic research.

In conclusion, social media marketing ethics is a lacking research area that requires further and deeper examination to encompass key perspectives, ethical concerns, social impact, and practical solutions. As mentioned, many literary sources focused on related subjects such as business ethics, marketing ethics, or corporate social responsibility, but few were exclusively focused on social media marketing. Although some principles can be applied to social media, it would be of incredibly useful to current and future academics and marketing professionals for research to be carried out based specifically on social networks for increased accuracy, relevancy, and understanding.

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: NEW PARADIGMS

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, consumer behaviour has shifted from an individual approach to a collective one, setting new paradigms in terms of behaviours, wants, and needs. However, pressing social, political, economic, and environmental concerns had been affecting consumer behaviour long before the 2019 health crisis. The current global climate has changed consumers' priorities and values, demanding brands be more responsible and accountable for their actions affecting society and the environment (Edelman, 2022; Sprout Social, 2018).

Although not a novelty, one of the rising concepts in marketing in response to these new paradigms is brand trust. In 2021, consumers considered brand trust to be more important than brand love and were found to be seven times more likely to purchase from a trusted brand. Edelman (2021) has referred to brand trust as the 'new brand equity', stating that brands must give back to society and tie marketing efforts to corporate ethos, an idea backed by statistics, academics, and marketing professionals. Trust, therefore, has become one of the most significant elements in modern-day marketing.

However, what *exactly* constitutes brand trust is a complex subject due to conflicting elements that come into play, particularly when operating on social media platforms. Moreover, the methodology many brands employ to obtain the benefits associated with brand trust present ethical concerns for not only consumers but society at large. This chapter will explore and evaluate the evolution of social media as a marketing tool and the main ethical challenges for marketers today in relation to brand trust.

2.1 Defining social media marketing

To create a concise and clear understanding of social media marketing and develop the key arguments of this work, an agreement must take place on what the terms 'social media' and 'marketing' mean. As stated by various academics, these terms can often be challenging to define since technology advancements are constantly changing the built-in services and products these platforms offer (Obar, & Wildman, 2015). Considering dictionary entries can often fall short in encapsulating the totality of these

terms, academics have resorted to create their own definitions; however, these definitions seem to differ in meaning and continue to be subject of debate (Li, 2021).

For the purpose of this work, we will use Longdom Publishing's definition of social media, which understands it as 'the interactive technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, interests, and other forms of expression through virtual communities and networks' (Longdom Publishing, 2022). While online forums (e.g., Reddit), encyclopaedias (e.g., Wikipedia), video sharing sites (e.g., YouTube), among other categories, would fall under this definition, this work's mention of social media platforms will only be referring to social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or Tik Tok (Lozano, 2022).

'Marketing' is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d.) as 'the process or technique of promoting, selling, and distributing a product or service', a definition that is perhaps insufficient when applied to social media. The American Marketing Association (2017) offers a broader and timelier description, defining it as 'the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large'. In contrast to the former, the latter includes the receiver of said marketing practices in its definition, since, arguably, marketing cannot exist without a target and requires an interaction between subject A (marketer) and subject B (target).

Another key element of said definition -and an idea backed by several academics in recent years-, is that it entails offering or adding value to, not only individuals, but society at large. This notion suggests that marketing is not an action devoid of greater consequence or effect, but an activity or process that directly affects individuals, communities, and societies (Pomeroy, 2017). Considering the average person sees around 4,000 to 10,000 ads a day (around 700% more than fifty years ago), the social impact of modern-day marketing should not be disregarded or ignored, but instead thought of as an integral part of said activity (Simpson, 2017).

In short, we can understand social media marketing as the act of promoting products or services using social media platforms (Akar & Topcu, 2011). However, in recent studies, academics note that the interaction between consumers and businesses is

also a key component and should be included in its definition (Sharma & Verma, 2018). For the purpose of this work, social media marketing will encompass both promotion and communication aspects, noting that the term will evolve as time progresses and new technologies arise.

2.2 Evolution: from social communications to monetised platforms

Studying the evolution of social media over the past 25 years allows us to understand social media marketing as multi-dimensional with both online and offline repercussions (Reto et al., 2017). While social media's evolution has been studied from different perspectives, this section will contemplate the key changes that have directly impacted consumers' and businesses' experience from an ethical standpoint.

As professor Van Dijk indicates in *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media* (2013), most social media platforms were originally created for the exchange of communications and creation of user generated content (UGC), both between users' own networks and the wider web. The concept of Web 2.0 was to facilitate user interaction and collaboration through virtual communities, in contrast to the passive content consumption of Web 1.0. The introduction of these online infrastructures would not only radically change modern communications, but also accelerate technology advancements and economic growth (ibid.).

While social media platforms were initially designed as communication tools, the monetisation of such in the late 2000s marked a pivotal point in terms of product design, purpose, and usage. As former Facebook executive Tim Kendall explains in the documentary *The Social Dilemma* (Orlowski, 2020), he was hired in 2006 by the company to design a business model that would generate profit and user growth yet remain free for the user. Facebook eventually implemented its advertising model, which involved selling advertising space to advertisers. In 2007, in-feed adverts were introduced becoming the platform's main source of revenue, meaning the advertisers were now the customers (Meta, 2007).

As of 2022, the most popular social media platforms –Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok–, continue to use advertisements as their main revenue stream (McFarlane, 2021; Statista, 2022). Some historians, such as Steinhouwer (2021), argue that social media platforms should be considered “advertising businesses” and “data-driven commercial enterprises” since 80% to 97% of their income proceeds from ads, supporting the idea that these social media networks are designed solely to increase profitability. However, popular platforms continue to appeal to the “social” aspect of social media, stating that their main mission is to bring communities together (Facebook, 2022; Instagram, 2022), facilitate public conversations (Twitter, 2022), or inspire creativity (TikTok, 2022).

In the last few years, users have also experienced platforms integrating new features destined for online shopping. Journalist Elena Cavander (2022) exposes that, since Instagram introduced in-feed shopping in 2016 and abolished its chronological algorithm, the platform feels more like a shopping app than a place to share pictures with friends. While the evolution of social media into e-commerce platforms has been criticised by the public for a variety of reasons, these integrations represent a new and more effective way for businesses and marketers to connect with customers and sell products or services (Ahmadinejad & Najafi, 2017). However, if these platforms are designed to encourage interactions between businesses and consumers, instead of among users (as stated in their mission statements), it could be argued that the mission and function of these platforms is obsolete, incoherent, and dishonest.

This inconsistency reflects a more pressing underlying ethical issue regarding product design: algorithms, which is also mentioned by Cavander (2022) as being part of the issue with new commercial integrations. Algorithms are designed to dictate the way users interact, discover, and consume content by thoroughly analysing and predicting user behaviour. This computerised technology turns users’ feeds into a stream of carefully selected content with the aim to increase user engagement and time spent on the platform (Saura, et al., 2021). According to Jaron Lanier, the co-founder of Virtual Reality, algorithms not only gather and study behavioural data, but use this information to influence and modify people’s actions, thoughts, and emotions (Lanier, 2018).

Lanier's statement encapsulates one of the biggest ethical challenges regarding social media today, an issue that has also been denounced by many former employees of these corporations, some of which helped create the same features they now refer to as "unethical" and a "threat" (Orlowski, 2020). The current design of social media has been proven to result in severe data privacy breaches, interference with socio-political events, negative mental health effects, and mass dissemination of false news, among many others. Moreover, data mining, --the primary process platforms use to extract and manipulate users' personal and private information--, continues to be used by platforms, corporations, researchers, governments, and marketers for a variety of purposes (McCourt, 2018; Saura et al., 2021).

The subject of technology, communications, and monetisation in the digital era is a vast and deeply complex issue that integrates a variety of elements that directly or indirectly affect many aspects of our society. For this reason, the relationship between businesses and consumers, as well as its wider impact, should be studied in context and by considering all parties involved. The aim of this work is not to question the morality of social media, or that of marketing itself, but to highlight the social consequences and ethical implications marketing practices can have on individuals and society at large, and how as marketers we can be morally responsible while still acquiring the benefits social media marketing offers.

Notwithstanding, while marketers may be tempted to believe the design and programming of social media is out of their control, the reality is that businesses that choose to market through these platforms are, willingly or not, submitting to the interests of third parties. Users' concerns are consumers' concerns; hence, they have the power to affect negatively upon business, particularly brand trust, loyalty, and reputation. In the following section, we will explore what trust means for businesses and digital consumers and the significance of corporate responsibility. The topic of data privacy, algorithms, and regulations in relation to social media marketing will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

2.3 Businesses & consumers: building trust with new digital generations

Social media marketing has experienced an exponential growth over the last couple of years, particularly during and after the events of the Covid-19 pandemic (Mason et al., 2021). Today, social media advertising's global market is valued at 115 billion dollars, a number that is projected to double by 2028. According to Million Insights (2022), this growth is due to the Internet's increasing penetration rate and the consecutive rise in social media users around the globe. In addition, the report attributes social media marketing's (SMM) popularity among marketers to two factors: (i) the direct communication with customers; and (ii) the integrated and automated marketing and data analysis tools social media platforms offer.

Statista (2021) also lists the most common benefits attributed to using social media for marketing purposes, such as increased exposure, improved traffic, generation of leads, and improved customer trust and loyalty. While these benefits are a representation of the value businesses can obtain by employing social media strategies, they are not a guarantee. In fact, research shows that, while marketers understand the importance of SMM, many businesses and organisations are still struggling to integrate social media with other marketing strategies due to a lack of clear frameworks and guidelines (Li et al., 2021). In addition, research suggests that social media marketing campaigns have more chances of success when the company possesses precise insight on their product, campaign, target audience, and the right platform (Zhu & Chen, 2015).

Small businesses in particular have found that social media offers many advantages in return for a lesser economical investment compared to traditional marketing and advertising (IAB, 2021). Social media can democratise the opportunities between multinational companies and small businesses, not only offering exposure to millions of consumers, but also having available tools to grow communities, improve customer service, and build emotional connections. With data harvested from social media user behaviour, any business, regardless of size, can optimise their marketing strategies and deliver campaigns with higher chances of success by more accurately predicting results, and therefore, minimising the risks of investment (Li et al., 2021).

Perhaps the most notable change caused by social media is the shift of the consumer's role in marketing and advertising activities. As social media users, consumers are now active participants and disseminators of information, providing real-time feedback and opinions (Venciūtė, 2018). Consumers are communicating and interacting with brands in an open platform and, simultaneously, exchanging information with other users, creating and sharing content, voicing opinions, and consolidating communities. As Sharma & Verma (2018) argue in their study, this shift of power has presented new challenges and opportunities for marketers, and consequently reshaped the way marketing messages are conceptualised and executed.

Social media platforms allow, on this account, for consumers to interact and directly influence brand perception and trust, critical factors for a company's long-term success and longevity (Orzan et al., 2016). Brand trust can be understood as the level of confidence consumers have on a brand to deliver on its promises, which, as data from Edelman (2021) suggests, goes far beyond the quality of the product, and integrates every aspect of the consumer's experience with the brand. Considering the power of constructing a positive and trustworthy brand presence, particularly online, it is no wonder marketers and businesses are using social media to increase brand awareness, build brand trust, and secure consumer loyalty.

To identify and evaluate the key ethical challenges for marketers when operating on social networks, it is counterproductive –or inadvisable– to detach social media marketing practices from the platform itself, which is why several academics are opting for a holistic research approach (Reto, 2016; Li, 2021). Businesses that choose to market on social media are inherently linked to the decisions tech companies make over their products, which can impact their business in positive and negative ways. Brand trust is, arguably, a factor that is directly affected by third-party product design, as explained in the previous section; yet, how businesses react and handle public concerns over social media platforms has proven to minimise these effects (Haudi et al., 2022).

While research reveals that the way in which businesses obtain, process, and store consumers' personal data is one of the major factors impacting brand trust, it is not the only element consumers consider when choosing a brand over another, making a purchase, or deciding to boycott a brand. Recent studies on brand trust and social

responsibility reveal that younger generations pay particular importance to a company's values and principles, highlighting that 83% of millennials and Gen Zs tend to purchase based on beliefs, a phenomenon referred to as 'belief-driven buying' (5W Public Relations, 2021; Edelman, 2021). While companies may be unable to cater to every consumer's beliefs, this information suggests that consumers' loyalty and trust is grounded in ethical factors that go beyond the product itself, and that consumers' moral standing can transcend commodities.

Due to social media's direct-to-consumer and consumer-to-consumer structure, prevalent social issues can dictate how businesses evolve and operate, forcing them to adapt and respond to societal demands. Global concerns, such as the current climate crisis, have impacted cross-generational consumer behaviour. Research has shown that 73% of Gen Z consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable products and cite climate change and global warming as their number one concern; moreover, they are successfully influencing older generations to buy from sustainable brands (First Insights, 2020). Young generations understand sustainability not only as ethically sourcing products, but also having a sustainable manufacturing process, which entails minimising environmental damage, advocating for animal welfare, and providing positive working conditions, among others (Edelman, 2022).

Whilst sustainability is not the focus of this work –as pressing and relevant the matter is–, it does illustrate the power of consumers and how their interests affect the market, and consequently, their behaviour. Many businesses have taken this momentum to re-evaluate their practices and make their services and businesses more eco-friendly; however, a number of multinational corporations, such as Coca-Cola, the number one plastic polluter of 2021, have used this phenomenon to market and advertise their products as “environmentally conscious” while not necessarily taking the required actions to become sustainable businesses and tackle the climate crisis (Robinson, 2022; Break Free From Plastic, 2021). This common, yet unethical, practice –known as *greenwashing*–, is not lost on consumers and has proven to cause brand trust deficit, a repercussion perhaps retail giants such as Amazon or Inditex can afford, but which could prove fatal for smaller companies (Mindshare, 2022).

A recent study on brand trust carried out by Edelman (2022), reveals how consumers, particularly between the ages of 16-35, demand action from brands regarding social issues, such as human rights, climate, gender equality, or racial justice, stating there is a 4-to-1 higher likelihood of purchase if brands take a stand on these matters. However, as the research suggests and reiterates, brand trust is earned, not only by responding to consumer needs, but by shaping company culture from the inside and taking the necessary steps to achieve desired outcomes. While navigating and balancing societal demands and business objectives can prove challenging, consumers still believe brands can create positive change. As Mindshare's study states, "the future of marketing is through authentic advertising based on genuine positive contribution [to society]" (ibid.).

Businesses are expected to take a stand on social issues and actively work to create positive change against pressing global concerns. Studies have shown that this concept is not only expected of them but will also benefit the company in the long run, improving many aspects of customer relationships. Social media has served as a space to build and nurture these relationships by including the consumer in conversations, obtaining value from audience listening, and consolidating online communities. However, in the pursuit of fulfilling consumers' demands and societal expectations, certain methods and strategies employed by businesses can fall into ethically grey areas or even cause controversy, boycotting, and irreparable damage to the brand. While some social 'trends' adopted by businesses can appear well-intentioned, it is imperative to consider short and long-term repercussions and evaluate the ethics behind profit-making decisions (Mirzaei et al., 2022).

2.3.1 The humanisation of brands: the fight for authenticity

The ethics of brand humanisation –sometimes referred to as 'anthropomorphisation', despite them not necessarily being interchangeable– is a concept that is yet to be explored and theorised in its entirety, but which is worth considering due to its increasing presence in social media marketing. The humanisation of technology is also a related concept that draws from the same principle: assigning human-like qualities, emotions, and behaviours to non-living entities. While the former can be applied to social media as strategies to further connect with consumers and improve brand perception,

trust, and loyalty, the latter can be applied to algorithm designs that alter the way users/consumers use the platforms and, in turn, how they interact with businesses (Merriam-Webster, n.d.; Chen, 2017).

A clear indicator of this phenomenon are the countless articles and blog guides found across the Internet urging businesses to “become more human”. Reliable sources and specialised marketers suggest brands be authentic, honest, and transparent with their content and marketing efforts, stating authenticity as a key factor to build trust, which will in consequence drive new business and improve marketing receptiveness (McLachlan & Newberry, 2021). Some suggestions include spotlighting the people behind the company, sharing insight into product design and manufacturing processes, or showcasing real-life customers’ experience with the product or service. Arguably, unless the company decides to post deceitful or false content, this type of brand humanisation does not appear to present harmful repercussions and, in fact, has proven to be beneficial in terms of brand loyalty and perceived product or service quality (Shanahan et al., 2018).

On the other hand, as Södergren (2021) emphasises, brand authenticity, although considered a “core asset” of modern-day marketing, still causes confusion among marketers due to an incongruous understanding of what brand authenticity means, considering many academics have argued authenticity and capitalism cannot coexist. Brand authenticity has been theorised and explored from many angles by academics; yet a common factor in the language used when discussing the subject and how it affects business-consumer relations is that authenticity is always ‘perceived’ by the consumer, which suggests authenticity is an interpretation and not something corporations can inherently *be* (Napoli et al., 2014).

The main dilemma of attributing human-like qualities to corporations is that abstract concepts such as ‘authenticity’ are entirely subjective and ideated specifically to and for the human psyche. Authenticity can be described as “the quality of being real or true” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.); yet, said definition presents the question whether motive or intention could alter such quality (e.g., to generate profit). Moreover, an ethical dilemma arises when corporations and businesses use this same subjective interpretation of authenticity to “appear” authentic to consumers while not necessarily being so, and, if the intent is genuine, would it still be considered “an appearance” considering the ethical

questions associated with consumerism? When applied to social media, such humanisation of brands has been described as “hyperreal performances”, since consumers are unable to distinguish between authentic and inauthentic communications (Kumar, 2022).

This confusion turned into scepticism, although not new to marketing, could also be enhanced by distrust in social media platforms, which reinforces the need for a comprehensive approach when evaluating these subjects. We Are Social’s & Hootsuite’s 2022 study reveals consumers are becoming better at identifying brand’s inauthentic and dishonest content, and consumer cynicism is expanding amongst social media communities. This is an evident challenge for marketers (and companies as a whole), however, it is also an opportunity for academics and marketers alike to agree upon what authenticity means in business and, more importantly, how to execute it to create relationships built on mutual trust between businesses and consumers.

Another way brands humanise themselves is by employing a “human-like” tone-of-voice. According to a study by the University of Southern California, 60% of businesses use a human-like tone of voice on social media (Jeong et al., 2022). This strategy involves communicating with consumers in a more intimate, conversational, and informal manner –as opposed to formal corporate communication–, to improve customer engagement and brand awareness. This “first-person” approach was popularly introduced on Twitter by North American fast-food chains, such as Denny’s or Wendy’s, which employed youthful and humorous language in order to be perceived as relatable to Gen Z and Millennials. While such Twitter accounts can be extreme examples of the phenomenon –as not every personified brand chooses to communicate through teenage slang or memes–, this marketing strategy, while proven to boost more sales than advertising, has equally been described as “bad for public health” and denounced as an unethical practice (Greene et al., 2018; Loose, 2014; Harvey, 2019).

A third example that could fall under brand humanisation is the denominated “brand activism”. Brand activism is understood as tangible actions to directly affect “social, political, economic, and/or environmental reform”. Contrarily, corporate social responsibility is considered a self-regulated practice integrated into business models to contribute to societal goals; yet ongoing debate and unclarity amongst academics about

the difference between the two, along with their purpose and motive, present polarising views on the subject (Hassinen, 2018). However, a seemingly global understanding is that CSR tackles prosocial issues that generate less divisiveness and passion than brand activism (Mirzaei et al., 2021). Likewise, consumer data presents a similar conflict and contradiction: on one hand, 70% of U.S. consumers want brands to use their platforms to tackle social issues; yet 56% of consumers believe brands take a stand only for PR or marketing ploys (Sprout Social, 2019).

2.3.1.1 Brand activism & woke-washing.

Social activism by brands on social media, while popular due to recent changes in consumer behaviours, is a high-risk move that can both benefit and detriment business. Once again, ‘authenticity’ is placed as a key factor in brand activism success; however, research suggests standing for social causes –and actively working to change them– must combine three aspects to be perceived as authentic: credibility, commitment, and heritage (Villagra, 2022; Mirzaei, 2021). ‘Woke-washing’ (following a similar meaning of *greenwashing*) refers to brand activism that is inauthentic and driven by profit-only motives. While intent may be “genuine”, academics state the importance of not only establishing a theoretical groundwork rooted in brand values, but also a well-thought-out execution: following intent with action. Not doing so will increase risk of immediate backlash, which, with social media as the fastest disseminator of information, could prove detrimental to the brand (Schmidt et al., 2022).

A prime example of a well-established brand accused of woke-washing is PepsiCo, particularly through their highly controversial 2017 Pepsi commercial ‘Live for Now’, featuring model and reality star Kendall Jenner. The advertisement showed a protest for the Black Lives Matter movement following a series of real-life shootings of African American citizens, in which the company suggested a can of Pepsi (handed to a police officer by the Caucasian model) would resolve racial conflicts in the country. The commercial was cancelled a day after its launch due to a nationwide outcry for its “tone-deaf” and “insensitive” message (NBC News, 2017). Consequently, although the company released a statement of positive intent, the brand’s negative sentiment on social

media reached 58.6%, and data confirms it worsened after their public apology (Brandwatch, 2017).

This case serves as an example of why businesses should establish a crisis management plan of action, but also as a lesson on how to avoid similar situations. The solution, perhaps, is not to ignore public or global issues, but to establish clear and genuine brand values that will transcend every business decision, so powerful and “well-intended” messages ring true. Many brands have successfully chosen causes they deem relevant to their values and philosophy, and, most importantly, have taken tangible action and made real contributions, even if it meant potentially alienating certain audiences. Ben and Jerry’s, for example, has been actively fighting for racial justice, voting rights, and climate change since 1985; Fenty Beauty, has also been praised for not only advocating for inclusivity and diversity in the cosmetics industry, but also featuring a wide range of shades since its launch in 2017 (40 in total, far beyond industry standards at the time) and continuing to use “real” and “unconventional” models to promote the brand (Sugar, 2018; Werle, 2019; Ben & Jerry’s, n.d.; Fenty Beauty, n.d.).

Nonetheless, in a study analysing Ben & Jerry’s social responsibility, the author indicates that while corporations may be “doing good” by contributing to social causes, they may also be harming society in other ways, therefore facing a significant contradiction (Dennis et al., 1998). The author exposes criticism directed at the brand for promoting unhealthy eating habits (selling ice-cream) and establishing partnerships with unethical corporations for their nut supply, among other issues. As the author argues, there is no right answer to this dilemma since ethics can be subjective, concluding that the ultimate power resides in the customer, presenting the question whether corporations can be entirely socially responsible while still generating profit - a debate still relevant today, almost two decades after the study was published.

Whilst corporate social responsibility and brand activism are debatable subjects, research suggests that the authenticity and credibility of brands’ intentions are less questioned when they are consistent and coherent with their established brand values (ibid.). Therefore, it could be argued that authenticity is only real when it is credible and vice-versa. Humanising a brand should be a conscious, researched, and purposeful business decision with transparent and honest intentions. Brand humanisation should

satisfy a purpose that transcends profit gratification, with the aim to enhance consumers' experience with the brand, such as improved customer service and brand affection, reaping benefits from organic consumer-to-consumer communications. As previously argued, businesses cannot cater to every consumer's beliefs, but they *can* act according to their own corporate, thereby creating a loyal and engaged community of like-minded customers that will cement their longevity as a brand.

2.3.1.2 Influencer marketing ethics.

While B2C social media communications can be considered “direct-to-consumer” marketing, there are other brand humanisation strategies that involve the presence of third parties: social media influencers. As in the PepsiCo case, brands can use influencer partnerships and sponsorships to sell products or services, which comes with its own set of ethical concerns and furthers the ‘authenticity as brand trust’ argument. While PepsiCo’s commercial was not launched exclusively on social media, the negative backlash and sentiment across social networks was directed at both the company and Kendall Jenner, presenting the question as to which party in the partnership should be held responsible (if not both) in the events of a PR crisis. Due to limitations, this work is unable to debate influencer ethics from the perspective of the influencer; however, the brand-influencer-consumer pipeline should be considered as converging and not as a linear funnel.

The use of celebrity endorsements has been a popular strategy employed by companies since the late 1800s, a tactic employed to benefit from the celebrity’s popularity and, in addition, personify the brand (Morin, 2002). With the rise of social media, brands have continued this form of partnership with influencers to promote and endorse their products or services. Brands seek to benefit from the “close-knit” relationship of influencers and their audience in return for monetary compensation (non-monetary rewards are also common; however, due to monetisation being a core topic of this paper, we will only be exploring paid partnerships). While the extent of influencers’ persuasive power over perceived brand value is still not broadly researched, studies show that consumers trust influencers 12% more than their favourite celebrities, as well as

impacting consumer intent-of-purchase in a positive manner (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; Morning Consult, 2021).

Considering the influencer marketing industry grows significantly every year (its global market size soared from 6 billion to 16 billion in the last four years), it is safe to assume this will continue to be a popular strategy for marketers, therefore needing a careful evaluation in terms of ethical responsibility (Morning Consult, 2021). As Borchers & Enche (2022) argue in their study on influencer ethics, influencer marketing intersects various fields: public relations, journalism, and advertising; yet influencers are not usually qualified professionals in any of these fields and “lack professional ethics and standards”, causing influencer-specific concerns which can be overlooked by traditional marketing ethics. Moreover, they counter-argue that, although sources cite authenticity as the main ethical principle in the industry, other issues such as the failure to disclose sponsorships or using harmful and discriminating visual and verbal language does not always fit under the concept of authenticity (Wellman et al., 2020).

Authenticity, genuine interest, and expertise are key qualities consumers look for in influencers and which will determine if they follow through with a purchase or not. Concretely, 88% of Gen Z agree with this sentiment, and data suggests influencer sponsorships be more effective than branded posts (ibid.). Perhaps due to the effectiveness of “organic” and “authentic” recommendations, brands and influencers have fallen into ethically grey areas and are failing to disclose sponsored posts. Social media platforms have made mandatory for such disclosure to occur; yet many brands continue to work around platform regulations and policies, despite public scepticism and potential penalties and legal fees (Meta, n.d.; Audrezet & Charret, 2019). Failure to be transparent on either end is an evident breach of trust between the brand and consumer, and, arguably, in the attempt of forcing endorsements to appear authentic, the brand is causing the exact opposite.

If brands (and, therefore, corporations) use humanisation tactics by employing influencers as trusted voices to raise brand awareness and generate profit, all repercussions should be considered carefully since harmful practices detriment the brand, the influencer, and their partnership. Studies conducted on the subject reveal that disclosed sponsorships do not negatively affect purchase intention or brand trust;

moreover, disclosure of paid sponsorships contribute to perceptions of authenticity, transparency, and expertise. Whilst it could be argued that businesses have a limited power over what influencers decide to do after closing a deal, they do have the responsibility to protect the influencers' brand trust (as well as their own) to create favourable outcomes for both parties (Audrezet & Charret, 2019; Audrezet et al., 2020).

2.4 Conclusions & reflections

Brand trust integrates many elements of business practices and decisions of which brand humanisation has been the topic of discussion for the section above. While humanising a brand may be a 'trendy' marketing decision, research finds that poor execution of humanisation practices can prove harmful to businesses, consumers, and affiliates (Sharma & Rahman, 2022). Considering brand trust is essential for long-term success, it is imperative marketers include relevant departments (if not the entire company) in decision-making processes to establish coherent and effective advertising and marketing communications that benefit (i) the company, (ii) the customer, and (iii) society, without causing damage to neither (Swaan Aarons et al., 2014).

As explored in this chapter, authenticity and credibility are crucial for humanising and personifying a brand successfully; however, corporations that choose to take a step further and partake in conversations surrounding social issues should do so consciously and sensitively to avoid inflicting internal and external harm. Exploiting social movements for profit is an unethical business practice that should be discouraged: inauthentic communications *will* be noticed and will damage the company, the customer, and the social movement it intends to help. Moreover, it could be argued that 'woke-washing' and 'green-washing' are entirely ineffective and unsustainable as marketing strategies. Brands can still incite change and support socio-political or environmental causes, but the intent must be authentic to be credible (i.e., aligned with the company's corporate ethos).

Following this argument, humanisation tactics should be reviewed prior to implementation by ethical and social responsibility teams, or at least considered under these principles if there is no department to fulfil this need. PepsiCo, for example, could

have perhaps avoided its PR crisis –and the consequent brand trust deficit– if market research would have been carried out prior the production of the advert, undergone the necessary internal work to execute their indented message successfully, and considered ethical implications and possible social repercussions. Brands, although some aspire to ‘become human’, are not. Corporations have the available resources to create and incite positive change on society, the scale of which most individuals could not achieve in their lifetime, which is why social responsibility should be placed at the forefront of any marketing activity.

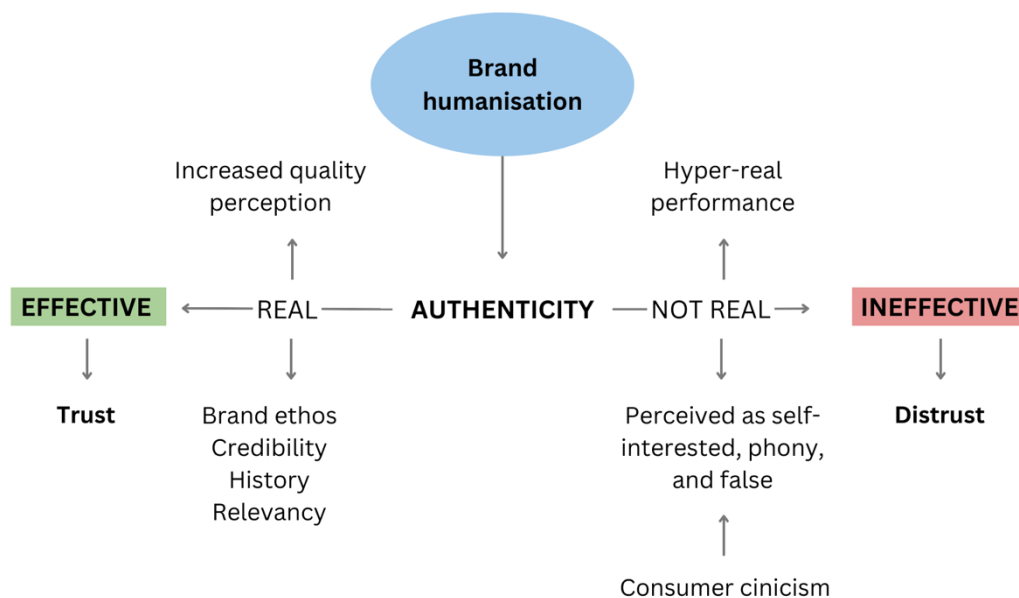
On the other hand, the debate continues considering businesses and consumers now coexist on social platforms that place consumers and businesses as equals. By narrowing the gaps between business and consumer, consumers’ communications and behaviours on social networks transcend from the online to the offline and vice versa, not necessarily representing a ‘real’ reality. This perceived reality and behaviour on social media can perhaps explain the humanisation phenomenon as brands believe they should cater and answer to consumers’ demands, and if they do not, they will perish. Social media is a fast-evolving technological tool, but its in-platform communications are changing just as fast. In other words, consumer behaviours can be fleeting and not all are to be acted upon, which reiterates the need for a strong corporate ethos, brand identity, and a holistic business approach when it comes to social media marketing.

For marketers, the takeaway of this chapter should be to align social media communications with corporate ethos and consider ethical implications when creating and executing social media strategies. As mentioned, today’s consumers are asking for accountability, responsibility and, most significantly, *action*. While the question does present itself of why corporations and companies are expected to create change and have a positive impact on society (instead of, for example, governments), it would be useful to bear in mind that many corporations, whether big or small, are contributors to current global issues, such as the environmental crisis or inter-generational poverty (United Nations, 2021; ILO, 2022). Although this work does not suggest social media marketers should attempt to rectify all of society’s ills –nor does it attempt to provide a solution to them–, it does emphasise the need to take marketing ethics seriously, especially considering social media’s impact on people’s lives.

To summarise the main ideas of this chapter, a diagram has been composed to illustrate brand humanisation strategies and evaluate their marketing effectiveness through the perspective of brand trust. Brand humanisation, as exposed in Figure 2 (below), has authenticity as its main dictator of effectiveness. If the authenticity is real, meaning it is aligned with corporate ethos, the brand has been historically linked to said aspect, it is relevant for the moment, and credible because it is not performative, marketing is more likely to be effective as it improves trust in addition to perceived product or service quality (disclosure: these concepts are not all-encompassing, but an example of identified aspect throughout this work). On the contrary, if brands do not possess these features or if the authenticity is performative (creating a hyper-reality), this will cause distrust, scepticism, and rejection, thus making marketing ineffective.

Figure 2

Brand humanisation: effective and ineffective practices



Source: own elaboration, 2023.

Trust, as explored in this chapter, is a crucial element for business success that entails many aspects of communications and business practices. When applied to social media, obtaining and maintaining trust can prove to be a challenge for many companies due to a conflict of interest between ethical practices and profit-making. Social media

platform design, as mentioned, already presents many ethical concerns; yet, while this design can benefit businesses and improve user experience, the entire process of gathering, processing, managing, and storing immense amount of user data by platforms and marketers/businesses continues to be one of the biggest ethical concerns today. The next chapter will attempt to illustrate this complex dilemma and offer marketers a deeper understanding of the ethical implications of advertising on social media.

CHAPTER 3: THE DATA PRIVACY DILEMMA

Data privacy is a common concern amongst social media users and one of the main challenges marketers face today. In this chapter we will contemplate the dilemma faced by platforms, businesses, and consumers when dealing with online privacy. The issues explored in the last chapter respond to marketing communications on social media (and beyond) from the perspective of brand trust – this chapter aims to connect data privacy to brand trust, social media marketing, and ethical responsibility.

Research studies present extensive information on data privacy from a variety of perspectives (users, platforms, governments, corporations, etc.); however, since the objective of this work is to propose an ethical guide for social media marketers, the findings and arguments presented in this section will serve as justification for said guide and to facilitate marketers with relevant and useful information. Following this work's holistic research approach, this chapter will explore data privacy in the context of platforms, businesses, consumers, and legal regulations.

The next section will follow a similar discussion as per last chapter; however, the aim is to communicate the importance and significance of privacy -particularly when operating on social media networks- and respond to why this is a pressing ethical issue in marketing.

3.1 Online privacy: what and why

The concept of privacy is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been the subject of much debate among academics. Regardless of how it may be categorised or understood (as a value, right, or behaviour), a general definition must be found to further explore and evaluate the ethical significance of data privacy. As illustrated by Acquisti et al. (2016), although academics have attempted to define privacy for many centuries, the connecting link between proposed definitions (i.e., the right to be left alone, the ability to control and protect personal data, a human right, or an integral part of human dignity, freedom, and autonomy) seems to be the presence of *boundaries* between the self and the public.

Defining privacy is further challenged by the fact that dictionaries are unable to provide a comprehensive understanding of the concept. Some noteworthy examples are ‘the freedom from unauthorised intrusion’ or ‘the state of being free from the attention of the public’ (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.; Oxford Dictionary, n.d.). These definitions coincide on freedom being a key component of privacy: freedom to not be watched and freedom to control the boundaries between the self and others; however, both examples use freedom in different contexts and allude to deeper unexplained concepts: free-will, control, and intrusion. For the purpose of this work, and in the context of social networks, we can interpret privacy as the ability an individual has to control how their data is used and processed, regardless of its larger societal implications and understanding that online privacy can also transfer offline (Mahmoodi et al, 2018).

Understanding privacy in different contexts has also been broadly theorised and discussed, yet scholars agree that context does not provide any clarity as to what privacy is, since its meaning is derived from external factors and does not allow privacy to have an identity of its own (Martin & Murphy, 2016). Furthermore, Solove (2008) attributes the inconclusive and abstract definition of this term—and its centuries-old debate—to the inability to adequately protect and safeguard privacy regardless of the many laws, policies, and regulations addressing privacy issues today.

Solove’s (2008) connection between etymology and the law is an interesting reflection that perhaps illustrates the philosophical dilemma of privacy: if we are unable to agree on what privacy is, how can we protect it? Why does it matter? Why is it important? The answer to these questions, just as morality itself, will always be subjective to the individual in question; yet, laws and regulations attempt to protect individuals and collectives from privacy violations and invasions because there are tangible repercussions and consequences to such: fraud, identity theft, harassment, physical unsafety, or loss of employment are some of the many repercussions of privacy violations. For businesses and organisations, loss of reputation, loss of customers, or termination of the company itself are also some of the consequences of privacy breaches (Martin & Murphy, 2016; Bayerl & Jacobs, 2022).

While privacy violations can be concrete, the line between legal and ethical is often blurred: legal does not mean ethical, which is one of the main ideas of this work

and illustrates why data privacy is such a significant and reoccurring issue in marketing. Prior to digital advertising as we know it today, marketers debated on whether it is ethical to acquire and store information and/or to supply third parties with customer data without their knowledge or consent (Bloom et al. 1994). This ethical dilemma has not been resolved and has become even more complex with the emergence of social media networks, considering these platforms operate by encouraging users to share personal information (i.e., information data) and use this data as the basis for their business model, as explained in last chapter.

The ethical questions presented by Bloom et al. (1994) likely responded to traditional marketing methods, yet it corroborates that data privacy is not a novel concern and has accompanied marketers for decades. As Jacobson et al. (2020) describe, social media marketing (and digital marketing in general) is not nearly as regulated or supervised as traditional marketing, which leaves marketers to either exploit the gaps in legislations and policies or to self-regulate. For social media marketers, ethical implications not only exist within the legal regulations of each territory, but within the platforms themselves. Marketers who choose to market through social media platforms are subjected to constant policy changes and regulations as well as new integrations in platform design; however, one of the main issues is that the speed at which the law operates does not always correspond to the speed at which technology develops (Van der Schyff, 2020).

As illustrated in this section, academics, philosophers, and marketers argue that the law has been unable to protect privacy due to a lack of clear understanding of the concept. Privacy protection has also been compromised since the Internet was made public due to the law's inability to 'keep up' with new technologies; however, protecting privacy should not only be the responsibility of lawmakers. For marketers, respecting users' privacy and protecting their data should not be a matter of 'legal' or 'illegal', but a matter of exercising good business practices from the perspective of social and ethical responsibility. Moreover, the relationship between law and morality is also another complex subject that presents conflicting ideas; therefore, this work urges marketers to reflect beyond what is lawful and consider how that affects their role as a marketer from a business and a societal perspective (Campbell, 2015).

Social media, however, presents further challenges and considerations due to the inherent nature of these platforms. Unlike traditional forms of media or communication, social media platforms are built on the exchange, creation, and consumption of user-generated content. As seen, in this context online privacy can be defined as an individual's ability to control the disclosure and use of personal information (Mahmoodi et al, 2018); however, as McFarland (2012) illustrates, it is crucial to recognize that privacy is not only an individualistic concern, but also a collective issue that affects individuals, communities, and society. For this reason, the next chapter, following a holistic framework, will explore data privacy from the perspective of users/consumers, businesses, and platforms.

3.2 The data privacy battle: Platforms vs. Businesses vs. Consumers

3.2.1 Platforms

As mentioned previously, platforms function by collecting and processing user data and use this gathered information to identify patterns in behaviour for economic gain. On the one hand, highly detailed user profiles allow platforms to understand their users' behaviours and interests and, therefore, can supply marketers with vast amounts of information to personify their advertising campaigns. On the other, these highly detailed profiles provide platforms with information on user behaviour, which can be used to further retain the users' attention and time spent on the platform. Although some academics, such as Jacobson et al. (2020), reason that these two uses of data respond to different goals, it could be argued that the long-term and final aim of both is to generate an economic return.

The advertising model, as briefly explained in Chapter 2, requires platforms to generate income by supplying advertising space to marketers. Considering social media networks are as of today free of monetary charge, it is understandable that social networks need to sustain their business in some way. However, as Saura et al. (2021) illustrate, ethical concerns arise when the design of these platforms –which aim to mine as much data as possible and keep users 'hooked' on the platform– is shaped by profit-making goals. The authors attribute addiction and other detrimental mental health issues, such as

depression and loneliness, as a direct consequence of unethical platform design. Furthermore, they argue that social media platform design is especially dangerous because it aims to modify user behaviour.

This study is one of the many which analyse and denounce social media platforms for their unethical practices in terms of data mining for psychological manipulation. The common issue seems to lie on employing these unethical practices for economic gain when it has been proven by multiple studies that social media –designed to maximise time spent on the platform– can be harmful to users and society (Saura et al., 2021; Jacobson et al., 2020). This concept was theorised by Harvard professor Shoshana Zuboff, who coined the term ‘surveillance capitalism’ to describe the monetisation of data collected through monitoring people’s online and offline behaviour. Zuboff (2018) considers user data as a form of currency, that is, the value with which platforms and advertisers create and sustain their economy. By not only collecting and analysing data, but selling it to third parties, these platforms’ business models can present a threat to users’ privacy, but also negatively impact individuals, collectives, and societies.

One of the most notorious and commonly used examples is that of the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal, where the latter was able to gather large amounts of data from Facebook users (87 million) and utilise this information to influence users’ behaviours and actions regarding the 2016 US Presidential election (Isaac & Hanna, 2018). The infamous data privacy breach forced Facebook to pay a large fine for violating their users’ privacy and misusing their data and, more significantly, forced the company to adopt new and improved security measures due to worldwide outcry. In addition, the scandal caused brand trust to plummet a 66% during the weeks after the case went public – which was the apparent cause of the company’s rebrand as *Meta* in 2021, although CEO Mark Zuckerberg claimed it was for other purposes. This case and its aftermath have been analysed and discussed extensively by news outlets and academic authors, sparking the conversation about ethical use of technology. Social media was said to disrupt free-thinking and the economy but also pose a threat to democracy (Isaac & Hanna, 2018; Members' Research Service, 2021).

Due to the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal, and rising concerns about user privacy, during the last few years new legislations and policies have emerged that

aim to safeguard people's privacy. For example, Europe implemented the General Data Protection Regulation in 2018 (EU, 2016) that required third parties to collect, process, analyse, and use data for legitimate purposes (again, *legitimate* does not mean ethical). In the US, however, no nationwide federal regulation has been enforced as of today, only state-exclusive regulations such as the California Consumer Privacy Act (CNBC, 2022; California Legislative Information, 2018). Due to this fact and the rising concerns over online privacy, operating system developers such as Apple and Google have taken the matter into their own hands by integrating their own privacy protection regulations into their devices. Facebook has openly disapproved of these measures since it will restrict data mining activities and, in consequence, minimise profit (Chen, 2021; Wakabayashi, 2022); however, it could be argued that harsh restrictions from software providers does not necessarily tackle or solve the problem since the root of the problem is perhaps another issue entirely.

The issue, according to Zuboff's theory, stems from the transactional value of sharing information online (Zuboff, 2018). Social media platforms are free because the value is not monetary; in other words, what is asked from users in return for the service is not money, but access to their personal data. Zuboff ties this concept with what she identifies as a new economic power, where personal data is even more valuable than money itself. Interestingly, Jaron Lanier (2018) also pinpoints the fault to the concept of a free web and free services. In his TED Talk 'How we need to remake the Internet' he recalls the early desire to make the Internet accessible to anyone and everyone, under the idea that knowledge should be universal. As he explains, the Internet quickly evolved to a point where this idea was no longer sustainable; yet many online platforms continue to operate under this ideal and exploit users' data in exchange for an allegedly free service. As Zuboff argues, these online services are *not* free: the value exchanged is not monetary, but far more personal.

Jaron Lanier (2018) offers an alternative in the form of a subscription business model, similar to that of streaming platforms such as Netflix or HBO, which would allow social media networks to annul the need to mass-exploit user data to sustain their business. While this is an interesting idea, which would require a prior evaluation to determine whether subscription costs would equate data mining profits for social media platforms to consider the option, it also clashes with what studies suggest users want and need.

Researchers have found that social media users expect a personalised experience, and that personalisation increases brand loyalty and perceived product or service quality (Shanahan et al., 2018). However, as the authors emphasise, personalisation on social media can quickly become detrimental to the brand if the customers feel uncomfortable with the level of personalisation and/or level of invasiveness. In addition, studies have found that social media users/consumers do not fully understand how their data is being used and even experience a phenomenon called ‘privacy fatigue’ (Choi et al., 2018).

Researchers have been attempting to decipher a pattern among social media consumers and their level of comfort with data mining and personalisation activities: studies show that there is confusion and contradiction as to what consumers across social media want and what their behaviour suggests. In the next section, we will evaluate what this confusion means for consumers and how this relates to brand trust through an ethical perspective.

3.2.2 Users

To understand users is to understand customers: as social media marketers, it is imperative to consider customers first and foremost as people who use social media. Their behaviour on the platform will directly impact how, when, and why they interact with our business, our content, and our marketing activities; for this reason, understanding consumers on social media is a crucial part of the marketing process which will directly affect marketing and advertising efforts, as the reputation, trust, and perception of the brand. However, before being users, users are human, and humans do not necessarily behave in coherent ways that can be measured and studied accurately.

Academics have attempted to decipher social media users’ behaviour regarding data privacy for many years: the results have been confusing, contradictory, and inconclusive (Kokolakis, 2017). Some common questions that have been proposed to understand the relationship between social media users and privacy are (i). do social media consumers understand how their data is being used and for what purposes; (ii). do consumers care about privacy; (iii). do consumers understand social media privacy policies; (iv). what makes a consumer want to share their data; or v. what brand

behaviours regarding data elicit a positive or negative consumer reaction. These questions are all significant for brand and customer relationships to prosper and for businesses to work on building trust with their online clientele.

In “Social media marketing: Who is watching the watchers?” the authors explore the concept of ‘marketing comfort’, the main idea being that consumers need to be comfortable with a brand’s activities and actions for marketing efforts to be effective and to reap the benefits of personalised advertisement (Jacobson et al., 2020). While other studies do not employ the naming of ‘marketing comfort’, they do support a similar idea, in which survey data reveals that the line between comfort and uncomfortable is *fine*: consumers can quickly become unnerved with brands level of personalisation if they feel like their privacy has been invaded, which can evidently cause damage to the brand’s trust and reputation and affect purchase decision (Shanahan et al., 2018). On the other hand, there is sufficient evidence to suggest these same consumers expect and desire a personalised experience, and personalisation has also been linked to perceived brand trust and even product quality (ibid.).

Interestingly, the concept of ‘perception’ reemerges once again in relation to the relationship between consumers and brands: it could be argued that perceived trust is not the same as a brand being trustful, yet this perception could very well foster the same benefits, regardless of the perception being true. This idea relates to the previously mentioned phenomenon of ‘privacy fatigue’, in which consumers are so overwhelmed with constant privacy policies and data protection alerts that they become mentally exhausted and adopt a ‘do not care’ attitude, which could put them in risky situations (Choi et al., 2018). In addition, (Martin & Murphy, 2016) also mentions how some consumers project their own expectations onto companies’ privacy policies that may or may not be grounded in any real evidence. Moreover, it has been proven that every year companies and social media platforms are making their privacy policies longer and more complicated to understand – in which the reading level currently stands at university level.

Considering only 29.5% of the EU population in 2021 had a university degree, and less than half of the U.S. population (37.5%), the reading level for privacy policies could be considered alienating to the greater portion of the European and U.S. population (Statista, 2022; Statista, 2022). Moreover, studies find that most users skip or skim

privacy policies because they find them time-consuming and confusing (Obar and Oeldorf-Hirsch, 2018). These facts, along with the prior observations, lead us to believe that there is a significant communication issue between platforms, businesses, and users. If users cannot comprehend privacy policies, but still accept due to fatigue, annoyance, or incomprehension, the responsibility should fall on the platform or business to make their policies understandable, readable, and encouraging to users to participate in the sharing of their private information. Making privacy policies deliberately unreadable and inaccessible to most of the population becomes an ethical problem since there is an evident imbalance of power between parties, regardless of the user having a university reading level or not.

Considering the previous arguments, there is sufficient evidence to support the claims that (i). people do not understand or fully understand privacy policies; and (ii). many companies are deliberately making their privacy policies obscure and unreadable. The next question, however, is whether people understand what privacy is altogether – if negative, how can they understand its value? How can they make the best decisions for themselves based of this lack of knowledge? Why should or would they care about something they cannot comprehend? Research finds that consumer attitudes and behaviours are inconsistent, reporting that a large percentage of consumers are concerned about their privacy, yet they continue to trade it for “relatively small rewards” (Kokolakis, 2017). However, as the author emphasises, these “small rewards” are highly contextual. Furthermore, in a world that is becoming increasingly digitalised, it could be argued that it is becoming harder for users to avoid sharing personal information online, whether that is through online banking, using a search engine, or watching a show on a streaming platform.

Regardless of their behaviour, businesses should have a moral responsibility of facilitating users clear and comprehensible information regarding their data. Although research suggests that consumers react positively to targeted advertising (as long as it is not invasive) and this increases profit, reputation, and quality of product/service perception, this does not mean that businesses or platforms should have to alienate the user they are making profit of off and obscure their data mining activities in order to make their business prosper. While researchers continue to investigate the privacy paradox, this work argues that, for businesses, consumer attitudes reveal a power imbalance regarding

consumer awareness, and should employ more transparent practices despite whether their consumers are clicking ‘accept’ on their privacy policies.

If several aspects of the communication between consumers and platforms/businesses, such as reading level, time consumption, or unreadability, is obstructing consumers from having a positive relationship with their data usage and, therefore, the business itself, the business in question is not practicing ethical or socially responsible activities – less so, when consumer data processing is what is allowing business to profit.

3.2.3 Businesses

When surveyed, marketers present reluctance to data privacy laws, with the idea that regulations will harm business and restrict their marketing activities (Qonsent, 2022). The conception that non-regulated data mining activities present the most positive outcomes in terms of business development is a false narrative considering study results. As with social media communications in Chapter 1, businesses who operate ethically and act in response to consumer attitudes regarding data privacy enjoy an improved ratio of success in customer-business relations (Martin & Murphy, 2016). Consumer-listening has been a well-used technique in marketing, which allows marketers to target consumers' needs, wants, behaviours, and concerns; yet, as explored in the last section, in some contexts consumer attitudes and behaviours can be contradictory and confusing, which leaves consumers unsatisfied and marketers unable to act effectively.

As researchers emphasise, marketers should take consumers into consideration and treat them as a crucial part of the marketing process (Jacobson et al., 2020). Evidence presented by studies show that, although there seems to be a privacy paradox regarding consumer behaviours and attitudes, the reality is that marketers (and, therefore, businesses) are not connecting or adapting to consumers' needs. If -as research suggests-, consumers are confused about how their data is collected and handled, for what purposes it is used, or what value or benefit they obtain, in addition to being concerned about their privacy and data violations and breaches, the least a business can do is provide a safe

space where the consumer feels heard, understood, and is part of the value exchange process.

There are sufficient studies that demonstrate most consumers (behaviour varies across industries and demographics) are willing to give up a certain degree of their personal information for a personalised and valuable experience, especially younger generations such as Gen Z (Adobe, 2019). The underline of this condition is that consumers require a valuable experience and do not wish to feel vulnerable, taken advantage of, or left in the dark about how their data is used. As seen with privacy policy behaviours, only because users are clicking 'accept' does not mean they are comfortable with the privacy experience the business or marketer is offering, more so if the interactions can be deemed as alienating, confusing, or off-putting.

For marketers and businesses in a digital age where privacy concern is prevalent and active, making decisions that difficult the communications and trust between consumer and business defeats the purpose of marketing efforts. As argued by Morey et al. (2015), it is not sufficient for businesses to merely abide by regulations, there needs to be open communication with consumers to build trust (or continue doing so) and for both parties to obtain the benefits associated with personalisation. While resources vary on which concepts are favourable to implement for the benefit of consumers and businesses, three common denominators researchers agree that have a positive impact on this value exchange are transparency, control, and vulnerability (Swani et al., 2021; Bleier, 2020).

While some studies may word these concepts differently, the general idea seems to be similar across sources: that transparency allows users to feel more comfortable sharing personal information as they are aware of the data exchange processes and purposes; however, if they deem the data collected as too sensitive, they might acquire negative attitudes and refuse to share information. Control over their data, on the other hand, is what across surveys consumers demand from businesses. While it could be argued that this last concept may be a responsive behaviour to the distrust caused by ongoing privacy violations and breaches, it is sensible to assume that consumers wish for more control if they cannot feel corporations can be trusted with their sensitive information. Lastly, when businesses respect and understand that the sharing of personal data can leave consumers vulnerable, and when they do not overstep the sensitivity of the

data requested, consumer trust improves (Swani et al., 2021; Martin & Murphy, 2016; Jacobson et al., 2020).

Personalised advertising can have the quality of benefiting the marketer and the consumer simultaneously without having to compromise privacy, security, or detriment the trust between business and consumer. Studies and marketing organisations are appealing for a customer-focused approach to marketing in response to widespread and increasing data privacy concerns (Brodherson et al., 2020; Forbes Business Council, 2023). Furthermore, by integrating data and privacy protection into marketing strategies, businesses and marketers can enjoy the benefits from improved trust and decreased privacy concerns and use customer-first and data protection strategies as competitive advantage (Bleier et al., 2020). However, industry professionals also urge other marketers to humanise the data protection process: technical solutions, although essential, are not enough to sustain a customer-first strategy. As argued in this chapter, the key is to involve the consumer in data privacy processes, focus on improving communications, and ensure consumers are comfortable and finding value in these communications.

3.3 Conclusions and reflections

The issue of data privacy in the context of social media marketing is a complex matter which is constantly evolving in face of new regulations and technology integrations. The relationship between businesses/marketers, consumers, and platforms is currently poor due to dissatisfaction with data mining processes and privacy protection. Data harvested from users' online behaviour —often cross-platform— for targeted advertising can cause discomfort and privacy concerns in users who feel like their privacy has been invaded and violated (Jacobson et al., 2020). With rising consumer concerns over privacy, which has been found to decrease trust, click-through rate, and purchase intention, businesses marketing on social media are left to work with a highly delicate and complicated dilemma.

As covered in the last two chapters, personalised advertising works by gathering large amounts of personal and behavioural data from users and processing it to create detailed profiles of consumers' interests, desires, personality, or identity, among other

human factors, but also to allow algorithms to anticipate their moods or behaviours (Saura et al., 2021). Marketers have been using this data-based model to improve marketing effectiveness on social media: marketers now target individual consumers instead of large segments, which means that for users advertising is personal and catered to their identity, driving more sales than non-personalised advertising. While research shows users can react positively and prefer this individually catered marketing (depending on the context and conditions), privacy concerns continue to rise due to poor privacy protection protocols, ambiguous and confusing communications, and an overall disregard for consumers' interests, which leaves consumers feeling vulnerable and distrustful (Martin & Murphy, 2016; Rodenhousen et al., 2022).

Instead of working to create a positive and valuable experience for all parties involved, there seems to be conflicts of interests from the platforms' side and a lack of transparent communication from businesses marketing on social media. Social media networks, as explored in the first chapter, have been heavily criticised for utilising user data for profit and to modify user behaviour, which evidently rises a number of ethical concerns (Zuboff, 2018). While marketers and businesses operating on social media networks may not be able to directly change platforms' policies, they *are* an integral part of the data mining process and benefiting from unethical platform design, therefore, should also hold ethical and social responsibilities. More significantly, their role in social media platforms' business model has enough leverage to be able to change consumer-platform-business relations for the better and implement a holistic and trust-based business model.

As Boston Consulting Group's report on privacy emphasises, marketers are faced with the challenge of providing customised experiences to consumers who want a personalised experience but feel distrustful. The logical response would not necessarily be to eliminate this effective marketing method, but to communicate transparently and educate consumers on how, why, and for what their data is used. Implementing actions that increase trust with consumers and adapting business to a digital environment that often poses a threat to users' privacy and wellbeing would be considered a strategic and optimum response to privacy concerns, supporting the idea that businesses should put into effect internal regulations—in addition to legal enforcements—that will improve and

protect businesses and users, by working from an ethical and social responsibility standpoint (Swani et al., 2021).

Privacy is a historically complex and elusive term to define and, therefore, to protect. However, just because laws are unable to enforce protection over every single condition or aspect of privacy (in any of its contexts), it does not mean that platforms or businesses should take advantage of legislation and regulation loopholes and exploit users' private information, regardless of the purpose or the users' consent. In addition, it could be argued that consent cannot hold its veracity if users are unable to comprehend the conditions of, for example, privacy policies. The transaction between consumers and platforms/businesses (i.e., access to data in exchange for a product or service) could be considered unethical if businesses are deliberately making data privacy communications deceptive and inaccessible to users. Businesses that are not purposefully misleading users, yet do not create a safe space and transparent information flows, may still be responsible for harming users and business itself.

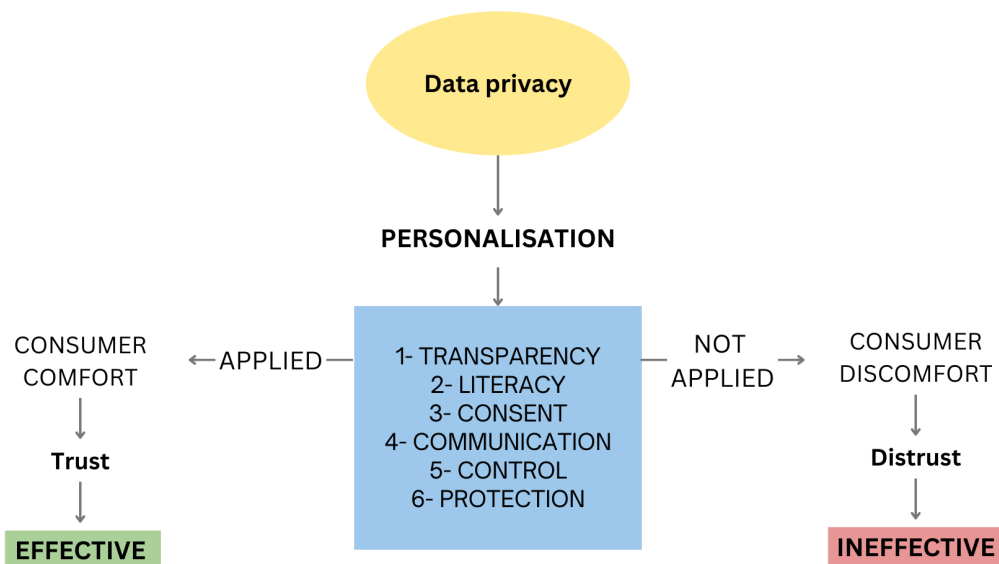
This chapter also focused on supporting the idea that marketers should place consumers' interests on the centre of their marketing efforts, which has been proven to be more effective than targeting users with no regard for their comfort level. When consumers feel their privacy is being respected and protected, meaning their privacy concern is low, they are willing to share more information – when consumers' trust is high, marketing efforts are more effective. This phenomenon, however, can vary across industries since some sectors are more prone to inspire more privacy concerns than others. Regardless of the industry, this work urges marketers and businesses to adopt a holistic approach to data privacy and practice consumer-listening to adapt and cater communications and marketing strategies to their reality: trust, as also explored in Chapter 2, is a key factor for business success and it would be counterproductive to damage it for short-term benefits (Morey et al., 2015).

To summarise consumer behaviour and marketing effectiveness, Figure 3 (below) has been formulated to aid the comprehension on the subject. Advertising personalisation or customisation, although expected and desired by consumers, can provoke two outcomes: consumer comfort and consumer discomfort. Consumer comfort, as explained previously, improves brand trust and ultimately marketing effectiveness. On the contrary,

if consumers feel discomfort with data practices, trust declines and marketing effectiveness decreases. After a comprehensive study this work has identified transparency, literacy, consent, communication, data protection, and consumers' ability to control their data to be key concepts and tools that, when applied, leads to consumer comfort. These concepts are not all-encompassing and can be interchanged depending on the industry or consumer demographic.

Figure 3

Data privacy: Consumer behaviour and marketing effectiveness



Source: own elaboration, 2023.

CHAPTER 4: A SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ETHICAL GUIDE PROPOSAL

The digital landscape has evolved rapidly since its conception and, overtime, technology has been integrating itself into every human life and experience, online and offline. For social media platforms, this means improved integrations and new innovations both for user experience and for commerce. For marketers, social media marketing (or ‘social marketing’) has become an essential and powerful tool to drive and grow business, by reaping benefits from the digital communities, networks, and social communications inhabiting on social media platforms. However, as exposed in this work, these new paradigms present significant ethical concerns due to the current business models of social networks and unregulated and deceitful marketing communications and incentives. Data mining has been denounced as the primary method for platforms to, firstly, sell intricate and profitable user data to advertisers and marketers so they can make profit through hyper-targeted advertising and, secondly, to create detailed user profiles to increase platform usage and generate more consumption (Zuboff, 2018).

Many academics and marketing professionals have analysed, assessed, and exposed the unethical use of social media for marketing purposes considering both the current nature of the platforms and the unregulated marketing activities that occur on the networks. Ethics in marketing has been a broadly studied subject prior to the conception of the Internet, where concepts such as data privacy were already being discussed. When the Internet became public, marketers and academics expressed their concerns over the unregulated use of this technological power and urged marketers not to abuse users’ privacy (Bloom et al, 1994). Over two decades later, data privacy is still a major concern for Internet users and, arguably, more pressing than ever. Data collection and processing occurs both online and offline for many people who use any type of technological device regardless of the purpose: this means that people are under constant surveillance, and many are unaware of how, why, or for what purpose it occurs.

It is crucial to emphasise that data mining and surveillance is enabled by technological advancements: platforms are able to gather, collect, process, analyse, and utilise vast amounts of real-time data because current technology can power it – something that it was not able to do a few decades ago. Moreover, algorithms that dictate

what appears on users' feeds, what advertisements to show, what news and content to suggest, have been proven to be biased and unobjective, which have been linked to social issues such as discrimination and extremism as well as mental health issues like addiction and depression. As Saura et al. (2021) argue, it is not social media (or technology) that is inherently unethical, it's the overall design that powers it. By operating on social media, marketers are already working on and with an unethical tool that profits from users and can present harmful outcomes.

Marketers have been employing social media for marketing purposes for evident reasons: in terms of advertising, with vast amount of available user data, marketers can not only hyper-target individuals, but can also estimate the impact and ROI of the campaign. This means that social media marketing has the power to yield positive and fairly accurate results for a lesser cost than traditional marketing, which also involves reducing the risk of investment and the ability to analyse ad performance in real time. Social communications on social networks, as explored in this work, can also improve consumer trust and relationship, thereby driving business and longevity (Shanahan et al., 2018). The highly debated dilemma of current marketers operating on this digital landscape can be understood as such: marketers are aware of the unethical design of social networks; however, this unethical design enables them to drive business and generate profit. Nevertheless, as explored in this work, the belief that one must be unethical to drive and sustain a business is false, harmful, and, for lack of a better word, lazy.

By deflecting and ignoring responsibility, social media marketing can present an array of short-term benefits. As explored in this work, new regulations and legislations—such as the General Data Protection Regulation—, have been enforced in the past few years to protect the privacy of citizens and homogenise the legalities of data collection across Europe. However, current legislations have been found to fall short in protecting online consumers from the various repercussions of data mining and its uses. Therefore, marketers are still required to self-regulate if they wish to practice ethical business and benefit from the opportunities social media and digital marketing can offer. The preconception that ethical business is a barrier to profitability is, arguably, a poor excuse to deflect responsibility: unethical business practices, as the ones explored in this work, are much easier to adopt and execute as they may not require as much prior work, external and internal effort, or holistic integrations (Kamila & Jasrotia, 2023).

This section aims to provide key ethical considerations for marketers who wish to start or continue implementing ethical business practices when marketing and advertising on social media. Although this work has presented arguments to help marketers understand why unethical practices can be counterproductive and harm business, it is also imperative to emphasise that ‘business’ should not be the sole reason to adopt ethical measures. While ethical marketing can help avoid negative repercussions and even improve customer relations, reputation, and profit –as explored in detail in this work– it could also be argued that applying ethical practices for the purpose of generating a reward (e.g., profit) is, in itself, unethical, as one would be acting in self-interest (Stark, 1993). Therefore, this work urges marketers to reflect on motive and purpose prior taking action and make decisions that are based on the company’s values and philosophy.

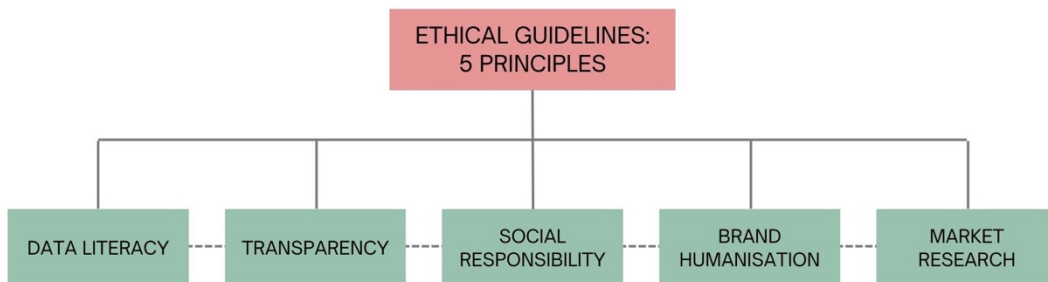
The following guidelines have been composed based on the reviewed literature, journals, articles, scientific studies, and market surveys. The principles serve as a response to the most prominent ethical concerns and dilemmas explored in this work, which are data privacy, social media personalisation, and brand humanisation, as the connection between them. These are concepts that marketers must –directly or indirectly– deal with when operating on social media and digital platforms and which affect business success, consumer wellbeing, and society. The issues and dilemmas behind these marketing aspects, such as transparency or privacy protection, are assessed to provide a positive and beneficial solution to all stakeholders, relating them to their respective concerns.

These principles are divided into the five pillars as exemplified in the outline below (Figure 1): (i) data privacy and consumer comfort, (ii) transparency and brand trust, (iii) social responsibility and ad personalisation, (iv) brand identity and humanisation, and (v) marketing research and education, with the aim to provide marketers with clear and accessible actions to achieve more ethical and effective marketing strategies. The propositions will be described and justified based on the explanation of the concepts in this work, followed by concise and practical actions that marketers can follow and implement to give response to their respective dilemmas and concerns; however, these concepts are interconnected between them and implementing actions from one pillar can help the objectives of the other. For example, transparency can improve brand trust

through brand humanisation or data protection strategies, and social responsibility incentives can be achieved through market research or advertisement personalisation.

Figure 4

Ethical guidelines for social media marketing



Source: Own elaboration, 2023.

4.1 Ethical guidelines

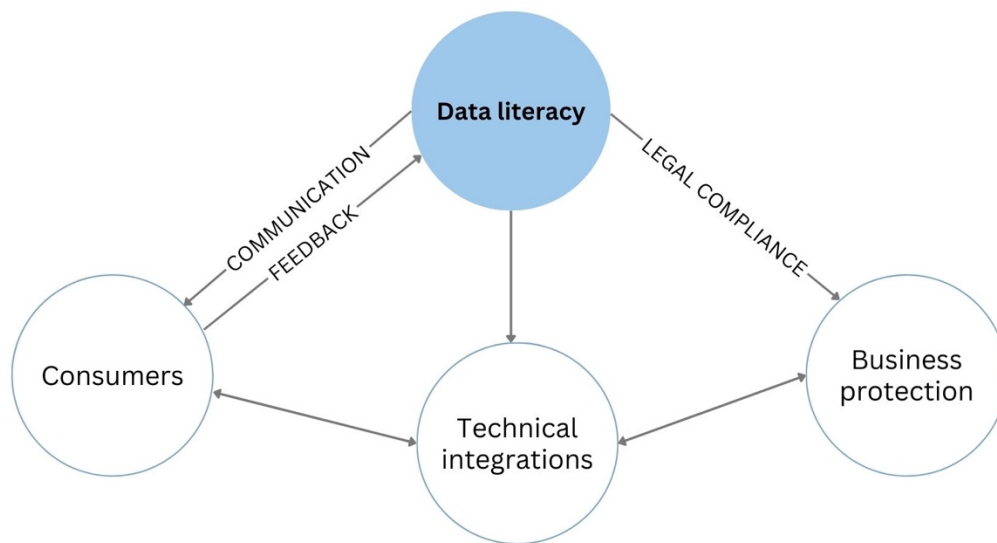
1- Data literacy: a privacy-first framework for marketing actions

Figure 5 encompasses a suggested framework for marketers to implement measures that responds to consumers, technical integrations, and business compliance when dealing with data privacy concerns. Firstly, by adopting data literacy as a marketing objective, marketers will be able to effectively use their knowledge and skills to communicate with consumers and listen to their behaviour and concerns regarding data privacy communications, therefore implementing the changes necessary that directly respond to possible consumer distrust and discomfort with business practices. This could be in the form of easier-to-read policies or more integrated tools that allow consumers to control how their data is used. In addition, data literacy will allow marketers to understand

and implement the software and technical integrations that both consumers and the business need to secure, store, and control data. Lastly, by becoming data literate, marketers can better protect businesses from possible data breaches and violations, complying with the law and federal and platform regulations, which will also aid in increasing consumer trust and will require technical investment and maintenance.

Figure 5

Data literacy framework proposition



Source: Own elaboration, 2023.

As explored in this work, people's concern over privacy is not a novel concept; however, as new (and faster) digital developments and integrations emerge, the more will marketers need to keep educated and updated on data privacy concerns and their consumers' behaviours and reactions. If marketers are not aware of privacy changes, do not understand the significance of the data they work with, nor their own consumers' behaviours, it will be harder to communicate openly and effectively with consumers and sustain consumer trust. Therefore, **active listening and acting on consumer feedback** will be crucial to navigate data privacy and enforce new strategies and integrations for consumer comfort.

On this line, data literacy as a strategy not only applies to the company or marketers themselves, but also consumers: as emphasised in this work, most consumers do not understand privacy policies or, for that matter, the meaning or use of their data. **Educating consumers on their data**, why it is important, and for what purposes it is used will allow consumers to feel included and respected. Marketers should integrate comprehensive measures that will add real value to business-consumer interactions: for example, if consumers are struggling to understand policies, marketers should make them as accessible as possible by using readable language and formats. If consumers do not understand what their data is being used for, provide them with information and examples through engaging resources such as videos, interactive messages, podcasts, blog posts, etc.

By involving consumers in ‘the data conversation’ marketers will be empowering consumers by helping them understand data processing and allowing them to make decisions based on knowledge and transparency. Marketers should also **allow consumers to choose** what they would like to share, as perhaps they are not comfortable sharing certain information. It is preferable to obtain a small amount of information, such as age, gender, or job position, rather than nothing at all. It is also imperative for marketers to **respect users and consumers preferences**: using data that has been collected without the consumer’s consent is evidently a violation of their privacy and a fast way to harm customer relationships and detriment business. Implementing **easy-to-use tools** so users can manage their data activities and consent is also a good way to improve trust and engagement.

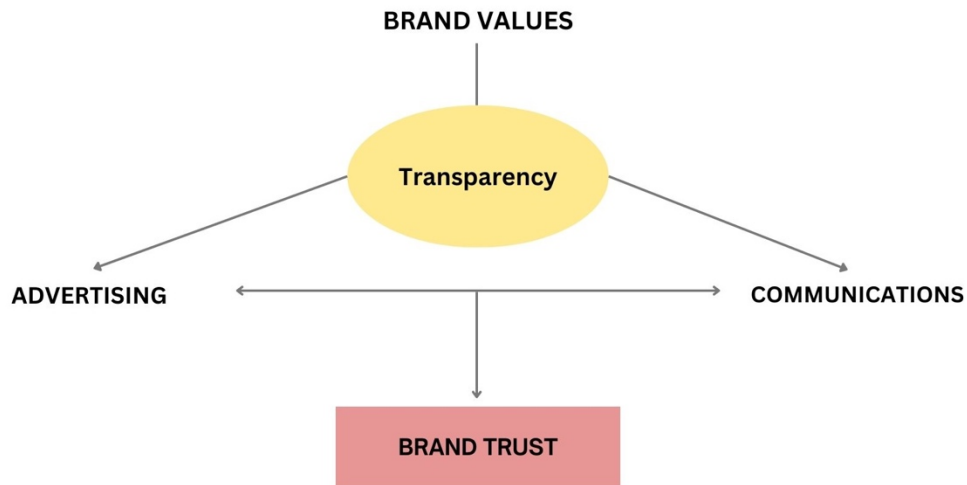
The latter may perhaps be harder to execute when dealing with social media platforms: although social networks give marketers easy access to vast amount of user information –marketers having no control over how it is collected or processed– it does not mean marketers should use it, or at least not in those conditions. Marketers can keep consumers informed and **offer valuable content** while opting for **less invasive profile targeting** – perhaps the latter will affect marketing effectiveness, but it is imperative to consider how much data is truly necessary to reach the right people and generate ROI. As previously seen, social media advertising can cause discomfort in consumers when they feel advertisers have violated their privacy (e.g.: incessant, cross-platform advertising that uses extremely specific behavioural information).

As Jacobson et al. (2020) suggest, marketers should consider all stakeholders involved in marketing actions and develop a framework that can be applied prior and after marketing efforts, having the consumer at the front of such. This means that **constant feedback and work** is a must since, as Kamila and Jasrotia (2023) point out, it cannot be expected of marketers to know what is best for consumers or society itself: marketers must act in base if real behaviours and concerns, not assumptions.

2- Transparency: a tool for brand trust

Figure 6 corresponds to an outline of the primordial connection of employing transparency as a marketing and communication incentive to increase and maintain brand trust. Transparency should be adopted as a brand value regardless of it not being explicitly stated as so, on which marketing decisions should be based. Being transparent as a brand can include many aspects; however, for marketers –among other topics not covered in this work–, transparency involves advertising practices and communications.

By creating transparent advertising models and a transparency-based relationship with consumers, brands will be able to build brand trust. In this table, advertising and communications are interconnected because transparency should be applied to both for it to have an effect. If, for example, marketers are employing transparent methods for data collection, but are not communicating it to consumers, there will be no effect. Likewise, if marketers communicate transparently about their data collection methods, but do not apply the advertising models or tools necessary to protect consumers' data, trust will not increase and may even do the contrary.

Figure 6*Marketing transparency framework*

Source: Own elaboration, 2023.

As key factor in building and keeping brand trust, marketing practices that lack transparency may cause consumers to feel confused, apprehensive, and suspicious. In terms of advertising, transparent privacy policies are crucial to communicate effectively with consumers; however, as explained in last point, transparency without proper communication will not be effective if consumers cannot comprehend the language used in said policies or if it is excessively lengthy or tedious. **Work along consumers** to find and integrate the tools that are most useful and effective.

As marketers in a company, working with a transparent approach may mean working closely with the communications department, if there is one. If not, marketers may need to expand their knowledge and **educate themselves** of effective communications skills that benefit both the company and consumers. Being transparent does not mean oversharing, it means respecting and valuing people, whether they are customers or not. **Authenticity and honesty** are also great players when dealing with social media or online communities, community managers should have as a priority to build relationships and communities on trust and honesty. Openly answering consumers'

questions and concerns with solutions will also add value to other users and positively improve brand reputation (Morey et al., 2015).

Proper disclosure when operating with paid collaborations or sponsorships with other brands or influencers, as seen in Chapter 2, is also crucial aspect of transparency as a core marketing value. Non-disclosure can quickly become a reason to get banned on many social media platforms on top of losing consumer trust. From a marketers' perspective, there is no sound reason to purposefully hide a paid collaboration: influencer and brand marketing has become a standard marketing strategy and social media users are no stranger to it – manipulating an audience for profit is evidently unethical and does not necessarily outweigh the many risks associated with non-disclosure. **Choosing the right influencers or brands** to collaborate with, for example, can be more effective than choosing a collaboration based on hype or trendiness. Collaborations can be one of the strongest forms of effective marketing when said partnership makes sense for both the brand and the collaborator – shared interests, audiences, values, and purpose can help ensure marketing effectiveness and strengthen brand awareness (Wellman et al., 2020).

In the process of finding the right collaborators to work with or finding the right strategies or tools for data management, marketers will most likely make mistakes or find that a certain campaign has failed due to unprofessionalism, scandals, or unforeseen circumstances. **Accountability and responsibility** are also imperative to maintain brand trust – consumers will react better and maintain loyalty and trust if the brand shows progression and transparency (Webb, 2021; Edelman, 2021). In addition, marketers, along with other relevant departments, should also develop a **crisis management** framework that will aid them in the recovery in case of harmful backlash or criticism.

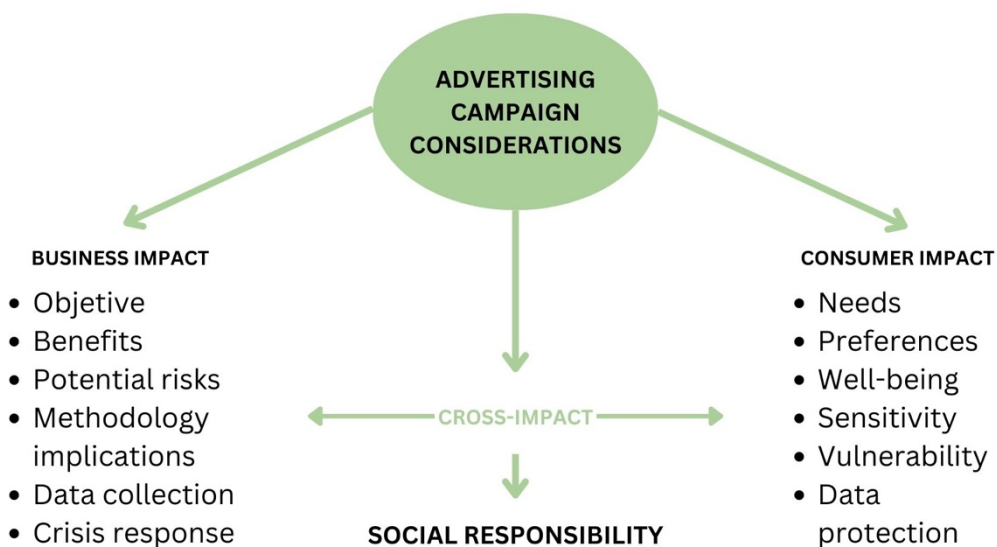
3- Social responsibility: personalisation & targeting

The diagram of Figure 7 serves to illustrate the example aspects to consider when developing a targeted advertising campaign on social media. As explored abundantly in this work, lack of consideration for consumers' comfort, wellbeing, and needs can cause brand damage and affect the effectiveness of the campaign. For consumers, unethical personalisation could cause an array of harmful repercussions such as discrimination,

extremism, manipulation, and many psychological issues. This diagram aims to offer examples of some key concepts to question before launching a paid campaign, to ensure marketing effectiveness and, more importantly, the impact upon consumers' experience and lives. By evaluating the cross-impact of consumers and the business in question, marketers can plan and adapt strategies to diminish risk and act responsibly towards the social and digital ecosystem.

Figure 7

Prior Campaign Consideration Example



Source: Own elaboration, 2023.

One of the main points of reflexion in this work, as of those contemplating social media ethics and advertising, is that social media has the power to improve social relations as well as deteriorate them. Social media is a clear asset for marketers who wish to improve customer relations, brand awareness, and generate profit; however, users are also a part of this transaction, and the ways marketers use social media platforms can have an impact on their personal lives. Before being consumers, consumers are users, and before that, they are people. **Educating ourselves on marketing impact** and the messages we are forwarding to society are part of being responsible marketers and professionals. Believing that social media marketing activities are devoid of “real” impact on individuals

and society is irresponsible, especially when choosing to exploit people in a vulnerable state.

From a psychological perspective, social media platform design has been found to negatively affect individuals in the form of addiction, depression, or loneliness, among other issues. Social media has also been criticised for being anti-democratic, biased, and for perpetuating extremism (e.g., the Cambridge Analytica case seen in Chapter 3, although there are many more examples). When marketers advertise through social media, it is crucial to **evaluate how algorithms may interpret data** and how this can have an impact on individuals and society. **Advertising should add value to consumers**, not further discriminatory, hateful, biased, or stereotypical messages ideals or, for that matter, use user profiling to influence demographics who are already vulnerable.

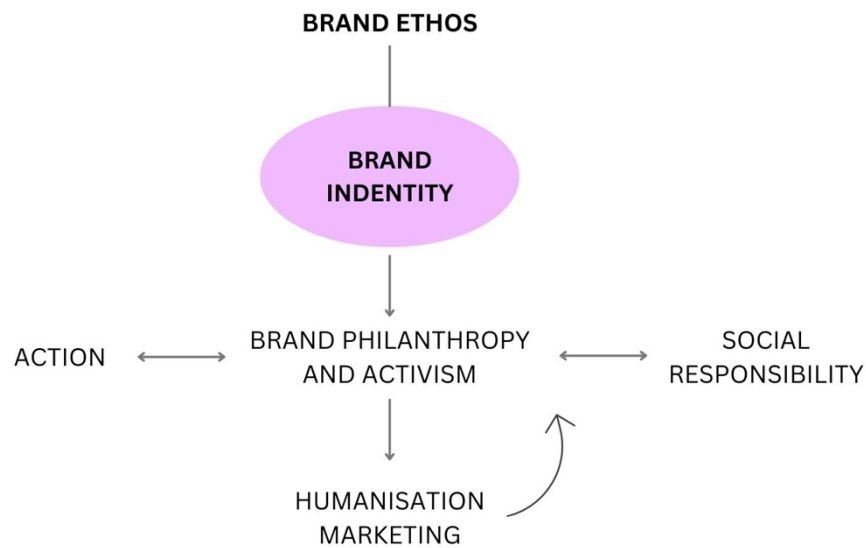
When launching targeted campaigns, a holistic approach may be advisable to consider as many perspectives as possible. **Working with relevant departments** such as Social Responsibility, Branding, or Communications could prove valuable to marketing and advertising professionals who wish to push a campaign that deals with sensitive topics, such as social issues or political campaigns, or could potentially be harmful to individuals, for example, encouraging overconsumption, addiction, or anxiety. **An established protocol** that considers consumers (and society) as the main beneficiaries (value) and goes through several steps to question marketing decisions would be optimal to ensure effective communication and targeting.

This work, thus, advises against targeting individuals based on race, gender, sexual preference, health status, or age, among many other factors. As Raituloto (2021) emphasises, **marketers should focus on consumers' needs, preferences, and well-being** rather than basing advertising campaigns on assumptions and personal beliefs. In addition, marketers should evaluate the risks and consequences of acquiring third-party data for marketing purposes – by purchasing data from other sources from their own, it can prove difficult to distinguish if the data was ethically harvested or whether consent was given, among other concerns. Regardless, using first-party data can prove more beneficial since there is complete control over the flow of information and the target audience, as consumers' consent and awareness. Therefore, excluding extenuating circumstances, this work also urges marketers to use first-party data for marketing

campaigns and **avoid the possible privacy violations and unethical practices that come with purchasing third-party data, as well as consumers' discomfort** (Martin, 2020; Bayerl & Jacobs, 2022).

4- Brand identity: humanisation and social responsibility

Figure 8 responds to a proposed process marketers should execute prior executing 'humanised' marketing campaigns. As will be explained in detail below, marketing campaigns that focus on social issues, activism, or any other form of humanisation should do so when it is aligned with the brand's ethos and is coherent with the brand identity. Linking a brand with social issues or movements must be paired with real action for it to be credible and authentic, as considering social responsibility of the campaign in question. Humanised marketing campaigns should be conceptualised after analysing and evaluating these prior steps, and not the other way round. However, for further consideration, after planning a campaign, marketers should ensure they are acting responsibly and adding value to society rather than using it for profit (hence the arrow pointing back to brand philanthropy and activism as social responsibility).

Figure 8*Ethical brand humanisation process*

Source: Own elaboration, 2023.

The ‘brand identity’ guideline or principle responds one of the main issues studied in Chapter 2, which was brand identity and how this relates to brand trust. On said chapter, the phenomenon of brand humanisation was explored: as brands have become part of the social media ecosystem, they have taken ‘life of their own’ and have not only begun weighing into social issues such as climate change, racial discrimination, or feminism, but have used them as a marketing strategy. This form of marketing can be high-risk when not aligned with corporate ethos, history, and values (Mirzaei et al., 2022). Therefore, brands (and through them, marketers) that choose to link themselves to social causes should do so with consideration, commitment, and purpose.

To create a consistent brand identity, marketers should **revert to brand values**, and align marketing practices and activities to such. Social media can be a great network to find new customers; however, not everyone is going to connect with your brand and content. Instead of trying to “fit in” everywhere, marketing incentives should part from trying to **find the right audience**, i.e., people with similar values and philosophy who are more likely to connect with the brand. Following user/consumer trends can be beneficial

for exposure and to acquire new consumers; however, if these trends are not aligned with corporate ethos or brand identity, customers will feel distrustful since those “core” values will feel exchangeable, transactional, and inauthentic.

Marketers should question if their strategies to acquire and retain customers align with the overall brand identity. As seen in Chapter 2, using social causes to gain brand awareness and be perceived favourably by possible consumers could have the opposite effect, especially if the brand had not had a history and prior commitment to the cause. Brands that commit to a cause, whether it be sustainability, global warming, animal welfare, or LGBTQ+ rights, and **show real passion and action throughout time** will be perceived as more authentic when debating a cause on social media or using said cause for marketing efforts (Kamila & Jasrotia, 2023).

In addition, authenticity can also be shown through **transparency and honesty** with consumer communications, whether it be through the company’s Cookie Policy or a product’s description and benefits. This work advises brands to carefully consider humanising a brand and what that entails for the different departments working on it: using human-like qualities on social media to improve business relations can bring an array of benefits; however, a humanified brand is also vulnerable to human mistakes. Being consistent, authentic, and transparent as a brand can prove to be hard when social media is incessantly encouraging users (and brands) to participate, interact, and jump on every trend; yet, **marketing strategies should be developed by considering key questions**, such as: ‘Does this decision make sense for the brand?’, ‘What is the true objective of this campaign?’, ‘Is this decision considering all stakeholders?’, or ‘What value are we bringing to this conversation/issue?’.

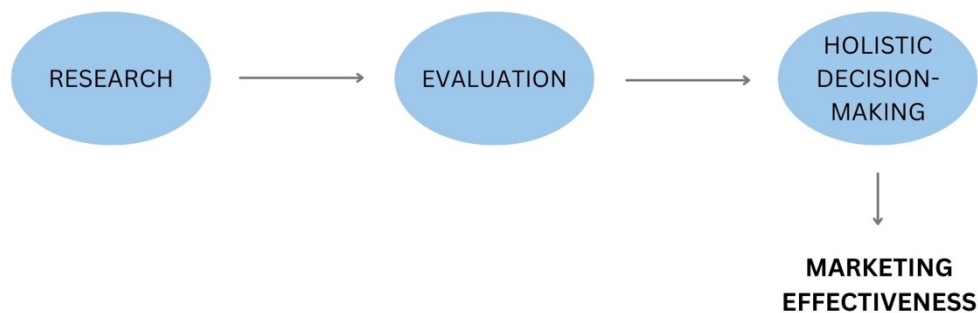
5- Evolution and growth: research, adapting, and holistic decision-making

For the last principle, the diagram presented in Figure 9 was constructed, which is perhaps the easiest and most achievable proposal so far. As will be justified theoretically below, this framework parts from using research in its many forms as a tool to grow as marketing professionals and avoid assumptions regarding our consumers’ or society’s needs, wants, and behaviours. When planning any type of campaign, research

should be carried out as the first step – whether that is analysing our competitors, gaining more knowledge on a subject, or asking our consumers for feedback. The next step would be to analyse and evaluate this new information to apply it to our work and/or campaign at hand, and take time to consider how this affects business, consumers, and other stakeholders. The third step would be to make business decisions based on a holistic process, which can also mean including relevant departments or external consultations for added expertise. Creating well-researched campaigns will aid in marketing effectiveness and will also increase the professionalism of marketers.

Figure 9

Growth and evolution through literacy and research



Source: Own elaboration, 2023.

Research-based decisions also allow marketers to avoid using the same marketing, advertising, and communication strategies that may be irrelevant, counterproductive, or ineffective. Research may take on different roles depending on the issue or marketing objective at hand: when dealing with data privacy and how to improve customer-business relations, data literacy --as described in the first guideline--, means **keeping updated with relevant changes in regulations, adapting to consumer behaviours** and concerns, **implementing or changing data protection incentives**, and **educating consumers** on

why and how their data is being used. This work encourages marketers to **include research as a key marketing strategy** that will allow the evolution and growth of marketing practices.

Furthermore, data and ethical literacy will be crucial to **maintain relevance and brand trust** within the scope of social media: as new technological integrations and platforms emerge, it will become even more imperative for marketers to keep educated to continue practicing ethical marketing and protect business and consumers. (Jacobson et al., 2020). Considering privacy is a significant concern for consumers, and it has been even prior the Internet, it is perhaps safe to believe that this issue will not be appeased anytime soon. Therefore, marketers should **establish clear privacy strategies** that will also **allow change, development, and adaptation** in face of consumer feedback, platform regulations, and governmental laws.

On the other hand, research allows improved decision making regarding social media communications. Prior market research can help prevent brands from supporting a cause in an insensitive and offensive manner and risk widespread backlash due to poor messaging and ignorance. In these cases, marketers and relevant teams should remember that **consulting with experts** can be a great asset when choosing to execute high-risk campaigns. Regardless the size of the company, marketers (and businesses) can effectively support social causes if they research and **make decisions based on their needs, objectives, and deficits**. Social issues should not be treated lightly and should be a business-wide decision, not left only to marketing professionals who perhaps lack the resources and expertise to market through them.

Depending on the seniority of the marketer, a good and advisable best practice would also be to **implement mandatory employee training** on relevant aspects of the role, such as data protection, data privacy, social responsibility, and communication. This also links with the prior data literacy guideline, and would ensure that all employees are aware, compliant, and can execute their marketing functions as ethically and responsibly as possible. Moderating and measuring performance would also be advisable. If working as a freelancer, or by own accord, the same concept of educating oneself would apply, as measuring one's performance and success ratio.

4.1.1 Disclosure

The above guidelines consist of best practices for marketers to consider the ethical perspectives of their marketing and advertising activities on social media and beyond. Needless to mention, they do not comprehend the entirety of ethical issues related to social media marketing, only the subjects discussed in this work. In addition, the subjects exposed relate to issues and activities that marketers have power over and can work to change and implement. Practices that would require internal implementation and execution from the organisation or business itself, have not been included since, thus, the guidelines would be better suited for business owners and CEOs. However, inside the marketing departments, other advisable practice would be to implement technological and technical infrastructures to safeguard consumers data and vulnerable information. Preferably, this would have to be executed company-wide to truly increase consumer trust and decrease privacy concerns and risk of privacy breaches.

It is also noteworthy to mention that some of the above guidelines cross-over in terms of applied philosophy and practice. For example, using transparency as an ethical principle can be applied to data privacy, marketing communications, and advertising practices. Likewise, social responsibility or literacy can be applied to various marketing practices and should be considered as prime objectives. In addition, this work supports the concept of ethical marketing as a process, not as a checklist box that can be ‘ticked off’: it requires constant work, commitment, and evolution, as it will also depend on the resources of the organisation and marketer(s) at hand (Rodenhausen et al, 2022).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS & REFLECTIONS

The primary aim of this work has been to identify, analyse, and evaluate two of the main ethical challenges for social media marketers today and propose an ethical guide based on these findings. By examining brand humanisation and data privacy dilemmas through the perspective of brand trust, this work offers a comprehensive and holistic examination of these critical issues and an ethical guide that is both practical and based on empirical and relevant findings. This final chapter will outline the main findings, discuss implications and contributions, provide recommendations, and assess the research methodology.

This work proposed the main objective of proposing an ethical guide for social media marketers that was practical and based on empirical evidence, accompanied by the following sub-objectives: (i). to provide a comprehensive and holistic evaluation of marketing dilemmas from the perspective of consumers, marketers, and social media platforms; (ii). to assess the impact of brand trust on consumer comfort and its relation to brand humanisation and data privacy; (iii). to evaluate the significance of ethical marketing practices for consumers and businesses; (iv). to identify consumer behavioural patterns and draw possible solutions to the dilemmas posed in this work. These objectives were formulated to fulfil the main contribution of this work, which is to provide marketers with a comprehensive and practical guide for social media marketing that will consider social responsibility as well as business success.

The purpose of this work has been to offer insight into the responsibilities of marketers with a focus on social media and provide solutions based on a comprehensive study of patterns, trends, and data. As argued throughout this work, this decision is based on the need for self-regulation in opposition to legal regulation as following the latter does not always result in ethical practices or effective marketing. In addition, various significant sources classify social media platforms and marketing altogether as unethical due to its capitalist and consumerist purposes. This work, although it does consider these perspectives, was formulated with the purpose of providing realistic, practical, and achievable solutions against unethical and self-interested marketing and capitalist business models. Marketing does not have to be unethical; however, due to unregulated technological developments and integrations, poor literacy and training, ineffective

communication, and lack of holistic regulations, among others, ethical social media marketing has become a challenge for marketers worldwide.

5.1 Findings and conclusions

To better reflect and comprehend the findings resulted from the research and data analysis and evaluation carried out for this work, the findings will respond directly to the five objectives posed in the prior paragraphs:

The findings for **Sub-objective 1** correspond to evaluating brand humanisation and data privacy dilemmas from the perspective of consumers and marketers in the context of social media platforms. Marketing and consumer relations have been studied in context to be able to provide the most accurate possible solutions and evaluate the problem from different perspectives. Social media platforms serve as the basis for business-consumer relations, which have established the operational mechanisms on which marketing practices reach consumers. This context is integral to understand the dilemmas posed by marketers since they have limited power over the decisions of social networks or the laws that regulate them.

Brand humanisation dilemmas were discussed on Chapter 2, which included aspects such as brand activism, influencer marketing, or humanised communications. The resulting conclusion is that marketers continue to struggle with their humanisation strategies on social networks, considering consumers have become cynical and distrustful of marketing efforts. This distrust and discomfort originate from inauthentic marketing, meaning, marketing that is indented to benefit the business and offers no real value to consumers or society in general, such as false advertising, woke-washing, or green-washing. These strategies are adopted by marketers who attempt to cater to shifting consumer-behaviours without evaluating external factors and perceive any type of social media discourse as a chance to make profit. Inauthenticity is identified as an extremely harmful quality for businesses marketing on social media. On the other hand, authenticity is identified as a key component for successful marketing that improves brand trust. However, marketers must beware of creating hyperreal performances: one the one hand,

because making a brand *appear* authentic already makes it inauthentic; on the other, consumers are more sceptic and aware of marketing strategies and ploys than ever before.

While this phenomenon may be seen as a brand humanisation dilemma, by considering and analysing all parties in context, it was not difficult to find a clear and achievable solution, one that has been repeated across sources (White et al., 2019; Borchers & Enke, 2022; Mirzaei et al., 2022). To ‘be’ authentic and, therefore, to reap the benefits from authenticity, marketing efforts must be aligned with corporate ethos. If a certain marketing action does not align with corporate values or philosophy, it is highly likely to harm business. In specific scenarios, particularly with brand activism, inauthentic marketing can also cause harm to consumers and society. In addition to authenticity, this work identifies self-awareness as a key quality to develop as it is imperative when making decisions that can affect all stakeholders.

In Chapter 3, data privacy dilemmas were also considered from the perspective of consumers and marketers in the context of social media. This dilemma is perhaps more complex due to the direct threats privacy violations and abuse can inflict upon individuals, businesses, and society. In addition, privacy protection regulations are scarce, incomplete, and vary from region to region, making the monitoring and protection of such harder to execute. To effectively communicate why data privacy is such a significant issue, this work has aimed to explain the unethical platform design and business models that social networks embody. Social media platforms have become exploitative of users’ data for their own gain and that of marketers. Marketers’ dilemma begins because hyper-personalisation and individual targeting *work*; yet they are often unethical. Moreover, consumers’ have been found to reject marketing that invades their privacy, but still desire a personalised experience (Shanahan et al., 2018; Edelman, 2021).

Marketers are perhaps faced with an apparent dilemma because they do not know what to choose: self-interest (making profit) or public wellbeing, and this is perhaps the most alarming finding of all. Making profit should never become a priority if it means causing harm or posing a threat to users’ safety or quality of life. This mindset has been attributed to a lack of data literacy, regulations, and social responsibility. Personalisation, however, does not have to be unethical: marketers can reap benefits from targeted advertising without having to invade users’ privacy or promote mass consumerism,

especially considering that social networks are already encouraging overconsumption and invasive advertising has been found to not work in the long run (Shanahan et al., 2018; Martin & Murphy, 2017).

While personalisation has been found to be effective, consumers wish to protect, control, and be informed of how their data is being used. Therefore, marketers should not only listen to consumers, but must become literate to be able to implement the necessary actions and technological integrations to build and maintain consumer trust. Transparency has been identified as a key factor in brand trust and what allows marketers to execute ethical and effective advertising campaigns. However, this work argues that transparency is not enough, and literacy plays a large role in positive consumer-business relationships. Marketers must become data literate, but the real value transaction presents itself when marketers educate consumers on how, why, and for what purposes their data is being collected. Consumers have been found to not understand privacy policies nor possess the mental capacity to process confusing and lengthy legal texts (Martin & Murphy, 2017; Van der Schyff et al., 2020). Therefore, based on this evidence, this work urges marketers to take data privacy concerns as an opportunity to strengthen consumer relations and work towards creating a safe and trusting space where marketing has the groundwork to be effective. These findings give answer to **Sub-objective 1** and **Sub-objective 2**.

Throughout this work, ethics have been contemplated from the perspective of social responsibility and from the perspective of business success. As seen, social media marketing –and marketing in general- has the power to impact individuals, societies, economies, human rights, and even governmental systems. The data-driven business models and mass surveillance systems placed by social media networks pose an evident challenge for ethical social media marketing, which will only get more complex as new and improved technological integrations enter the field. As argued in this work, regulations are often outdated or incomplete by the time they are implemented due to the fast development of technology, therefore, marketers have been navigating social media marketing with no prior training, awareness, or regulation.

Considering marketers have been warning marketers prior the conception of social media about abuse of consumer data and encouraged them to act wisely to avoid excessive regulation, it would be safe to assume that ethics in marketing will continue to be a

challenge for many years to come (Bloom et al., 1991; Appel et al., 2020). For this reason, and considering the history of ethics, marketing, and social media, this work sustains the idea that ethical marketing is never a completed task. Ethical marketing requires investment and resources in order to continue adapting, developing, and evaluating marketing practices on social media. As explored and argued in this work, it is far easier for marketers in terms of effort and ROI to continue using unethical marketing tools and strategies; however, for those who are concerned not only about social responsibility but also about business sustainability, ethics will always be a work in progress.

This work has contemplated negative repercussions of unethical social media marketing for consumers such as violation of privacy, identity theft, user behaviour modification, mental health issues, over-consumption, false advertising, discrimination, among many others. However, unethical marketing also affects the relationship between consumer and business and has been found to be counterproductive: what marketers believe will give them an increased ROI can eventually cause the brand to plummet. This finding is significant because it supports the idea that consumers are buying consciously and that marketing is expected to 'be' more than self-interested actions, it is expected to generate value not only to the consumer, but society and even the planet (Jahns, 2021; Edelman, 2022). This revelation is evidenced by the many sources revealing consumers' purchasing trends and by the results of brands who choose to employ authentic and transparent practices.

Authentic and transparent practices that increase brand trust, however, does not mean such marketing is necessarily ethical. Likewise, ethical marketing does not equal business success. The overall conclusion is that there is a direct correlation between ethical marketing and brand trust, therefore, marketers would be sensible to adopt ethical marketing as a staple to create sustainable business while acting in favour of social responsibility, having the consumer at the front of marketing decisions. As social media evolves with new technological integrations, it is crucial for marketers to integrate ethics into marketing decisions even if it is not the easiest and fastest route. These ethical considerations respond to **Sub-objective 3**.

After careful observation and evaluation of marketer-consumer relations, a few patterns have been identified that may or may not reflect the entirety of the social media

ecosystem; yet they pose significant questions that marketers ought to reflect upon to gather insight into consumer behaviour:

- Consumer behaviour is highly contextual and influenced by awareness: belief-driven buying has been a new concept that has given name to the apparent shift in consumers' interest for sustainability, business ethics, and social issues. It appears that consumers' behaviour shifts depending on their level of awareness: as their knowledge of a certain topic grows, so do their expectations and demands they make of businesses operating in the same context as them. This can apply to both data privacy and brand activism, for example. Perhaps it is not consumers that are changing, but social media is allowing for new information to flow, and this is impacting consumers' behaviour. This perceived pattern is important for marketers, because it means that not only do they need to understand consumers to market effectively, but they also need to understand historical, political, social, and economic contexts.
- Consumers want valuable, authentic, and transparent marketing: consumers, as argued, are not necessarily behaving in strange ways (i.e., desiring a personalised advertising experience but reacting poorly to personalised advertising), it is the communication flow with marketers that is failing. In these paradoxical behaviours, marketers should evaluate their communication efforts: if consumers desire a certain feature but have poor reactions to such, changing the methodology or approach could be key to further understanding consumer behaviour. This work argues that this phenomenon is of the responsibility of marketers and a fault in their strategy: if a certain strategy is not working, another one should be implemented. Empirical evidence reveals that consumers know what they want and how they want it, it is marketers who are perhaps unwilling to adapt and change.
- Consumers react poorly to capitalist marketing: although the debate around ethics and capitalism is a subject this work is not able to further develop, an interesting finding and hypothesis is that consumers react negatively to capitalist marketing particularly on social media. As explained, social media platforms (especially Facebook and Instagram) are becoming similar to e-commerce platforms. In

addition, there is rising awareness over the fact that networks capitalise on user data and critiques over users' feeds becoming overfilled with advertisements. The oversaturation of capitalist features and the encouragement of overconsumption of social media would explain why consumers have such a negative reaction to unethical marketing that does not bring any value to the consumer. Likewise, it would explain why consumers are desiring the opposite from brands such as authenticity, credibility, transparency, or responsibility.

- Consumers want to feel included, protected, and valued: although it may seem evident, consumers do not want to feel 'used' or deprived of vital information, especially when it comes to their personal data. While this finding is not necessarily ground-breaking, it appears that marketers still believe obscure privacy policies and simply complying with regulations is effective or even ethical. Data privacy is a major consumer concern; therefore, it is understandable that they react poorly to communications that are not catered to them, nor are they constructed in a way that makes them comprehensible and accessible. This behavioural pattern is imperative for marketers to assimilate and understand since it will continue to be a prevalent issue in marketing ethics and will most likely continue to grow and present further challenges.

These behavioural patterns respond to **Sub-objective 4**. Understanding consumer trends and patterns is significant for any marketer; however, understanding the origin and root of these behaviours will provide marketers with a holistic comprehension of different subjects and dilemmas and will allow them to improve consumer-business relations as create more effective marketing campaigns.

Lastly, the findings for **Objective 1**, the main objective corresponding to the ethical proposal guide for social media marketers, encompass all the previous findings and which would not have been achieved without the prior work. Creating an ethical guide for marketers became much easier once all the necessary research, data analysis, and concept and evidence evaluation was completed. The process of creating the ethical guide gave light to a few reflections: (i), ethical marketing requires a great amount of resources (time, monetary, network, and human investment, among others) that many will be unable to assume for a variety of reasons; (ii) ethics should be a core business-wide

implementation for a higher chance of ethical marketing to be of success; (iii) ethical marketing often requires relevant departments to implement and execute successful campaigns.

While the objective was successfully completed, it also reinforced the idea that guides can be a great source of aid but are hardly all-encompassing; therefore, this work stresses the need to integrate ethics into marketing, thus making ethics an integral part of such. There is also an urgent need for support, education, and training as an industry-wide staple to ensure marketers are aware of marketing impact and responsibility, but also of frameworks with which to integrate ethics into marketing practices. For this reason, the proposed guide in Chapter 4 focused on perhaps smaller and achievable guidelines that targeted specific issues or practices, and by no means was it intended as a ‘full’ or ‘all-encompassing’ work since that would be counter argumentative.

5.2 Evaluation of contribution to research gaps

The most notable research gaps identified in Chapter 1 correspond to: (i). a lack of timely and relevant literary sources that include new technological integrations or legal regulation developments; (ii). a lack of ethics research that focuses specifically on social media marketing as opposed to general marketing; (iii). a lack of evidence that measures the long-lasting impact of certain marketing actions on social media; (iv). a lack of academic and reliable sources that offer ethical marketing guidelines based on empirical evidence and academic research.

In regard to the first research gap, this work has undergone an extensive research process, not only to identify current and relevant data, but to connect similar or opposing ideas to attempt to illustrate the state of the current social media ecosystem. While this work cannot be qualified as a literary source, it may perhaps offer an array of timely ideas and research topics for academics looking to further explore social media marketing ethics. In addition, due to the limitations of this work, various developments have not been explored, such as new AI integrations; however, it does provide relevant insights into brand humanisation and data privacy which can be applied to new integrations to come.

Business ethics, as marketing ethics, have been broadly studied; yet there are few academic and reliable sources that explore ethics in the context of social media, particularly focusing on brand humanisation. In retrospect, this work has been unable to offer in-depth insight into the various types of brand humanisation impact, partly due to the lack of sources; however, Chapter 2 does connect various significant concepts together and relates them to the social media marketing field through traditional marketing-related principles such as brand trust and ethics. This holistic approach offers marketing ethics a more updated framework on social media operations and current ethical concerns over marketing activities, as urged by academics (Felix et al., 2016; Jacobson et al., 2020; Saura et al., 2021). In addition, there are few sources that base their arguments on an examination of consumers, marketers, and social media platforms, reason for one of the objectives of this work be to provide this cross-evaluation.

This work has been unable to contribute majorly to the third research gap, corresponding to the lack of sources that verified the long-lasting effects of certain aspects of social media marketing. Due to the choice of methodology and subject of this work, which considered mostly secondary data, this aspect has not been fulfilled; however, this work urges academics and researchers to further explore the subject. For example, the impact of digital communication platforms turning into e-commerce platforms, the impact of invasion and abuse of user privacy on the individual and society, or the impact of social media becoming a hyper-real performance, are topics that would have been interesting to add to this work if they had been offered as research prior.

Regarding a lack of reliable and academic sources offering ethical marketing guides based on empirical evidence, this is perhaps this work's most notable contribution, as it adds to existing ethical marketing guides but also provides an extensive justification of the proposal. The justification served to support the belief that it is not enough to encourage marketers to practice ethical marketing – they must understand *why* it is important. Therefore, this work has contributed to fulfil both these needs based on the chosen dilemmas: data privacy and brand humanisation.

5.3 Limitations & methodology reflection

This work, as emphasised throughout this work, has encountered a few limitations: the main one being the relevancy and reliability of the source materials. Since the methodology was based on secondary sources, they were the basis for the findings, conclusions, and the overall proposal on Chapter IV. Since there were no additional resources to generate first-party data, the work has perhaps been limited in this regard. In addition, the chosen sources were those which were available and accessible – the work may have been limited by the choice of accessible resources, most of which were accessed through the institution, but perhaps there were more relevant studies that this work was unable to include.

Another limitation is the researcher's bias (my own): although extensive and sufficient research was carried out to evaluate different perspectives, it is probable some perspectives may have been influenced by my own personal experience on the subject at hand; however, diverse perspectives are what makes research rich, dynamic, and significant. In addition, all arguments were backed by relevant evidence and data.

The final limitation responds to the first: as this work was limited by current literature and sources, some aspects of this thesis will eventually become obsolete and irrelevant. Nevertheless, this work continues to be current and timely since it was first conceptualised (nearly a year ago), therefore, most of it will still be of use in years to come.

5.4 Recommendations and final reflections

In addition to the recommendations mentioned earlier in this chapter, which suggest that academics and marketing researchers should conduct further research on ethics in the context of social media marketing, the most significant recommendation is directed towards fellow marketing professionals. This work has explored and justified why ethics are not only important for social responsibility but also for sustainable businesses. However, it must acknowledge that implementing ethics can be challenging and somewhat abstract without a proper framework of knowledge and resources.

Considering ethics are not a requirement to practice social media marketing, it is easy for marketers to overlook them and perhaps abuse their power without being aware of it. This lack of ethical regulation leaves marketers with the choice to self-regulate or continue to simply follow the platforms' regulations, which, without the right support, marketers are unable to make the right or best business decisions. Despite these challenges, this work encourages marketers to confront our challenge as professionals and people, and to uphold our responsibility to the digital ecosystem and society. As argued in this work, marketers should embrace these challenges and use them as opportunities for growth and improvement, because that is what consumers want: ethical and sustainable marketing.

To conclude this chapter, this work has delved into the current and complex landscape of social media marketing and ethics. Through a comprehensive and holistic study of consumer behaviours, marketing strategies, and the social media platform ecosystem, this work has evaluated two of the most prominent marketing dilemmas, brand humanisation and data privacy, with the aim to provide marketers with an ethical guide that considered both social responsibility and business success. The findings of this thesis identify transparency, authenticity, literacy, and consumer comfort as key factors that affect brand trust and social media marketing effectiveness. In addition, this work argues the importance of ethics and social responsibility in marketing in the face of a capitalist economy that often places profit over the wellbeing of society.

This work has proposed a social media marketing ethical guide in the aim of providing marketers with a clear, achievable, and practical guide that responds to dilemmas in the face of brand humanisation and data privacy, as well as to fill an identified gap in marketing research and resources. By employing and considering the recommended guidelines and frameworks, marketers can begin to implement and integrate solutions to the identified issues, and work towards building a more sustainable and responsible digital marketing ecosystem.

As new technologies develop and bring their consequent set of ethical dilemmas, it is imperative that marketers are well versed and prepared to integrate new concepts into their marketing practices. By establishing ethical frameworks that encourage self-reflection and place the consumer as a priority, marketers will be able to continue adapting

and practicing effective and responsible social media marketing. While navigating ethical dilemmas can be challenging, social media is a game-changing tool for marketers that will continue to offer an array of innovative opportunities for consumer relations, business development, and communications: it is up to marketers to build a trusting, sustainable, and responsible ecosystem that adds value to consumers, businesses, platforms, and society itself.

REFERENCES

- 5W Public Relations. (2021). *Consumer Culture Report*. <https://bit.ly/3Tt24jk>
- Accenture. (2021). *Life Reimagined: Mapping the motivations that matter for today's consumers*. <https://accntu.re/3FbjKfn>
- Acquisti, A., Taylor, C., & Wagman, L. (2016). The Economics of Privacy. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 54(2), 442-92. <https://bit.ly/3Ys2hXe>
- Adobe. (2019, January 24). Generation Z: The most willing to share data with brands, but only for a good experience. *Adobe Blog*. <https://shorturl.at/szCMR>
- Ahmadinejad, B., & Najafi, H. (2017). E-business through Social Media: A Quantitative Survey (Case Study: Instagram). *International Journal of Management, Accounting and Economics*, 4, 2017-2383. <https://bit.ly/3TTBPD1>
- Akar, E., & Topcu, B. (2011). An Examination of the Factors Influencing Consumers' Attitudes Toward Social Media Marketing. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, 10, 35-67
- American Marketing Association. (2017). *Definitions of Marketing*. <https://bit.ly/2oYG6Mh>
- Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R., et al. (2020). The future of social media in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48(1), 79-95. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00695-1>
- Bayerl, P. S., & Jacobs, G. (2022). Who is responsible for customers' privacy? Effects of first versus third party handling of privacy contracts on continuance intentions. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 185. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2022.122039>
- Ben & Jerry's. (n.d.). *Issues We Care About*. <https://benjerrys.co/2HKIYRj>

- Bleier, A., Goldfarb, A., & Tucker, C. (2020). Consumer privacy and the future of data-based innovation and marketing. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 37(3), 466-480. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2020.03.006>
- Bloom, P. N., Milne, G. R., & Adler, R. (1994). Avoiding misuse of new information technologies: legal and societal considerations. *Journal of Marketing*, 58, 98–110. <https://bit.ly/3X24siu>
- Borchers, N. S. & Enke, N. (2022). “I’ve never seen a client say: ‘Tell the influencer not to label this as sponsored’”: An exploration into influencer industry ethics. *Public Relations Review*, 48(5). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2022.102235>
- Break Free From Plastic. (2021). *Brand Audit Report 2021: Volume IV*. <https://bit.ly/3NEMCPv>
- Brodherson, M., Broitman, A., Cherek, J., & Robinson, K. (2021, May 20). A customer-centric approach to marketing in a privacy-first world. McKinsey & Company. <https://shorturl.at/bkmFS>
- California Legislative Information. (2018). California Consumer Privacy Act of 2018, Cal. Civ. Code § 1798.100 et seq.
- Cambridge Dictionary. (nd.). Authenticity. In *dictionary.cambridge.org*. Retrieved October 26, 2022, from <https://bit.ly/3svch31>
- Campbell, T. (2015). Law and Morality: An Analytical Perspective. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2, 483-488, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.63044-1>
- Chen, B. X. (2021, September 16). The Battle for Digital Privacy Is Reshaping the Internet. *The New York Times*. <https://nyti.ms/3DoZs03>

- Chen, K. (2017). Humanizing Brands: An Examination of the Psychological Process of Anthropomorphism and its Effects on Consumer Responses. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 5(2), 75-87. <https://bit.ly/3Wfu2kN>
- Choi, H., Park, J., & Jung, Y. (2018). The role of privacy fatigue in online privacy behavior. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 81, 42-51. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.12.001>
- Dennis, B.S., Neck, C.P., & Goldsby, M.G. (1998). The scoop on Ben & Jerry's Inc.: an examination of corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 13(5/6), 387-393. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683949810224363>
- Di Bella, S. (2019). Book Review: The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power by Shoshana Zuboff. *London School of Economics*. <https://bit.ly/3BqcM2p>
- Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., Jain, V., Karjaluoto, H., Kefi, H., Krishen, A. S., Kumar, V., Rahman, M. M., Raman, R., Rauschnabel, P. A., Rowley, J., Salo, J., Tran, G. A., & Wang, Y. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions. *International Journal of Information Management*, 59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168>
- Edelman. (2021). *2021 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust, The New Brand Equity*. <https://bit.ly/3h1Tiuq>
- Edelman. (2022). *2022 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: The New Cascade of Influence*. <https://bit.ly/3F5UNID>
- Evangelista, R. (2019) Review of Zuboff's The Age of Surveillance Capitalism. *Surveillance & Society*, 246-251, 17(1/2). <https://bit.ly/3xy9yJ7>
- European Union. (2016). Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to

the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation). Official Journal of the European Union, L 119, 1–88.

Fenty Beauty (n.d.). <https://fentybeauty.com>

First Insights. (2021). *The Sustainability Disconnect Between Consumers and Retail Executives*. <https://bit.ly/3DfseAD>

Forbes Business Council. (2023, January 25). Creating a Culture of Privacy: The Importance of Developing a Privacy Program for Your Business. *Forbes*. <https://shorturl.at/cdzMQ>

Greene, T., Seet, C., Rodríguez Barrio, A., McIntyre, D., Kelly, B., & Bragg, M. (2022). Brands with personalities – good for businesses, but bad for public health? A content analysis of how food and beverage brands personify themselves on Twitter. *Public Health Nutrition*, 25(1), 51-60. <https://bit.ly/3SWHlbM>

Harvey, B. (2019, April 19). The Ethics of Brand Humanisation. *The Prindle Institute for Ethics*. <https://bit.ly/3U6ddH4>

Hassinen, M. (2018). *A critical approach to Kotler and Sarkar's brand activism: a comparison to a theoretical framework of CSR, CC, and activism*. Aalto University. <https://bit.ly/3DqRzqc>

Haudi, H., Handayani, W., Musnaini, M., Suyoto, Y., Prasetyo, T., Wijoyo, H., Yonata, H., Koho, R., Cahyono, Y. (2022). The effect of social media marketing on brand trust, brand equity and brand loyalty. *International Journal of Data and Network Science*, 6. <https://bit.ly/3FiBSEj>

Hinds, J., Williams, E. J., & Joinson, A. N. (2020). “It wouldn't happen to me”: Privacy concerns and perspectives following the Cambridge Analytica scandal. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 143, 102498. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhcs.2020.102498>

IAB. (2021, October 19). *The Economic Impact of the Market-Making Internet*. <https://bit.ly/3TjW24I>

International Labour Organisation. (2022, September 12). *50 million people worldwide in modern slavery*. <https://bit.ly/3sQdWAu>

Isaak, J., & Hanna, M. J. (2018). User Data Privacy: Facebook, Cambridge Analytica, and Privacy Protection. *Computer*, 51(8), 56-59. <https://doi.org/10.1109/MC.2018.3191268>

Jacobson, J., Gruzd, A., & Hernández-García, A. (2020). Social media marketing: Who is watching the watchers?. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.03.001>.

Jahns, K. (2021, August 10) The environment is Gen Z's No. 1 concern – and some companies are taking advantage of that. *CNBC*. <https://cnb.cx/3yXpeGL>

Jeong, H. J., Chung, D., & Kim, J. (2022). Brands Are Human on Social Media: The Effectiveness of Human Tone-of-Voice on Consumer Engagement and Purchase Intentions Through Social Presence. *International Journal of Communication*, 16, 4231-4253. <https://bit.ly/3zkcYjt>

Jiménez-Castillo, R., & Sánchez-Fernández, R. (2019). The role of digital influencers in brand recommendation: Examining their impact on engagement, expected value and purchase intention. *International Journal of Information Management*, 49, 366-376. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2019.07.009>.

Joyce, G. (2017, April 7). *Data Reveals the Extent of the Backlash to the Kendall Jenner Pepsi Ad*. Brandwatch. <https://bit.ly/3gRXhJX>

Kamila, M. K., & Jasrotia, S. S. (2023). Ethics and marketing responsibility: A bibliometric analysis and literature review. *Asia Pacific Management Review*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmr.2023.04.002>

- Koay, K. Y., Cheung, M. L., Soh, P. C., & Teoh, C. W. (2022). Social media influencer marketing: the moderating role of materialism. *European Business Review*, 34(2), 224-243. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-02-2021-0032>
- Kokolakis, S. (2017). Privacy attitudes and privacy behaviour: A review of current research on the privacy paradox phenomenon. *Computers & Security*, 64, 122-134. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cose.2015.07.002>.
- Kumar, V., & Kaushik, A. (2022). Engaging customers through brand authenticity perceptions: The moderating role of self-congruence. *Journal of Business Research*, 138, 26-37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.08.065>
- Lanier, J. (2018, May 3). *How we need to remake the Internet*. YouTube. <https://bit.ly/2zfe0RA>
- Li, F., Larimo, J. & Leonidou, L.C. (2021). *Social media marketing strategy: definition, conceptualization, taxonomy, validation, and future agenda*. *J. of the Acad. Mark. Sci.* 49, 51–70. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-020-00733-3>
- Loewen, B. (2018, October 10). 4 Ways Brands Can Be More Authentic On Social Media. *Hootsuite*. <https://bit.ly/2Ok5OGu>
- Longdom Publishing. (2022). Social Media. <https://bit.ly/3saT32N>
- Losse, K. (2014, June 10). Weird Corporate Twitter. *The New Inquiry*. <https://bit.ly/3fjzIcY>
- Lozano, K. (2022, October 4). How YouTube Created the Attention Economy. *The New Yorker*. <https://bit.ly/3zyyscP>
- Martin, K. (2020, August 6). Consumers find third-party use of personal location data violates privacy, study shows. *University of Notre Dame*. <https://shorturl.at/uvGPS>

- Martin, K. D., & Murphy, P. E. (2016). The role of data privacy in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 45, 135-155. <https://bit.ly/3idQStH>
- Mason, A. N., Narcum, J., & Mason, M. (2021). Social media marketing gains importance after Covid-19. *Cogent Business & Management*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2020.1870797>
- McCourt, A. (2018). Social Media Mining: The Effects of Big Data In The Age of Social Media. *Media Freedom and Information Access Clinic*. Yale Law School. <https://bit.ly/2qHv0bM>
- McFarlane, G. (2021). How Facebook (Meta), Twitter, Social Media Make Money from You. Investopedia. <https://bit.ly/2J8yPOx>
- McLachlan, S., & Newberry, C. (2021, June 29). 22 Benefits of Social Media for Business. Hootsuite. <https://bit.ly/3D81nW8>
- Members' Research Service. (2021). *Key social media risks to democracy: Risks from surveillance, personalisation, disinformation, moderation and microtargeting*. European Parliamentary Research Service. <http://shorturl.at/uHY59>
- Meta. (2007, November 7). Facebook Unveils Facebook Ads. <https://bit.ly/3SGHGer>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Humanize. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved November 1, 2022, from <https://bit.ly/3sO3XvB>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Marketing. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved September 21, 2022, from <https://bit.ly/2GfoRxs>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Privacy. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved December 21, 2022, from <https://bit.ly/3vyAY0g>
- Mindshare. (2022). *Reality Check 2022: An Emerging World*. <https://bit.ly/3Tg7mii>

- Mirzaei, A., Wilkie, D. C., Siuki, H. (2022). Woke brand activism authenticity or the lack of it. *Journal of Business Research*, 139, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.09.044>
- Morey, T., Forbath, T., & Schoop, A. (2015, May). Customer Data: Designing for Transparency and Trust. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://shorturl.at/az127>
- Morin, R. (2002, February 3). When Celebrity Endorsers Go Bad. *The Washington Post*. <https://wapo.st/3h4RroU>
- Morning Consult. (2021). *The Influencer Report: Engaging Gen Z and Millennials*. <https://bit.ly/3TRLzxF>
- Napoli, J., Dickinson, S., Beverland, M., & Farrelly, F. (2014). Measuring consumer-based brand authenticity. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(6), 1090-1098. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.06.001>
- Pomeroy, A. (2017). Marketing for sustainability: Extending the conceptualisation of the marketing mix to drive value for individuals and society at large. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 25(2). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ausmj.2017.04.011>
- Qonsent (2022). Qonsent Consumer Insights 2022. <https://shorturl.at/dpEMP>
- Reto, F., Rauschnabel, P. A., & Hinsch, C. (2017). Elements of strategic social media marketing: A holistic framework. *Journal of Business Research*, 70, 118-126. <https://bit.ly/3S7vpzk>
- Robinson, D. (2022, July 17). 10 Companies Called Out for Greenwashing. *Earth.org*. <https://bit.ly/3sMzfmn>
- Rodenhausen, D., Wiener, L., Rogers, K., & Katerman, M. (2022, January 21). Consumers Want Privacy. Marketers Can Deliver. *Boston Consulting Group*. <https://shorturl.at/bRWXZ>

- Saura, J. R., Palacios-Marqués, D., & Iturricha-Fernández, A. (2021). Ethical design in social media: Assessing the main performance measurements of user online behavior modification. *Journal of Business Research*, 129, 271-281. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.03.001>.
- Schmidt, H.J., Ind, N., Guzmán, F. & Kennedy, E. (2022). Sociopolitical activist brands. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 31 (1), 40-55. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-03-2020-2805>
- Segijn, C. M., & Strycharz, J. (2023). The ethical ramifications of surveillance in contemporary advertising for the industry, consumers, and regulators: current issues and a future research agenda. *International Journal of Advertising*, 42(1), 69-77. DOI: 10.1080/02650487.2022.2114700
- Shanahan, T., Tran, T. P., & Taylor, E. C. (2018). Getting to know you: Social media personalization as a means of enhancing brand loyalty and perceived quality. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 47, 57-65. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2018.10.007>
- Sharma, M., & Rahman, Z. (2022). Anthropomorphic brand management: An integrated review and research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 149, 463-475. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.05.039>.
- Sharma, S., & Verma, H. V. (2018). *Social Media Marketing: Evolution and Change*. Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore. <https://rdcu.be/cWzC1>
- Simpson, J. (2017, August 5). Finding Brand Success In The Digital World. *Forbes*. <https://bit.ly/3NreVAH>
- Smith, J. (2022, December 22). Data privacy rules are sweeping across the globe and getting stricter. *CNBC*. <https://shorturl.at/NRTUW>

- Södergren, J. (2021). Brand authenticity: 25 Years of research. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 45. 645– 663. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12651>
- Solove, D. J. (2008). Understanding privacy. *Harvard University Press*. <https://bit.ly/3G8EnI4>
- Sprout Social. (2018). #BrandsGetReal: What consumers want from brands in a divided society. <https://bit.ly/2GqC98L>
- Sprout Social. (2019). *Brands Creating Change in the Conscious Consumer Era*. <https://bit.ly/3zoHZTr>
- Stark, A. (1993, May-June). What's the Matter with Business Ethics?. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://shorturl.at/hmKMT>
- Statista. (2021). *Leading benefits of using social media for marketing purposes as of January 2021*. <https://bit.ly/3ej6MB4>
- Statista. (2022). *Educational attainment in the U.S. 1960-2021*. <https://rb.gy/hqe2a>
- Statista. (2022). *EU share of population with a university degree in 2021*. <https://rb.gy/b3guj>
- Statista. (2022). *Most popular social networks worldwide as of January 2022, ranked by number of monthly active users*. <https://bit.ly/3Cxjh5q>
- Steinhauer, J (2021). *History, Disrupted: How Social Media and the World Wide Web Have Changed the Past*. Palgrave MacMillan.
- Sugar, R. (2018, October 30). Ben & Jerry's is donating a total of \$100,000 to 4 progressive causes. *Vox*. <https://bit.ly/3UbCjnR>
- Swani, K., Milne, G. R., & Slepchuk, A. N. (2021). Revisiting trust and privacy concerns in consumers' perceptions of marketing information management practices:

- Replication and extension. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 56, 137-158.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2021.03.001>.
- Obar, J. A., & Oeldorf-Hirsch, A. (2020). The biggest lie on the Internet: ignoring the privacy policies and terms of service policies of social networking services. *Information, Communication & Society*, 23(1), 128-147.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1486870>
- Obar, J. A. & Wildman, S. (2015). Social media definition and the governance challenge: An introduction to the special issue. *Telecommunications Policy*, 39(9), 745-750.
- Orlowski, J. (Director, Writer). (2020). *The Social Dilemma* [Documentary]. Exposure Labs; Argent Pictures; The Space Program.
- Orzan, G., Platon, O. E., Stefănescu, C. D., & Orzan, M. (2016). Conceptual model regarding the influence of social media marketing communication on brand trust, brand affect, and brand loyalty. *Economic Computation & Economic Cybernetics Studies & Research*, 50(1). <https://bit.ly/3rQwPTl>
- Oxford Dictionary. (n.d.). Privacy. In *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*. Retrieved December 21, 2022, from <https://bit.ly/2LSfnrs>
- United Nations. (2021). *Our Common Agenda - Report of the Secretary-General*.
<https://bit.ly/3zHd3xZ>
- Van der Schyff, K., Flowerday, S., & Furnell, S. (2020). Duplicitous social media and data surveillance: An evaluation of privacy risk. *Computers & Security*, 94.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cose.2020.101822>
- Van Dijck, J. (2013). *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*. Oxford University Press.

- Venciūtė, D. (2018). Social Media Marketing – from Tool to Capability. *Management of Organizations: Systematic Research*, 79, 131-145. <https://doi.org/10.1515/mosr-2018-0009>
- Victor, D. (2017, April 5). Pepsi Pulls Ad Accused of Trivialising Black Lives Matter. *The New York Times*. <https://nyti.ms/3SQJNvq>
- Wakabayashi, D. (2022, February 16). Google Plans Privacy Changes, but Promises to Not Be Disruptive. *The New York Times*. <https://nyti.ms/3XNjVEa>
- We Are Social & Hootsuite. (2022). *Digital 2022: Global Overview Report*. <https://bit.ly/3N6g6p4>
- Webb, Bella. (2021, September 23). Brutal honesty: the new look sustainable marketing. *Vogue Business*. <https://shorturl.at/dnyO3>
- Wellman, M. L., Stoldt, R., Tully, M., & Ekdale, B. (2020). Ethics of Authenticity: Social Media Influencers and the Production of Sponsored Content. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 35(2), 68-82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2020.1736078>
- Werle, A. (2019). Beyond Light, Medium, and Dark: Diversity and Inclusivity in the Makeup and Beauty Industries. *Mahurin Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects*. <https://bit.ly/3FBh4I2>
- White, K., Hardisty, D. J., & Habib, R. (2019, July-August). The Elusive Green Consumer. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://shorturl.at/ntKN8>
- Zhu, Y., Chen, H. (2015). Social media and human need satisfaction: Implications for social media marketing. *Business Horizons*, 58(3), 335-345. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2015.01.006>
- Zuboff, S. & Santos Mosquera, A. (2018). *The Age Of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. Paidós.

APPENDIX: Sustainable Development Goals

As required by the Faculty of Business Administration and Management of the Polytechnic University of Valencia, the Sustainable Development Goals form, as the relation of this work to it, has been attached to this work. The transcription in English is as follows:

The relationship of my Master's thesis, focusing on the ethics of social media marketing, can be slightly related to two of the SDGs:

SDG 3. Health and wellbeing': the paper assesses the importance of practicing ethical marketing in order to reduce the negative impact of unethical marketing on the mental health of users. The argument is based on the fact that network marketing is based on models that are detrimental to people's mental health, fostering addiction, social isolation, depression, anxiety, among many others. The work encourages marketers to consider the impact of their work on people's health as one of the main focuses of ethical marketing.

SDG 8. 'Decent work and economic growth': one of the arguments promoted by the work to practice ethical marketing is, in addition to the previous one, to create a sustainable industry and to foster the economic growth of the industry. Ethical marketing is done through ethical business, and this includes all areas of business, both the supply chain and the working conditions of workers. The paper highlights and supports the evidence that ethical marketing and ethical business help economic growth, and, in addition, help create a sustainable industry.


ANEXO I. RELACIÓN DEL TRABAJO CON LOS OBJETIVOS DE DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE DE LA AGENDA 2030
Anexo al Trabajo de Fin de Grado y Trabajo de Fin de Máster: Relación del trabajo con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible de la agenda 2030.

Grado de relación del trabajo con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS).

Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenibles	Alto	Medio	Bajo	No Procede
ODS 1. Fin de la pobreza.				X
ODS 2. Hambre cero.				X
ODS 3. Salud y bienestar.		X		
ODS 4. Educación de calidad.				X
ODS 5. Igualdad de género.				X
ODS 6. Agua limpia y saneamiento.				X
ODS 7. Energía asequible y no contaminante.				X
ODS 8. Trabajo decente y crecimiento económico.		X		
ODS 9. Industria, innovación e infraestructuras.				X
ODS 10. Reducción de las desigualdades.				X
ODS 11. Ciudades y comunidades sostenibles.				X
ODS 12. Producción y consumo responsables.				X
ODS 13. Acción por el clima.				X
ODS 14. Vida submarina.				X
ODS 15. Vida de ecosistemas terrestres.				X
ODS 16. Paz, justicia e instituciones sólidas.				X
ODS 17. Alianzas para lograr objetivos.				X

Descripción de la alineación del TFG/TFM con los ODS con un grado de relación más alto.

***Utilice tantas páginas como sea necesario.



Anexo al Trabajo de Fin de Grado y Trabajo de Fin de Máster: Relación del trabajo con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible de la agenda 2030. (Numere la página)

La relación de mi trabajo de fin de máster, centrado en la ética del marketing de redes sociales, se puede relacionar levemente con dos de los ODS:

-Con el ODS 3. 'Salud y bienestar': se valora en el trabajo la importancia de practicar marketing ético a modo de reducir el impacto negativo que tiene el marketing no ético en la salud mental de los usuarios. El argumento se basa en que, al practicar marketing de redes, éstas están basadas en modelos perjudiciales a la salud mental de las personas, fomentando la adicción, aislamiento social, depresión, ansiedad, entre muchas otras. El trabajo promueve que los profesionales de marketing consideren el impacto de su trabajo en la salud de las personas como uno de los focos principales del marketing ético.

-Con el ODS 8. 'Trabajo decente y crecimiento económico': una de los argumentos que promueve el trabajo de practicar el marketing ético es, además de la previa, crear una industria sostenible y fomentar el crecimiento económico de la misma. El marketing ético se realiza a través de negocio ético, y esto incluye todas las áreas de negocio, tanto la cadena de suministro como las condiciones laborales de los trabajadores. El trabajo resalta y apoya la evidencia de que el marketing y negocio ético ayudan al crecimiento económico y, además, ayudan a crear una industria sostenible.